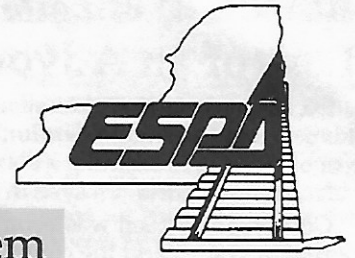


THE ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

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



Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

Vol. 21, No. 2

MARCH / APRIL 2000

ESPA Celebrates 20 Years

Roughly 100 people came to Albany on February 26 to attend the ESPA and NARP region II annual meeting—and to celebrate the 20th anniversary of ESPA's beginnings in 1980. Tour groups visited both the Rensselaer shops and the new passenger station before the meeting started. Visitors got an indoor preview of the cathedral-like main waiting room of what is now being described as the largest rail passenger station under construction anywhere in the U.S.

CDTA generously provided a bus to transport visitors to Amtrak's shops and then to take everyone across the river to the meeting.

The meeting began with a special 20th anniversary event reminiscences from three former ESPA Presidents about happenings during their terms of office. Frank Barry (1984- 1989) described how ESPA had faced down Conrail representatives on the Rail Taxation Council in 1986, forcing Conrail to join Amtrak, DOT and ESPA in studying potential 90MPH operation west of Schenectady.

(cont'd on page 5)

ESPA Award Goes to Adirondack Focus Group

ESPA President Robert Lenz gave the first award of his presidency to the Adirondack Focus Group during ESPA's 20th Anniversary annual meeting.



Photo: Jack Ross

From left to right – Wes Coates, Jack Ross, Jim Palmer, Jim Farrigan, Rita Markoff, Randy Lydon, Margarethe McCurry and Thom Coates.

This work group was established by Empire Service Director Wes Coates in January of last year to improve service and ridership on the Adirondack train to Montreal. The group, which has included on board and maintenance employees in addition to three ESPA members, has worked on better maintenance and food service, and instituted on board entertainment and educational lectures, (some by ESPA members). While Amtrak has undertaken other efforts to temporarily involve its staff and customers

(cont'd on page 8)

Amtrak Plans for Expansion!

At a February 28th press conference Amtrak released results of an 18 month Market Based Network Analysis of its national route structure containing a dozen proposals to expand its services. At least four would directly affect New York. The report marks the first time in Amtrak's 30 year history that it has laid out a plan to actually expand its route structure for long distance trains. In the past it has reacted to periodic pressure from the President or Congress by cutting certain routes, then gradually adding routes incrementally until the next series of cutbacks.

The study is based on the growing conviction within Amtrak that cutting routes is not the way to prosperity. As Board Chairman Thompson told reporters, "We didn't want to preside over the status quo or something that would barely eke out an existence for 18 months. We decided the smart thing would be to grow. We're going to build a national transportation system...expand the routes and ridership ..improve our bottom line." (from NARP Website posting- www.narprail.org)

The following proposals will affect New York:

- Creating a new overnight New York-Chicago train through Michigan and Southern Ontario by linking existing trains in the express markets and provide through service from New York points to Dearborn, Ann Arbor, Jackson, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo and other cities in Michigan. However, if it is substituted for an Empire Corridor Niagara Falls train it will likely be less reliable than the train it replaces.

- Split the New York-New Orleans *Crescent* in Meridian, sending some of its cars west to Dallas and Fort Worth through Jackson and Vicksburg, Miss., and Monroe and Shreveport, La. This would provide what is believed to be the first direct train from New York to Texas, although the Pennsylvania Railroad sent sleepers from New York to Houston, San Antonio and Dallas-Ft. Worth via connecting railroads as late as 1961. Amtrak itself ran a through New York - Los Angeles sleeper via New Orleans, Houston and San Antonio for a time in the mid 1980's.

- Reroute one of the Florida trains to Miami via the Florida East Coast Railroad. This would restore service to St. Augustine, Daytona Beach, Cape Canaveral, Melbourne and Fort Pierce. These resorts lost through rail passenger service when a bitter strike made the Florida East Coast Railroad unsafe for passenger service in 1963.

(cont'd on pg. 8)

Gargano Calls for Kennedy Manhattan Trains Sooner Rather than Later

Charles Gargano, head of the Empire State Development Corp. and close advisor to Governor Pataki, called for quick action on a one-seat ride from Kennedy Airport to Penn Station in Manhattan last month. Rather than waiting nine years for the LIRR to complete its link to Grand Central Terminal, Gargano issued a "Request for Expressions of Interest" for private firms to propose

(cont'd on pg. 6)

Editorial

Loss of an Advocate and Friend

On February 1, 2000 the rail and transit community lost an advocate and a friend. Gordon Thompson dedicated his career of 50 years to building a better community by providing a balanced transportation system for its citizens.

Gordon Thompson was aware of the link between a transportation system and the county's prosperity. Throughout his long career as a transportation planner, he worked diligently to accomplish an efficient and reliable passenger rail and transit network for the nation and the region. His influence was especially felt here in New York State.

Among Gordon's many accomplishments were his participation in the design and implementation of Buffalo's light rail transit system. He was a major factor in the organization of a regional bus system for Erie and Niagara Counties and was also instrumental in the promotion of specialized buses with adaptations to serve the aged and the handicapped of the region. He was a board member and former Vice Chairman of the Citizens Regional Transit Corporation, an advocacy group that promoted the expansion of MetroRail and improved transit in the Niagara Frontier.

He served as the Transit Coordinator for Rockland County, where he implemented various innovative programs and helped individuals with disabilities to use their talents to be employed in responsible transit positions. He worked on transit projects in Cleveland, Ohio and served as a consultant on transit projects worldwide. His last assignment was the final inspection of the 15-mile light rail line in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Gordon worked to promote a High Speed Rail System and lead a group of rail advocates, including several ESPA members, to develop a comprehensive long-term passenger rail and transit plan for New York. He presented this effort to state, regional and local officials as a means to encourage the adoption of a statewide rail plan.

He corresponded with federal and state officials providing technical information and insight on rail and transit issues, always urging adequate funding for intercity passenger rail and transit agencies. His knowledge of worldwide intercity passenger rail and transit operations provided a rebuttal to misinformed anti Amtrak and anti-transit groups and as such provided officials with a balanced view of passenger rail issues.

Gordon often provided technical assistance and advice to ESPA and its individual members including written articles and analysis of rail issues. His advice and guidance helped ESPA members in their campaigns to maintain passenger service in New York State.

Gordon Thompson maintained a vibrant interest in regional development and the need to use the lessons embodied in our transportation heritage to provide for a better life in our communities. He served on numerous citizens' panels and workgroups, most recently working on the redevelopment of the Buffalo Waterfront.

He served as a mentor to students and helped numerous concerned citizens throughout the state and nation in their efforts to promote rail and transit projects.

Gordon Thompson will be greatly missed by those who knew him and by thousands who did not know him personally but now enjoy the results of his efforts. His enthusiastic efforts on behalf of the rail community and the legacy of numerous and scholarly works will assist the passenger and transit community for years to come.

David Skoney

States Announce High Speed Rail Coalition

At a standing room only breakfast in Washington on February 1st, New York's Assistant Transportation Commissioner Jack Guinan opened a meeting to announce the formation of the State's Coalition for High Speed Rail. This event was hastily organized by Amtrak, the Wisconsin and New York State transportation departments and others as part of the National Conference of American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) annual legislative briefing. The group was addressed by Amtrak President George Warrington, Senator Frank Lautenberg (D., NJ) and transportation officials from Illinois, North Carolina, Mississippi and Wisconsin, in addition to New York.

Approximately 150 people crowded in, including New York Representatives Jack Quinn (R., Buffalo), Sherwood Boehlert, (R., Utica), Sue Kelly, (R., Mt. Kisco), Jerry Nadler, (D, Manhattan) and Benjamin Gilman, (R., Middletown). (No other state had so many Members of Congress present).

The briefing breakfast grew out of the High Speed Rail Summit meeting of state transportation officials held in Milwaukee last October where it was decided to form a national coalition of states to organize support for high-speed rail. A planning meeting in Washington on January 12th drew 34 people from eleven states, including Jack Guinan, Steve Hewitt and two others from New York's Transportation Department.

A major purpose of the coalition is to convey the message that rail has to be an integral part of this country's transportation system and the federal government must become a strong financial partner to help it develop, as it does for other modes. New York's Commissioner Joe Boardman is playing a lead role as a result of his position as Chairman of AASHTO's Standing Committee on Public Transportation, plus his strong personal interest in high-speed rail.

The coalition aims to involve the 27 states along the federally designated high speed rail corridors plus 9 others working to develop conventional train service within their borders. Getting Lautenberg's S-1900 funding bill through Congress is a major short-term goal, according to Steve Hewitt, NYSDOT's liaison for federal legislation. Over the longer term the group wants to get high speed rail into the regular transportation authorization.

For now the Coalition is limited to state transportation department officials—including some of the very same ones who have lobbied so successfully for highway funding in the past. Getting rail passenger service prominently onto their agenda could turn out to be one of the biggest steps forward for rail passenger service since Amtrak's creation. Certainly it bodes well for rail service in the new century.

Frank Barry

Pataki Proposes More Money for Rail

Governor Pataki's 2000 budget proposes a new five-year \$80 million program for rail projects, freight and passenger. Ten million would be spent this year, another \$10 mil. next year and then \$20 million for each of the next three years. These funds could be used to help with any of the projects already proposed or for new projects. Although the amount is small in relation to projects now being considered, it is still a very welcome development for rail advocates who have seen budgets offered year after year with major spending for highways and little or nothing for rail.

The governor's budget would also make \$7 million per year available to partially reimburse local governments and school districts for funds they will lose if rail property taxes are lowered. This is viewed as a good faith step by CSX and other railroads, but legislative action is still urgently needed before the state gets a green light for major passenger rail improvements.

Washington Update

There are two bills critical to the future of passenger rail service, which are picking up steam in Congress, and deserve the immediate support of all ESPA members.

The first bill is Amtrak's FY 2001 capital grant. Amtrak requested, and President Clinton proposed, \$521 million in funding for Amtrak in 2001. Then, 26 governors wrote to President Clinton and asked that Amtrak receive the fully authorized amount for FY 2001 — \$989 million. These governors were Republicans and Democrats, from large and small states. The president responded by proposing an additional \$468 million in funding which would come in the form of a 50-50 match from Washington and the states.

Nothing can be taken for granted at this point. Amtrak must receive the minimum \$521 million if nationwide passenger service is to continue. While Congress probably will approve that amount, it never hurts to remind members of Congress how important it is. The additional \$468 million will be a much harder sell in Congress, because it requires the states to take half of that amount from their overall federal transportation dollars. It sets a precedent which Congressman Bud Shuster of Pennsylvania, a big highway supporter, is already opposing.

The message for the future of rail is clear: Amtrak must receive the full \$521 million for FY 2001 to maintain its existing system, and if Amtrak is to create new high-speed corridors, it must receive the full \$989 million.

A second opportunity for expanded high-speed passenger rail service is S.1900, which Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey has championed. This bill would allow Amtrak to sell \$10 billion in bonds from 2001 to 2010 for new high-speed service. A companion bill, H.R. 3700, has been introduced in the House.

While the bill has strong support in the Senate, support in the House is much weaker. The House sponsors are Amo Houghton of New York, and James Oberstar of Minnesota.

The bill's first stop is the House Ways and Means Committee, a committee which will scrutinize the bill intensely.

ESPA members are urged to take prompt action to help move this important bill along. The following New York members of the House Ways and Means Committee need to be contacted:

** Charles Rangel (New York City / Harlem). Urge him to support the bill. Phone: (202) 225-4365. Address: 2354 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515. Mr. Rangel is the ranking Democrat on the Ways & Means Committee.

* Amo Houghton (Hornell). Thank him for sponsoring the bill. Phone: (202) 225-3161 Address: 1110 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515.

These bills, which are under consideration in Congress now, hold great promise for passenger rail service in New York, and throughout the country. Their passage depends to a large degree on whether Congress hears from rail travelers who want passenger rail service to expand, and alleviate the worsening congestion on our highways and in the air.

John Boffa, ESPA Washington Representative

Late Flash!

HR-3700 now has 28 sponsors, including New Yorkers Amo Houghton (R., Corning), Sherwood Boehlert, (R., Utica), Benjamin Gilman (R., Middletown), Michael McNulty (D., Albany), John McHugh, R., (Watertown) and John Sweeney, (R., Saratoga Springs). If your Congressperson is not one of the above, please ask him or her to co-sponsor HR-3700.

Electric Service Begins to Boston

"For 100 years people have been talking about finishing the electrification all the way to Boston," Stan Bagley told ESPA members at the annual meeting on February 26th. "We've done it." Well, almost. The work wasn't quite finished, and both tracks were not completely electrified the entire distance, but by switching from one track to the other, Amtrak was able to initiate through electrified service from Washington to Boston on January 31st for the first time in history. The 156-mile project is by far the largest electrification in this country since the Pennsylvania Railroad electrified its track to Washington and Harrisburg in the 1930's.

As a result, Amtrak's first two Acela Regional trains are now covering the 231 miles in 3 hours, 55 minutes (with 5 stops) and 3:57 with 7 stops. Is this the fastest schedule ever? Well, not quite. Here's how it compares with some fast schedules in earlier years:

Year	1954	1970	1971	1975	1990	2000
Railroad	NH	Penn Cent.	ATK	ATK	ATK	ATK
Trip Time	4:00	3:39	3:48	3:57	3:55	3:55
Train(s)	Y.Clip	Turbo Mer. Ltd.	Turbo	Y.Clip	New Eng. Express	Acela
No. Stops	5, 6	4	5	5	4	5
NY Terminal	GCT	GCT	Penn	Penn	Penn	Penn

The fastest schedule ever was achieved by a 1969 experimental 3-car low slung turboliner train built by United Aircraft. It originated in Back Bay instead of South Station, which shortened its trip by 5 minutes compared to other schedules. Since it could operate on the third rail it did not need an engine change in New Haven.

But ten years ago Amtrak operated two New England Expresses each day in the same time the Acela trips take today. These trains required ten minutes for an engine change at New Haven, but made one less stop than Acela. Perhaps most impressive were the 1954 runs which required an engine change but still managed five and even six stops in four hours flat.

Back then there was no 150MPH track nor high acceleration electric locomotives. But with a 59MPH end-to-end average, the initial Acela schedule is just the beginning. Schedules should tighten up as work is completed, and will certainly improve as new Acela locomotives enter service.

Frank Barry

Maine Construction to Continue

The latest Surface Transportation Board (STB) decision allows construction to continue on the Boston to Portland line. This will allow up to 79 mph speeds for passenger trains on the 115-lb. rail.

The issue revolves around the adequacy of support for the track structure. With adequate support, the rail will be stiff enough to resist bending beyond safe limits. The design of the reconstructed railbed includes enough depth of ballast and other substructure to provide sufficient support to the 115-lb. continuous welded rail. Service is expected to start this fall.

Catskill Study Contractor Selected

The NYS Department of Transportation has designated Edwards and Kelsey to undertake a \$500,000 study of bringing high speed trains to the Catskill Mountain region, specifically Monticello. DOT officials would not speculate how this might be done. Monticello has not had rail service of any kind since the New York Ontario and Western was abandoned in 1957. Before then it was served by a branch off another branch from the NYO&W main line to Scranton and Oswego.

Funds for the Catskill study were secured by Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, (D., Manhattan).

Frank Barry

New Amtrak Facilities at Memphis

Amtrak customers in Memphis, Tenn. are now benefiting from the renovated Memphis Central Station. The \$17 million project, for which Amtrak contributed \$100,000, includes renovated Amtrak Facilities, a restored Great Hall, apartments and condominiums; a city bus and trolley transfer facilities and platform level parking.

Northwest Cascades Service Rated Best in 1999

Amtrak *Cascades* were rated number one for customer satisfaction in Amtrak's 42-route national system in 1999. Each month customers who travel aboard Amtrak are randomly selected to respond to a series of questions to measure their satisfaction level in specific areas of service – everything from comfort of seats to the cleanliness of the bathrooms, from food quality to station and on-board crews.

In the year since the launch of the new *Cascades* services, annual ridership on the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor hit a record high of more than 565,100 passenger trips during 1999. The trend marks a 150 percent increase since 1993 when Amtrak began its partnership with Pacific Northwest states.

Amtrak Weekly Rail Sale Program

Through Amtrak's Rail SALE, Amtrak customers can take advantage of coach class fares discounted at up to 70%, on rail travel in the U.S.

Weekly updates to the Rail SALE fares are posted every Monday, and the fares are available for a least one-week. The discounted fares apply not only to the cities listed but also to intermediate destinations. Rail SALE fares are only available to customers who purchase their tickets on-line using a credit card.

New Cafe Car Menus

Amtrak has introduced a new Cafe Car Menu on Empire Corridor trains. New sandwich items include: Thai Chicken Wrap, Ham and Cheese on French baguette, a Garlic and Herb Turkey sandwich, and a Chicken and Mozzarella with roasted red peppers on a French roll. The new menu also has a flame-broiled cheeseburger for more traditional food connoisseurs.

Salads will be offered for the first time on Empire Service, including Mediterranean, Nicoise, Turkey Caesar, Chef's, and Spinach salads. They will rotate on a weekly basis, but a fresh garden salad and fresh fruit salad will be available at all times. New snack items include Blue Luna Cafe Salsa with Chips, Terra Chips (colorful collection of various vegetable chips), Salsa Reds (Spicy red corn chips), and Harry's Premium Sourdough Pretzel Nuggets. New beverages include Blue Luna Cafe Latte Coffee (a gourmet blend of French roast coffee and milk that will be served cold) and Lipton's natural iced Green Tea with honey.

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

Albany, NY	Express Lansing Travel	(518)438-4441
	(800) 767-1840
Clarence, NY	Clarence Travel	(716) 759-7203
	(800) 336-3890
New York, NY	Bill Closs Travel	(212) 804-5719
Patchogue, NY	Accent on Travel	(516) 654-3325
 FAX(516) 654-3379	
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.

Amtrak Reform Council Backs Off

At a hearing on February 23rd a Senate sub-committee chaired by Amtrak supporter Kay Bailey Hutchison, (R., Tex.) removed a barrier to Amtrak's survival thrown up by the Amtrak Reform Council in its first report to Congress, issued in January. The problem involved what to count in determining whether Amtrak can reach self-sufficiency by 2003 as required by Congress in 1997. Congress has been willing to continue providing capital funds for Amtrak, but operating funds may not be provided after 2002.

The Amtrak Reform Council, established by the 1997 law to monitor Amtrak's efforts to reach self-sufficiency, must report to Congress if it concludes that Amtrak cannot meet this goal. Such a finding would require the Council to submit to Congress a plan to "restructure and rationalize" national intercity rail passenger service, while Amtrak would be forced to plan for its own liquidation.

The Amtrak Reform Council's report alleges that Amtrak's positive projections have been deceptive because they have inappropriately labeled depreciation and progressive overhaul costs as capital items when they are really operating costs. According to the Council this has allowed Amtrak to understate its actual operating expenses by \$567 million. Amtrak's written rebuttal argued that the Council was trying to reinterpret the understanding with Congress reached in 1997 by ignoring historical precedent as well as Congressional decisions in 1993.

Hutchison, who chairs the Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine that oversees Amtrak, agreed with Amtrak Board Chairman Tommy Thompson's assertions, and asked Amtrak Reform Council Chairman Gil Carmichael to back off. Carmichael, long an Amtrak supporter, seemed only too glad to do so. He said the problem arose from a legal interpretation by the Council's attorney who felt that since Congress had not made its intent clear, the Council should follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. Amtrak said it follows these principles for accounting purposes, but that Congress did not intend for these principles to determine the standard of self sufficiency for Amtrak.

Amtrak says that progressive overhauls are done more frequently than heavy overhauls and allow for replacement of parts as needed rather than waiting for a heavy overhaul where everything is replaced at once. Progressive overhauls cost less and keep equipment in better operating condition, according to Amtrak. Amtrak's rebuttal indicates that while these are considered operating expenses for accounting purposes, Congress has allowed progressive overhauls to be funded from its Capital grant. It also allowed transit operators to use capital funds for repairs.

Frank Barry

Adirondack RR to Revise Utica Service

This summer will see fewer through trains from Utica to Thendara according to the Adirondack Railroad's new timetable. Service will begin on Memorial Day weekend with local runs only to Holland Patent (13 miles) and Remsen (22 miles). Through trains to Thendara will not begin until June 28th, and then will run only twice weekly (Thurs and Sat.), leaving Utica 9AM and returning at 6:30PM.

The Adirondack Railroad suffered some financial problems last year, due in part to a washout and lower than expected ridership. It's management also took a blow when Acting Executive Director Henry Parnesse suffered a heart attack.

However the railroad still hopes to initiate service between Lake Placid and Saranac Lake in September. This will require rehabilitating 74 miles of track between Thendara and Saranac Lake sufficiently to get equipment through for the Lake Placid operation. Work on this most remote stretch is already underway and former Adirondack Railway Preservation Society President David Link told ESPA all washouts should be repaired by mid-May.

Frank Barry

ESPA Celebrates *(continued from page 1)*

Lewis Hoppe (1989-1990) described how he persuaded Amtrak President Graham Claytor to open up an 11PM New York-Albany Sunday deadhead move to passengers in 1989. In 1998 Amtrak made this train a daily operation.

Steve Salatti (1990-1999) said ESPA's most important accomplishments during his term were ESPA's Five Year Plan (1996) and the 1998 Marist Public Opinion poll, which revealed high voter support for state investment in rail passenger service. Both have been credited with helping to create the climate which made Governor Pataki's commitment to upgrading rail service possible.

Guest speakers began with Michael Smith and John Reed of the New York State Department of Transportation. Smith, who heads the new High Speed Rail group, reported that the first rebuilt turboliner is due out of the shop in April for testing, and the second should follow in June. Both will have a fiberglass skin bonded to the metal to reduce maintenance. The new turbine motors will be lighter and less polluting, although slightly more powerful than earlier versions. "We expect 15 years of trouble free service," Smith said.

Smith said the state hopes to rebuild the other five trainsets during the next 2-1/2 years, beginning in June. The turboliners have been a long time coming; initially promised in time for the 1998 election campaign, the completion date has become something of a moving target, always just a few months away. Asbestos removal and other complications have slowed completion. Smith said "we want to make sure they're reliable before they go into service."

John Reed described the Department's progress on infrastructure. Although federal approval for use of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds under TEA-21 is still pending, the last requirement has been met, according to Reed—the Coast Guard has approved plans to repair the Hudson River bridge. Meanwhile, the High Speed Team has worked with Amtrak to complete plans for the second track between Albany and Schenectady and the resulting configuration scheme has been forwarded to CSX for its approval. A decision has been made to use concrete ties, which will greatly reduce maintenance.

DOT has also been working with Amtrak to identify projects to reduce running time between Albany and Poughkeepsie. These include relocating curves, laying ballast on bridges where ties now rest on bare metal and upgrading or eliminating road crossings.

John Boffa, ESPA's resident representative in Washington, reported on the importance of passing the Lautenberg high speed bond issue bill to create a secure source of funding for expansion. (See separate article). Boffa noted that, as chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, Presidential candidate John McCain was "the biggest stumbling block to Amtrak's reauthorization" in 1997. His opponent George W. Bush supported efforts to preserve Amtrak's *Texas Eagle* and reportedly wants to appoint Amtrak Board Chairman Tommy Thompson as his Secretary of Transportation, Boffa said.

In introducing Stan Bagley, Frank Barry noted that as President of the Northeast Corridor, Mr. Bagley was the highest-ranking Amtrak official ever to address an ESPA meeting. Mr. Bagley thanked ESPA, saying, "Few organizations have demonstrated results as ESPA has. Your efforts have made a difference."

Mr. Bagley reported on the successful introduction of the first electric train to Boston, which exceeded ridership projections 35-40% during the first month and "last Friday carried 1000 people, every seat was used at least twice."

"I'm excited about *Acela*," he said. "In July, when people can finally feel it and touch it, they will want it everywhere. High speed rail is becoming the hot mode." He noted that the high-speed trainsets were designed with input from 24,000 customers.

The "Capstone" cars, which will be used for *Acela Regional* service, (including Empire Service) are being built from 1970's Amfleet I cars. They were designed with a team of conductors, lounge car attendants, vendors and others. "We had mockups made of styrofoam and cardboard that we could move around." Bagley

said this was done because "for years new cars have been rejected by employees who had no say in their design." The Capstone Cars will have fewer and more comfortable seats, more space for luggage and completely redesigned bathrooms.

Mr. Bagley complemented Empire Service Director Wes Coates for his efforts to keep the trains on time. "Wes has worked tirelessly to maintain good relationships with CSX. You have to work on this every single day. The key is dispatching." He noted that on time performance is "the key driver" among the 13 areas covered by Amtrak's customer surveys.

Wes Coates has been concentrating on reducing border delays, and Amtrak is now spending \$50,000 to program its reservation computers to require citizenship data from international passengers in advance, in order to speed border inspections. This summer Amtrak plans to build an office for inspectors in the Niagara Falls station so inspections can be done while the train is serviced instead of requiring a special stop at the border.



Photo: Jack Ross

ESPA Vice President Gary Prophet (right) asks Mr. Bagley questions from the members.

On the partnership with New York State, Mr. Bagley said work on the double track to Schenectady should start this summer. He said some improvements have already been made to the Rensselaer maintenance complex. The \$11 million to upgrade this facility represents "a key commitment by Amtrak to keep jobs here. It will become a maintenance home for the turboliners as well as the dual powered locomotives. And it will help us bring in outside locomotive maintenance business."

Responding to questions, Mr. Bagley and his management team: John Taino, Vice President of Operations; Walter Peters, Senior Director of Scheduling; and Walter Ernst, Metropolitan Division General Manager -- made the following points:

Amtrak wants to raise speeds between New Rochelle and New Haven from 70 to 110MPH on track owned by Metro-North, but the overhead wires (catenary) are the big constraint. Metro-North is now beginning a seven-year project to replace them, according to Mr. Taino.

The new turboliner trainsets are the only additional equipment in sight for Empire Service this summer, although Wes Coates is looking for ways to service cars more quickly in the shop to make them more available. The Capstone cars will not arrive here until next year.

While most Northeast Corridor runs will be either *Acela Express* (the high speed trainsets), *Acela Commuter* (New York- Philadelphia Clocker trains) or *Acela Regional* (everything else), three named trains will have special identities as "leisure trains". They are the overnight Boston-New York-Washington-Newport News *Twilight Shoreliner*, the *Adirondack* to Montreal and the *Maple Leaf* to Toronto. A focus group, similar to the very successful Adirondack focus group, is being established for the *Maple Leaf*.

(cont'd on page 7)

Give the
Gift of
Travel!



Kennedy Manhattan Trains (cont'd from page 1)

methods for improving signaling, and increasing track capacity into Penn Station, permitting direct train service within three years. While the request mentions a track connection at Jamaica to the Port Authority's AirTrain proposed elevated railway line above the Van Wyck Expressway as a possibility, it allows all reasonable alternatives to be considered.

This announcement is good news for rail passenger advocates. The current plan, a shuttle system requiring a change at Jamaica, would be especially unattractive for intercity rail passenger arriving at Penn Station. The announcement is also important to the Committee for Better Transit and the Southeast Queens Concerned Neighbors who are presently involved in litigation aimed at reversing the Port Authority's decision to use the Van Wyck corridor rather than the disused LIRR Rockaway cut-off in central Queens. A key Port Authority argument for not using the far less costly (and less disruptive) alternative was the LIRR's claim that additional peak hour trains could not be operated to Penn Station. Gargano has now cut the legs off of that argument.

The MTA, and its subsidiary the LIRR, and the Port Authority have been unable to cooperate on a plan for one-seat ride for seven years. Congratulations go to Mr. Gargano for breaking this logjam.

George Haikalis

Transport 2000 Canada

Transport 2000 is Canada's equivalent of NARP with many of the same problems (i.e. lack of government funding). To find out more information, Transport 2000 can be reached at:

www.transport2000.ca Hotline 1 800 771 5035,
or write to:

Transport 2000, Bureau National Office, Suite 100, 117 Sparks St.
P.O. Box 858, Station . B Ottawa, ON K1P5P9

Anyone interested in contributing transit related articles from the New York City area, please contact the ESPA Express at HYPERLINK "mailto:rwlenz@aol.com" rwlenz@aol.com or write ESPA 10531 Main St. Clarence, NY 14031.

Southern Tier Study Extended to Corning

In response to a request from Senator John Kuhl, (R., Bath), the Department of Transportation (DOT) will extend its New York to Binghamton study of rail passenger service to take in Elmira and Corning. Senator Kuhl represents Elmira and Corning and serves on the Transportation Committee.

The study will also examine the potential for service from Binghamton to both Syracuse and Utica over the New York Susquehanna & Western.

DOT officials have made it clear to ESPA that the study will objectively examine both the Port Jervis and Scranton routes between Binghamton and New York, despite Senator Libous' repeatedly stated preference for the Port Jervis route. However the report will distinguish between short term and long-term possibilities, as only the Port Jervis route could be started within the next 2 years or so. Senator Tom Libous, (R., Binghamton), secured funding for the study.

DOT intends to utilize the combined Management Investment Study and Environmental Analysis now being completed for the planned New York-Hoboken to Scranton service in order to study the Scranton Route. However the initial draft, due from the consultants this month, must be reviewed by several entities including New Jersey Transit and the Federal Transit Administration before it becomes publicly available.

Unfortunately the court has again postponed its hearing to determine the value of the New Jersey cutoff which must be acquired by eminent domain so tracks can be re-laid on the most direct route to Scranton and Binghamton. Frank Reilly, Transportation Planner for Morris County, NJ, who is coordinating the project, told ESPA he expects passenger trains to arrive in Scranton 4-5 years from now.

Frank Barry

Remember Earth Day 2000- April 22

Earth Day 2000 will have more than 500 million participants representing nearly every nation on earth. Earth Day 2000 is an opportunity to focus attention on the most urgent environmental perils of our time. www.earthday.net

2000 ESPA Officers & Coordinators

President:	Robert Lenz, * 10531 Main St., Clarence, NY 14031-1684 716-759-2442 (H), 716-759-2315 (W) rwlenz@aol.com Fax: 716-759-2791
Vice President:	Gary Prophet, 11 Rock Maple Rd., Saugherties, NY 12477 212-858-4054 .. Gary.Prophet@nasd.com
Dir. Legislative Affairs:	Frank Barry, *219 E. Lansing Rd., Groton, NY 13073 607-533-7563 (H), 607-255-7456 (W) FB12@cornell.edu
Secretary:	Thom Coates, 63 Severson Hill Rd, Voorheesville, NY 12186 518-765-4559 TJCoates@aol.com
Treasurer:	John Ross, *4 Maplewood Court, Greenwich, NY 12834 518-692-2044
Membership Services:	Stuart Greenberg, 12 Burgoyne, Goram, NY 11727 516-473-8095
REGIONAL COORDINATORS:	
Chautauqua:	Roy A. Davis, 2912 East Lake Dr., Dunkirk, NY 14048 716-934-7946 davrr@netsync.net
Western NY:	David C. Skoney, 24 Hillside Ave., Cheektowaga, NY 14225 716-835-4188
Rochester Area:	Karl Greenhagle, 297 Hidden Valley Rd., Rochester, NY 14624-2302 716-247-2426 karl@frontiernet.net Fax: 716-247-4048
Central New York:	Andrew Cabal, 313 Walberta Rd., Syracuse, NY 13219 315-487-2887 ajcabal@aol.com
Adirondack:	Dr. Margarethe McCurry, 178 Sunnyside Rd., Glens Falls, NY 12804 518-793-0793
Mohawk Valley:	Jerry Koller, 49 Lincoln Ave., Amsterdam, NY 12010 518-843-3104
Utica:	Gary Gianotti, 1813 1/2 Girard St., Utica, NY 13501-2717 315-734-1521
Capitol District:	Thom Coates, 63 Severson Hill Rd, Voorheesville, NY 12186 518-765-4559
Mid-Hudson:	Richard Kulla, *5 Summit Ave., Pawling, NY 12564 914-855-9102 rkulla@aol.com
Southern Tier:	Rob Piecuch, 418 Highland Ave., Horseheads, NY 14845 607-739-5127 .. rpiecuch@servtech.com
Manhattan:	George Haikalis, 1 Washington Square Village #50, NY, NY 10012-6635 212-475-3394 geohaikalis@juno.com
Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, Staten Island:	George Arneit, *176-12 76th Ave., Flushing, NY 11366 718-969-7588 (W)
Long Island:	Chris Nadelbach, 118-18 Union Turnpike, Apt. 6F, Kew Gardens, NY 11415 718-544-7185 CN1LN1@aol.com
Westchester:	Richard Duffy, RR 2, Route 82, Mill Creek, NY 12545
Rockland/Orange:	Orrin J. Getz, 5 Carlisle Court, New City, NY 10956 914-638-4494(H), 212-930-0493(W)
International Coordinator:	George Tait, 114 Rock Island St., Gouverneur, NY 13642-1113 315-287-1422

*Also on the Board of Directors, National Association of Railroad Passengers

ESPA Celebrates (cont'd from page 5)

Questioned on why Amtrak fares have gone up over 40% since 1995, Mr. Bagley said "I wouldn't raise fares if I didn't think traffic would sustain it. Fare setting is done through extensive modeling—it's not a seat of the pants thing. My expenses are going up," he added. "I have to do it." But he doesn't anticipate any more increases this year.

Wes Coates will follow up on applications for stops from Lyons and Dunkirk. Mr. Bagley noted that CSX is now requiring an island platform which can be served by either track and must be reached by a bridge or tunnel. "We agree with that," Bagley said. "We don't want to build any more facilities with platforms on one side only." This will substantially increase the cost for Lyons which has no station and had planned a simple shelter along the southern-most track. Dunkirk already has an island platform on an elevated right of way which is accessible from a station at street level. "I don't mind stopping," Bagley said, "but it has to have some economic benefit."

CSX Vice President of State Relations John Casellini asked ESPA for support in lowering New York's rail property tax. He passed out charts showing that Conrail paid 55% of its property taxes in New York, even though only 18% of its tracks were located here. A chart also indicated that New York's \$7160 per mile rate was 2-1/2 times greater than the next highest rate (in the District of Columbia), of \$2720. Massachusetts, which charged only \$1330 per mile, has a much higher level of industrial starts than New York, according to Casellini. He also said CSX is interested in the double tracking to Schenectady (which it has yet to approve), but wants to see the tax problem resolved.

He said CSX has \$850 million for capital improvements this year which will be spent to upgrade its system in 23 states. About \$50 million will be spent in New York, half of it to upgrade its single track Freight line along the west shore of the Hudson River. Traffic on this line has doubled since the CSX takeover, according to Casellini, and now amounts to 40 trains a day. Parts of this line will be double tracked.

Casellini said restoring commuter service along this line to Nyack would be "very difficult," because "two or three tracks are needed just for freight and there's not enough room for that. A fourth track for passenger trains would be impossible."

Mr. Casellini, who personally helped ESPA volunteers and Rome citizens paint part of the Rome station last summer, said CSX is willing to advance the Amtrak - New York State High Speed Program and will work through Amtrak, "our business partner."

The meeting ended with ample enthusiasm—an appropriate testimonial to an organization which over the last 20 years has become a serious force in transportation planning in New York State.

Some ESPA Accomplishments

After 20 years it is worth pausing to reflect on our accomplishments. It is dangerous for an organization like ESPA to claim credit because any major accomplishment requires many actors. In fact ESPA's successes have usually resulted from persuading a powerful legislator or official to take up our cause as their own. Nevertheless, ESPA played a prominent role in getting the following projects initiated, even though many other people can rightfully claim credit for each of them. Some of them probably would not have occurred without ESPA's initiative:

1984 - Extending a New York-Syracuse train to Niagara Falls to provide 4 daily trains.

1988 - Restoring the fourth train to Niagara Falls after it was cut back to Albany in 1986.

1989 - Restoring the Port Kent Stop after it was discontinued in 1988 so passengers on the *Adirondack* train could take the ferry to Burlington, Vt.

1989 - Opening a Sunday evening deadhead train to Albany for passengers

1990 - Completion of a study of 90MPH speeds west of Schenectady

1991 - Doubletracking between Spuyten Duyvil and Penn Station (At a cost of \$11 million, this is probably ESPA's biggest accomplishment to date)

1995 - Getting a small shelter built for the Port Kent stop (this took seven years)

1998 - Restoring the fourth train to Niagara Falls to daily service after it was cut back to three days per week in 1995.

1998 - Widening the Amtrak waiting area planned for the new Syracuse Intermodal Center

1998 - Expanding the Depew station

1999 - Reopening the Fort Edward Station

Some key people who made the above improvements possible include Assemblywoman Susan Johns, (D., Rochester); Reginald Gilliam of the New York Department of Transportation; Graham Claytor, President of Amtrak; former US Senator Alfonse D'Amato; Bill Johnson, Essex County Planner; Assembly Majority Leader Michael Bragman, (D., Syracuse); Amtrak Conductor Craig Allyn; Washington County Tourism Director Joann Fuller; Assemblyman Sam Hoyt, (D., Buffalo); Amtrak Empire Service Director Wes Coates and many others.

ESPA also played important roles in funding the Adirondack Railroad track upgrade from Remsen to Thendara and in encouraging the formation of the Empire Corridor Rail Task Force. Other ESPA instigated projects in the pipeline include double-tracking between Albany and Schenectady, opening new stops in Dunkirk and Lyons and extending a daytime corridor train to Cleveland.

Although each of the above projects has involved major work by some ESPA members, all members deserve credit. Our organization's clout results from our numbers and member dues make our work possible.

Frank Barry

2nd Annual Letters to the Editor Campaign

May 1st marks Amtrak's 29th birthday. For the second year, Amtrak supporters are asked to write letters to local newspapers for publication on or near May 1st. This is an advocacy tool allowing the public to become better educated about Amtrak funding, the need for Amtrak expansion and the pleasure of traveling by train. Your participation in this second annual event would be greatly appreciated.

Jim Norton, Railroad Passenger Association of Alabama
jnarch@hiwaay.net

New 2000 Travel Planner

Amtrak's 2000 104 page travel planner guide is a great introduction to long-distance travel by train, and includes basic facts and diagrams of on-board accommodations that answer most common questions. Excellent photography with the national network map for both Amtrak and VIA rail. Pick up an extra copy or two to drop off at the doctor's office or other places where people might be likely to pick it up and start thinking about taking an Amtrak trip.

Traveling?

Take along ESPA's Rail & Station Report Form. Through this ongoing project, ESPA hopes to better serve the train-riding public by being better prepared in documenting any needs for service improvements as well as to pay compliments for outstanding services rendered. For copies write:

ESPA, 10529 Main Street,
Clarence, NY 14031-1684

Amtrak Plan for Expansion (cont'd from page 1)

• Add a new New York - Chicago train, the *Manhattan Limited*, through Pennsylvania, Cleveland and Toledo along the Norfolk Southern route. This train would run through Pennsylvania at night, providing daytime arrivals in Cleveland and points west.

• A transcontinental New York - Los Angeles train may be developed as well.

• A sixth change would involve extending one of the New York-Florida trains northeast to Boston via Springfield (keeping it out of the way of 150MPH *Acela* trains east of New Haven.)

Other proposals include starting a totally new train between San Antonio and Monterrey, Mexico, and rerouting the *Sunset Limited* through Dallas and Forth Worth instead of San Antonio and the Big Bend country. There would be a new overnight train between Chicago, Iowa City and Des Moines, and two Wisconsin runs would be extended to serve Madison and Fond du Lac. The Chicago-Toronto *International* would be rerouted through Ann Arbor and Dearborn, leaving Lansing and Flint, Mich., without rail service, while one of the Michigan trains would be extended south from Detroit to Toledo. The *Texas Eagle* would run daily Chicago to San Antonio.

According to Amtrak, the study considered hundreds of route scenarios, including elimination of selected under-performing runs. But the analysis revealed that the loss of revenue from a single poor performing route, combined with the loss of connecting revenue from passengers and express, would exceed the marginal savings from its elimination. Amtrak President George Warrington told reporters that "eliminating the *Sunset Limited* would save \$8 million in costs but deprive Amtrak of \$9.5 million in fares from passengers and fees from deliveries that rely on that line to connect to other routes." Amtrak expects this plan to improve Amtrak's bottom line by \$65 million when fully implemented, hopefully by 2003.

The Amtrak Reform Council notes that the computer model developed for this analysis gives Amtrak the ability to analyze incremental profitability of its routes and to measure the financial impact of changes. It answers allegations from critics who have claimed that the corporation lacked suitable methods for estimating the financial effects of service changes.

But implementation is not a sure thing, as each proposal involves negotiation with host freight railroads, some of which are likely to be difficult. The proposals will also require equipment. Amtrak expects to meet this need by fixing up 50 "bad order" cars at its Beech Grove shops, some of which have been damaged in derailments.

Amtrak notes that this is only the first phase of its long range expansion plan. Phase 2 will identify additional capital requirements to start future high-speed corridors.

Frank Barry

ESPA Award (cont'd from page 1)

In designing new services, this is believed to be Amtrak's first on-going employee/customer team established to improve and monitor a particular train. After receiving the award, the team members present publicly thanked Mr. Coates for bringing them together for this assignment.

Lenz's choice this year also represents a first, as it is the first time ever that the President's award has gone to front line employees. The award is normally given to the person ESPA's President believes has done the most during the past year to improve rail passenger service in the State. Commissioner of Transportation Joseph Boardman received last year's award for his role in bringing about the \$185 million agreement between New York and Amtrak to upgrade Amtrak service.

Frank Barry

ESPA Downstate Regional Meetings: The former meeting location is not currently available. For the time and location of the next meeting, please call (212) 475-3394.

A Special Officers and Coordinators Meeting will be held April 30 at Penn Station. For time and details, please call 716-759-2315 or e-mail Robert Lenz at: rwlenz@aol.com

ESPA Membership

The Empire State Passengers Association is a volunteer network of people working to improve intercity rail, mass transit and bus service in New York State. Keep informed with **The ESPA Express**. Keep the pressure on for safe, efficient, environmentally sound transportation. Dues and contributions support ESPA's publications and advocacy on the passengers' behalf.

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

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

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

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel. 716-759-2315, Fax: 716-759-2791, e-mail: RWLenz@aol.com. **Deadline for material for the May-June issue is May 26.**

8

THE ESPA EXPRESS
10531 Main Street
Clarence, NY 14031-1684

Please take a moment to check your mailing label.
Your membership may be due for renewal.
We appreciate your support.

FIRST CLASS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #2
Clarence, NY

Forward & Address Correction Requested

1882

01/2001

Bruce B. Becker
49 Algonquin Road
Clifton Park, NY 12065

