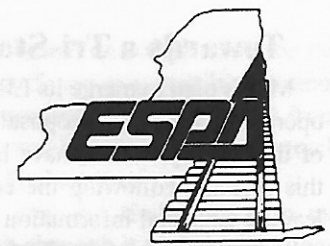


THE ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

HTTP://www.trainweb.ORG/espa



Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

Vol. 26, No. 4

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Turboliner Status

Currently, each weekday, one of the refurbished turboliners is running between Albany and New York's Penn Station. Amtrak is operating both Set #1 and Set #2, although at this point only one operates on any given day. Recent observations have a turboliner often operating from Albany as Train 250, departing at 9:00am and returning as Train 251, which now departs Penn Station at 12:45pm. Set #3 appears to be nearly complete at SuperSteel and Sets #4 and #5 are currently under refurbishment. Set #6 is just beginning to receive its refurbishments and Set #7 has not yet been delivered to SuperSteel although it is no longer in operation and continues to sit in Rensselaer. This train-set was partially refurbished in 1994 and operated from 1995 through 2002.

DOT Transformation

The New York State Department of Transportation is undergoing an internal reform process formally officially known as Transformation. The process is aimed at turning the NYSDOT into a transportation entity, which is able to meet the economic needs of the State with respect to all modes of transportation. This comes at a time when the department has many new people in key senior positions throughout the state. Early retirement incentives offered over the past several months have been taken by many NYSDOT employees.

All levels of the department and other State agencies are participating in the process. Commissioner Joseph H. Boardman has emphasized that thinking is to be non-mode specific and that it is to include all methods of conveyance. The project has been tasked to Acting First Deputy Commissioner Brian Rowback and Mike McCarthy- Director of Program Management at Albany headquarters. Mr. McCarthy has informed ESPA that aspects of the plan should be in place by year-end. He goes on to say that the policy areas to be considered are:

1.) Trade- the northeast United States and Eastern Canada

(Cont'd on page 6)

Major Progress in Washington!

Strong support for Amtrak has emerged in Congress in recent weeks, despite continued opposition by critics who control key committees. On June 25th the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee passed two major bills that would authorize \$2 billion annually for Amtrak during the next three years and \$60 billion in bonds for high speed and other rail projects.

However neither bill would guarantee that any money actually gets spent, and the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee chairmen who can do that--Ernest Istook (R., Okla.) in the House, and Senator Richard Shelby (R., Ala.) have been openly hostile to Amtrak. At an April 10th hearing Istook said "There is a grave question whether Amtrak can continue to operate without dragging down the transportation system for the rest of the country."

But in an almost unprecedented move, Jack Quinn (R., Buffalo) and other Amtrak supporters in the House garnered 219 signatures on a letter to the appropriators urging them to grant David Gunn's request of \$1.812 billion for FY2004. This appears to be the first pro-Amtrak letter to be signed by more than half the House members and it puts Amtrak supporters in a strong position for negotiations with the Senate. Traditionally the Senate has been more willing to appropriate adequate funds for Amtrak than the House, which has often attempted to bargain the final amount downward. This time it will be clear to negotiators that a House majority supports full funding whatever subcommittee chairmen and other critics may say. Twenty-three of New York's 29 Congressmen and women signed the letter. Only California had more signers. For a list of New York signers, see Congressional scoreboard (page 4). At this writing it appears House Appropriators may act by mid July.

There were positive moves in the Senate as well--Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R., Tex.), who chairs the Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, introduced an amendment to the Surface Transportation Safety Reauthorization Act authorizing \$2 billion annually for Amtrak for 6 years. This was approved by the full Senate Commerce Committee over the objections of its chairman, John McCain. As one of Amtrak's harshest critics, McCain deserves at least some credit for not using his chairman's prerogative to block the vote. But he cut fellow Republican Hutchison off in mid-sentence so rudely that "the room gasped" according to Don Phillips in the August TRAINS magazine.

In a show of bipartisan support, the Railroad Infrastructure Development and Expansion Act for the 21st Century (Ride21) was introduced by Don Young (R., Alaska), James Oberstar (D., Minn.), Jack Quinn and Corrine Brown, (D., Fla.). They are the chairs and ranking members of the Transportation and

(Cont'd on page 3)

Amtrak serves 2003

New York State Fair

Amtrak will once again make a special stop for the 2003 New York State Fair August 21 - September 1. Three Trains in each direction will offer a special discount of 20% off the lowest available adult rail fare and up to two free kids (age 10 and under) per paid adult. Reservation code - X530.



Towards a Tri-State Regional Railroad

MTA's plan to merge its LIRR and Metro-North commuter rail operations, part of a proposal for a comprehensive restructuring of this agency, was to have been brought before the legislature this spring. Following the controversy and lawsuit about misleading financial information underpinning MTA's fare hike and calls for reform after charges of wrongdoing and favoritism, MTA put its proposal on hold, but plans to introduce it this fall, in a special session.

MTA argues that merging its two commuter rail operations makes a lot of sense and will produce substantial savings in overhead and maintenance cost. With tax sources earmarked for this agency shrinking, and with the city and the state anxious to reduce payments to the MTA to ease pressure on their own budgets, MTA is looking for ways to streamline its operations. From the transit rider's perspective merging these operations also offers some attractive longer-term service and pricing gains.

Bringing some LIRR trains into Grand Central and some Metro-North Hudson and New Haven line trains into Penn Station offers the opportunity for convenient transfer between these two long-spirited carriers.

Unifying these lines will bring nearly 80% of the region's commuter rail operations under a single management. Remaining will be NJ Transit's commuter rail service. It would make good sense to consider merging the NJ Transit operation into the new MTA carrier as well. Further economies of scale would result, benefiting New Jersey taxpayers. Perhaps more important from the passenger's perspective, the merger would greatly ease the implementation of new service opportunities. The centerpiece of ESPA/CBT/NJ-ARP regional rail working group's "Penn Station Metro-Hub" plan is to produce short term capacity and service gains, and fare simplification, achieved by operating trains through Penn Station. A 50% gain in peak hour capacity could be attained by "through-running" trains between points in New Jersey and points in Long Island, Westchester and Connecticut. This gain occurs by eliminating conflicts between inbound and outbound trains when trains are reversed in the station. Capacity gains are desperately needed at this overstressed facility.

Integration of services can be attained by cooperative arrangements short of a full merger, but little progress has been achieved so far. In fact, the opposite seems to be happening. This spring NJ Transit selected its own bi-level car design rather than adding to an ongoing MTA purchase. NJ Transit is obtaining a costly fleet of 33 new diesel locomotives that are not compatible with operations to Penn Station, while Metro-North and the LIRR have opted for dual-mode locomotives that provide one-seat service from non-electrified lines to Manhattan terminals. MTA has shown little interest in NJ Transit's Access to the Region's Core Plan "G" initiative. This plan calls for a new rail tunnel under the Hudson to Penn Station and a link to Grand Central. Rail passenger advocates on both sides of the Hudson have strongly supported this option, with its substantial benefits of regional connectivity. Through-routing Metro-North and NJ Transit trains using this link would produce a world-class regional rail system. Upstate New Yorkers have much to gain from this connection because it would permit Empire Service trains to serve both Grand Central and Penn Station and continue on to Philadelphia and Washington.

Achieving a tri-state operation is not without precedent, since several examples of bi-state rail operation are already in place in

the region. Nearly a quarter of Metro-North's service is provided under contract with the state of Connecticut. MTA bills Connecticut for its share of the cost, and systems of independent audits and an arbitration mechanism are in place to resolve disputes. MTA contracts with NJ Transit for its service to Orange and Rockland Counties. Both of these arrangements have served the traveling public well for many years, and could provide the basis for a more comprehensive agreement that would be needed to protect New Jersey's interest in a unified Tri-State operation. With substantial tax savings and service benefits at stake, and with major interstate planning decisions in the making, now is the time to lay the groundwork for a Tri-State Regional Railroad.

George Haikalis, ESPA Manhattan Coordinator

Cut-Off Restoration

Restoration of the Lackawanna Cut-Off in New Jersey and resumption of passenger rail service between New York and Scranton has continued to move forward, though at a pace much slower than supporters would like to see.

According to Frank Reilly, Chairman, of the Bi-State (New Jersey & Pennsylvania) Advisory Committee and Executive Director, Morris County DOT, the project has been transferred from the five counties involved to New Jersey Transit as of November of 2002.

However, before it was transferred, the bi-state technical committee received assurances it would still play a significant role in advancing the project. New Jersey Transit has kept that promise and the committee is minutely involved.

Completion date is still targeted at late 2006, but considering the way funding has been coming down, 2007 appears more likely. Frank Reilly stated that if funding came through faster, the project could possibly be up and running by late 2005 or early 2006 -- but currently that doesn't seem to be happening.

Supporters of the project expect a rating from FTA around the middle of next year. They will then go after the larger funds from the Government for final engineering. Construction work on the Cut-Off could finally begin in 2005.

Reilly indicates that the project still needs the continued support from New Jersey and Pennsylvania residents - as well as New York residents in urging the congressmen and state officials to fully support the project. Generally all have strongly supported the project, but keeping letters of support going to them is very helpful. Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter indicated that he planned to lobby to have the Cut-Off restoration included in the latest Federal Transit Authorization bill, which is vital to the completion of this long-needed project. Letters of support for the restoration of the Lackawanna Cut-Off and rail service to Scranton and beyond to Binghamton are strongly recommended. Letters should be sent to Senator Arlen Specter, 711 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510-3802 and The Hon. Rodney Frelinghuysen, 11th Congressional District NJ (R), 2442 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515-3011, Tel: 202-225-5034, or: 30 Schuyler Place - 2nd Floor, Morristown, NJ 07060, Tel: 973-984-0711. Letters should also be sent to both New York Senators, Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton.

Rob Piecuch

ESPA wishes to thank Mischler's Florist and Greenhouses at 118 South Forest Road Williamsville NY for their generous donation again this year of flowers to beautify the Buffalo/Depew station. We urge our Western New York members to remember Mischler's for their floral and planting needs.

Major Progress (Cont'd from page 1)

Infrastructure Committee and its Railroad Subcommittee. According to Quinn, "The roughly \$60 billion...in this bill is the first serious money to be dedicated to a major, long-term rail infrastructure program of truly national scope." Quinn is a long time Amtrak supporter and received the National Association of Railroad Passengers Golden Spike Award for his efforts last year, as did Don Young this year.

RIDE-21, introduced as HR-2571, would authorize states or interstate compacts to issue \$12 billion in federally tax-exempt bonds and \$12 billion in federal tax credit bonds for high speed rail, each at a rate of \$1.2 billion annually for ten years. High Speed would be defined as 125MPH. It would also extend the Swift Rail Development Act through 2011, authorizing \$100 million annually for corridor development, subject to appropriation. The Swift Act had previously been authorized at \$35 million annually for planning and technology development only.

Finally, the bill would expand the Railroad Rehabilitation and Infrastructure Financing Loan Program by increasing its funding authority from \$3.5 to \$35 billion in outstanding loans at any one time. And it would eliminate restrictive provisions, which have prevented use of this program in the past. Loans could be used for maglev as well as conventional rail projects including 110MPH corridors, and up to \$7 billion could be used to upgrade freight railroads including shortlines.

This bill is almost identical to HR-2950--also called RIDE-21--that Quinn and Young introduced last year--but this year labor issues that dampened Democratic support have apparently been resolved and the top Democrats are now signed on. HR-2950 never made it beyond the committee last year. HR-2950 itself evolved from HR-2329, presented by New York's Amo Houghton (R, Corning) and Oberstar in 2001, which introduced the concept of tax credit bonds for rail. This approach has been advocated by Tim Gillespie, who represented ESPA in Washington last year and now represents the Railway Supply Institute.

Quinn, Young, Oberstar and Brown also introduced HR-2572 to provide Amtrak with direct operating grants at \$2 billion annually for 3 years. This would not only allow Amtrak to continue operation but would also allow implementation of David Gunn's 5 year plan to restore the system to a state of good repair after 5 years of deferred maintenance under the previous management. Young stated that "Although serious disagreements still exist about Amtrak's long term management strategy and structure, there is a common understanding of the need for near-term funding." Gunn has argued persuasively that restoring the system to a state of good repair is necessary no matter what Congress decides to do with Amtrak in the long term.

This bill would require Amtrak to submit business plans to the Secretary of Transportation and to report bi-monthly on its progress.

Hutchison's Amendment

In the Senate, Hutchison's amendment would create a "Rail Infrastructure Finance Corporation to support rail transportation capital projects through issuance of rail capital infrastructure bonds." The concept of a specific entity for this purpose has been strongly advocated by Tim Gillespie and is being promoted by the Railway Supply Institute. Gillespie feels the weak financial condition of many states will make them reluctant to incur more debt

by issuing bonds, which RIDE-21 requires them to do. But "the Rail Infrastructure Finance Corporation would have no debt to start with and a built-in mechanism (non-federal contributions to the project) to repay the principal," Gillespie says.

The Hutchison amendment would also include intercity rail passenger service in Surface Transportation legislation for the first time although rail funding would not come from gasoline taxes. But this would at least acknowledge that the federal government has responsibility to find a means for funding rail along with other modes, according to the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP). This amendment also authorizes \$2 billion annually for Amtrak for five years. It will be offered as an amendment to the TEA-21 renewal bill when that legislation comes to the floor.

The Bush Administration remains a threat however. At an Istook hearing in April, Michael Jackson of the Federal Railroad Administration said simply "The Bush Administration does not believe there should be a subsidy for (Amtrak) operations." Bush spokesmen have said any operating subsidy would be up to the states. Such a policy would likely end most or all long distance routes and probably many corridors as well, since most states face severe cash shortages. NARP points out that Amtrak began as a federal initiative, not a state or local initiative and should remain a 100% federal responsibility.

Bush's proposed \$900 million budget for Amtrak would likely generate another shutdown crisis or at best force Amtrak to defer Maintenance again. The Bush Administration insists on reforms as a condition of its support, including privatization of at least some routes, which could have very questionable results, based on experiences in Europe. And finally it has specifically opposed the tax credit idea suggested by key Republican supporters Hutchison, Houghton, Quinn and Young.

Yet public support for Amtrak continues to grow. The U.S. Conference of Mayors passed resolutions at its meeting in June, calling on Congress to "establish a dedicated federal rail infrastructure program to address needed improvements to our nation's railroad infrastructure," and to provide at least \$1.8 billion for Amtrak next year. Even conservative columnist George Will wrote in a June 8 column that Amtrak should be counted "as a cost of democracy--it is here to stay." Will noted a recent nationwide opinion poll that showed 71% public support for subsidizing Amtrak at current or increased levels. *Frank Barry*

Congressional Scoreboard: Support for Amtrak by NYS Representatives

This chart shows support for Amtrak at critical points during the last two years by current New York State members of the U.S. House of Representatives. With no major votes on Amtrak, support has been demonstrated by co-sponsoring key legislation and co-signing letters requesting adequate funding. The latter understates true support because members of the Appropriations Committee* often do not like to sign outside letters to their own chairmen but most have nevertheless been supportive within the committee. John Sweeney** is New York's only member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation & Treasury which deals directly with Amtrak.

Both New York Senators, Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton have cosponsored or co-signed every important Senate bill and letter in support of Amtrak.

HR2329: Co-sponsors, High Speed Rail Investment Act, introduced by Houghton 6/01

6/02 letter: Quinn-Boehlert letter to Appropriators asking \$2 bil for '03

2/03 letter: to Appropriators urging \$1.2 billion for FY 2003

6/03 letter:: Quinn-Oberstar letter to Appropriators asking \$1.8 bil. for '04

District	Member	HR2329	6/02 Letter	2/03 Letter	6/03 Letter
1	Timothy Bishop (D) (Took office Jan. 03.)			•	•
2	Steve Israel (D)			•	•
3	Peter King (R)	•	•	•	•
4	Carolyn McCarthy (D)				•
5	Gary Ackerman (D)		•	•	•
6	Gregory Meeks (D)	•	•	•	•
7	Joseph Crowley (D)	•	•	•	•
8	Jerrold Nadler (D)	•	•	•	•
9	Anthony Weiner (D)	•	•	•	•
10	Edolphus Towns (D)	•	•	•	•
11	Major Owens (D)	•	•		•
12	Nydia Velázquez (D)	•		•	•
13	Vito Fossella (R)				
14	Carolyn Maloney (D)	•	•	•	•
15	Charles Rangel (D)	•			•
16	*Jose Serrano (D)	•			
17	Eliot Engel (D)	•	•	•	•
18	*Nita Lowey (D)	•			
19	Sue Kelley (R)		•	•	•
20	**John Sweeney (R)	•			
21	Michael McNulty (D)	•	•	•	•
22	*Maurice Hinchey (D)	•	•	•	•
23	John McHugh (R)	•	•	•	•
24	Sherwood Boehlert (R)	•	•	•	•
25	*James Walsh (R)	•		•	
26	Thomas Reynolds (R)				
27	Jack Quinn (R)	•	•	•	•
28	Louise Slaughter (D)	•	•	•	•
29	Amory Houghton (R)	•	•	•	•

PLEASE URGE PRESIDENT BUSH TO FULLY FUND AMTRAK RATHER THAN PASSING THIS OFF TO THE STATES.

White House comments: 202-456-1111, fax 2461
E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

Bills Express Ready to Roll

The Bills Express will be available for three 2003 regular-season games, including the home opener against the New England Patriots on Sept. 7. In addition, the Express will be in operation Sept. 28, when former Syracuse star Donovan McNabb leads the Philadelphia Eagles into Ralph Wilson Stadium, and for the return of Bruce Smith to Orchard Park when the Washington Redskins visit Oct. 19.

The Express, presented in cooperation with Amtrak, takes fans round trip from Albany to the stadium with stops in Schenectady, Utica, Syracuse and Rochester. Fans can purchase a Bills Express Package that includes a game ticket as well as a round-trip fare on Amtrak or pay for the transportation alone.

Lower Hudson Valley Cross-Hudson Transit

The current bus service between Rockland County and the Tarrytown station has been increasing in popularity and now buses, called "TAPPAN ZEEExpress Bus" make 24 roundtrips each weekday, providing connections at Tarrytown to 24 Metro-North trains to Manhattan and from 24 trains from Manhattan. Buses depart from several locations in Nyack, from Thruway Exists 12 and 14, and from the Spring Valley bus terminal. Reduced service is also provided on Saturdays.

Additional and faster ferry service now exists between Haverstraw and Ossining, which provides 8 roundtrips each weekday and has resulted in increased ridership since faster ferries were placed into service in 2002. The travel time from Haverstraw to Grand Central Terminal is now as little as 65 minutes.

The MTA and New York Waterways are also looking at other ferry options for the future, including: Newburgh to Beacon, Nyack to Tarrytown, and various locations to Yonkers.

Gary Prophet

New Jersey to Mid-town Manhattan Possible Transit Link

One option to improved access from New Jersey to Manhattan would be to connect a rebuilt PATH in lower Manhattan directly to the # 6 local subway line that operates from City Hall (lower Manhattan) through the east side of mid-town, to the upper east side, terminating in the Bronx. This would more closely integrate the mass transit of both states and also promote better access to New Jersey from Manhattan, for the growing numbers of jobs located there. This would take some of the pressure and crowding away from Penn Station, which is already at train capacity during peak hours.

New Jersey and New York also need additional rail capacity under the Hudson River on the Northeast Corridor line, which is used by an increasing number of New Jersey Transit and Amtrak trains to/from Philadelphia, and Washington. When two additional tunnels are built, they should continue from New Jersey, to Penn Station (possibly at a lower level than the current tracks in Penn Station) and continue to Grand Central Terminal. Penn Station is at train capacity today and about two-thirds of all mid-town jobs are located within a half mile of Grand Central Terminal. It would simply add to congestion if any additional track capacity under the Hudson River did not serve the East side, but simply dumped thousands of more people at Penn Station, when most people wish to be on the east side. Additionally, by serving Grand Central, a long desired direct one-seat link would exist between the two major Manhattan rail stations, and connections would exist to Metro-North trains, allowing passengers from New Jersey to connect at Grand Central to such destinations as Rye, Greenwich, White Plains, Mount Kisco, Brewster, and Tarrytown.

Gary Prophet

US Customs/Niagara Falls

U.S. Customs and Immigration personnel at Niagara Falls have finally moved into the office Amtrak built for them in its station there. Hopefully this will reduce delays to the Maple Leaf from Toronto since the train should no longer have to make two stops on the U.S. side; it can now be serviced while the border inspection takes place at the station.

Canadian Pacific Passenger Improvements

Canadian Pacific (CP) track and signal departments are using the summer construction season to upgrade the 173 mile Canadian Mainline between Schenectady, NY and Rouses Point, NY. This is the ongoing joint NYSDOT/ CP project aimed at improving on time performance on the Adirondack route. The centerpiece of the project is a state of the art fiber optic signaling system.

CP Senior Manager of Business Development Steve Fisk reports to ESPA that "this project is moving forward with a cut in of the new signal system by year end". Mr. Fisk acknowledges that timekeeping for Amtrak's Adirondack train "could be better" and adds that part of the work will include the elimination of 10 slow orders along the route. The new signaling system will add a considerable degree of reliability to the railway. Signal communication is presently a patchwork of lineside poles and local telephone lines used for block communication. These are especially vulnerable to failure during the winter months.

The Saratoga Springs station will be getting its own station siding complete with power turnouts, again part of the overall improvement project. Mr. Fisk adds "this will enhance passenger safety and convenience at the new CDTA station"- CDTA is the lead agency and owner of the new station. The new station and related trackwork will benefit the expanding tourist operation of the former Delaware & Hudson North Creek Branch. Saratoga County and Canadian Pacific are working together on this project as well; transfer of the south end of the line between Corinth and Saratoga Springs is expected to take place in 2004.

This project is yet another example of the role New York State government and industry are working on to improve the passenger handling capabilities of the State's railway infrastructure. Public and private joint investment in railway improvements will likely lead to increased pressure to use improved facilities to a greater degree. Improved timekeeping and realistic fares on Amtrak routes would be a good start. *Ben Gottfried*

Tappan Zee Bridge and Rail Transit Study

The New York State Thruway Authority and the Metro-North Railroad are currently analyzing alternatives for rebuilding or replacing the Tappan Zee Bridge, which is a 3-mile long span over the Hudson River that connects Rockland County and Westchester County. It is currently a 7-lane bridge (3 lanes in each direction, plus a reversible lane to provide 4 lanes for peak direction travel) that is in need of repair or replacement, both of which will cost well in excess of a billion dollars. Currently, the bridge carries an average of 150,000 vehicles a day and there is little or no room to add any additional lanes on the Westchester County side and few locations where additional road capacity could be added on the Rockland County side.

There are over 150 alternatives under consideration, although many include combinations of the following concepts/ideas:

A. Repairing the Tappan Zee Bridge and adding a rail component, which could be either a bridge or a tunnel and which could be either light rail or heavy rail.

B. Replacing the Tappan Zee Bridge, either slightly north or south of the current bridge, while using the same portals (highway right-of-way) on both sides of the Hudson River. Along with this option, various rail components would be included, as explained below, under "D".

C. Replace the Tappan Zee Bridge with an 8-lane tunnel, with would also have a tunnel for rail (2-4 tracks).

D. The rail component, whether a tunnel or bridge would be the following: light rail from Suffern to Tarrytown, possibly continuing to White Plains and Port Chester and/or commuter rail from Suffern to Tarrytown and turning southward with a direct track connection with the Metro-North Hudson line.

E. If rail is placed on a bridge over the Hudson, due to the necessary height over the shipping channel, it would take a long gradual descent to connect at grade with the Hudson line. A lift or swing bridge over the Hudson is not being considered as an option, due to the number of boats on the Hudson River. A rail bridge or tunnel could be either 2 or 4 tracks, potentially with 2 tracks connecting with the Hudson line and 2 tracks continuing to White Plains and possibly Port Chester.

F. Various combination options, such as a highway bridge and rail tunnel are also being considered. Also, if a rail tunnel were to be built first, that would allow people a transit option during the extended construction of a replacement bridge for trucks and cars. The use of tracks for freight from Rockland County to the Bronx and Long Island is also being explored, which would be a feature of a direct track connection with the Metro-North Hudson line. Options that include a rail line across the Hudson ending at the Tarrytown Metro-North station were not viewed favorably by people attending hearings in April 2003, as that would preclude a one seat ride to Manhattan and would require a change to a bus at Tarrytown to continue to White Plains.

G. It has also been pointed out that a West-East rail line from Suffern to Port Chester would connect all 5 MTA lines that operate north of New York City, which includes the: Port Jervis line (at Suffern), Pascack Valley line (at Nanuet), Hudson line (at Tarrytown, or a new station just south of the current Tarrytown station), Harlem line (at White Plains) and New Haven line (at Port Chester). It would also connect with a long discussed potential future service on the West Shore line, and to Stewart Airport (Newburgh). A potential rail spur from east of White Plains to the Westchester County Airport was also viewed as an option.

H. The rail transit from Suffern to Tarrytown to White Plains to Port Chester could be either elevated or underground, or a combination of both. No funding or cost estimates were provided on any highway or rail options, as that was viewed as part of the next phase. Preliminary analysis is currently underway, with specific 5-6 options and an Environmental Impact Statement to be completed in 2004 and a decision to be made by the end of 2005. For more information, visit <http://www.tzbsite.com> where the project status will be kept up-to-date.

To provide input, please send your letters/ideas to both:

Christopher A. Waite, P.E., Executive Project Manager
New York State Thruway Authority
200 Southern Boulevard, Albany, NY 12209

And Janet M. Mainiero, AICP, Deputy Project Manager
MTA Metro-North Railroad
347 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017

In addition, to view the complete list of options and discuss the plan in further detail, call the Tappan Zee Bridge Community Outreach Center at 914-524-0273 on Wednesdays or Thursdays, as they have office hours in both Tarrytown and Nyack.

Gary Prophet

LATE FLASH

On July 11, Ernest Istook's Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee slashed Amtrak 2004 funding to \$580 mil. - a clear shutdown budget.

DOT Transformation (Cont'd from page 1)

constitutes the world's third largest economy behind only the United States and Japan.

2.) Technology- the complex flow of information now part of transportation systems.

3.) Traffic- the flow and the means of transport for goods and the traveling public.

These developments come at a time when New York's Transportation Commissioner Joseph Boardman has risen to become a powerful proponent of railway investment through his outspoken Chairmanship of the AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) Standing Committee on Rail Transportation. His public comments often reflect his belief that the rail system is worthy of additional public investment. Railroads themselves are beginning to acknowledge that their own capital spending plans may be inadequate to allow them to grow their businesses. Continuing freight traffic growth and the market demand for faster freight service is putting pressure on railroads to find new ways to finance capital projects. A public policy which invests in freight and passenger speed and capacity improvements could be a solution to this emerging problem.

Many of the new faces throughout the department consider New York's ongoing investment and consideration of New York's extraordinary railway infrastructure highly important to long range planning. Local development agencies throughout the state are aware of the significant value of using railway corridors to enhance their economic development plans. The NYSDOT by undertaking the task of Transformation, will put the agency in a better position to serve the growing need for comprehensive transportation planning and implementation required by state, local and federal entities.

ESPA applauds the efforts of the Transportation Department in this reorganization effort. New thinking and fresh ideas will surely emerge during the process which will guide the State in the coming years ahead. If the NYSDOT were to apply their legendary highway infrastructure construction standards to railway improvements, a great public benefit could be on the horizon. Stay tuned.

Ben Gottfried

Next Statewide ESPA Meeting Date:

Saturday, August 2 Utica - 12n - 3:35pm Union Station

Please contact Bruce Becker, 518-383-5985 if you need more information or are planning on attending.

Downstate ESPA Meetings

Downstate ESPA continues to meet monthly, joined with transit advocates from the Committee for Better Transit (CBT) and NJ Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP), as the "Regional Rail Working Group." The meetings are held in the Conference Room, NYPD Downtown Center, at 104 Washington Street, just north of Rector Street in Lower Manhattan. All ESPA members are invited to participate. The meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month from 6-8pm. The next three meetings will be July 16, August 20 and September 17, 2003. If you cannot make a meeting please feel free to contact us with your ideas and also to volunteer to assist our efforts.

The focus of the working group is on how to convert the great sleeping giant of regional mobility -- the region's commuter rail lines -- into a "regional rail system" modeled after the successful examples in Paris and Berlin and other cities in Europe and Asia. The group's initial effort, the "Penn Station Metro-Hub" plan, and other information can be found at www.auto-free.org or by contacting Manhattan Coordinator George Haikalis, at geohaikalis@juno.com or at 212-475-3394.

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. 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)

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