

THE ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

HTTP://www.trainweb.ORG/espa



Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

Vol. 25, No. 1

January/February 2003

New York State Commissioner Speaks Out

State frustration with Amtrak regarding the future of New York State service broke into the open when Transportation Commissioner Joseph Boardman released a November 18 letter to John Robert Smith, Chairman of Amtrak's Board of Directors. Boardman wrote that New York could not support Amtrak's plan to turn funding responsibility for short distance trains over to states, especially since Amtrak wants to accomplish this in one year but cannot say what it will cost. Boardman said it is unrealistic to expect states to fund both operating and many capital costs that have historically been a federal responsibility.

(Cont'd on page 8)

Election Results Threaten Amtrak

The Republican sweep in the November elections has put Amtrak's future in the hands of its most outspoken critics, especially in the Senate. Senator John McCain, who will chair the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee that will produce legislation governing Amtrak's existence, believes long distance trains should be dropped. On November 14th he said in a Senate discussion that Amtrak costs taxpayers "billions and billions per passenger"—an extraordinary exaggeration since it has received only about \$25 billion in its 31 years of existence. (NARP hotline, 11/15).

Last October the Republican House Appropriation Committee proposed a budget of only \$762 million, far short of the \$1.2 billion passed in July by the Senate Appropriations Committee, then under Democratic control. In a brief lame duck session after the election, the 107th Congress passed a continuing resolution to fund Amtrak at \$1.04 billion until January 11th, 2003. Since that will give the new Congress almost no time to get organized, a further continuing resolution is likely early in January. The amount for Amtrak will be an early test of Congressional intent.

It was hoped initially that the low House figure might be adjusted upward to the Senate level. But the likely Senate Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee Chairman, Richard Shelby (R., Ala.), has opposed Amtrak funding almost as vigorously as

(Cont'd on page 7)

Grade Crossing Funds for Empire Corridor

The Federal Railroad Administration recently awarded a \$1.5 million grant to New York State for grade crossing improvements along the Empire Corridor. New York State received 28% of the total \$5.4 million awarded with the nine other eligible states receiving lesser amounts. The funds will be used as part of the state's overall passenger rail improvement plans and will be aimed at crossing projects between Albany and Poughkeepsie.

Saratoga Station Work Underway



View of the temporary Saratoga Springs Amtrak station. Rehabilitation of the former D&H station is to be completed by the Fall. Visit www.cdta.org for more information and pictures.

Winter Fare Discounts Available

On January 7 Amtrak planned to introduced a new round of fare discount programs, including the following...

- A 25% Discount off regular fares will be valid for reservations made from January 7- February 15, good for travel January 10 - August 28. Fare Code H259 will be required to obtain this discount.
- A Free Companion Offer valid for reservations made from January 7- February 15, good for travel January 10 - August 28. Fare Code H255 will be required to obtain this discount.

Both discounts will require a three-day advance purchase and are non-refundable. They will not be valid on the *Acela Express*, *Metroliner*, *Downeaster*, Canadian portion of joint Amtrak/Via trains or for certain Thruway Bus trips. For full information and reservations, contact Amtrak.

In addition to these discounts, Amtrak in January plans to permanently reduce some base fares by as much as 25%, all of which are controlled by its 'revenue management' reservation system. Unfortunately, these reductions will not impact the very high fares on the Empire Corridor.

Bruce Springsteen Rides Empire Corridor

To reach his December 13th concert in Albany, famous rocker Bruce Springsteen and his E Street Band chartered a four car Amtrak train to travel from New York City and return. The non-stop special made the 142-mile trip in two hours! Reportedly, Springsteen enjoyed the ride, with his children having an opportunity to visit the cab before departure. Springsteen was featured in the Sept./Oct. issue of Amtrak's 'Arrive' Magazine.

The View from the Cab

As 2003 dawns, the future of passenger rail service in New York State remains as cloudy as it has ever been.

Finding support for Amtrak in Washington within the newly elected Republican controlled Congress will be very difficult. Add to this the White House's unwavering commitment to unworkable funding levels for Amtrak and the scene is set for a battle in the coming months to just maintain the current nationwide system, with little chance of progress towards actual improvements. Let's all hope that the increased credibility David Gunn has brought to Amtrak in Washington will be enough to help it survive.

Here in New York State, positions are taking shape regarding Amtrak's desire for increased state operating subsidies. With service levels continuing to deteriorate and with no sign that Amtrak is willing to reduce its uncompetitive high fare structure, it is now time to examine every available option for providing the citizens of New York State with quality and cost-effective rail service. Unfortunately, finding the necessary money to fund such service will be hard, as the state faces the most severe budget gap in decades.

I urge you to attend ESPA's 23rd Annual Meeting, scheduled for Saturday, March 1, 2003 at The Mohawk Club in Schenectady. In addition to conducting ESPA business, a number of excellent speakers have been invited to address us. With 2003 shaping up to be such a pivotal year, you won't want to miss this opportunity to be fully informed of how you can help make a difference. See the enclosed Registration Form for all the details.

As always, I welcome your comments, critiques and suggestions, on how ESPA can better attain our goals of improved passenger rail service in New York State. Don't hesitate to contact me at anytime.

Bruce B. Becker, President

Young Proposes Raising Gas Tax

Don Young (R., Alaska), who chairs the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee, will propose raising the gasoline tax 2¢ in each of the next six years to finance more highway and transit construction. None of the proceeds would go to Amtrak. The T&I Committee will draft legislation to replace the TEA-21 surface transportation act, which expires this year.

Young expects the gas tax to go up by 15-cents during the next 6 years, as the increase would be adjusted upward for inflation. He foresees a \$60 billion highway program by 2009 (vs. \$32 billion in 2002), plus \$12 billion for transit. While this would nearly double transit's \$6.3 billion 2002 appropriation, it would reduce transit's share of the total from the traditional 20% to 16.7%, despite the large number of transit applications pending.

New York Representatives on the T&I Highway and Transit Subcommittee include Sherwood Boehlert (R., Utica), Jack Quinn, (R., Buffalo), Sue Kelly, (R., Katonah) and Jerrold Nadler, (D., New York). ESPA members should urge their representatives to allow states to use these funds for intercity rail passenger service when rail best meets their needs.

In the Senate James Inhofe, (R., Okla.), described by the National Association of Railroad Passengers as a fervent highway supporter, will chair the Environment and Public Works Committee, which will draft the Senate bill. Inhofe did not co-sponsor S-1991, the Hollings Amtrak Bill or sign the letter urging adequate funding for Amtrak last summer.

NY Senator Hilary Clinton, an Amtrak supporter, currently serves on the Environment and Public Works Committee.

Frank Barry (from NARP Website Hotlines, Nov. 8, 15)

Amtrak Delays Turboliner

As of press time, negotiations between Amtrak, NYSDOT and Supersteel were continuing regarding the start of revenue service using the first of the refurbished Turboliners. Amtrak contends that operating manuals and spare parts for the trainsets have yet to be made available by Supersteel. In addition, training of Amtrak shop and operating crews still must be accomplished. Amtrak is also raising concerns over the capacity limiting, fixed consist of the trainsets and their comparatively higher fuel consumption. Finally Amtrak has requested certification from the federal Railroad Administration that the trains are safe to operate.

In a mid-December 2002 interview Transportation Commissioner Joseph Boardman told the Albany Times Union "We are going to send the Turbos down there (to Amtrak) so fast they're going to have to run them just to get them out of the yard." While Boardman's remarks may have been somewhat tongue in cheek, they reinforce New York State's commitment to complete the \$98 million Turbo rehabilitation project. And as a sign that Boardman's comments may not have been too far off base, set two was recently delivered by Supersteel to Amtrak.

ESPA is very concerned that Amtrak appears to be linking acceptance of the Turboliners to its desire for new state operating subsidies for Empire trains. With new corridor equipment badly needed, ESPA will continue to push all parties to resolve their differences and allow the Turboliners to enter service as soon as possible.

Bruce Becker

Rail Tax Reform Bill on Pataki's Desk

The vital legislation providing for rail property tax reform, passed by the state Senate and Assembly six months ago, is now awaiting action by Governor Pataki. The bill, S7602, was sent to the Governor's office for consideration on December 31, 2002, the last day possible under state law. The Governor normally has ten business days to sign or veto bills he receives and if he takes no action a bill is automatically enacted. But, due to procedural issues connected with the start of a new legislative session, the Governor will now have 30 days to consider the rail property tax reform legislation and he must actively sign the bill for it to become law. If he fails to act, the bill will die and will then have to be reintroduced in the Senate and Assembly during the 2003 session. ESPA is aggressively lobbying the Governor to sign the bill, reminding him that many of his statewide passenger rail improvement projects will stall if the legislation is not enacted.

Bruce Becker

Paul Reistrup Retires from CSX

Paul Reistrup, CSX's Vice-President of Passenger Integration retired on December 31, 2002. Reistrup, Amtrak's second president, was hired by CSX in 1997 to help integrate passenger operations connected with the acquisition of Conrail. Reistrup was a strong supporter of passenger service across the CSX system and actively worked to improve Amtrak service in New York State. Reistrup had a vast historical knowledge of passenger operations in the state and his perspectives will be missed. CSX has named John M. Gibson as its new vice-president, passenger and operations planning and Jay S. Westbrook as assistant vice-president, passenger and operations planning.

Bruce Becker

ACTION ALERT

Ask President Bush and your Congressional representative for:

- State flexibility to use TEA-21 funds for rail.
- \$1.2 billion for Amtrak.

Amtrak News

Bid on eBay for Amtrak Travel As part of a three-month trial Amtrak will make a limited number of tickets on a variety of routes available for bidding (www.ebay.com). Tickets are available for adult coach class, one-way and round trip travel. An Amtrak customer service representative will contact the winner three days after the close of the auction to finalize the travel itinerary and arrange payment.

“Buy Two Get One Free” offer on Acela Express Amtrak Guest Rewards members will earn a free trip on any *Acela Express* destination when they take two qualifying roundtrips (or four one-way tickets) between the cities of Boston, New York, and Washington. Amtrak will provide members with a free, same-class travel certificate, which may be redeemed April 22 - August 28, 2003. The free travel certificates may be redeemed or transferred to friends or family, and there is no limit on the number of certificates travelers may earn.

Groups traveling together enjoy even greater savings Amtrak has increased its base group discount from five to 20 percent. The new base group discount is available to groups of 20 or more who are traveling together.

ESPA's Fun “One-Day Trip” Flyers

ESPA has produced and distributed over 21,000 of its popular One-Day Trip Flyers to cities such as Utica, Syracuse, Rochester and Buffalo. The flyers list the many attractions that are easily available within a short walk or bus ride from the station. The flyers also include a map and Amtrak schedule. For a copy of the four flyers, contact Bob Lenz 10531 Main St. Clarence, NY 14031 or e-mail: rwlenz@aol.com

There are many additional events listed at the web sites below!

Buffalo	www.buffalocvb.org	
	Harlem Globetrotters	Feb. 5
	Olmsted Winterfest	Feb. 14-17
	Jesus Christ Superstar	Feb. 11-16
	Phantom of the Opera	Mar. 26- Apr. 19
Rochester	www.visitrochester.com	
	Ike Turner & The Kings	Jan. 23
	Elegant Oboe - Eastman Theater	Jan. 24, 26
	Teddy Bear Festival	Feb. 9-10
	Lawrence Welk Show	Mar. 8
Syracuse	www.visitSyracuse.org	
	Disney on Ice	Jan. 15-19
	Winter Fest	Feb. 14-22
	Music by Famous Artists	Feb. 18-20
	2003 Home/Garden Show	Mar. 13-16
	Hello Dolly	Mar. 28-30
	Carousel Center - three blocks from station	
Utica	www.oneidacountyvb.com	
	Harlem Globetrotters	Feb. 6
	Madame Butterfly	Feb. 8
	F.X. Matt Brewing Co. Tours	Daily
	Children's Museum	Daily x Mon
Albany	www.Albany.org	
	Great Northeast Home Show	Jan 31-Feb 2
	The Zucchini Brothers	Feb. 8
	Smucker's Stars on Ice	Feb. 23
	Mid-Winter N.E. Art & Craft Show	Feb.25-27

Amtrak Empire Service Problems

ESPA is gravely concerned about Amtrak's ability to serve intercity passengers on the Empire Corridor, after receiving recent trip reports and after ESPA officers themselves have witnessed acts of service that dismay. Here are some examples: Delay a Niagara Falls bound train by an hour to rescue a Rensselaer bound train just 25 minutes from Rensselaer; Engine failure occurring on both the Sunday after Thanksgiving and the day after Christmas (both peak travel days), with one resulting in 4 hours without lights nor heat; 2 crew members standing by a door and not lifting a finger to help passengers with their luggage up the steps onto the train; opening just one door at Croton-Harmon (high level platform) for 40 passengers to board a train; opening just 1 door on many trains at the high level platform at Syracuse; trains losing all power and heat 5-10 times during their trip; train an hour late sits at Rhinecliff for 4 minutes while the conductor has a smoke; lack of seat checks on most Albany to/from NYC trains; passengers missing their stops because no train announcement is made or announcement can not be heard in some coaches; and coach seating in a state of disrepair with torn seats, non-functioning lighting; and bathrooms not working or out of water. Intercity rail service in New York State cannot survive such service difficulties and these are just from the peak travel days of Thanksgiving and Christmas. *Gary Prophet*

Amtrak Rebuilding Cars

Amtrak intends to repair 26 wreck-damaged cars by September, according to a November 13 memo from President David Gunn to employees. This will include 16 Superliner cars—enough for two trainsets, plus 10 single level cars. The Superliners will be rebuilt at the Indianapolis Beech Grove shops, the single level cars at Bear, Delaware. Nearly 100 laid off employees have been recalled.

Gunn is negotiating with the unions for more efficient workrules agreements and has promised to recall more workers if that can be accomplished.

North Pole Limited

On Sunday, December 8, 2002, eastbound Amtrak #288 became the North Pole Limited on its 29-mile journey between Niagara Falls NY and Depew. The Buffalo-based Western New York Railway Historical Society used two chartered busses to transport 87 passengers, both children and adults from the Depew Amtrak station to the Niagara Falls Amtrak station. On the return trip by rail Santa and Mrs. Claus met and talked to everyone personally. Their two elves assisted in handing out candy canes to all, along with Operation Lifesaver Activity Books and Amtrak engineer hats to the children. Adults received the latest edition of both the Amtrak National Timetable and Travel Planner. Because of Santa's busy schedule, he and his entourage detrained at the Exchange Street Station in Downtown Buffalo for the quick return back to the North Pole. *Greg Jandura*

Remember - Write a Letter to the Editor.

Letters to the editor are probably the most effective free advertising we can get. Studies show that they are widely read by the public. Write your local community papers in addition to the major papers. Guidelines for Letters to the Editor: To get published, keep it short. Include your phone number and address. If you do not get published the first time keep trying.

Justin Ordon, 22 years old, of Wilton N.Y., was killed Christmas Day at about 4pm after he was hit by a train while riding a snowmobile.

Dear Empire State Passengers Assoc.

The tragedy that occurred on Christmas afternoon happened for a reason. I am not sure what that reason is, nobody is. Everyday we all do things without even thinking of what the consequences of the actions we take may bring. Sometimes, we don't even know what we are doing is wrong or dangerous. Justin Ordon made a fatal mistake on Christmas, he rode a friend's snowmobile down a small portion of the railroad tracks.

He knew the trails, and he loved to ride. At 3pm, Justin left to get gas for a friend, because his friend was cold from riding. His friend wanted him to come inside and warm up, but he would be right back. Justin was the type of person who would do anything for anybody. At that point the storm we were being hit with had eased up, and Stewart's store is only a short ride from here, so he left. In the next hour we received almost six inches of snow. We don't know whether he got lost, confused, or if he even knew he was on the tracks. There were whiteout conditions within only a few minutes. He never made it to Stewart's for gas. At around 4pm, the train accident happened, and the person I have loved for three years was taken from me.

Many are quick to judge and call Justin stupid for riding the tracks, and say immediately that he was trespassing. The more important thing to realize in all of this is that this was an accident, and it happened to teach a lesson to others. I don't put blame onto anyone for what happened that night. I know that everything possible was done to stop that train. My heart goes out to the crew and passengers aboard that train, because never could they have expected this to happen. Nobody expected this to happen. There are many things to be learned from what happened to Justin that afternoon: The weather is unpredictable and so is fate.

I know that all things happen for a reason, and only God knows why this happened to Justin. I just hope that some good comes from what happened. I hope others think before they judge, think before they ride near railroad tracks, and think before they act. A memorial fund has been set up in his name in care of the Adirondack Trust Bank. Also, there are no intentions of any lawsuit against Amtrak, as they did what they could do to stop the train.

Kimberly Barter (girlfriend of Justin)

New Cars Coming for Port Jervis Service

Metro-North has agreed to purchase 65 Comet V coaches from Alstom along with 200 that New Jersey Transit has ordered as part of the same contract. After the new cars are delivered Metro-North's West of Hudson fleet will consist entirely of the 65 brand new coaches plus 2 overhauled Comet III coaches.

Most of the 67 coaches will be used on the Port Jervis Line, but some could end up on the Pascack Valley Line. At the December 11th Metro-North Committee meeting, President Peter Cannito mentioned starting express service on the Pascack Valley next year, after completion of the Bergen Tunnel North Tube rehabilitation. Also, the Metro-North 2003 Operating Budget provides funding for "New Service West of Hudson," that is supposed to include starting Pascack Valley Line express service from Spring Valley to Hoboken. The cars will be built at Alstom's plant in Hornell, N.Y.

Orrin Getz, ESPA Coordinator Rockland County 4

MTA Ponders Fare Hikes

Travelers who use the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's transit and commuter rail lines could be paying fares up to one-third higher in 2003. In addition, motorists using MTA's bridges and tunnels could be paying up to 50 cents more per crossing.

The agency says it needs fare and toll hikes because it is facing a \$1 billion shortfall in its budget for 2003 and 2004. Part of the problem may be due to the MTA's marketing successes. Free transfers and widespread use of MetroCard discounts have brought the average subway fare paid to \$1.04 instead of the \$1.50 price of a single token. In addition, motorists get a 50 cents break when they pay tolls with the E-Z Pass, an electronic system that deducts toll fees from a prepaid account.

MTA's board has authorized holding hearings on fare increases early next year. This is the first step in the fare hike process: Three different fare hike scenarios have been posted on the MTA website.

Option A calls for increasing the basic bus and subway fare to \$1.75 from \$1.50, with average bus and subway fares (accounting for MetroCard discounts and transfers) rising to \$1.14, plus a 10 percent fare hike for the Long Island and Metro North railroads, a 25 cent security surcharge on bridge and tunnel tolls and significant service cuts, including closing ticket agencies and reducing cleaning.

Option B would see base subway and bus fares rise to \$2 (\$1.24 average), plus a 20% rail fare hike and a 50 cent toll surcharge, but no service reductions.

Option C also calls for a \$2 bus and subway fare with proportional increases for rail fare (33.3%) and the 50-cent toll hike.

Both options A and B call for increased government aid, while option C does not. So far, the Pataki administration, which is facing budget shortfalls of its own, has not indicated that additional state aid would be forthcoming.

Ben Gottfried

Lake Shore Limited Problems

ESPA has received many letters and emails from members expressing their dissatisfaction with the westbound schedule of the *Lake Shore Limited*. In the last newsletter, we pointed out the one benefit to passengers (Western New York to Chicago overnight) of the October 2002 revised schedule, but ESPA does not endorse the new schedule. ESPA is pushing to have the *Lake Shore* (Train 49) return to a New York departure between 4:30pm and 5pm. The current 7am scheduled arrival in Chicago is ridiculous and, in fact, the train actually is most likely to arrive after 8:30am. Not surprisingly, Amtrak is finding that Train 49 is now having difficulty in selling the high priced *Viewliner* sleeper compartments, as passengers do not wish to be forced out of expensive sleeping accommodations at 7am. Nor do passengers wish to depart NY mid-day on what should be just an overnight to Chicago. Passengers connecting to western trains now must endure about a 7-8 hour layover in Chicago.

On Train 49, breakfast is served from 4-5am Chicago (Central) time. If the train is running late, Amtrak stops serving breakfast 2 hours before the anticipated Chicago arrival. In yet another degrading of service, the New York section of the *Lake Shore* no longer has a lounge car. The Boston *Lake Shore* should depart Boston at 5:50pm and operate precisely 4 hours behind Train 49 from Albany to Chicago, which would also provide much needed service from Ohio stations west to Chicago.

Gary Prophet

Long Island R.R. 2002 - A Year in Review

As the year draws to a close, a review of LIRR projects and improvements in 2002 is in order. Most of these projects are on-going, behind-the-scenes initiatives that may or may not be noticed by the average passenger. However, these projects are helping to rebuild the railroad literally from the ground up. Additionally, they are helping the railroad provide improved safety, comfort and reliability to its passengers. A summary follows:

1. Track Improvements - This past summer, the LIRR replaced 25 miles of continuous welded rail and installed 33,500 steel-reinforced concrete ties between Jamaica and Valley Stream via St. Albans, Queens on the Babylon and West Hempstead branches. Additional track and tie replacement work was also done on the Montauk Branch between Patchogue and Speonk, and on the Ronkonkoma Branch between Ronkonkoma and Greenport. This track work follows previous summers where the Main Line out to Ronkonkoma and the Port Washington branch have both seen new rail and concrete ties. During the past 5 years, the LIRR has laid down more than 155,000 concrete ties, clearly demonstrating its commitment to long-term passenger rail.

2. Tunnel Improvement - The Atlantic Avenue tunnel received new lights, improving visibility (and safety) in the tunnel between East New York and Jamaica. This work followed an earlier track/switch replacement project that resulted in improved running time of up to 4 minutes between Flatbush Avenue and Jamaica.

3. Station Improvements - Jamaica Station reconstruction continues, with total completion expected sometime in 2005. This year saw the installation of temporary staircases from Sutphin Boulevard to platform level; the replacement of old wooden overhead canopies with modern waterproof ones; the start of construction on the new, overhead mezzanine addition,

and work on new elevator systems. One very convenient feature planned for passengers is a direct, high-occupancy elevator (currently being worked on) that will allow direct access from the underground E/Z subway lines to street (Jamaica station) level and also up to the new mezzanine level, where connections can be made to LIRR trains and the new Port Authority Air Train to JFK Airport when it opens. This means passengers loaded down with luggage will not have to use escalators and/or stairs to climb the equivalent of two stories. This is also a valuable aid to disabled and elderly passengers.

The LIRR Flatbush Avenue station project is also well underway. While construction continued throughout 2002, the following temporary improvements were made: 1) A temporary, climate controlled waiting room, renovated restrooms, improved station lighting; full-service concession stand, and a dedicated line to purchase tickets alleviating congestion at a main entrance.

Finally the St. Albans and Rosedale stations were rehabilitated this year.

4. New Equipment - The end of 2002 saw the introduction of the first of 678 new M-7 electric cars from Alstom in Hornell.

5. Better Planning - When recently faced with a potential NYC Transit strike in December, the LIRR had a contingency plan that was well-advertised. Trains from Nassau and Suffolk Counties were to run express to their western terminals and the railroad would have instituted dedicated train shuttles to all stations within NYC limits to Manhattan and downtown Brooklyn.. As can be seen, work continues on an incremental basis, a position long advocated by ESPA as a means of obtaining passenger service improvements.

(Information gathered from various LIRR publications and the LIRR website). *Chris Nadelbach, Long Island Coordinator*
Members interested in Long Island rail service may contact Chris at CN1LN1@aol.com or 718-544-7185

23rd ESPA Annual Meeting

Empire State Passenger Association & National Association of Railroad Passengers- Region. II

Saturday, March 1, 2003 • 11:00am - 4:00pm

The Mohawk Club, 1 North Church Street (Corner of Union Street) Schenectady, NY

In the Historic Stockade Area of Downtown Schenectady, Three Blocks from the Amtrak Station, Free Parking

A Hot Lunch Buffet Will Be Served at 12:00noon

Invited Speakers:

Senator Charles Schumer, Congressman John Sweeney, Amtrak President David Gunn, NYS Transportation Commissioner Joseph Boardman, Anthony Pearl, Author of 'New Departures-Rethinking Rail Passenger Policy'

Please return this form with check for \$25.00 per person by February 21, 2003 (*Sorry, No cancellations after this date*)

Make checks payable to "ESPA" & mail to: Bruce B. Becker 49 Algonquin Road Clifton Park, NY 12065

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone No: _____ E-Mail: _____

_____ I will be arriving in Schenectady on Train # 284 _____ or Train #65 _____

(Transportation and Walking Maps will be provided)

Lackawanna Mainline Restoration Project

This ambitious project being undertaken by Pennsylvania and New Jersey continues to make headlines and progress. The official title is *The NJ-PA Lackawanna Cut-off Railroad Restoration Project* so named because its centerpiece *Cut-off* segment lacks rails! The project sponsors are seeking funding through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and estimate the total cost to be about \$200 million.

The entire route between Hoboken, N.J. and Scranton, Pa. is a distance of 133 route miles, all in public ownership. Compared to other similar regional corridors such as New York City to Albany, NY- 141 miles, and Boston to Portland, Me. -116 miles, this one is exceptional in that a Transit agency is undertaking the project without involvement of Amtrak. It is also unlike any mere extension of a commuter line, which usually involves adding a new station stop at the end of an existing route. This will extend New Jersey Transit's reach by 88 mainline miles and add the legendary New Jersey Cut-Off and Lackawanna Mainline to New Jersey Transit's impressive collection of railroad properties.

As Grantee of the FTA funding, NJT is leading the effort to engineer and define the project. According to NJT spokesman Ken Miller the first step in the process will begin in January and will take up to 18 months. This will define the operating plan, the stations to be served and equipment to be ordered (the \$200 mil. price tag includes 5 trainsets). Mr. Miller says that NJT and its staff are optimistic that the funding will be forthcoming and that the service will be successful in serving New Jersey and Pennsylvania with an important new transportation link.

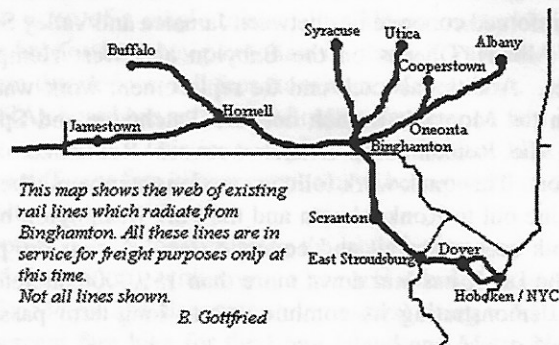
In Pennsylvania, the lead agency is The Lackawanna County Rail Authority (LCRA), chaired by Mr. Larry Malski. A \$40 million match grant was recently appropriated through Pennsylvania's State Transportation Capital Budget. The 56-mile route segment in Pa. is currently in service and in excellent shape, according to Mr. Malski. Indeed, the first 33 miles out of Scranton are good to 60 mph with the remaining track at class II (30 mph passenger) standards. An expanding freight service is run by designated operator Delaware- Lackawanna Railway along this route. Mr. Malski estimates that passenger trains will cover the 133-mile Scranton to Hoboken route in just under 3 hours. This would be the fastest time ever by rail.

New York interest in the project begins at Binghamton where a web of existing freight routes converge. Southward to Scranton the ex. Lackawanna Main is owned by Canadian Pacific, since this segment was purchased by the Delaware and Hudson in the 1970's. According to Steve Fisk, senior manager of business development, the Canadian Pacific is prepared and willing to serve a passenger need if asked. Mr. Fisk views passenger trains as new business, which would be required in some way to add to the bottom line of the Canadian Pacific. This route segment is currently operated as a 40 mph single-track route with passing sidings (two, with one added just last year).

Northward from Binghamton the lines to Syracuse and Utica are the focus of a joint effort by NYSDOT and the New York Susquehanna and Western to upgrade trackage in preparation for the 2003 startup of a passenger demonstration project between Binghamton and Syracuse. NYS&W Vice President Nathan Fenno tells ESPA that the track rehabilitation project is ongoing with additional engineering work being done during the winter months in preparation for springtime trackwork. Mr. Fenno estimates a Syracuse to Binghamton running time of about 2 hours for the demonstration project.

In spite of so many groups focusing their efforts on these rail lines, New York has yet to become involved in the planning for the targeted 2006 start date of the Scranton to Hoboken section of the line. ESPA believes the entire system will one day serve the interests of New York passengers and is encouraged by the grassroots efforts thus far. In discussions with rail officials in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, many ask why is New York not a part of the process, what is the delay? The 2006 start date gives New York the chance to develop and plan for participation in this new Lackawanna Railroad System.

Ben Gottfried



Excerpts from the AASHTO Report

AASHTO has issued a new report addressing the public benefits and investment needs of intercity rail passenger transportation. (see page 8)

Excerpts:

- 80% of trips over 100 miles in length are under 500 miles long.
- Rail corridor ridership has grown by 26% in last five years, as a result of added service.
- Long distance train ridership has declined by 3% in the last 5 years due to route eliminations and reduced capacity.
- Amtrak and California's feeder bus system was used by 683,000 people in 2001, generating \$10.7 million in revenues after deducting for the cost of the buses.
- Feeder buses can cover their operating costs with as few as 7 passengers.
- Amtrak contracts for more buses in California than all its trains on the Northeast Corridor, Empire Corridor and Keystone Corridors combined.
- To attract passengers, feeder buses must be dedicated with through ticketing and guaranteed connections.
- Rail service alone does not necessarily promote economic development, but it can have a profound effect when integrated into a sound local development strategy.
- Approximately \$59 billion will be needed during the next 20 years to upgrade existing corridors and develop new ones now being planned.
- Approximately \$1.1 billion will be needed to replace and rebuild equipment for long distance trains for existing and new routes.
- Past state expenditures and future commitments to corridor improvements now exceeds \$4 billion.
- For states to continue development and financing of rail passenger corridors, the federal government must provide secure, predictable, reliable funding with a standard match criteria as it does for other modes. It must also provide passenger franchise rights over freight rail lines, and protection from any divestiture of Amtrak, including the right of states to acquire essential Amtrak assets free of liens.

Frank Barry

Adirondack Scenic Railroad to expand?

After a good 2002 season that began with the grand opening at Utica Union Station, the Adirondack Scenic Railroad announced that it would soon begin working to restore service to Big Moose. Funding is being sought through the "\$50 Buy-A-Tie" program, and a new "Patron" class of donor at \$250. Donors electing to make a contribution to this new class of gift will be invited on the Big Moose Inaugural Train. The train will depart Utica Union Station in style, serving complimentary food and beverage to donors.

In June the Adirondack Scenic RR will be hosting a special event called 'A Day Out with Thomas'. Thomas the Tank Engine will visit Utica and as many as 20,000 passengers are expected during his six-day visit over the last two weekends in June.

2,046 miles of New Rail Lines for Europe

Over the next eight years, European governments are set to install 2,046 miles (3,300 kilometers) of new high-speed track, more than doubling the current network. At the same time, Europe's railways are introducing a new generation of trains that reach top speeds of 217 miles per hour, up from about 186 mph now. One such superfast train began service earlier this year in Germany between Frankfurt and Cologne. Another will hit the rails in the next few months in Spain between Madrid and Barcelona. "In more and more places, the train is now faster than taking a plane," says Johannes Ludewig, executive director of the Brussels-based Community of European Railways.

Business Week Online

Election results (Cont'd from page 1)

Senator McCain. Last July he told then subcommittee chair Senator Patty Murray (D, Wash.) that her \$1.2 million Amtrak appropriation "goes too far in throwing money at Amtrak." (Washington Post, 7/24).

On December 16th Amtrak President David Gunn wrote House Appropriations Chairman C.W. Young (R, Fla.) to say the \$762 million House figure "would guarantee insolvency by spring and the shutting down of the railroad at that time... (In fact) anything substantially less than the Senate number would bring about insolvency." Gunn's letter further stated that discontinuing routes offers no savings, "given the extensive termination notification requirements and labor protection payment that would have to be made."

Even the House \$762 million would be better than the Bush administration's proposed \$521 million. Unfortunately early in December Bush representatives rejected requests for more money from Senator Ted Stevens (R., Alaska) and Congressman Bill Young, who will chair the Appropriations Committees in their respective chambers. Control of all three sources of power by the same party will make it difficult for any Congressional chairman to go against the President—something that was not a problem when the Democrats controlled the Senate last summer. The new Senate leader, Bill Frist neither co-sponsored the Hollings Bill to reauthorize Amtrak nor signed the critical letter to appropriators urging the \$1.2 billion necessary for Amtrak.

But there are signs of hope. Don Phillips, writing in the February TRAINS magazine, says he expects Congress to do the same thing it does every year—give Amtrak just barely enough to survive without addressing fundamental problems. Although most Democrats support Amtrak funding and most of the oppo-

sition come from Republicans, there are some very strong Republican supporters as well. One of the most fervent is Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson of Texas. Her support is critical because her state is served only by long distance trains and because it will be difficult for President Bush to ignore a Senator from home. And she serves on both key subcommittees that will determine Amtrak's future and its funding. Last fall she campaigned for John Cornyn, who was elected to replace retiring Senator Phil Gramm, another outspoken Amtrak detractor. At a campaign stop last fall, both Hutchinson and Cornyn pledged to help Amtrak.

Secondly David Gunn has gained credibility with Congress, winning praise even from Senator McCain. To do so he has repudiated his predecessor's and promised an open and forthright approach to Congress—a promise he has so far kept.

Finally, while it is easy for the opponents in Congress to rail against something they don't like, accepting the consequences of actually shutting it down is another matter. Clearly this motivated the Bush Administration to work to prevent an Amtrak shutdown last summer as the election approached.

If Phillips is right, and Congress gives Amtrak another year of bare bones existence perhaps the biggest question is whether any serious reforms will be exacted. Last June Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta stated five principles the Administration would require for continuing intercity rail service. First, all federal operating subsidies should be phased out. Secondly, Amtrak should be divorced from owning and maintaining the Northeast Corridor trackage—something ESPA Washington representative and former Amtrak lobbyist Tim Gillespie believes is essential if Amtrak is to survive. ESPA officers voted to support this position last summer. Mineta also wants to bring competition to intercity passenger service through franchising individual routes or services such as maintenance, reservations or food services. Finally, the Bush Administration wants to develop an effective partnership with the states under which the states would take the initiative in planning and development. This is a bit ironic since many states, including New York have already begun planning and are calling loudly for the federal government to join them as it has for highway, transit and airport improvements.

If Amtrak's service survives this year unscathed, it may be able to survive anything. But as in the past, it will be critical for citizens to voice their support for rail service, given the inability of Amtrak to match the large campaign contributions from corporations that build and use highways and airports. Last Fall two New York Congressmen on the Appropriations Committee—James Walsh (R., Syr) and John Sweeney (R., Saratoga)—voted against an amendment to raise the Amtrak appropriation to the necessary \$1.2 billion. In order to vote against their powerful party leaders in Washington they will need to hear a very strong, clear voice from the people back home.

Frank Barry

ACTION ALERT

Ask President Bush and your Congressional representative for:

- State flexibility to use TEA-21 funds for rail.
- \$1.2 billion for Amtrak.



* Be aware that trains cannot stop quickly. Even if the locomotive engineer sees you, a freight train moving at 55 miles per hour can take a mile or more to stop once emergency brakes are applied.
* Always expect a train! Freight trains do not follow set schedules.

New York State Speaks Out (Cont'd from page 1)

The letter also chastised Amtrak for not carrying out its share of improvements to the Empire Corridor, including double tracking between Albany and Schenectady and ordering turbines and transmissions for the remaining turboliners.

The letter accuses Amtrak of "failing to honor its past partnerships and commitments" and "unilaterally changing historical and contractual relationships. New York is not interested in negotiating on these terms," Boardman wrote. "For good faith negotiations to take place, Amtrak must recognize and discuss (New York's) needs as the context for any consideration by New York of Amtrak's new ideas."

Amtrak's Public Affairs Manager Cliff Black told ESPA that negotiations with New York will be "long and sometimes difficult. They are extremely complicated, involving the turboliners, double-tracking, frequency and operating costs."

Boardman told New York Times reporter Richard Perez Peña (Times, 11/27) that much of his grievance was really with the federal government: "We need the federal government — the administration, the Senate and the House — to sit in the room...when we sit down with Amtrak, to be involved in fixing the intercity rail problem in this country. Congress and the White House bailed out airlines last year and they should do the same for Amtrak," Boardman said.

According to NYSDOT officials, the State is concerned about how to protect service for the 400,000 daily New York City commuters as well as service to Albany, Niagara Falls and Montreal, in the event of an Amtrak shutdown. "We need to be able to get access to their assets, including Penn Station," one staffer said.

Boardman's frustration is understandable since he chairs the Standing Committee on Railroad Transportation of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). In this capacity he ordered the production of separate reports on rail freight and passenger service in the U.S. to be used as background for new legislation for highways, transit and rail, including Amtrak. In his preface to the report on Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation, Boardman notes that "judging passenger rail strictly on its financial performance or its success in minimizing financial demands to the federal government is a test no other mode of transportation is asked to meet, nor can meet." (See Excerpts, page 6)

The preface also indicates that a priority item on the AASHTO 2002 action agenda is "legislation ensuring that the nation's travelers will have efficient and dependable intercity passenger rail service." This is significant because AASHTO has been influential in

passing highway legislation. Boardman is a leader in the push to broaden AASHTO lobbying beyond highways to include rail.

Boardman's personal efforts at the federal level make the struggle with Amtrak all the more ironic. A Gannett December 27th article says Gunn's efforts to get states to pay for their trains results from conditions imposed by the Bush Administration in return for a federal loan last summer. A knowledgeable Amtrak official said the Appropriations Committees forced Gunn to do this although this issue was initially stirred up by the Amtrak Reform Council. Otherwise "This would not have been one of Mr. Gunn's first issues." According to Black, Gunn and Boardman have agreed to "bury the hatchet, but "negotiations could still go on for years."

Asked whether New York might lose trains, Black said "There is some peril there." However Amtrak officials have assured ESPA that no trains will come off with the January 27th schedule change.

Frank Barry

Regional Rail Working Group, sponsored by ESPA/Committee for Better Transit/NJ Association of Rail Passengers, meets the third Wednesday of each month, 6 - 8 PM.

Location: Conference room, NYPD Downtown Center, 104 Washington St. (just north of Rector St) Lower Manhattan.

For information call George Haikalis, Manhattan Coordinator 212-475-3394 or e-mail at geohaikalis@juno.com

ESPA/NARP Member? If you are a member of both ESPA and NARP you can save \$5 when renewing your ESPA membership.

(Renew for \$15 instead of the regular \$20).

ESPA MEMBERSHIP

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. 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.

- Introductory membership (\$10.00 for one year)
- Renewal membership (\$20.00 per year)
- Renewal - Student or Senior Citizen (\$12.50 per year)
- Family membership (\$25.00)
- Sustaining membership (\$50.00)
- Patron membership (\$75.00)
- Corporate membership (\$100.00)
- Lifetime membership (\$300.00)

Individuals that join or renew at the sustaining membership or higher will receive the new ESPA lapel pin as a gift.

Please make checks and money orders payable to ESPA, c/o John Ross, 4 Maplewood Court, Greenwich, NY 12834.

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel: 1-716-759-2315, Fax: 716-759-2791. e-mail: RWLenz@aol.com. Deadline for material for the March/April issue is Feb. 28, 2003. Material may be reproduced if credit given to ESPA and to the writer.

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
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #2
CLARENCE, NY

Forward & Address Correction Requested