

# The ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

<http://www.esparail.org>



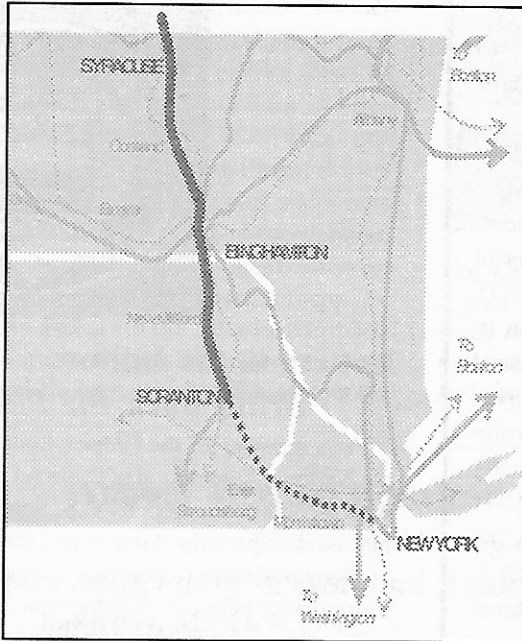
## WORKING FOR A MORE BALANCED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Vol. 32, No. 1

January/February 2008

### Schumer Calls For DOT-Amtrak Study For I-81 Rail Corridor

On November 28, 2007 Senator Charles Schumer released a press statement calling "... on NYSDOT and Amtrak to Conduct Feasibility Study for Passenger Rail Service along the Interstate 81 Rail Corridor". Specifically the Senator notes the need for a "speedy" connection for Binghamton and the southern tier of New York with New York City. The Senator and his staff have been involved with the Bi-Sate I-81 rail corridor concept since the effort to advance intercity rail service beyond Scranton began.



Amtrak and NYSDOT would have to partner in moving forward with a rail passenger study of the I-81 rail corridor route between Binghamton and Scranton. Amtrak has and is working to deliver similar passenger analysis studies for numerous rail corridor proposals around the country. This study is the only new corridor start focused on the New York City market.

*(Continued on page 3)*

### State – Amtrak Lawsuit Resolved!

After four long years, the State initiated lawsuit against Aak over the ill-fated Turboliner rebuilding project has finally been resolved. In a jointly released press statement on December 12, 2007, NYSDOT Commissioner Astrid Glynn and Amtrak President Alex Kummant announced the settlement, which calls for Amtrak to pay the State \$20 million dollars and both the State and Amtrak to invest another \$10 million in infrastructure improvements.

As previously reported, the first improvement to be accomplished will be work at the rock cut under the George Washington Bridge in 2008, which will allow speeds to be increased through the area from the current 15mph to 60mph. Other already announced projects include the building of the fourth platform track at Rensselaer and a new platform at Hudson.

In the press statement, Governor Spitzer noted "A reliable, efficient passenger rail system is critical to tourism and robust economic development across New York State. This agreement...enables the State and Amtrak to move forward cooperatively to improve passenger rail service..." Amtrak President Kummant stated "This settlement now allows both Amtrak and the State of New York to concentrate on the improvements to rail service that I know our Board and Governor Spitzer desire to achieve in New York." *(Cont'd on page 7)*

### State Drafting New Rail Plan

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) kicked-off work on a comprehensive "State Rail Plan and Policy" at a December 11<sup>th</sup> Albany meeting. The plan will replace the "current" 1986 plan by addressing current and pending issues facing freight, intercity passenger and commuter rail service providers and uses.

Hosted by DOT Deputy Commissioner Karen Rae, the meeting began a process designed to produce a new rail plan scheduled for July 2008 release. Allison de Cereno of the Wagner-Rudin Transportation Center acted as meeting facilitator for the assembled freight and passenger stakeholders.

Represented were: Railroads of New York (RONY), the statewide railroad association; Class 1 railroads Canadian Pacific and Norfolk Southern; and Shortlines Genesee Valley Transportation and the New York & Atlantic Railway. Passenger interests were represented by the Empire State Passenger Association, Amtrak, Metro-North and the Long Island Rail Road.

The final plan aims to establish a New York State government policy of actively supporting development, maintenance and enhancement of a statewide rail transportation system. In addition, the plan will conform to the planning requirements of the pending federal Amtrak Reauthorization legislation.

The working schedule for the new rail plan calls for completion of a draft public version by April 4<sup>th</sup>. A thirty day public review period will run from April 5<sup>th</sup> thru May 4<sup>th</sup> with public meetings held in the Capital District, western New York and New York City. Following further review, the final state plan and policy will be issued by July 25<sup>th</sup>. *Anthony Rudmann*

### Senate Committee Approves Climate Bill

The U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved S-2191, the America's Climate Security Act, on December 5<sup>th</sup>. Submitted by Senators Joe Lieberman (I, Conn.) and John Warner (R, Va.), it sets up emission reduction incentives, including an auction of emission allowances with part of the proceeds available to states for various related uses. One permitted use would be to "improve public transportation and passenger rail service and otherwise reduce vehicle miles traveled."

Senator Hilary Clinton represents New York on this committee. *Frank Barry*

## The View from the Cab

### The best holiday present we could get....

As reported on the front page, the four- year-long lawsuit by New York State against Amtrak over the ill-fated Turboliner rebuilding program has finally been resolved.

While we must all be pleased that this roadblock to future progress has been removed, it is very ironic that the \$20 million settlement from Amtrak finally accepted by the State is the same amount originally offered by then Amtrak President David Gunn at the beginning of the whole mess. Other than having to endure four years of accusations, political-posturing and face-saving, the citizens of New York have gained nothing from this exercise in utter futility. In fact, we have been forced to watch our Empire Service continue to deteriorate, while both sides have hidden behind their lawyers.

With the lawsuit now behind us, it is time to look forward to a reliable and efficient rail system for the State which we have been advocating for many years.

**But there remains much hard work ahead for us!** By the time you read this, the Governor's FY 2008-09 Executive Budget proposal will have been released and if there is to be any near-term real progress to be made, it must contain meaningful state funding to advance the current initiatives of NYSDOT and the Senate High Speed Rail Taskforce, in addition to providing matching funds in order to leverage future federal dollars. While Governor Spitzer has publicly stated his support for passenger rail on numerous occasions, it is now up to him to provide the leadership to insure that money is actually available to make things happen!

I strongly encourage you to make plans to attend our 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Membership Meeting in Schenectady on March 8, 2008. This event also serves as the NARP Region Two Annual Meeting and for the first time in many years, there is a contested election for NARP Board seats representing New York State. If you are a New York State NARP member, you will be receiving a ballot and complete election information in the mail. I urge you to complete the ballot and either return it as instructed or attend the meeting and bring it with you.

David Johnson, Assistant Director of NARP will be joining us at the meeting along with prominent speakers from both the New York State Department of Transportation and Amtrak.

2008 looks to be an important year for our cause and your attendance at the meeting will be both informative and valuable. Full meeting details and registration information are enclosed. Please check our website, [www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org), for the latest information on the complete line-up of confirmed speakers for the meeting!

**I'll look forward to seeing many of you on March 8<sup>th</sup> in Schenectady. 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*

## Weekend Special Fares on Adirondack

Just in time for a relaxing winter trip to Montreal, Amtrak has announced a special \$75.00 round trip weekend fare for travel on the State-supported *Adirondack*. Valid for sale through March 24, 2008, the special fare will be available for travel from January 11 to March 31, on Fridays through Mondays only. Travel can be in either direction between Adirondack stops from New York to Schenectady and from Plattsburgh to Montreal. While most other discounts (AAA, etc.) are not combinable with this special fare, up to 2 children can travel with each adult at just \$38.00 round trip.

Reservations are required seven days in advance and there is no discount code required; the special fare will automatically be offered on qualifying trips. Other restrictions and black-out dates apply. Visit Amtrak's website or call them at 1-800-USA-RAIL for full details...



## Letters to the Editor:

### Bring Back the Passenger Trains

As a member of the Empire State Passengers Association and the National Association of Railroad Passengers, I was very pleased with the announcement by U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer on Nov. 28 that he is requesting Amtrak and the New York State Department of Transportation to conduct a feasibility study about passenger train service between Binghamton, Scranton, and New York City.

The Binghamton area desperately needs another transportation option. Currently, the only two ways to travel to New York City are by car or by bus. Increasing congestion and fuel prices will only make travel on the highways less desirable in the future. Since there is no direct air service between Binghamton and New York City, passenger trains can fill the need for a convenient third option for business and leisure travel.

Binghamton has been without intercity rail passenger service since 1970. It's time to bring back the trains to the historic Lackawanna station downtown. I urge area residents to contact their federal, state, and local elected officials and ask them to support the re-establishment of passenger trains to New York City. It's important to let them know that there is strong local interest and support for travel by rail. *Kenneth May - a Vestal resident.*

Dear Editor,

Years ago I worked for the DEC as an air pollution engineer. At that time I was told one letter to an Assembly man/woman or Senator was worth 100 telephone calls. I strongly urge you and others to encourage members to write about issues.

Thank you for your response—it is always comforting to think our efforts are not falling on deaf ears when we take time to write.

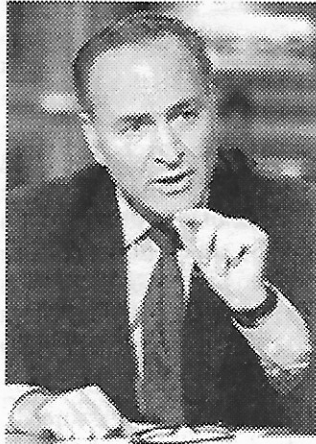
*Ray Dunbar*



**Senator Schumer Calls for Study** (Cont'd from page 1)

Regarding the wider impact of passenger rail service on the corridor, Senator Schumer notes *"The Binghamton - Scranton line would hook up to the Lackawanna Cutoff Project once it's completed for access to New York City, complementing this project by providing even more access for riders"*.

The route is envisioned to use New Jersey Transit's Hoboken terminal, giving rail passengers along the corridor a new way to get to the City. The New Jersey Transit network accesses the core of the metropolitan region with its fleet of trains, light rail lines, ferries and buses that serve Hoboken Terminal



With regard to funding the study the Senator notes *"Once the state requests this study, Amtrak can move forward with the project using existing funds already budgeted for this purpose"*.

Amtrak's impressive list of completed rail corridor studies seem to be accomplished within one year from the date of formal request for a study. This gives supporters time for planning and coordination

of interest groups along the corridor. The current transit vision for the Scranton to Hoboken passenger rail project can be complemented with an intercity aspect for the New Lackawanna Mainline its sponsors intend to create. Hopefully the Amtrak study will continue to bring in new stakeholders which will highlight the

enormous potential for the new route. New federal legislation giving money to new passenger rail corridors is co-sponsored by New Jersey Senator Frank Lautenberg. Sen. Lautenberg is a traditional supporter of passenger trains and their need to be user friendly with respect to on board services. Maybe Amtrak service, a *Phoebe Snow* perhaps, streaking through the mountains of New Jersey and Pennsylvania will be the place to put the theory to the test.

*Ben Gottfried*



*You Go Girl* –Miss Phoebe Snow, the Lackawanna Mainline legend and her train may be just the ticket. A new rail corridor study deal, a new intercity rail corridor for New York State at a new intercity terminal for New York City, puts all the punches in just the right places.

**Annual Meeting Registration Information**

*28<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the*

***Empire State Passengers Association & National Association of Railroad Passengers–Region II***

Saturday, March 8, 2008

12:00noon – 5:00pm

Holiday Inn Downtown • 100 Nott Terrace • Schenectady, NY (Four Blocks from the Amtrak Station - Free Parking)

A Complete Hot Lunch Buffet will be served at 12:30pm

**Confirmed Speakers:**

**David R. Johnson, Assistant Director - NARP**

**Prominent Representatives From Amtrak and The New York State Department of Transportation**

**Will Also Be Speaking . . .**

**Please complete and return this stub with a check for \$35.00 per person for the complete program (lunch, meeting and refreshment breaks) or \$15.00 if you will ONLY be attending the meeting, to be received no later than February 28, 2008.** (NO cancellations after this date). *Please Note:* Written confirmation of your meeting registration having being received is **NOT** provided unless specifically requested (ie. tickets are not mailed to you ). Meeting registration begins at 11:00am.

Make checks payable to 'ESPA' and mail to: Bruce B. Becker • 8175 Old Post Road East • East Amherst, NY 14051

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I will be arriving in Schenectady on: \_\_\_\_\_  Tr. # 282  Tr. #71

(Transportation and Walking Maps will be provided)

## Passenger Rail Working Group Reports

Passenger rail advocacy and the call for serious investment in the rail system has become one step louder with a new report to the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission. The Commission's Passenger Rail Working Group released a December 6, 2007 press statement on its Planning America's Passenger Rail Future initiative which is intended to assist with upcoming Congressional legislative actions in the works to actually start spending some serious money on railroads.

Congress mandated establishment of the Commission in the current highway and transit authorization (SAFETEA-LU, FY2004-2009). While the primary mandate was to generate alternatives for financing the national highway system, the legislation also requires it to address future needs of the entire surface transportation system including "intercity passenger bus and rail." However the Commission found less data for intercity passenger rail than for other modes. So its chairman, Frank Busalacchi, Secretary of Wisconsin DOT, set up the Passenger Rail Working Group to provide "recommendations on a national vision for intercity passenger rail through 2050, a cost estimate for that vision and a federal funding program" to accomplish it. "I formed the passenger Rail Working Group," he said, "to advise the commission in response to a wide range of public testimony calling for a strong national intercity passenger rail system". (One of the Group's members is Ross Capon, Executive Director of NARP).

The plan goes so far as to name the unthinkable, estimated costs! The group calls for \$357.2 billion through 2050 or about \$8 billion a year using the 80/20 Federal State cost sharing principal to grow the rail transportation network using projects which enhance passenger and in many cases freight operations too. The Group is moving forward with a respect for the freight railroad's need to grow their respective businesses along with a need for passenger rail focused investment.

The report has enjoyed widespread positive press throughout the country. There is no need going forward to explain that passenger rail makes sense, the newspaper articles focus on recommendations of the group as basic common sense for a country which is lagging behind in creating a passenger rail option for our economic agenda and our collective desire to start getting serious with respect to the new realities of our environment. Again Mr. Busalacchi points out "...We need to develop and expand our passenger rail system, not only to provide needed mobility for our nation's travelers, but also to help the nation's environmental efforts to reduce greenhouse gases." We couldn't agree more.

*Ben Gottfried*

## Presidential Emergency Board Sides With Labor in Amtrak Dispute

On November 28th President Bush ordered the establishment of a Presidential Emergency Board to investigate and report on the eight year impasse between Amtrak and nine of its unions. The Board's report, issued December 30th, supports unions in several key areas.

The two most difficult issues involved back pay increases and work rules. Amtrak has offered regular pay increases after an agreement is signed plus a \$4500 bonus to each employee, but unions want retroactive increases to compensate for lack of significant increases during the 8 years without an agreement. They want increases to match those of the freight railroads, which

averaged \$12,848 per employee.

Amtrak says it simply cannot match pay increases awarded by profitable freight railroads during this time since, as a publicly subsidized entity it has been under intense pressure to reduce its deficit. But unions say Amtrak's managerial staff have received generous increases and most commuter railroads, also publicly subsidized, pay significantly more than Amtrak. Unions feel it is unconscionable to deny workers reasonable wage increases for such a long time—since 1999 their pay has gone up by only \$1.71 per hour.

The Emergency Board called the eight year time lag "unprecedented" but struggled with Amtrak's claim that it could not provide back pay increases because Congress sets its budget and has not provided for this. In the end boardmembers drew on the conclusion of a previous Emergency Board on back pay: "Our obligation is to recommend a fair and equitable package of compensation...and then leave to the funding authorities the issue of whether they wish to fund that package."

*(Report to the President by Emergency Board 234 (1997)).*

However, recognizing that Congress has already passed its budget for 2008, the Board recommended that this amount be awarded in two steps—40% this year, 60% next year. It assumed Amtrak can budget some money this year, as evidenced by its \$4500 offer. The split payment gives time for Congress to provide the rest next year.

Amtrak says work rule changes are needed to meet Congressional mandates for efficiency. It says union craft distinctions require several people to perform jobs easily done by one. Craft distinctions are a holdover from the steam era when highly skilled artisans made and fitted parts. Today parts are ordered and installed much more easily. More flexible job assignments would allow faster equipment turnarounds, reducing delays to trains as well as costs, Amtrak says. Amtrak wants freedom to contract out, schedule and to assign work according to employee ability rather than craft membership.

But unions counter that employee productivity has risen sharply with increased ridership and revenue as well as slimming down of Amtrak's labor force. They also say they should not be required to give Amtrak concessions the freight railroads don't have.

The Board was unconvinced by Amtrak's arguments, saying its demands are too sweeping and Amtrak did not provide sufficient evidence to justify their need. Amtrak has not taken full advantage of the flexibilities available, the Board said. The Board stressed the need to follow precedent and agreed with the unions that Amtrak contracts should generally follow those negotiated with freight railroads. This has been an accepted principle since Amtrak was created, according to the Board. The need for any variations should be spelled out in detail, the Board said, with clear evidence that existing flexibility provisions had been tried unsuccessfully.

The Board further concluded that Amtrak bore "much greater responsibility" for the eight year delay than the unions.

The Railway Labor Act requires a 30 day negotiation period before either party can act unilaterally after an Emergency Board presents its findings, so no strike could occur before January 31st. But a strike now seems unlikely unless Amtrak flouts the Board's recommendations.

*Frank Barry*



## CSX Endures Fines, Hedge Fund Attack

CSX transportation has been in the news once again regarding safety violations and now some “hedge fund” hedging to influence the management of the railroad giant. Christopher Hohn, the managing partner of activist hedge fund firm The Children’s Investment Fund Management (TCI) fired off a letter to CSX on December 18, 2007 on behalf of TCI and 3G Capital Partners Ltd., alleging that the railroad is poorly managed and in need of changes in the boardroom: “*CSX’s incumbent board has overseen a railroad that for many years has lagged its peers on many of the key metrics of operational and financial performance,*” said Hohn. “*Rather than engage in a constructive dialogue with one of its largest shareholders, the CSX board has consistently ignored our substantive concerns and failed to hold management accountable for continuing operational underperformance. Our goal is a strong CSX that can provide the returns shareholders deserve, the service shipper’s demand, a safety record communities can count on and a working environment employees can be proud of.*” TCI and 3G Capital are strategic investment firms which represent a combined ownership interest of 11.8 percent of CSX’s outstanding shares.

In another salvo of unpleasant news on January 3, 2008 the FRA announced that CSX has agreed to pay \$350,000 in fines to FRA as a result of the 23 State inspections of its tracks last year. The investigation arose as a result of the spectacular derailment of March 12, 2007 near Oneida, NY on the Chicago Mainline. The inspections found 3,518 safety defects and of particular interest 199 serious violations. The fine of \$349,265 was a settlement for 141 of those violations in the serious category.

CSX has responded to the hedge funds insistence that the road is mismanaged pointing out that their share price has nearly tripled in the past three years. CSX like all American class one railroads is involved with large capital programs to grow capacity and improve operating performance. With respect to the FRA findings, CSX had this to say on the day of the FRA announcement: *CSXT appreciates the important work performed by the FRA and was pleased to cooperate fully with the effort. CSXT is committed to continuing its strong safety improvements through prudent, long-term investments in infrastructure and technology, as well as through diligent inspections and training.* Ben Gottfried

## Amtrak Funds Increase Slightly

On the day after Christmas, President Bush signed the omnibus funding package for all domestic programs including Amtrak, ending months of negotiations and suspense over veto threats. Amtrak requested \$1.53 billion for 2008 but the final bill, HR-2764, allocates just \$1.325 billion, plus \$30 million for matching grants to states wishing to improve existing service or start new routes. This is a slight increase over last year’s \$1.294 billion, but \$50 million less than the \$1.375 billion Congress approved when the House and Senate versions were reconciled in November. However President Bush threatened to veto that bill and the vote in favor was not enough to override a veto. So \$50 million was cut from the \$900 mil. allocated to capital projects and debt service. (Operating funds had already been cut to \$475 million from \$490 mil. last year.) The bill nevertheless provides a significant increase in capital funding, going from \$495 million last year to approximately \$565 million in the current year.

The \$30 million to match state supported improvements was supposed to be much larger. Amtrak suggested \$150 million, and the House bill included \$100 million, the Senate counterpart had

\$50 million and the Conferees reconciling the two versions compromised at \$75 million. But since this was a new item it was presumably easy to cut. Yet the fact that it survived at all is important because it lays the groundwork for federal support for state initiated improvements like those so successful in expanding highways and transit. The amount can be increased later if politics become more favorable after November.

The final bill requires Amtrak to report quarterly to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees on its success in cutting costs of dining and sleeper services. This is slightly milder than last year’s wording which barred funding for any Amtrak route unless the Inspector General certified savings had been achieved. The final bill continues to bar federal funding for any route whose fares are discounted more than 50%—unless a state covers the loss incurred as a result of the discount and participates in setting the fares. And it continues many other restrictions and reporting requirements that according to the National Association of Railroad Passengers January Newsletter) “make Amtrak one of government’s most micro-managed programs.” Frank Barry

## Long Distance Dining Car Menus Improved

In mid-December, Amtrak introduced a new upgraded rotation of dining car menus on 10 of its 14 long distance trains. Featuring a return of cooked-to-order flatiron steaks at dinner and omelets at breakfast, the new menus have already received widespread praise. In addition, the new menus offer a selection of appetizers, such as shrimp cocktail and chicken wings to complement the full meals.

Four trains were not affected by these changes, including the *Auto Train* (where meals for all passengers are included in the ticket prices); the *Empire Builder* (which has enjoyed enhanced dining options over the past two years); the *City of New Orleans* (which is using a regionalized All-Day menu in a combined Superliner diner-lounge car) and our own *Lake Shore Limited*.

As reported in the last newsletter, the *Lake Shore’s* dining service was downgraded in September by the withdrawal of the train’s Heritage Fleet diners. The replacement, rebuilt Amfleet II ‘Diner-Lite’ cars offer an All-Day menu, but lack the equipment and space to prepare cooked-to-order items or adequately serve a busy train. While Amtrak’s official position remains that the *Lake Shore* will regain its full diners at sometime in the future, many question if this will ever actually occur based on the extremely limited number of these 50 plus years-old cars still available for service.

Amtrak is to be complemented on its success in controlling dining car costs, while finding workable ways to significantly upgrade the overall dining experience (except unfortunately on the *Lake Shore*). Bruce B. Becker

## Amtrak Seeks ESPA’s Input

Amtrak’s Empire District Superintendent Tom Connolly wants to hear of your New York State Amtrak travel experiences. Whether everything was great or if there was room for improvement, Tom welcomes our input, as he strives to provide the best possible service on the Empire Corridor. Please send your written trip reports and comments, including specific dates, train numbers and employee names as appropriate to:

Thomas Commolly, District Superintendent Amtrak  
525 East Street, Rensselaer, NY 12144

Please also send a copy to Bruce Becker, so we can track trip experiences and follow up as necessary. Thanks for your help...

## More Information on Pascack Valley Line Improvements:

Not only was weekday off-peak service started on the Pascack Valley Line on October 28, 2007 (as Frank Barry mentioned in his article last month), but also weekend service was started with 23 trains running on both Saturdays and Sundays. In addition, since Sunday service was in effect on major holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years Day) the 23 trains also operated on these days on the Pascack Valley Line. This represents the greatest single improvement in service that Metro-North has ever implemented in its 25 year history.

In an ongoing effort, Metro-North and New Jersey Transit are planning to jointly study what improvements might be needed on the Pascack Valley Line over the next 20 years. Rockland County Legislative Chairwoman Harriet Cornell helped organize the dialogue between the two transit agencies. Metro-North provides service on the Pascack Valley Line (that includes station stops at Spring Valley, Nanuet, and Pearl River) in Rockland County under an operating agreement with New Jersey Transit.

Over the next six months, staff from both agencies will conduct a technical analysis and identify potential improvements. A major concern for the future is that the Pascack Valley Line does not have adequate facilities in place for the service that will be required for Access to the Region's Core (ARC) project. New Jersey Transit, in collaboration with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, is proceeding with the environmental review of ARC that will provide a one-seat ride for Pascack Valley Line passengers into Midtown Manhattan.

Chairwoman Cornell and Orrin Getz (Rockland Coordinator for ESPA) are both on the Stakeholders Advisory Work Group (SWAG) for Traffic and Transit for the I-287/Tappan Zee Bridge Project. The Traffic and Transit SWAG is currently reviewing the transit alternatives for the replacement Tappan Zee Bridge and the I-287 corridor between Suffern in Rockland County and Port Chester in Westchester County. One of the concerns of this project is how the planned rail alternatives for the I-287/Tappan Zee Bridge Project will connect with the Pascack Valley Line to provide facilities to help support ARC. A meeting with the I-287/Tappan Zee Bridge Project Manager Michael Anderson is planned to review this subject.

*Orrin Getz ESPA Rockland Coordinator*

## Poughkeepsie Bridge Gets State Grant

The state of New York has awarded a \$500,000 grant to Walkway over the Hudson, the group trying to transform the abandoned former New Haven Railroad Poughkeepsie Bridge over the Hudson River into a public park. The money will come from the state's environmental protection fund, which is part of the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, the *Middletown Times Herald-Record* reported.

The first train crossed the bridge on December 29, 1888, and it was officially opened in 1889. The bridge has six main spans, stands 212 feet above the water, and is 6,747 feet long including approaches. It was closed in 1974 after a deck fire, and Penn Central elected not to repair it.

Citizen groups on both sides of the Hudson River have been working since the late 1990s to make it a pedestrian and bike walkway to connect trails on both sides of the river and create a 25-mile stretch of linear park for recreation. (*Trains News Wire*)

## Metro-North and Enterprise Rent-A-Car Plan Car Rental Program at 23 Rail Stations

Metro-North has selected Enterprise Rent-A-Car to operate a rental car program at 23 Metro-North stations to provide train riders with the ability to complete their trip with a car at the suburban or ex-urban end. Enterprise will install a special information kiosk/key drop-off box at each of the selected stations and the railroad will provide dedicated parking spaces for the rental vehicles. Customers will make reservations via the Internet or Enterprise's 800 number and will be able to rent vehicles at an hourly or daily rate. Among the many stations included in this program are Poughkeepsie, Beacon, Ossining, Southeast and Port Chester as well as five stations east of the Hudson River. The contract allows for additional stations to be added to the program and negotiations are continuing over possible staffed Enterprise locations at major stations. The program should commence this Spring. Hertz Rent-A-Car Company currently has an office immediately adjacent to the North White Plains Metro-North station already used by many New York City residents.

ESPA members should also be aware that Enterprise operates a rental car desk at the Albany-Rensselaer station which is staffed a portion of each day. Enterprise picks up customers at the station and shuttles them to cars in downtown Albany, but cars may be dropped off at the train station. It is unclear how car pickup will work in the Metro-North program. Drop-off will be at the stations.

*Steve Strauss*

## New Yorker Nancy Naples Appointed to Amtrak Board

President Bush's nomination of Erie County Republican Nancy Naples to the Amtrak Board of Directors was approved by the US Senate Commerce Committee on December 18. Along with newly approved Republican Denver Stutler of Florida and Democrat Thomas Carper of Illinois, Naples joins Chairperson Donna McClain, Vice-Chair R. Hunter Biden, Amtrak President Alex Kummant and Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters on Amtrak's governing Board.

Naples' political career started in Erie County with her election as County Comptroller in 1993. After an unsuccessful congressional run against Brian Higgins in 2004, Naples resigned as Comptroller in June 2005 at the height of the County's fiscal crisis. Governor Pataki appointed her as Motor Vehicles Commissioner in January 2006, a post she held for the last year of the Pataki administration.

In testifying before the Senate Commerce Committee, Naples said she had "loved trains" ever since taking the New York Central from Buffalo to the 1965 World's Fair in New York and that she intended to ride the Empire Builder early in 2008 in order to sample Amtrak's current long-distance services.

ESPA congratulates Naples on her appointment to the Amtrak Board and we look forward to communicating with her regarding both our goals for New York State and for passenger rail service across the country.

*Bruce B. Becker*

"Vermont's seasonal Thruway bus between Okemo (The Inn at Jackson Gore) and Rutland, connecting with Amtrak's Ethan Allen, runs through April 6th."



## N.J. Transit's Former Boss Dead at 55

George D. Warrington, the former NJ Transit executive director who eased overcrowding on the system's trains and helped jump-start plans for a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River, died Monday at his home in Mendham. He was 55.

The cause was pancreatic cancer, according to his brother, Marc, Warrington "was passionate about getting people out of their cars and onto mass transit, for the good of everyone," his brother said.

He brought a focus on customer service and a sharp eye for detail when he arrived at NJ Transit in 2002 from Amtrak, where he had spent four years as president and chief executive officer.

He took control of the state's transit system at a time when its commuter trains were severely overcrowded at peak hours. Ignoring the conventional wisdom that the system was at its breaking point, Warrington added 100 trains and pressed the agency to accelerate the turnaround time for cars that needed maintenance.

But Warrington's lasting legacy and most remarkable accomplishment, colleagues said, was convincing public officials in New York of the need for a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River. When it is built, the \$8 billion tunnel will double the number of NJ Transit and Amtrak trains entering Penn Station in New York, easing gridlock and making room to expand service.

Before Warrington got involved, the tunnel was considered strictly a New Jersey project, said Martin Robins, a senior fellow at the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University.

"He performed what I consider to be a miracle in winning over New Yorkers to the importance of the project," Robins said.

Richard Sarles, who succeeded Warrington as NJ Transit's executive director in April, agreed. *William Lamb Bergen Record*

## Empire Corridor Travel Tips and Discounts...

- In partnership with the 'I Love New York' tourism program, Amtrak is offering a 20% fare discount program for NYS rail travel now through September 2008. The 20% discount off regular adult fares is only available by making reservations directly through Amtrak's 800 number, 1-800-USA-RAIL and specifically mentioning discount code V464 to the agent (it is NOT available via the Amtrak's web site!). The discount is valid on all trains running in New York State and on the *Adirondack* to Montreal (but not on Northeast Corridor trains or on the *Maple Leaf* in Ontario). Reservations must be made at least three days in advance of travel and early reservations will help insure the best availability of the discount. For more information and other discount restrictions, contact Amtrak directly.
- All Empire Corridor trains require reservations. While advance reservations are encouraged, last minute passengers will always be accommodated if space is available on a particular train. Booking as early as possible will provide the best possible fare. Amtrak accepts reservations up to 11 months in advance of your travel date! Travel during off-peak periods (mid-week, early morning or late evening) will generally be the least expensive.

- AAA and NARP members receive 10% off most regular fares, with a three day advance purchase requirement. Senior citizens, veterans and many students can receive a 15% discount off most fares.
- Visit [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com) and select 'Hot Deals' for the latest discount program information.
- Join the Amtrak Guest Rewards program and earn points towards free travel and more.

## Joe Landry Elected to Office

ESPA's long-time Albany Government Representative Joe Landry has turned a new page in his public-service oriented career with his recent election to the post of Supervisor for the Town of Niskayuna, located in Schenectady County. Niskayuna, with a population of 30,000, is a rapidly growing suburban community, the seventh largest in the Capital Region.

With Joe's new position being a full-time responsibility, he has been forced to curtail his lobbying and representation of the numerous organizations, including ESPA, which he has served for many years. Joe's knowledge of the inner workings of state government and interest in transportation has benefited ESPA greatly over the past seven years and through his help, ESPA has gained new access and respect in the Executive Branch, Legislature and among the pertinent state Agencies.

ESPA wishes Joe all the best in his new position and sincerely thanks him for all he has done for the Association and our cause!

*Bruce B. Becker*

## LIRR to Spend \$20.7 Million to Reduce Platform Gaps

The Long Island has revealed a plan to reduce the dangerous platform gaps by an average of three inches at stations system-wide by adding a metal plate at the base of each car door and changing its decades-old standard for train clearance of platforms. The \$20.7 million allocated for gap remediation in 2008 is nearly triple that of the \$7.2 million spent in 2007.

## State – Amtrak Lawsuit Resolved *(Cont'd from page 1)*

Reportedly, the seven turboliners (the three now in Amtrak's possession were the only ones actually completed and operated) will be put up for sale, with whatever proceeds that may be ultimately obtained to be shared by the State and Amtrak. As the turbo's poor fuel economy was one of the principal reasons the rebuilding program was cancelled by Amtrak, it is unlikely that the trains will go to another North American operator to be used for actual service. A more likely outcome may find the trains scrapped—the same fate that befell their United Aircraft turbotrain cousins more than 30 years ago.

The settlement does finally open the door for real progress to be made in the years to come. With NYSDOT working on a new comprehensive state rail plan and with the political will in Washington increasingly turning to favor passenger rail, after many long years the citizens of New York will hopefully start to see meaningful improvements accomplished on the Empire Corridor. ESPA applauds the resolution of the lawsuit and stands ready, as always, to represent the rail travelers of the state as the efforts unfold.

*Bruce B. Becker*

## 2008- 09 ESPA Meeting Dates

### Confirmed Dates...

Saturday, January 26, 2008 ..... Schenectady, NY - The Parker Inn  
Saturday, March 8, 2008 ..... Annual Membership Meeting –  
Holiday Inn Schenectady

### Tentative Future Dates...

Saturday, April 26, 2008 ..... Rensselaer, NY  
Saturday, June 21, 2008 ..... Schenectady, NY  
Saturday, August 2, 2008 ..... Utica, NY  
Saturday, September 27, 2008 ..... Rensselaer, NY  
Saturday, November 15, 2008 ..... Schenectady, NY  
Saturday, January 24, 2009 ..... Schenectady, NY  
Saturday, March 7, 2009 ..... Annual Meeting – Schenectady NY

ALL dates and locations are subject to change...Please refer to the ESPA Web Site, [www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org), for the most current information!

If you would like to become more active in ESPA, these meetings are the perfect opportunity to learn more about the Association and how YOU can make a difference! ALL ESPA members (and other interested persons) are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact President Bruce Becker, 716-741-6384 or [bbecker@esparail.org](mailto:bbecker@esparail.org), for more information or if you are planning on attending a meeting.

### Receive the ESPA Express earlier!

For members providing their e-mail address, the ESPA Newsletter will be-mailed at the same time it is forwarded to the printer enabling you to receive the newsletter one to two weeks earlier than by mail. The postage savings can be used for passenger rail advocacy. E-mail address submitted will only be used by ESPA and not given to any other group. Please send your e-mail address to [www.rwlencz@aol.com](mailto:www.rwlencz@aol.com)

Thank you! Robert Lenz, Editor

## Retractable Barricades to be Tested at Michigan Crossing

Denton Road in Van Buren Township, Wayne County, Mich., is the first location in the United States to be equipped with unique retractable barricades that serve as warning devices at a railroad crossing. The barricades, or "delineators," will rise from the pavement and discourage drivers from driving around lowered crossing gate arms when a train is approaching. The delineators are part of a federal railroad crossing safety test sponsored by the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Federal Railroad Administration, and Norfolk Southern, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration.

### 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 or Senior Citizen (\$12.50 per year)
- Family membership (\$30.00)
- Sustaining membership (\$50.00)
- Patron membership (\$75.00)
- Corporate membership (\$100.00)
- Lifetime membership (\$300.00)

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

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel: 716-759-2315. e-mail: [RWLenz@aol.com](mailto:RWLenz@aol.com).  
Deadline for material for Mar/Apr issue is February 29, 2008. Material may be reproduced if credit is given ESPA and to the writer.

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