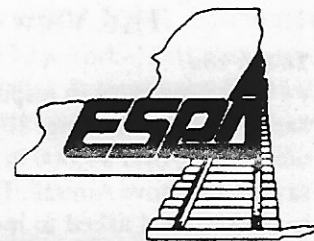


The ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

<http://www.trainweb.org/espa>



WORKING FOR A MORE BALANCED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Vol. 29, No. 4

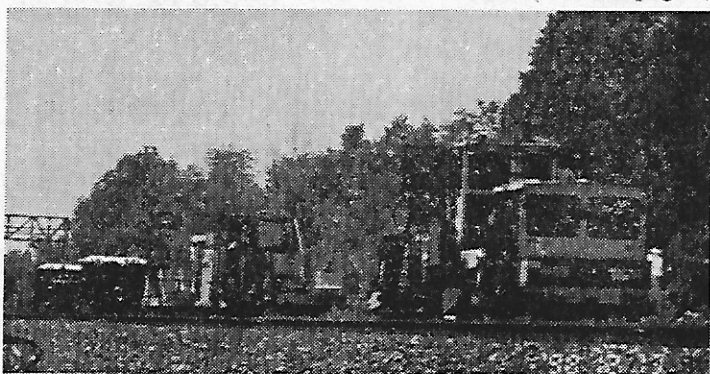
July/August 2005

House Funds Amtrak

Amtrak supporters won a big victory June 29th when the full House of Representatives voted \$1.176 billion for Amtrak, adding \$626 million to the \$550 million proposed by its Appropriations Committee on June 21st. The committee's \$550 million was an improvement over Bush's zero figure, but the bill barred use of any of it for trains with a subsidy of more than \$30 per passenger. Funding was specifically banned for all 15 cross country long distance trains plus the *Carolynian* (New York-Charlotte), *Hoosier State* (Chicago-Indianapolis) and Michigan's entire Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac corridor.

An Appropriations Committee press release falsely claimed the bill would preserve service on the Northeast Corridor including New York-Albany and other branches, as well as Chicago and West Coast corridors. In fact \$550 million would have shut down everything, since debt service alone costs \$278 million and severance payments from closing the long distance routes and other mandated payments would have more than consumed the rest.

(Cont'd on page 4)



CSX improving safety and ride quality, but temporarily upsetting Amtrak riders with poor on-time performance.

Delays to End South of Albany

CSX has now completed all major track rehabilitation south of Albany. Delays have been rampant since the work began, at times affecting every single train on the corridor.

The only work remaining on the Hudson line is ballasting a steel deck bridge near Stuyvesant, which will raise train speed from 90 to 110MPH. The job will take approximately two weeks and will alternately close a short section of each track, but this should not cause major delays.

Consequently August on time performance should improve dramatically for all northbound trains as far as Albany and for southbound trains originating in Albany (although heat related speed restrictions could still cause delays on very hot afternoons). However major trackwork continues west of Albany and delays are likely there through the summer.

Frank Barry

Service Ends On Hudson Valley Trains

In an effort to cut costs, Amtrak dropped all food service from trains that run solely between Albany and New York effective July 1. Amtrak states that this reduction in service levels will save over \$1.0 million dollars annually, mostly through the elimination of on board employee positions and the closing of the Albany commissary. Food service will continue to be offered on all other trains that operate in New York State. Reserved Seat Business Class service is still being offered on the affected trains, but the previously provided complimentary beverages have been eliminated. There are no plans to stop running the current business/café cars, thus table seating will still be provided on all trains and passengers are able to bring their food and beverages on board with them.

ESPA has voiced it's strong objection to this move and has urged Amtrak to consider other, less drastic, cost saving measures and to institute programs to increase café car revenues by insisting that cars be open for service immediately upon departure from the originating station; that they remain open until arrival at the end station and that staff not be allowed to take breaks during normal meal periods.

Bruce Becker

Acelas Return

Amtrak began restoring its Acela high-speed trains between New York and Washington on July 11, with two runs in each direction, and more have been added since. Weekday Acela trains now leave New York at 7AM, 8AM, 2PM and 3PM and leave Washington at 7AM, 9AM, 4PM and 5PM. Weekend Acelas leave New York at 10AM on Saturdays, and at 12 Noon and 6PM on Sundays. They leave Washington at 2 and 4PM Saturdays and 5PM Sundays. All stop at Newark, Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore. More Acela trainsets will return during the coming months, allowing service to Boston.

Amtrak says it lost only .5% of its Northeast Corridor ridership as a result of the withdrawal of the Acela trains on April 15th due to brake problems.

For now the Acela's will run on the same roughly 3 hour schedule as the Metroliners they are replacing and will provide the same Metroliner sandwich food service, though the fare will be higher.

Frank Barry

State Fair Service Returns for Fourth Season

Amtrak will again be making special stops at the New York State Fairgrounds in Syracuse during this year's Fair, scheduled for August 25 through September 5. All Empire Corridor trains (excluding the *Lake Shore Limited*) will provide service directly to the Fair Entrance Gate. This service is especially convenient for Western New Yorkers, as current schedules provide excellent same day trips to the Fair. Special Fair Service Discounts will be announced soon. For complete information, contact Amtrak...

The View from the Cab

Thank You!

Your generosity in response to our recent Special Appeal has been overwhelming! To date, we have received contribution totaling over \$9,000 in support of our ongoing efforts to save and improve Amtrak. The following is a list of those who have given and asked to be recognized. If you haven't already made a donation, I urge you to consider doing so NOW.

As a result of this effort we have been aided by Boffa and Associates, a Washington Public Relations firm, in mobilizing constituents around the country to voice their support for Amtrak. This is effectively involving people who would not otherwise be heard in ways that would not be possible without your contributions. Our engagement of a representative in Washington, DC, made possible by your financial support, has already made a very positive difference.

As the final Amtrak funding level is likely to be decided by a future House-Senate Conference Committee, we will also be working to positively influence this outcome, when the time is right.

Thanks again. As always, I welcome your comments, critiques and suggestions, on how ESPA can better attain our goals. Don't hesitate to contact me at anytime.

Bruce B. Becker, President

Upcoming Transportation Bond Act Projects

As of press time, there is still no detailed list of projects which will be included in the upcoming \$2.9 billion Transportation Bond Act voters will be asked to consider this November. What is known is that funding from an approved Bond Act would be roughly evenly split between the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the state Department of Transportation. The portion that DOT would receive would fund a variety of transportation related projects statewide, with highway and bridge repairs likely to be a major component. Reportedly, some passenger rail related projects have been proposed by NYSDOT, but firm details are lacking. The ESPA Officers and Coordinators will review the details of the Bond Act when they become available and provide further information in the next ESPA Express newsletter.

Bruce B. Becker

Boardman Confirmed

Former New York State Transportation Commissioner Joseph Boardman was confirmed by the U.S. Senate to head the Federal Railroad Administration, and is now on the job. During his confirmation hearing he made the following statement regarding Amtrak's appropriation: "If confirmed, I believe we have to work in collaboration, it will not be zero. If we can reform and make the changes necessary to support rail transportation, that will not occur"

Senator Bruno Appoints Former DOT Commissioner John Egan to Lead High Speed Rail Study

State Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno has announced the appointment of John Egan to lead a new study of high-speed rail for the state. Egan, who most recently headed the Albany Airport and oversaw its complete rebuilding, expects to have a final report delivered to the newly created Senate High Speed Rail Task Force within six months. While a new consulting contract for the study will be awarded over the summer, Egan expects to also make extensive use of previously completed studies. Reportedly the study will focus primarily on infrastructure improvements in the New York Albany Hudson Valley Corridor, but may also address improvements needed in other areas of the state.

Mr. Egan has already been in contact with ESPA and he has asked for our input, from the passenger's perspective, for the study. Senator Bruno has also expressed his desire for ESPA's involvement when the Task Force considers the recommendations of the study. The Senator adamantly wants this effort to be successful and to lead to improved rail service. ESPA will continue to push for incremental improvements that will result in increased on-time reliability, capacity enhancements, reduced trip times and increased frequencies.

Bruce B. Becker

ESPA 2005 Special Appeal Donor List Names through 6/23/05

Molly and Barry Adams	Ruth Langbert
Jan Allen	Peter Lichtenfeld
Eugene Ashline	Robert Linger
William Becker	Glenn Mallow
Ken Beer	Stephen Maselli
Judy and Doug Beers	Martha McCluskey
Thomas Birmingham	Robert McConnin
Jon Bovard	William Moltshor
Stephen Boyer	Richard Moore
Phyllis Budell	I. A. Morris
Clinton Carpenter	Morris Moving Corp.
Edward Casey	Paul Nance
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Joann Collins	Alec Pandeleon
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Ben English	Greg Rabb
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Gerald Fordham	James Richardson
Everett Fox	Richard Rizzo
Wayne Freed	Patricia Roberts
Joseph Gagne	Arthur Savage
Stuart Gewirtzman	Walter Schuffenhauer
Carlton Gordon	George Shaw
Frank Gordrier	Robert Silverfarb
James and Dolores Haker	Ralph Spielman
Peter Hall	Glenne Spitze
Douglas Hard	Stedman Stephens
Henry Hart	Nicholas Sturgeon
Thomas Hart	George Terwilliger
Susan Hauser	John Urtz
Tom Hebeisen	Richard Venus
Lewis Hitch	Fred Videtto
Charlotte Jakubiec	Fred Wertz
Gregory Jandura	Henry Williams
Jan Kasoff	Marcel Zucchini

'New York By Rail' Travel Discount

The 2005 'New York By Rail' Travel Guide is now available! Featuring destinations across the state, this 50 page, full color guide can be obtained at trail stations, on board Empire Corridor trains or by contacting Amtrak at 1-800-872-7245 or on line at www.amtrak.com.

This year's Travel Guide is offering a 'New York By Rail 50% Off Companion Fare' discount, valid through March 2006. Using discount code V707, New York State travelers can save 50% off a second adult fare when traveling in pairs. Specific advance purchase requirements, blackout dates and other restriction apply. Contact Amtrak for full details.

Syracuse Park Street Bridge Advancing

The long delayed Park Street Bridge passenger rail project in Syracuse crossed another hurdle involved with a project of this nature. A section 89 administrative hearing was held in Syracuse on June 29, 2005 to address construction related issues involved with the project as it crosses a public highway. Section 89 administrative hearings are required for projects, which cross a public highway or right of way, in this example, Park Street. The required testimony for the hearing was provided by regional transportation officials, general contractor SB&NY (Syracuse Binghamton and New York Railroad) and engineering firm Spectra Engineering.

The project at this point has about two million dollars (\$1,955,000) available for the new rail connection to the Syracuse intermodal terminal east of the new bridge over Park Street, which serves both Amtrak and regional Centro bus services. The track will extend beyond the terminal to allow SB&NY service to the P&C Stadium east of the transportation center. The new track will also allow for cross platform transfers to the regional "On Track" shuttle trains to Armory Square and Syracuse University. This is something area transportation and political leaders hope will encourage ridership on the unique rail service operated under contract with the County using vintage Budd RDC self propelled cars.

According to Assistant Secretary for Onondaga County Economic Development Donald Western, no physical connection will be made to the CSX mainline during this phase of the project. The new track, while parallel to the CSX/ Amtrak route, will remain isolated from the busy mainline (a switch lead onto a mainline of the caliber of the CSX property in the Syracuse terminal district would add considerable cost to the project as this is high density signaled territory). Mr. Western goes on to point out that actual construction of this long awaited project is, like so many things in rail passenger development, "uncertain for 2005".

Ben Gottfried

Schumer to Push Transit Security Funds

Senator Charles Schumer has promised to try to double the \$100 million 2006 transit security appropriation, which the Appropriations Committee had cut from \$150 million to \$100 million before the London attacks. Senators Richard Shelby (R., AL) and Paul Sarbanes (D., MD) planned an amendment to raise it to \$1.166 billion. (Shelby and Sarbanes are leaders of the Banking Committee with jurisdiction over public transit.)

Currently far more money is spent on airline security than transit even though many more people ride transit each day than fly in planes.

Tunnel Safety Work Done

Improvements to reduce casualties from a fire or terrorist attack in the Hudson River tunnels are now essentially complete. New fans have been installed to greatly improve ventilation, and stairs in escape hatches have been widened to permit use by rescuers and escaping passengers moving in opposite directions. Telephone and radio communications and access to water for firefighting in the tunnel have been improved, as has the walkway at car door height. The improvements have been made to both Amtrak and PATH tunnels and are underway in Amtrak's East River tunnels. In addition Amtrak is installing third rails in the Hudson tunnels to provide power in case the overhead catenary wire is disabled.

The \$480 million project was funded by a \$100 million federal grant and funding from the transport agencies using the tunnels.

Newark Star Ledger (7/10), courtesy Orrin Getz

Transit Agencies to Develop Joint Farecard

The three transit agencies serving New York—Port Authority of NY and NJ, Metropolitan Transportation Authority and NJ Transit have announced plans to develop a regional "smartcard" for travel throughout the metropolitan area on all their lines. (Thanks to Orrin Getz and Dave Mears for this info).

LIRR Main Line Corridor Improvements (Third Mainline Track)

The planned East Side Access Project to bring LIRR trains into GCT via the existing but unused lower level of the 63rd St. tunnel will provide a 40% increase in peak hour capacity. The LIRR mainline to Hicksville in Nassau County is currently double track and capacity constrained. It is operated with both tracks in one direction for about one hour during each peak period, handicapping "reverse" commuting. As a complement to increased capacity into Manhattan, the MTA is proposing an increase in LIRR capacity by means of a third mainline track, reconfiguration of the Queens Interlocking (where trains are sorted between the 2-track mainline and the 2-track Hempstead branch), and simultaneously eliminating several very busy grade crossings and improving station areas. The MTA 5-year, \$21B capital plan includes Phase I, the western segment from Queens to Mineola, at a preliminary cost of approximately \$200M.

Public meetings were held in June as part of the Environmental Impact Statement process and many local residents voiced strong opposition, citing more train movements, perceived freight traffic increase including dangerous cargo such as LPG, possible property condemnation and construction disruption. According to the NY Times, this opposition has prompted several Long Island state senators to threaten withholding support for the entire capital program if it includes this project.

John Raha



Historic Train Station & Theater

Visit the Westport NY Depot Theater, a professional theatre in the historic 19th century Westport Train Station. Amtrak's daily *Adirondack* takes you right to the door. The 2005 season includes:

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change – A Musical Comedy by Joe DePietro & Jimmy Rogers. July 8 – July 17

The Woman in Black – A Ghostly Mystery by Stephen Mallatratt. July 22 – July 31

Show Boat – The Classic American Musical by Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern. August 12 – September 4

Rounding Third – A New Comedy by Richard Dresser. September 9 – September 18

For additional information www.depottheatre.org 518-962-4449

An Operation Livesaver tip:

Be aware trains **DO NOT** follow schedules.

Any time is Train Time!

The funding bill was developed by Appropriation transportation subcommittee chair Joe Knollenberg of suburban Detroit and committee staff. Knollenberg was praised by his Democratic counterpart John Olver (Mass.), and Vice Chair John Sweeney (R., Clifton Park) for considering their concerns and doing the best he could with limited resources. Both had pressed for funding for Amtrak. Although Knollenberg did provide some funding, he seemed no less critical of Amtrak than his predecessor Ernest Istook, and like Istook proposed elimination of all train service in his own district.

Knollenberg's bill was passed by his subcommittee on June 15th. Two amendments to increase funds to \$1.2 billion were defeated by party line votes during consideration by the full committee. Major objections cited by New York Republican staffers involved offsets, since Congressional rules require any increase in one category to be offset by a reduction somewhere else. Both proposed offsets involved taxes—postponing Bush's tax cut for those with incomes over \$1 million (Olver) or eliminating earned income tax credit for non-U.S. citizens (Virgil Goode, R, VA). One staffer said taxes were under the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee and therefore beyond the scope of the Appropriations Committee, so would be declared out of order.

Offsets are becoming more critical as funds tighten due to the Iraq War and simultaneous tax cuts. As consideration of the transportation appropriation by the full House approached, word spread that a prominent Republican would offer an amendment to increase Amtrak funding. But the offset was not disclosed because, as one staffer said, if it became known beforehand, someone else might "steal" it for their own amendment.

The suspense ended June 29th when Steven LaTourette (R., OH) and James Oberstar (D., MN), both leaders in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee responsible for authorizing Amtrak, offered their \$626 million amendment on the floor. (LaTourette chairs the Railroad Subcommittee; Oberstar is Ranking Minority Member on the full T&I Committee).

The bi-partisan amendment's offsets eliminate funding for several offices under Transportation Secretary Mineta including his Chief Information Officer (though they could continue if funds are transferred from other programs). They also cut allocations for federal buildings, including USDOT headquarters. Transportation planning, research and development funds are cut and a rail safety research and development program eliminated. Finally funds are cut for aviation, eliminating a credit stabilization program for airlines, according to Knollenberg.

Presentation of this amendment initiated a 3-hour debate on Amtrak by the entire 435 member House. New York City's Jerry Nadler (D) and 13 other members, including six Republicans, spoke for the amendment; only six—all Republicans, spoke against it. The amendment was approved by a voice vote.

But the debate continued as Corrine Brown (Fla.), ranking Democrat on T&I's Railroad Subcommittee, offered an amendment to delete the ban on funding for long distance trains. She was joined by Nick Rahall (D, WV) and Robert Menendez (D., NJ) as co-sponsors. Nadler and 11 other Democrats spoke for this amendment while six Republicans—including New York's John Sweeney, spoke against it. A voice vote was taken and the chair declared the Noes appeared to have it—but Brown immediately demanded (Cont'd on page 7)

May 2004 and April-May 2005 support letters were circulated by both parties requesting adequate Amtrak funding from the House Appropriations Committee. ✓ = Co-signer. March, 2005 letter to the Budget Committee was from Republicans only. The successful Brown Amendment deleted a ban on federal funding for long distance trains from the 2006 appropriation. Kennedy Amendment (Rejected) would have transferred \$100 mil. from Amtrak to homeless programs. ✓ = vote for; X = vote against.

	5/04 Support Letters	Rep.3/3/05 Support Letters	4-5/05 Support Letters	6/29/05 Brown Amend	6/29/05 Kennedy Amend
Bishop	✓		✓	✓**	X
Israel	✓		✓	✓	X
King		✓	✓	X	X
McCarthy	✓		✓	✓	X
Ackerman	✓		✓	✓	X
Meeks	✓		✓	✓	X
Crowley	✓		✓	✓	X
Nadler	✓		✓	✓**	X
Weiner	✓		✓	✓	X
Towns	✓		✓	✓	X
Owens	✓		✓	✓	X
Velazquez	✓		✓	✓	X
Fossella				X	X
Maloney	✓		✓	✓	X
Rangel	✓		✓	✓	X
Serrano	*		*	✓	X
Engel	✓		✓	✓	X
Lowey	*		*	✓	X
Kelly		✓	✓	✓	X
Sweeney	*	✓	*	X*-	X
McNulty	✓		✓	✓	X
Hinchey	✓		✓	✓	X
McHugh	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Boehlert	✓		✓	X	X
Walsh	*	✓	*	X	X
Reynolds				X	X
Higgins	Elected 11/04		✓	✓	X
Slaughter	✓		✓	✓	X
Kuhl	Elected 11/04		✓	✓	X

* On Appropriations Committee the letters were addressed to.

** Spoke up for Amtrak in floor debate

*- Spoke for Amtrak Appropriation increase but against Brown Amendment



Thanks to Mischler's Florist and Greenhouses of Williamsville NY for donating the flowers to enhance the Buffalo-Depew station.

Quotes from the Amtrak debate

"I must say to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. Knollenberg) and others on the other side, I admire what you did with inadequate resources, but I do not admire that you are the ones who made the resources inadequate. Members who voted for the tax cuts do not come to the floor with clean hands when they talk about the consequences of the tax cuts." Barney Frank, (D, Mass.)

"We rank a lowly 25th on the list of countries that provide commuter rail funds, behind countries like Estonia, Belgium, and Slovenia. Amtrak deserves better than that." Tim Bishop, (D, Southampton)

"While the TSA is currently spending \$16 million a year on new uniforms for airport screeners, passenger rail relies on a total force of 342 Amtrak officers to protect 25 million yearly passengers traveling on 22,000 miles of track in 46 States." Michael Castle (R, DE)

"This bill is a backdoor attempt to shut down Amtrak, to guarantee an Amtrak bankruptcy. We simply cannot allow it to happen." Jerry Nadler (D, NYC)

"\$550 million... is \$323 million less than Congress has appropriated to support the redevelopment of transportation infrastructure in Iraq." Elijah Cummings, (D, MD)

"There are people here who have a theological zeal that somehow Amtrak should be self-supporting, but they sit back as we lavish subsidies on the airline industry, which has not shown a profit in its passenger service for 75 years."

Earl Blumenauer, (D, OR)

"This assault on Amtrak by the President and some of his allies in the Congress is a perfect example of why 81 percent of the American people believe Congress is out of touch with their priorities." Corrine Brown, (D, FL)

"I have to tell my colleagues that priority is important; but I need to remind people that I voted for a lot of stuff that I might not have thought is important: cranberry and blueberry research, sweet potato research, a tattoo-removal program, and even a national anger management program. Amtrak is at least as important as removing tattoos with Federal money."

Steven LaTourette (R., OH)

"Let us come together in a bipartisan fashion and do something that we have not done well around here, and that is work together to better Amtrak and to assure that no one in this great Nation of ours is homeless." Alcee Hastings (D, FL)

Thompson Addresses ESPA Officers

Louis Thompson, a rail expert with broad international experience, spoke to ESPA officers about possible Amtrak reforms at their June 25th meeting in Schenectady. Thompson was invited to help ESPA think through which reforms may be helpful—on the theory that simply fighting to preserve the status quo is not sufficient in the present climate.

Thompson worked with the Federal Railroad Administration when Amtrak was created and headed the Northeast Corridor Improvement Program in the 1980's. Since then he has worked with most of the World's railroads as the World Bank's railways expert. This has included public and private sector, and freight and passenger issues.

Thompson began by pointing out that Amtrak was not created primarily to save passenger service but rather to save freight railroads from overwhelming passenger service deficits. But now, he said, "There's growing realization that we really do need passen-

ger trains." However there must be federal money, he said, to expand capacity for both freight and passengers.

He agreed with Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta and many others that "What we've done for 34 years hasn't worked." There's never been adequate money, and Amtrak is "more fragile now than ten years ago."

Regarding privatization, he defended the current British operation: "Last year British railroads produced more passenger miles than in any year since 1947. The accident rate is now way below anything (government operated) British Rail ever achieved." But he conceded there had been mistakes along the way. "The British government never expected it to succeed. They thought all they had to do was privatize it, walk away and it would need nothing further from government. The government wasn't prepared for success."

He noted that passenger trains do make money in Japan, where some routes are privatized, but that's where "Gas sells for \$5 a gallon and tolls can cost \$100 per trip." The Paris-Lyons TGV may also make money, he said, but elsewhere rail passenger service is "not profitable."

Thompson said DOT Secretary Mineta has been "deeply frustrated" over the lack of a decent proposal from Amtrak. Yet he has not responded to Amtrak's April 21st proposal—which Thompson called Amtrak's first-ever plan for comprehensive reforms to stabilize and improve inter-city rail passenger service in the U.S. His powerpoint presentation reviewed both the Bush and Amtrak proposals and ended with a suggestion for the following compromise that may emerge "if we're lucky:"

*Use the Gunn-Laney proposal as a base, keeping the 5 Amtrak business lines it proposes.

*Amtrak would run national system trains if Congress pays through FRA Grant Agreements. Amtrak would provide ranking for cuts if funds fall short.

*Amtrak would run ACELA and regional Northeast Corridor trains without federal support.

*A new Amtrak subsidiary would manage NEC infrastructure, with a board composed of representatives from states, freight users and USDOT. The federal government would pay to restore NEC to good condition. All users, including Amtrak, would pay avoidable costs. Amtrak would continue dispatching.

*Amtrak's right of access on freight railroads could be transferred to other users on terms acceptable to host railroads to allow for competition. (Thompson believes most freight railroads may agree to current terms for existing service levels but would be very reluctant to allow new or expanded service, given current freight volumes.)

*The federal government would provide 80/20 funding to states for capital investments in state corridor services. There would be a transition period for states to assume operating costs.

*Federal government would assume Amtrak's legacy debt.

"We can't assume this will be resolved," Thompson concluded, observing that "nothing ever gets resolved without a crisis." Amtrak's situation is still very precarious, he said, noting that a failure by any of the key actors in the next several months could still push Amtrak into bankruptcy.

ESPA officers did not take a position on Thompson's scenario, but it will provide helpful background as the refunding and reauthorization processes continue to play out.

The Bush Administration has so far been unable to sell its own
(Cont'd on page 8)

State DOT Ends Turbo Project

As an official end to the State's ill-conceived, multi-year effort to rebuild seven Turboliners for high speed service in New York State, NYS DOT has recently agreed to pay Super Steel Schenectady \$5.5 million to end the project and move the remaining 4 partially rebuilt trainsets to long term storage. The other three completed trainsets remain in storage at Amtrak's Wilmington, DE maintenance facility. There is no indication that these trainsets will ever be returned to revenue service.

Over \$65 million has been spent on the Turbo rebuilding project, first announced by Governor Pataki in 1998. The State and Amtrak remain in litigation over the terms of the original shared agreement for higher speed service, which was to be funded equally by DOT and Amtrak.

Saratoga Race Season Service

Amtrak will again be offering special Saratoga Race Track Packages this season, with service provided on Saturdays and Sundays, starting July 30 and running through Labor Day. For the first time in several years through Race Service directly to Saratoga is being offered every Saturday and Sunday of the seven week Saratoga Race Meet.

Northbound service will be provided directly to Saratoga on #71, leaving New York at 7:45am and arriving at 11:16am. Southbound service will be provided from Saratoga on #296 departing at 7:07pm, both Saturdays and Sundays, with a 10:45pm arrival back in New York. Offered from all Hudson Valley stations, the Race Packages will include round trip Rail, Bus Transfer from the Saratoga Station to the Racetrack, Clubhouse Admission and a Program. Contact Amtrak for reservations and more information...

ESPA's Fun "One-Day Trip" Flyers

One-Day Trip Flyers for Utica, Syracuse, Rochester and Buffalo that list the many attractions that are easily available within a short walk or bus ride from the station are available on the ESPA web site: www.trainweb.com/espa. The flyers also include a map and Amtrak schedule. For a copy of the four flyers, contact Bob Lenz 10531 Main St. Clarence, NY 14031 e-mail: rwlenz@aol.com

'Hot Deals' Save Big When Traveling by Rail

Weekly Specials offer deeply discounted fares on selected routes
Advertised Specials One popular plan gives families & friends more chances to save on summer travel when groups of 3 to 6 passengers traveling together, book a reservation between May 16 and September 30 for travel May 19 through December 15, 2005. The first two passengers pay regular fare, the third through sixth pay only 10% of Amtrak's standard one-way fare.

NY by Rail offers 50% off a companion ticket from NYC to Canada.

Amtrak Guest Rewards Credit Card – redeem points for free travel. Another special lets kids ride free on Auto Train, Crescent, Hiawatha among other routes.

Passenger Discounts – Seniors, Veterans, Student, NARP, AAA
Rail Passes include the North America Pass – 30-days, 2 countries – one low price.

Multi-Ride Passes 10-Ride or Monthly Pass

Full details available at www.Amtrak.com

Adirondack Scenic Railroad Business Plan

Adirondack Scenic Railroad's parent Board, the Adirondack Railway Preservation Society (ARPS) has developed a new business strategy plan and added the services of a consulting firm to implement and guide the plan. The Board recognizes the need to coordinate State, Federal and private sector resources to further the development of the Utica to Lake Placid rail corridor.

The corridor itself is registered as a national historic place and serves as the only non-highway transportation system serving this portion of the Adirondack Park. Trains use the tracks of the Mohawk, Adirondack and Northern between Utica and Remsen (Snow Junction) and then onto the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) owned trackage to Lake Placid. Passenger trains operate between Utica and Thendara (51.6 miles) during the tourist season with separate short excursion services offered at both Thendara and Lake Placid.

The strategic plan is aimed at establishing passenger service along the entire 141-mile route. The necessary steps required to build support for such an ambitious undertaking are addressed in the new plan. The plan highlights the potential economic development benefits to the region served by the corridor. New York tourism spending is pegged at \$40 billion according to the plan and the Adirondack Park itself is a major tourist destination dependent on the tourism industry. The plan estimated an \$8 million spending plan for the railroad in 2005 with funding needs increasing to \$17.5 million in 2007 as more services come online.

According to ARP's president Gene Falvo the Board has hired a consultant to help coordinate and implement the plan. Mr. Falvo calls the Adirondack Scenic Railroad "a tourist attraction unlike any other" with a truly unique set of opportunities and challenges. He stresses the need for public and private partnerships if the plan is to succeed. As the plan unfolds and the stakeholders in this Adirondack route come together with legislative and business leaders, perhaps we can all enjoy the prospect of a new transportation option through the Adirondack Mountains. Find out more at the Adirondack Railroad website, adirondackrr.com

Ben Gottfried

Adirondack's Train Excursion

An all-rail excursion will run on Saturday, October 22, 2005. The Adirondack Scenic train will leave Utica about 10 - 15 minutes after the arrival of Amtrak train #280. The first stop will be at the newly reconstructed Remsen Station for a visit of the station with its historical items. There will be pictorial items and static displays of railroad equipment, including the first Alco RS-3 locomotive purchased by the New York Central Railroad and still in service on the Adirondack Scenic. Also at Remsen, there will be static train photo opportunities, along with a photo run-by before leaving for Thendara. Arrival back in Utica is planned about 45 minutes before Amtrak train #283 departs for points west. This gives time to explore the beautiful Union Station, which is currently receiving additional restoration. Please be advised that some off-train activities are non-handicapped accessible.

Tickets can be purchased by mail or telephone. Central NY Chapter, NRHS, PO Box 229, Marcellus, NY 13108-0229. Those ordering by mail, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Include names and daytime phone numbers of all individual ticket holders. Reservations and information: 315-488-8208 or 315-469-0864. americanraillink@twcny.rr.com

House Funding (Cont'd from page 4)

a recorded vote and her amendment won 269 to 152 with 12 not voting.

While 73 Republicans voted for it, only two of New York's nine Republicans did so—Sue Kelly, (Katonah) and John “Randy” Kuhl (Corning). The “No” votes of the other seven are puzzling since nearly all have generally supported Amtrak. One staffer said the Governor's office told his boss long distance trains have little impact in New York State. It is not clear how many others shared this type of uninformed provincialism. In fact six of Amtrak's 15 long distance routes originate in New York City and are heavily used by New Yorkers—and the westbound *Lake Shore Limited* provides critical Empire Corridor service west of Albany.

Sweeney's and Boehlert's votes are particularly troubling as both are in key positions and both have received awards from ESPA and NARP respectively for actively supporting rail passenger service. Sweeney's two statements during the debate—for increasing funding and against the amendment to save long distance trains—suggest an internal struggle. He expressed dissatisfaction with Amtrak's current service but did not want to lose it—or spend a lot more money to make it better. His remarks at our annual meeting and follow up discussions with his staff indicate he wants to reform Amtrak but is not quite sure how. In explaining his opposition to Brown's amendment, he said he voted against it reluctantly but wanted to send a message that the status quo is not acceptable, that reform is needed. A staffer from another member said they voted to increase the funding but “We didn't want to give them a blank check. We want to see reforms; this was a way to send them a message.”

Sweeney said early in the debate he was “deeply disappointed at (Amtrak's) failure...to bring about meaningful proposals. It puts..Amtrak allies in a..disadvantaged position because...we do not ensure any strengthening...of the system.” He did not mention the sweeping reforms Amtrak has suggested, saying only that “the people running the system (must) get more interactive with us and propose more of the changes...we need...to finally resolve...longstanding problems.”

Many in ESPA share both his desire for better service and his frustration about just how to make it better when adequate funds are not available and many of the most serious problems now stem from lack of freight railroad capacity. But it does feel distressing to have our representative's vote with the opposition when the concept of a national public rail passenger system is under attack. Had they won, a lot of money would have been gone to pay laid off train crews who were not running trains.

Later nearly everyone joined to put down a spurious attack from Mark Kennedy (R., MN), a perennial Amtrak foe, who proposed diverting \$100 million of Amtrak's newly restored funds to provide shelter for the homeless. At this point the debate took a sharp partisan turn. “Hallelujah,” boomed David Obey, ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, “we have finally found a Republican who cares about any kind of a poor peoples program!...Let me just list some of the programs for poor people you have scuttled over the last 4 years.” LaTourette described the amendment as “a wolf in sheep's clothing.”

Nine members, all Democrats except LaTourette, spoke against Kennedy's amendment. No one supported it. Kennedy refused to accept a negative voice vote so a recorded vote was tallied—362 against, 59 for. Supporters included only two Democrats, both from Tennessee. New York's entire delegation voted No. Nearly

half the No vote came from Republicans, including several outspoken Amtrak critics.

The \$1.176 billion figure actually represents a 2.6% cut from Amtrak's current figure of \$1.207. But it places Amtrak in a much better position for House-Senate negotiations in which the House usually has the lower figure. Amtrak has asked for \$1.82 billion to be able to initiate essential repairs.

The Senate Appropriations transportation subcommittee's Amtrak hearing took place May 12th. New subcommittee chair Christopher Bond (R., Mo.) said, “Even if I was to agree that \$1.82 billion..for Amtrak is justified, I do not know how this subcommittee (could) provide such a significant increase from (Bush's) budget request.” Department of Transportation Inspector General Kenneth Mead has said Amtrak needs at least \$1.4 billion to continue essential repairs already underway.

On May 21st Senator Bond rode the Empire Builder with David Gunn and said at a Cut Bank, Mont. news conference, “The Administration is trying to bankrupt Amtrak and I'm not going to allow that.”

Full Senate Appropriation Committee action is expected late in July.

Frank Barry

There's Always a Reason to Ride Amtrak

Buffalo	www.buffalocvb.org	
	Neil Diamond – at the HSBC Arena	Aug. 24
	Ring of Fire – Studio Arena	Sept.9-Oct.7
	Transportation Museum	Daily
Rochester	www.visitrochester.com	
	Eastman School of music Concert	Aug. 4,5
	Rochester Red Wings Baseball	July/Aug
	Park Ave. Summer Art Fest	Aug 6,7
Syracuse	www.visitSyracuse.org	
	Syracuse Skychiefs Baseball	July 29
	Jazz in the Square	July 28-30
	Carousel Center – three blocks from station	
Utica	www.oneidacountycvb.com	
	Classic Movie Nights at the Stanley	Tuesdays
	F.X. Matt Brewing Co. Tours	Daily
	Children's Museum (next to station)	Daily x Mon
Albany	www.Albany.org	
	Summer in the City Art Fair	Aug 3
	Patty Loveless	Aug. 5
	Alan Jackson	Aug. 30

You can Keep America on Track

Join the National Association of Railroad Passengers – working for a balanced national transportation system. NARP is an alliance of railroad passengers and citizens who want more sensible transportation choices in this country . . . choices that include an improved and expanded nationwide rail passenger network with long-distance trains; high-frequency, high-speed short-distance corridors; and commuter trains. Many membership benefits including a monthly newsletter and a 10% discount when traveling on Amtrak. www.narprail.org 1-202-408-8362

Amtrak Seeks ESPA's Input

Amtrak's Empire District Superintendent, James Turngren, wants to hear of your New York State Amtrak travel experiences. Whether everything was great or if there was room for improvement, Jim 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: James Turngren, District Superintendent, Empire District, 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...

2005 - 2006 ESPA Meeting Dates

Saturday, August 6, 2005	Utica - Trackage Tavern
Saturday, October 1, 2005	Saratoga Springs - Amtrak Station
Saturday, November 19, 2005	Rhinecliff
Saturday, January 11, 2006	Schenectady - The Parker Inn
Saturday, March 11, 2006	Annual Meeting Schenectady

If you would like to become more involved in ESPA, these meetings are the perfect opportunity to learn more about the Association and how you can make a difference. ALL ESPA members are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact President Bruce Becker, 716-741-6384 or bbecker@westwoodcc.cc if you need more information or are planning on attending a meeting.

Postage Savings used for Passenger Rail Advocacy

For members providing their e-mail address, the ESPA Newsletter will be mailed at the same time it is forwarded to the printer. The postage savings can be used for passenger rail advocacy. E-mail addresses submitted will only be used by ESPA and not given to any other group. Please send your e-mail address to Robert Lenz, Newsletter Ed. www.rwlenz@aol.com

Thompson Addresses ESPA (Cont'd from page 5)
reforms but it may have succeeded in a broader sense. Its insistence on reform as a condition of funding has created a crisis atmosphere, which may force action; at a minimum it has forced Amtrak, members of Congress and even ESPA, to think seriously about reform. The big question though, is not whether reform will occur, but whether if it does, the results will be beneficial or unintentionally destructive. This may depend on whether changes are up driven by ideology or pragmatic considerations.

Frank Barry

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. Deadline for material for September/October issue is September 1, 2005. Material may be reproduced if credit is given ESPA and to the writer.

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