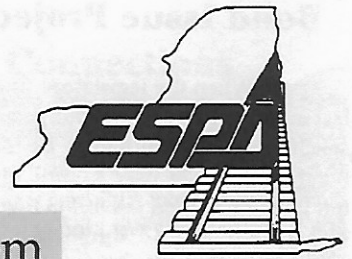


THE ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION
<http://www.trainweb.com/espa>



Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

Vol. 21, No. 4

JULY/AUGUST 2000

Legislature Fumbles Drops Property Tax Relief Bill

In a startling setback for New York's privately owned railroads, the state legislature adjourned without passing a tax relief bill viewed as critical for improving both freight and passenger rail service in upstate New York. Two closely involved Senate staff members gave the same explanation—"We just ran out of time." Bargaining and negotiation continued into the last evening of the last session, when according to New York's hallowed tradition, many bills are pushed through late at night without affording legislators time to read or discuss them. But by the time agreement was reached and the necessary approvals were obtained, there was insufficient time to get the bill printed so it could be voted on. "We missed it by about an hour and a half," one staffer said.

This bill would have reduced New York's rail property tax rate, which is more than twice the rate in the next highest state served by Conrail. Without legislative relief this already high rate may nearly double when an out-of-court settlement reached between Conrail and the State expires in September.

The legislation was opposed by the New York State Association of Counties and other local government groups, and during negotiations the state agreed to compensate localities for revenue lost for ten years instead of five. The railroads agreed to a slower schedule for implementing reductions in order to make it more palatable, but it was all for naught.

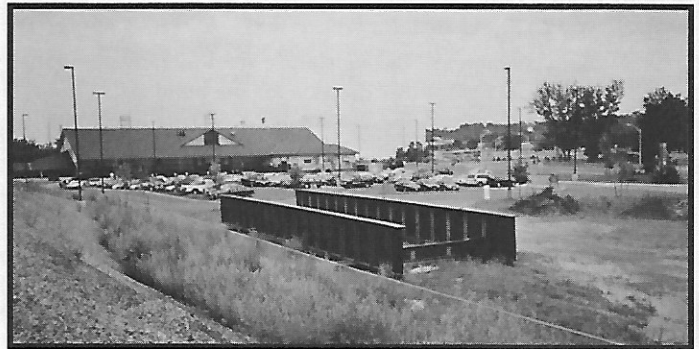
Tax reduction is critical because extra high property taxes increase the cost of investment and operation of new track and other plant improvements, and encourage abandonment of lightly used tracks. This makes New York less attractive than other states for track capacity expansion projects by large railroads like CSX and Norfolk Southern. It serves as a barrier to improvements for passenger service that would increase the value of railroad property.

"If the double track (between Albany and Schenectady) is ready to go and this still hasn't been dealt with, we'll have to hold it up," John Casellini, CSX Resident Vice President of State Relations told ESPA. "Up to now, we have proceeded in good faith, believing that this would be resolved. We didn't want to hold anything hostage." DOT and Amtrak sources agree that CSX has encouraged this project to advance.

Casellini could not say what would happen next. "Do we start a lawsuit? We would much rather spend our money in a positive way rather than taking actions others would see as aggressive." But the financial consequences may be too great to ignore. Clearly, Casellini, who worked very hard to get the bill passed, felt betrayed. "We thought we had an agreement," he said. Unfortunately the agreement came too late, despite valiant efforts by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ronald Stafford (R., Plattsburgh), and Assemblyman Paul Tokasz, (D., Buffalo), who pushed in the bill in their respective chambers. Governor Pataki pushed it too.

Several knowledgeable sources said this bill would be easier to pass after the election, but legislative

(cont'd on page 6)



Syracuse Rail Bridge awaits completion (see page 2)

Amtrak Guarantees Customer Satisfaction

In a bold move to retain more of the 15% of its customers who say "never again", Amtrak pledged on July 6th to give an unconditional voucher for train travel to any customer dissatisfied with its service, regardless of the cause. Bill Shulz of Amtrak's Corporate Communications said the unconditional guarantee is a first in the travel industry. Ironically, while Amtrak Board President Tommy Thompson and CEO George Warrington were speaking to reporters, airline workers were demonstrating against "air rage" in more than a dozen cities around the world. The demonstrations stemmed from a 380% increase in violent incidents over 3 years—incidents in which unruly passengers have vented their frustrations with air travel on airline personnel.

Amtrak employees have occasionally suffered similar incidents, but the new policy is designed to empower them to take whatever action is necessary to "make it right" for dissatisfied customers on the spot. Amtrak customers—or "guests," as they are now called—who are dissatisfied, are asked to talk to any Amtrak employee, who is then expected and empowered to do whatever possible to solve the problem. A guest still dissatisfied may call Amtrak's 800 number and request a voucher. The guest must furnish the number from the ticket stub and will be asked to describe the problem and the result of talking with an employee. The guest will be mailed a "service guarantee certificate" which can be used to reduce the cost for the next trip. The certificate value will equal the cost of the portion of the trip the customer considered unsatisfactory.

Will Amtrak be swamped by requests for vouchers? Cliff Black, of Amtrak's public affairs office, thinks not. "I was worried too at first," he admitted, "but after learning more about it, I'm convinced it will work." Black points out that the Coast Starlight, considered by many to be Amtrak's premier train, has been guaranteeing passenger satisfaction for several years, and "only one out of every 107,000 passengers has requested a voucher."

(cont'd on page 6)

Co-sponsors Needed - see page 2

Bond Issue Projects being selected

When the legislature finally closed down for the summer last month it had laid out budgetary outlines for transportation, but specific projects still had to be identified. Most of the \$3.8 billion bond issue will be used to fund highway and MTA capital projects, but it will also fund the following:

Non-MTA transit: \$125 million

Rail and ports: \$100 million

Canal system: \$100 million

Airports: \$75 million

These dollars are to be spread over five years, and "rail" figures cover both freight and passenger projects. The Governor's 5-year plan includes an additional \$80 million for rail, which does not require voter approval.

Both chambers of the legislature are now canvassing their members for ideas for specific projects for the bond issue. Projects proposed will be sent to the Department of Transportation for screening—to assure viability and determine their cost. Legislative leaders hope to publicize the projects agreed upon by late August, as there is general recognition that the bond issue will not pass unless voters know what's in it.

ESPA is promoting projects West and North of Schenectady, since the \$185 million from the 1998 Amtrak - New York State agreement is being concentrated in the area between Schenectady and Poughkeepsie. ESPA's recommendations include:

1. Second platforms (on the westbound track) in Depew, Rochester and Syracuse, to allow two trains to be serviced at once. These should be high-level platforms for faster and easier boarding.

2. Improve customs and immigration inspection by moving it into Montreal station and upgrading track at border. This would save nearly an hour in scheduled travel time for the *Adirondack* train and eliminate unscheduled delays caused by border inspections. (This would yield the highest time savings per dollar invested of any project proposed).

3. At least thirty miles of high-speed super elevated 3rd track, preferably between Amsterdam and Utica, where speed is now restricted to 70MPH or less. This would also reduce delays in summer when track work frequently requires one track to be taken out of service for maintenance due to the wear from numerous curves in this section.

4. An additional passing siding on the D&H Adirondack Route. Since so few sidings are left on the D&H, a delay to one train inevitably delays the other, as the "meet" cannot easily be moved to another siding.

5. New trainsets for use on runs to Montreal, Toronto or Niagara Falls. Cars would be modern, with comfortable seats, large windows. One car could be designed for viewing scenery, with glass-topped ceiling. These trains could be manufactured in New York State plants.

6. Other high-speed improvements including easing curves, additional crossovers, elimination or better protection of grade crossings, between Schenectady and Niagara Falls.

7. Station in Lyons to provide good public transportation for Finger Lakes area. As low cost airlines enter upstate, rail service will need to reach markets the airlines cannot get to. A station in Dunkirk to service the Chautauqua area.

8. Advanced signaling between Schenectady and Buffalo to permit faster running on existing track.

9. Track, signal and station improvements south and west of Binghamton to allow restoration of service to the Southern Tier.

10. Parking lot expansion, particularly in Rhinecliff. Ridership has nearly doubled there over the past four years and travelers who don't arrive early cannot find spaces and now park along the road in dangerous locations.

Frank Barry

New York Co-sponsors still needed

Both New York Senators and 16 of its 31 Representatives have signed on as co-sponsors of the High Speed Rail Investment Bill (S-1900/HR-3700), which would provide federal funding for the Empire Corridor and other federally designated routes. New York's HR-3700 cosponsors are:

Amo Houghton (R., Corning)

John LaFalce (D., Tonawanda)

Jack Quinn (R., Buffalo)

Louise Slaughter (D., Rochester)

James Walsh (R., Syracuse)

Maurice Hinchey (D., Saugerties)

John McHugh (R., Watertown)

Sherwood Boehlert (R., Utica)

John Sweeney (R., Saratoga Springs)

Michael McNulty (D., Albany)

Benjamin Gilman (R., Middletown)

Sue Kelly (R., Katonah)

Charles Rangel (D., Manhattan)

Major Owens (D., Brooklyn)

Jerrold Nadler (D., New York)

Gregory Meeks (D., Queens).

The 16 represent a good balance across both parties. After much work by ESPA, the list now includes every upstate Congressional representative EXCEPT Tom Reynolds, who represents Buffalo and Rochester suburbs and the area in between, including Lyons, which desperately wants an Amtrak stop. Mr. Reynolds needs to hear from his constituents! And Rick Lazio, (R., Babylon), who wants to represent our state as U.S. Senator, needs to hear how important faster rail service is outside his Long Island district. Everyone in New York State who wants better rail passenger service should ask Mr. Lazio to co-sponsor HR-3700.

Frank Barry

ACTION ALERT!

IF YOUR REPRESENTATIVE IS NOT AMONG THE 16 CO-SPONSORS, PLEASE URGE HIM OR HER TO CO-SPONSOR HR-3700!

Progress in Syracuse?

After an 18-month delay, some cautious steps have been taken toward building the long awaited span across Park Street in Syracuse to allow the On-Track shuttle into the Walsh Regional Transportation Center (Amtrak and bus station). CSX has jacked up the part of its bridge, which sank less than an inch when drilling first started for the new span next to it in January 1999, and has finally lifted the stop work order Conrail imposed then.

"Our bridge is whole and sound," CSX's John Casellini told ESPA. "Work can go ahead."

But the Central New York Transportation Authority, which built the transportation center, wants to get out of the project. Frank Kobliski, the Authority's chief operations officer, told ESPA "We just haven't found any way to proceed without potentially calamitous liability in the event of an accident. Therefore we've concluded that the best thing is for us to get out of the project, especially since Walter Rich (of OnTrack) is willing to take over."

But it isn't that simple, because the Authority has the money. Kobliski said their lawyer believes the authority could be sued if it turned over the money to OnTrack and an accident occurred. Therefore the Authority is investigating returning the money to the original government funders and hoping they will fund OnTrack to build the bridge. "This would absolve us of liability which might be incurred if we funded OnTrack directly," Kobliski said. Kobliski said some construction could still happen this Fall if a way can be found to satisfy its concerns about liability.

Frank Barry

Washington Update

There is a mix of good and bad news for passenger rail advocates as Congress continues work on bills that are critical to the future of passenger rail service. First, the bad news, which was not unexpected.

The U.S. Senate killed in June an amendment to an appropriations bill that would have given states the flexibility to use federal transportation dollars for intercity rail service. The pro-rail amendment was sponsored by Senators Voinovich (R-OH) and Cleland (D-GA), but lost on a procedural move led by Senator Bob Smith (R-NH) on a 52 - 46 vote. The Senate ultimately voted in support of Smith's objections to the bill. This bill's future has been regarded as an uphill battle, and will continue to face strong opposition in the future. It would set a precedent many members of Congress do not like, and will require vigorous lobbying if its supporters want it to pass. ESPA members should know that Senator Charles Schumer spoke strongly in favor of the bill before it was brought to a vote, and it appears he will be a key supporter in the future.

Separately, the appropriations process for transportation has concluded with \$521 million allocated for Amtrak in FY 2001. This is about half the amount authorized for Amtrak for FY 2001, and leaves Amtrak banking on increased revenues from passenger and mail revenues to make up the difference.

The bill with the most promise for passenger rail service is S. 1900/H.R. 3700. That bill, which would provide bonding for future passenger rail projects, is sponsored in the House by a New Yorker-Rep. Amo Houghton, and was championed by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ). Although Senator Lautenberg is retiring, this bill is gathering steam, and continues to gain co-sponsors. Rep. Houghton deserves a round of applause for bringing this bill to life in the House of Representatives. Continued support is needed, and members who are not yet co-sponsors need to hear from their pro-rail constituents.

Amtrak's \$521 million would not be as threatening if Acela service were running as expected. In a recent article in *The Washington Post*, Amtrak officials were quoted as saying that the new Acela service will not start up until "at least mid-August." According to the *Post*, "...cracked or missing bolts were found in several wheel sets during test runs..."

Inspectors have discovered that bolts had broken off the undercarriages of at least two locomotives. The bolts are used to mount the gear case of the train's traction motor, which turns the locomotive's wheels. The problem occurred under stress when the locomotives logged up to 40,000 miles of testing. Upon further inspection, several more broken bolts were found in other locomotives.

The *Post* story by transportation reporter Don Phillips quotes Richard Sarles, Amtrak's vice president for Northeast corridor high-speed rail, saying that "Amtrak, the Federal Railroad administration and the Canadian-French consortium building the 150-mph trains agreed that it would be best to halt the high-speed tests until engineers could determine what is going wrong."

It appears the revenue from the new *Acela* service will come later than expected. Initial indications are positive, however. The limited *Acela* service between Boston and New York City is attracting strong ridership.

If *Acela* service is operating in August, the fall could be a good season for Amtrak. As always, Congress must hear from Amtrak supporters, so the vitally important funding from Washington will keep fueling our national passenger rail system. Rising gasoline prices should be a strong reminder of just how important passenger rail service is.

—John Boffa, *ESPA Washington Representative*

Turboliner Almost Ready

For well over a year we have been told completion of the first turboliner was "just a few months" away. This Spring it has gotten down to "a few weeks" and as this is written it is expected to be turned over to Amtrak for commissioning in a matter of days—perhaps by the time you read this. Amtrak made an initial inspection on June 19th and requested modifications on the trucks, but that is almost complete.

Besides high speed testing (above 125MPH) the train must prove itself at regular speeds on the entire route to Niagara Falls. DOT officials now expect it to begin revenue service in the Fall. A media "event" could occur in September.

Work has begun on the second trainset which may be ready by late Fall, and a third set has arrived at the Super Steel plant from Wilmington.

Frank Barry

CSX Approves Utica Platform

After a wait of many months, Oneida County has received CSX approval to build a bridge over its mainline and reconstruct a platform that will serve both the westbound track and trains of the Adirondack Railroad in Utica. CSX required some modifications, which will need sign-off by the Federal Transit Administration. The overpass with the required elevators is expected to cost \$2.4 million. Other improvements to the station and the old Railway Express Wing will cost another \$3.4 million. "We hope to be able to put it out to bid this Fall, with major construction coming next summer," according to DeForest Winfield, Program Manager of the Oneida County Municipal Planning Organization.

The county also plans to reopen a restaurant in the station and has already received three proposals.

Frank Barry

Double Tracking May Begin Soon

Although the second track between Albany and Schenectady will not be laid this summer, DOT and Amtrak officials hope to begin at least some of the preparatory work before this construction season ends. This could include grading, laying ballast and moving signal, grade crossing and other installations out of the way of the second track. It might also include upgrading the existing siding between Schenectady and Carmans (3 miles east), which sometimes gets used for meets now. The new track will have concrete ties, which last longer than wood and require less maintenance.

However all this may now depend on how CSX reacts to the failure of the legislature to pass property tax relief and whether the legislature acts this Fall.

\$1 Million to improve ALSTOM Facility

Governor Pataki announced the state would provide \$1 million in transportation funds to improve access to ALSTOM Transportation Inc. in the City of Hornell.

The funds are being provided to assist the City of Hornell to relocate rail tracks, construct a rail transfer table which is used to move and place rail cars on the desired track and improve Transit Drive, an existing access road into ALSTOM. Both the rail and roadwork are anticipated to be completed before December 2000.

In Hornell, ALSTOM designs and builds state-of-the-art passenger rail vehicles for the growing U.S. market and re-manufactures all types of existing passenger cars and freight locomotives. The company is currently producing the luxury bi-level *Pacific Surfliner* coaches for Amtrak's southern California corridor, and is refurbishing subway cars for the Chicago Transportation Authority. The company recently won a contract to build 130 new rail cars for New Jersey Transit, with an option for an additional 100 new cars.

AMTRAK NEWS

Amtrak Rensselaer Shop is undergoing a major renovation which will include lengthening the back of the building to make it long enough to pull in a locomotive and a six car train on the running maintenance side. The new addition will be high enough that an overhead crane will be able to lift a prime mover out of a P32ACDM locomotive. Also, B track, a single ended track inside the building will be extended out through the front to make it a through track.

Amtrak Enhances Telephone Reservation System

Amtrak's 1-800-USA-Rail reservation and information line will offer speech recognition capabilities when it goes live later this year. By simply speaking into the phone, customers will receive the information they need and will get immediate answers without having to use a touch-tone keypad or wait on hold. In addition, the system will redirect a significant number of calls, allowing reservation sales agents to focus on customers with more complex needs such as booking multi-train reservations.

New "Pacific Surfliner" Service Launched on the San Diego-Los Angeles-San Luis Obispo passenger rail corridor, replacing the San Diegans. Amtrak's \$125 million investment in eight new trains is the single-largest investment ever in any state. The State of California recently purchased an additional trainset, and will be phased into service every six to eight weeks, with all nine in service by 2001.

The new five-car double-decker trains will seat 427 and consist of one Pacific Business Class Car, one Coach/Café Car, two Coach Cars, and one Coach/Baggage/Cab Car. The trains are being manufactured by ALSTOM, and powered by new General Motors Electro-Motive Division F59PHI locomotives. Amenities include: large panoramic windows, at-seat audio and video in Pacific Business Class, receive train information on digital information display boards, upgraded and healthier menu selections, featuring local wines and microbrews, and take advantage of bicycle and surfboard racks.

Amtrak Cascades Service Rated Best in 1999

In four of the last five years, the Amtrak *Cascades* has been rated number one for customer satisfaction. For the first quarter of 2000, Amtrak *Cascades* are already 14 percent ahead of the same period in 1999, with a total of 106,579 passengers. Amtrak Manager Rich Mason said, "Customers want more frequent train service and reduced travel times." And Amtrak and its Pacific Northwest partners continue to work toward that goal.

New Genesis Amtrak has increased its order for new General Electric P42 Genesis diesels from two units for wreck replacement to a total of fifteen, for fleet expansion.

PLEASE PATRONIZE THESE AUTHORIZED TRAVEL AGENTS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGER ASSOCIATION

Clarence, NY	Clarence Travel	(716) 759-7203
	(800) 336-3890
New York, NY	Bill Closs Travel	(212) 804-5719
Rochester, NY	Automobile Club of Rochester	(716) 461-5000
Tonawanda, NY	Courtesy Travel	(716) 695-3550
	(800) 695-3750

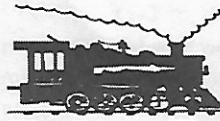
Authorized Amtrak travel agents who wish to join ESPA, maintain current membership status, and be listed in this DIRECTORY, should send a \$50 check, made payable to ESPA, and mail to: Robert Lenz, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031.

Travel Advisory

Amtrak is warning passengers on long-distance CSX routes to expect more delays than usual this summer because of increased freight traffic together with an aggressive track maintenance program.

VIA Rail Canada resumed service between Senneterre and Montreal which had been interrupted because of a damaged CN bridge north of La Tuque.

The Lake Country Limited, which operates between Jamesville, Wis., and Chicago, began serving the popular Lake Geneva communities. The stop is located in Zenda, Wis., just a few miles away from most of Lake Geneva's resorts and the lake's main business district.



The Depot Theatre

A great place to visit by train!

Amtrak's *Adirondack* offers a daily scenic journey to Westport NY.

There's even a B&B near the station. The 22nd summer season offers: **I DO! I DO!** a romantic musical comedy, July 14 - 17, 20 - 23.

Bell Book & Candle, a comic fantasy, July 28 - 31 August 3 - 6,

On The Town, musical August 18 - 21, 28 & 31, Sept. 1 - 3, 7 - 10

For matinee and information on other performances, call The Depot Theater in Westport at 518 962-4449, or visit on the web at www.depottheatre.org

Adirondack Gets National Park Guide

Riders on Amtrak's *Adirondack* train to Montreal may now listen to lectures on the history of the region between Saratoga Springs and Westport, which played prominently in the French and Indian and Revolutionary Wars. The *Adirondack* is the first train in the Northeast to benefit from the joint Amtrak-National Park Service Trails and Rails program which provides volunteers from the Park Service to explain significant sights viewed from the window. Area history has been provided on the *Adirondack* previously by ESPA members Dr. Margarette McCurry and Jack Ross.

The lectures, which started on July 1st, are given on weekends with emphasis on the French and Indian War northbound, the Revolutionary War southbound. If successful, the program may be expanded to the New York-Albany portion of the trip.

Vranich quits Amtrak Reform Council

Joe Vranich, appointed to serve on the Amtrak Reform Council by U.S. Senate Leader Trent Lott, resigned on July 10 after issuing a lengthy press release outlining numerous complaints against Amtrak. He accused Amtrak of withholding fiscal information required by the Council, deceptive bookkeeping, using hidden government subsidies, and failing to institute high-speed trains. He urged dissolution of the Amtrak Board of Directors and replacement of the Secretary of Transportation by the Secretary of the Treasury. He said he wanted to leave the Reform Council "so I can speak more freely."

Vranich worked for the National Association of Railroad Passengers when it was advocating Amtrak's formation, and later worked for Amtrak's public relations department. He has since worked in public relations for aircraft manufacturers and bus transit industries and for a time headed the High Speed Ground Transportation Association in Washington. After writing the book "Supertrains," which advocated magnetic levitation and super high speed railroads, he wrote a book called "Derailed" which accused Amtrak of inefficiency and ineffectiveness and urged its dissolution. He recommended continuation of the northeast corridor and some other corridors, but said long distance trains should be replaced by privately operated luxury cruise trains for those who can afford them.

Amtrak expressed its reaction through the following statement:

"The Amtrak Reform Council's mission is to objectively assess Amtrak's progress and ability to reach self sufficiency. Mr. Vranich's statements demonstrate an inability to be objective, and therefore it is probably best for the Reform Council that he is longer with them."

Frank Barry

News Briefs

Montgomery County offers Transportation Seminar The Montgomery County Planning Board under Director Michael Kayes and ESPA Mohawk Valley Coordinator Jerry Koller, will offer Montgomery and area counties, a public Transportation Education Seminar during September and October. Planned speakers include representatives from Amtrak, Capital District Transportation of Albany, Trailways, Fulmont Airport, County Charter Services, NYS DOT, and Montgomery County Taxi. Watch for the Sept/Oct newsletter or call Jerry Koller 518 843 3104 or Montgomery County Planning Dept. 518 853-8155 or e-mail to: dir_kayes@planning.co.montgomery.ny.us

Transit Ridership reached its highest level in four decades in 1999, according to the U.S. DOT, when Americans took more than nine billion trips on public transit. Public transportation usage continues to outpace growth in other modes of transportation, with 1999 ridership increasing 4.5% over 1998, compared to a 2% gain in motor vehicle miles traveled and a 3% gain in airline ridership.

Boston to Portland Service Delayed The "Big Dig" construction at North Station in Boston has delayed the January startup date until April. Plans call for Amtrak to make four round trips daily from Portland to Boston.

More Metro-North Service:

Metro-North changed its schedule on July 9. In addition to the opening of the Wassaic extension on the Harlem line, more trains were added on all three Metro-North lines. Highlights include:

Hudson Line: Mid and late morning express service from the upper Hudson line. More trains during rush hour to Cortlandt, Beacon, and Poughkeepsie. Morning train that used to start in Croton, extended to start at Cortlandt. Additional trains added at Tarrytown, Yonkers, Hastings, and Irvington

Harlem Line: Extended to Wassaic, which also includes new station at Tenmile River. All trains that served Dover Plains are extended to Wassaic. Several new trains from Dover Plains, beginning in Wassaic. Late night service every day to Dover Plains and Wassaic.

New Haven Line: Additional afternoon express train to the upper New Haven line. More weekend service added. *Gary Prophet*

Spring Valley Station Opens

A partnership between Metro-North and the village, which is in the midst of urban renewal planning, rededicated the historic Spring Valley Station in June, with hopes to lure commuters from across Rockland County. The refurbished station offers a ticket office, concessions stand, security cameras, inside seating, and soon, expanded parking.

The \$5.6 million investment in the station building, intermodal area and parking lot is to be complete this fall. The project was funded by the New York State Department of Transportation and the MTA capital program, including \$1.4 million that was earmarked for Spring Valley by former state Senator Joseph Holland, who was instrumental in bringing the parties together to benefit the village.

Metro-North and New Jersey Transit are now involved in a project to allow travelers on the Pascack Valley Line to transfer at Secaucus, N.J., saving 20 minutes on a trip to Manhattan's Penn Station. Commuters currently have to change trains at Hoboken, N.J.

Lyons to Study Demand

State Senator Michael Nozzolio (R., Seneca Falls), has arranged a \$20,000 "member item" state grant to survey demand for rail passenger service at Lyons. The study, which was requested by the State Department of Transportation, will cover the surrounding area, including Geneva, Seneca Falls and Waterloo. The state has earmarked \$250,000 for the station, but more will be required if CSX insists on an island platform.

Bus to Train Connections

The NYS DOT has recently started bus connections to two train stations. Several months ago, Shortline, under contract from NYS DOT began a Newburgh to Beacon train station connection. The bus picks up passengers at several locations in Newburgh, including a Park-N-Ride near Route 17K, and allows passengers to connect to 4 morning Metro-North trains from Beacon to Grand Central Terminal. It then connects from 4 late afternoon, early evening trains from Grand Central. The buses serve a total of about 100 people a day, 50 in each direction, and the bus operates weekdays. Since parking fills early at the Beacon station, this service provides Newburgh area passengers a convenient way to travel to Manhattan without driving and without taking a parking space at the train station. This use of intermodal connections benefits everyone and is an example of DOT working well with Metro-North, to serve the region's transportation needs.

A similar bus service began in late June, allowing Kingston and Red Hook passengers to take a trolley-like vehicle (operated by Shortline) to Amtrak's Rhinecliff station. Since a bus is not able to turn around at Rhinecliff, the trolley-like vehicle works fine. The service connects Kingston and the Rhinecliff station with 4 roundtrips a day and connects Red Hook with 2 mid-late morning Amtrak trains to New York's Penn Station and with 4 trains from New York. Unfortunately, by serving Red Hook and Kingston with the same vehicle, Kingston passengers endure a 35 minute ride through Red Hook, instead of a 15-minute direct routing. During the first 2 week of operation, there were difficulties locating a bus schedule and publicity was non-existent. Also, the Montgomery Wards parking lot is to be used as a Park-N-Ride, yet no signs exist to this fact and no one in the store is even aware that their parking lot is serving as a Park-N-Ride.

Ideally, a bus would serve 4 trains directly to/from Kingston, starting/ending at the Kingston bus station (center of Kingston), to Fleet Center (former IBM plant), then serve the Montgomery Ward's Park-n-Ride, then to the Rhinecliff train station. A separate bus would start at Tivoli, Red Hook, Rhinebeck, then the Rhinecliff train station. Unfortunately, by attempting to serve two separate markets with the same bus, no one receives good service and this reduces the chance of success. This connecting bus operation, nicknamed "DUCK", is operated with funds provided by NYS DOT *Gary Prophet*

Ferry to Train Connection

On June 29, the MTA Board approved the start of a ferry service connecting Rockland County with Metro North's Hudson Line (Westchester County). The ferry will connect Haverstraw with Ossining and will provide relief for some commuters stuck in Tappan Zee Bridge traffic and may start as soon as August. The service will be provided by NY Waterway and will connect with four morning and four afternoon/evening trains to/from Manhattan. Travel time from Haverstraw to Grand Central will be about 75 minutes, which according to Metro-North, is a 30-minute time savings. About 250 parking spaces will be available at the Haverstraw dock off of Route 9W, with the potential to expand the parking in the future. Each trip of the ferry holds up to 150 passengers. Ticket prices will be \$3 one-way or \$193 for a monthly Uni-ticket, including \$163 for rail and \$30 for ferry service. The parking cost at the dock is \$3 per day or \$30 per month.

ESPA NEEDS YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS

As part of our program of keeping members informed, the e-mail list is used from time to time to send out alerts. If you're not on the list or you can't be sure, send your e-mail address to: rwlenz@aol.com

Legislative Fumbles (cont'd from page 1)

staffers did not hold out much hope for passage this year. The "we just ran out of time," explanation offers little consolation to those who counted on it's passage, especially since the bill has been in the works for months. New York's antiquated legislative tradition may end up diverting millions of public and private dollars to lawyers and judges rather than construction workers and engineers while New Yorkers wait for improvements long overdue.

Frank Barry

Amtrak Guarantees (cont'd from page 1)

Amtrak says a 1% increase in its retention rate would add \$13 million in annual revenues. And there is the unquantifiable cost to Amtrak that results when a dissatisfied customer tells his or her friends, relatives and work associates about a bad experience.

While Amtrak says the guarantee is "unconditional," there are safeguards. The guest must attempt to get the problem resolved with an employee first. And if the same passenger submits repeated requests for vouchers, Amtrak will take notice. All in all, Amtrak believes the good will and financial benefits will far outweigh the risks, even though Black concedes the overall rate will rise above the Coast Starlight's very low figure.

What Black characterized as a "bold step" has not come lightly or suddenly. Amtrak has spent months training and preparing its 24,000 employees. It hopes empowering them to take actions to make it right will overcome the "It's not my fault, there's nothing I can do" attitude passengers sometimes encounter. And it views the system as a way to quickly identify problems with trains, stations, procedures or specific employees so attention can be directed where needed.

Amtrak has even introduced a new logo, (see below) consisting of three wavy convergent lines "whose shape suggests movement and captures the excitement of travel," according to Black. Warrington told reporters that Amtrak needs to change its image as an organization "tired, worn out, complacent and under siege." It is not a coincidence that the nearly 30-year-old "pointless arrow" is being laid to rest as the service guarantee is introduced.

For Amtrak and its guests, everything now depends on what happens out on the trains and in stations far from Warrington's Washington office. Success hinges on the success of Amtrak's management in getting buy-in from the employees who actually interact with the passengers. The employees will gain something too if it works—for every month in which fewer than one per thousand passengers request a voucher, each Amtrak employee will get a bonus of roughly \$50.

The public does not usually view Amtrak as a leader in the travel industry. Some of its most visible initiatives, such as yield management pricing, have been forced upon it by more dominant modes, mainly the airlines. But if this initiative works, it could well turn the tables on the airlines; their customers and public opinion just might force the airlines to follow Amtrak's lead.

Frank Barry



Rome Train Station

Rome's train station project will be accomplished in two phases. Phase I will be bid this summer. Phase I will include a newly constructed platform, renovation of the passenger tunnel, a new entranceway and elevator - Estimated cost \$1,100.00. The City of Rome, through it's street program will construct the parking lot. That program is tentatively scheduled to start in July. Phase II, which will involve the main station renovation is being designed. A source of construction dollars has not been identified at this time.

The Rome Rotary Club is sponsoring a "Support the Restoration of the Rome Train Station" fundraiser. Gary Gianotti

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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. 716-759-2315, Fax: 716-759-2791, e-mail: RWLenz@aol.com. Deadline for material for the September-October issue is Sept. 7.

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