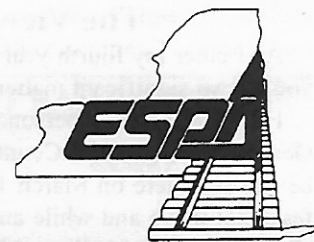


THE ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

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



Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

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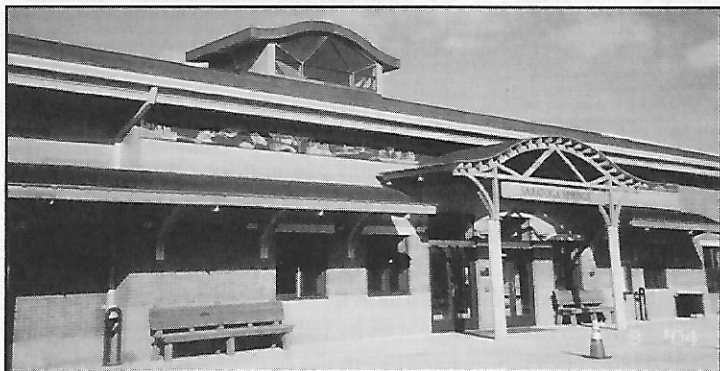


Photo: Jack Ross

New Saratoga Springs Station Opens

Dedicated March 15th, this 6 million, 8,000 square foot station offers large windows, newsstand, coffee shop, visitor information area, among other amenities.

Weather Interrupts Lake Shore Boston Through Service

Severe maintenance problems have temporarily ended through train service between Chicago, Upstate New York and Boston. As of January 31, more than a third (18 of 48) of Amtrak's single level Viewliner sleepers were out of service due to deferred maintenance and problems caused by the severe cold this winter.

As a result, sleepers have been eliminated entirely from the Boston section of the *Lake Shore Limited*, the New York to Chicago *Cardinal* (via West Virginia) and the overnight Boston-Washington *Federal*.

As of mid-February all the *Lake Shore Limited's* through cars to Boston were replaced by a connecting train at Albany with 84 seat coaches and a baggage car, requiring sleeper passengers to ride in a coach between Boston and Albany. The *Cardinal's* sleeper should be restored by March 16th.

This winter Amtrak discovered that emergency valves designed to drain water when pipe temperature approached freezing had become inoperative in many cars due to deferred maintenance. Freezing and bursting pipes caused major damage as a result. And some shock absorbers and their mountings were allowed to deteriorate to the point that the ride became unacceptably rough. Many cars were taken out of service as a result.

Amtrak's Cliff Black said a major design problem surfaced when Viewliner retention tanks froze and it became obvious that they lacked any sort of heater. When these cars were shuttling between New York, Boston and Chicago and laid over in subzero weather, "They simply never got a chance to thaw out--and you can't empty a solid block of ice," Black said. This eventually led Amtrak to cycle the *Lake Shore* equipment through to Florida as the *Silver Star* and vice versa, "but this summer we'll have to address the design problem," Black said. *Frank Barry*

Gunn Speaks at Annual Meeting

About 90 people listened as David Gunn – the first Amtrak president ever to address our association – interspersed insightful analysis with impish humor at the March 6th joint ESPA/NARP Region II annual meeting in Schenectady. Gunn said things look good now – after replacing the former strategic business units with a smaller basic railroad structure, "We are under running our budget by about \$50 million through February; our revenue is up and our expenses are down."



Mr. Gunn

"Our goal is to operate the existing system and to defend it," he promised. "We're not going to play the game of discontinuing the *Sunset Limited* – that won't save us any money."

When he took over nearly two years ago, Mr. Gunn discovered that Amtrak had simply stopped doing heavy repairs on its cars, locomotives and tracks. "We had to focus on bringing our own system back to a state of good repair. Last year we got our track laying machine running again and converted 58 miles of track from wood to concrete ties. This year we'll put in 101 miles of new welded rail and convert 70 miles to concrete ties. We'll completely overhaul more than 200 cars. We have the cash for this," he said; "but we don't know what will happen in the future."

Gunn believes corridors are the key to survival in the long run, and he listed three requirements for developing them: First, "deal with existing technology: diesels and proven rolling stock. Don't get into reinventing the wheel." *(Cont'd on page 4)*

Lyons Working for Amtrak Stop

Wayne County Planner Sharon Lilla says Lyons has gathered \$1 million for a station and is working to develop a design that will meet Amtrak and CSX approval. Senator Mike Nozzolio, Congressman James Walsh and Senator Schumer have all helped with the effort.

Lilla says a ridership survey indicates an Amtrak stop in Lyons would generate 27,000 new riders annually, many of whom would come from the three colleges in the area. The possibility of getting their children to school by train instead of driving them should make Finger Lakes area colleges more attractive to downstate families. Wayne County has 93,375 inhabitants and the survey takes in an even larger catchment area including parts of neighboring counties with a population of 140,000. *Frank Barry*

"A Vision for Passenger Rail and Public Transportation in New York State...2004 – 2008".

See 'The View from the Cab' page 2

The View from the Cab

As I enter my fourth year as ESPA President, I want to inform you of two significant matters...

First off and on a personal note, I have accepted a position as General Manager of a Country Club in the Buffalo area and will be starting there on March 15, 2004. This is a very positive professional move and while any such change can be challenging to all involved, my family and I are excited about the many opportunities that Western New York has to offer. While I will be in Buffalo soon, we will not be fully moving until after the end of the school year, so you may continue to contact me at the address noted in this issue or preferably by e-mail at bbecker@nycap.rr.com.

This change does mean that I will have to cut back my time commitments to ESPA in the immediate term. We are fortunate to have a very strong and capable team of Officers and Coordinators within ESPA, which I will be relying on in the months to come. Specifically, Gary Prophet, Vice-President will be coordinating and chairing the April 25th meeting at Penn Station and with others assisting at future meetings. Also, our Capital Region Coordinator, Anthony Rudmann is stepping up to the plate and will ably be representing ESPA's interests in Albany, assisted by our Government Affairs Representative, Joe Landry.

Secondly and of significance to all ESPA members, your Officers and Coordinators have completed work on the Association's next Five Year Plan, *"A Vision for Passenger Rail and Public Transportation in New York State...2004 - 2008"*. The plan was presented at the recent Annual Meeting and has already received attention in the press.

As I noted to the meeting attendees, this 'Vision' goes beyond any of our previous plans and advocates the following three major initiatives:

- **Development of a Comprehensive State-Wide Public Transportation System Plan**, with higher speed passenger rail at the core. We are encouraging all parties that would be involved in the development of such a plan to closely examine California's highly successful efforts at providing a unified rail and bus network. We are also strongly encouraging that long needed rail infrastructure improvements be completed as soon as possible, so that the future unified network could fully take advantage of reduced rail travel times.
- **Commitment to Plan Vision and Identifying Resources** strives to make the case to our elected representatives that such a public transportation plan needs to be a top state priority and that provides funds for it is absolutely necessary.
- **Creation of a New York State Public Transportation Authority**, which we believe is critical to the ultimate success of the proposed unified public transportation network. We envision the newly created organization providing the direction and capital funding, including the sales of bonds, to accomplish the necessary improvements and enhancements across the state. In addition, the proposed Public Transportation Authority would be responsible for setting service levels, frequencies, fares, selecting service operators and coordinating the public awareness and marketing of the system. Among the Authority's principal duties would be the implementation of the proposed intermodal network of linked and coordinated train, bus and ferry services. We also encourage investigating the benefits of making the proposed new authority a subsidiary of one of the currently existing entities in the state, such as the Thruway Authority has done with the state canal system.

We hope that our three 'vision points' will inspire and provide direction to our elected officials, the Department of Transportation, Amtrak and the state's other public transportation providers. The plan also recommends a number of specific Passenger Rail Infrastructure Improvement and Service Enhancements. The full plan is available on the ESPA web site, www.trainweb.org/espa or by requesting a printed copy by writing ESPA, Box 434, Syracuse, NY 13209.

In closing, I wish to extend my thanks to all of the Association's Officers and Statewide Coordinators who spend countless volunteer hours advancing our cause, and to each of you, the over 1,400 members of ESPA, who make our Association the finest state rail advocacy group in the country.

As always, I welcome your comments, critiques and suggestions.
Bruce B. Becker, President

ESPA Coordinator Positions Open

The ESPA Regional Coordinator position for Central New York is currently vacant. ESPA members interested in being considered for this opening should contact Bruce Becker.

As information, the ESPA By-laws define the Regional Coordinator's positions as follows: "The Regional Coordinators shall report on membership activity in their respective regions and shall relate Association activities to the regions." Attendance at the bi-monthly Officers and Coordinators Meeting is encouraged.

Amtrak Seeks ESPA's Input

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

Four 6 Car Turbos Likely

As he left the March 6th ESPA/NARP annual meeting, Amtrak President David Gunn told reporters he expected an agreement soon with the New York State Department of Transportation to complete rehabilitation of four of the seven turboliner trainsets. Three would operate at any one time with one held in reserve. All four sets would include 6 cars instead of the original 5-car format, with the extra cars taken from the three remaining sets. The extra car would allow operation in the more popular early morning and late afternoon slots. The six-car configuration was used frequently when the turboliners were new.

However despite their 125MPH capacity, running times will not be reduced for the turbotrains because required track and signal work has yet to be done.

(From *Albany Times Union and Schenectady Gazette*, March 7).

Rome Station Improvements

The majority of the first phase exterior work, including a new platform and repairs to the tunnel were completed last summer. The roof, and interior improvements including new floors, bathrooms, heating and construction of new offices for VIP bus service are to be completed very soon.
Daily Sentinel, Rome NY

\$2.5 Million Appropriated for Scranton Service

The Omnibus funding bill, signed into law on January 23, includes \$2.5 million to complete environmental and other studies needed to restore tracks to the Lackawanna Cutoff, abandoned by Conrail in 1980. This should allow completion of planning work, after which application could be made for construction funds.

These tracks would allow rail passenger service to be reinstated from Hoboken to Scranton, relieving congestion on parallel Route I-80. The total project is expected to cost \$200 million. It is hoped that service to Scranton could be extended to Binghamton and perhaps ultimately perhaps to Corning as well.

China Drops Long Distance Maglev

According to the official newspaper China Daily, China's State Council decided to drop its Beijing-Shanghai project due to its high cost and because "it does not match the wheel track technique used by railways in China." The 750 mile line had been in the planning stage for 9 years, and represented the biggest maglev project under development anywhere.

China has just opened an 18 mile commercial maglev system to connect Shanghai to its second airport, opened three years ago. The long distance maglev project was canceled just two weeks after the airport line opened at a cost of \$1.2 billion (\$67 million per mile). The China Daily said a conventional high speed rail line from Beijing to Shanghai could be built for half the cost of maglev.

Frank Barry

Metro North Port Jervis Line Program

Metro North is hard at work with an ambitious capital plan for 2004 on the Port Jervis former Erie Railroad commuter main line. The commuter Authority completed a long term lease agreement with Norfolk Southern in 2003 which allows the commuter railroad to assume responsibility for maintenance and capital improvements.

New in 2004 are 7 miles of new continuous welded rail (cwr) between CP OV (Otisville) and CP Howell where the old main diverges onto the high speed (79mph) "Graham Line". An additional 2 miles of new welded iron is also in place around Harriman. The route segment between Suffern and Port Jervis (64.6 miles) will also see an impressive 15,000 new crossties installed this year with an additional 5-7 miles of cwr to be installed elsewhere on the route.

Looking further ahead, Metro North Spokesman Dan Brucker estimates some 30 miles of cwr will be needed on the railroad in the near future. The Authority is also assessing station and parking requirements to anticipate passenger traffic growth. Inspection and evaluation of the signaling system and the 80 to 90 bridges and culverts on the right-of-way is also underway. Spokesman Brucker also points out that Metro North ridership is expected to double on the Port Jervis line in the next 5 years as a result of the opening of Seacacus Transfer in New Jersey. Metro North serves about 2,000 daily commuters at the 8 stations (Suffern ridership is included in NJT totals) west of Suffern.

The fastest trains on this line cover the 95.1 miles between "The Port" and Hoboken in just over 2 hours for an off-peak fare of \$20.25. This compares quite favorably to Amtrak's Albany to NYC fares which are 4 times higher for that 141 mile route.

Ben Gottfried

Senate Rejects Rail Funding Effort

Despite last ditch efforts by Senators Ernest Hollings (D., S.C.) and Tom Carper, (D., Del.), their ARRIVE-21 rail tax credit bill did not get into the Senate's SAFETEA bill to extend TEA-21 highway and transit funding for another 6 years. They were unable to reach agreement with Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R., Tex.), whose \$48 billion rail bonding bill would have accomplished similar objectives. Particularly difficult issues reportedly involved labor wage rates and the proportion of funding allocated to the Northeast Corridor. Lack of agreement between key Democratic and Republican rail supporters largely doomed the effort.

Both Hollings and Hutchison's bills would have provided funding for freight railroads in addition to Amtrak, and this drew support from four of the major class I lines - CSX, Norfolk Southern, BNSF and Canadian Pacific. But Union Pacific refused to support the effort and apparently prevented the American Association of Railroads from supporting it as well. Nevertheless this was one of the first instances in which Amtrak, passenger interests and freight railroads have worked together for federal funding.

However some pro-rail provisions did make it into S-1072, the Senate SAFETEA highway/transit bill, including authorization for Amtrak funding at \$2 billion per year. S-1072 would also authorize creation of a nonprofit Build America Corporation to issue bonds to support transportation projects for all modes, including "passenger rail or facilities" and "public transportation facilities." And it authorizes \$350 million for "lateral or vertical relocation" of tracks passing through a municipality to "mitigate adverse effects of rail traffic." Another \$350 million was authorized to upgrade track on regional and shortline railroads to accept 286,000 lb freight cars.

Unfortunately though, none of these funds would come from guaranteed highway revenues. Instead they would have to be appropriated from the very limited pool already available for transportation, competing with Amtrak for very scarce funds.

Fortunately an attempt to bar use of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Enhancement funds for rail was rejected; in fact the bill specifically authorizes Maine to continue financing its *Downeaster* service with CMAQ funds.

S-1072 guarantees funding for highways at \$255 billion and transit at \$56.5 billion. An attempt by Senator Charles Grassley and others to drastically cut transit funding was successfully beaten back. But the Bush Administration hopes to limit the federal share of transit projects to 50% instead of the current 80% "so states will do more selection of the projects on their own". However this will bias federal funds against transit unless the same standards are applied to highway projects.

The day before S-1072 was finalized, President Bush threatened to veto the entire bill because it would cost more than his budget allowed (\$318 bil. vs. \$256 bil.), and because it authorized funding for Amtrak. S-1072 must now be reconciled with the House version.

So at this point efforts to gain acceptance of intercity rail as a viable form of surface transportation eligible for federal funding have not advanced very far. Not surprisingly, long time Amtrak foe Senator John McCain, (R., Ariz.), who chairs the Committee developing the SAFETEA legislation, played a major role in blocking Senators Hollings' and Carper's efforts. Senator Hollings is the Democratic Minority Ranking Member on McCain's committee. But according to one knowledgeable staffer, the biggest problem, was the looming federal deficit: "The downward pressure on the overall bill (SAFETEA) just closed this off."

Frank Barry

Downstate ESPA Meetings

NYC metropolitan area ESPA members are most welcome to attend Downstate ESPA meetings. Held in cooperation with NJARP and the Committee for Better Transit, the monthly gatherings are at the Conference Room, NYPD Downtown Center, 104 Washington Street, just north of Rector Street in Lower Manhattan, 6-8 pm, on the third Wednesday of each month. For more information call George Haikalas at 212-475-3394 or send a note to geohaikalas@juno.com.

Gunn Speaks (cont'd from page 1)

The U.S. passenger rail supply industry has virtually disappeared, he said, "so you have to deal with stuff that's off the shelf." Amtrak had gotten into a jam, he said, by promoting expensive projects that "I believe scared people off instead of gaining support, because all people saw was a lot of money."

Second, "There has to be a federal commitment to a capital program for rail. Otherwise it won't happen." And states must commit to match federal money 20-80% as they do under the highway program. Also, "States must commit to cover the operating deficit. Corridors are going to be state driven, and there's no way you're going to get that without the states committing to the operating deficit. Some corridors will break even if you do a good job on the capital side and you have frequent, fast service."

Third, "You have to have a willing railroad that will quickly implement the track and signal improvements you need." Fragmented ownership is a real, serious problem; "You have three owners between here and New York – that's worse than it was in the 1830's!"

"Focus on what you can do in a year or two," he said. He noted that Amtrak is partnering with Pennsylvania to upgrade the Philadelphia - Harrisburg line. This is possible because "We own it, and we would have to repair it anyway. We went to the state and said we could actually upgrade it to 110MPH for \$110 million if they would pay half. They agreed."

Gunn told the group there are two things ESPA can do to help: "First, put pressure on your congressional delegation to support a rail title in the highway bill so there is federal money the states can match. Second, pick one project that is worth doing which somebody is willing to carry out. Try to have a victory or two. Demonstrate to other people that you can get something done; take a picture of it; show them."

Responding to a question, Gunn said the *Lake Shore Limited* is a microcosm of everything that's wrong with trying to run passenger trains over highly congested freight railroads. And a lot of equipment needs to be repaired. It has all the worst things that can happen to a train. It can be fixed but it will take time. He also suggested that "the Boston Stub train is a good solution for a train that tries to do too much. I think it works better than through service. What we'll do on that we're not yet sure."

Ross Capon, Executive Director of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, said our mode-specific trust fund transportation system "guarantees that what you have today you will have even more of tomorrow." He noted that 41% of highway spending (in FY 2001) came from other sources than the gasoline tax, but only if you look at all levels of government. At the federal level, highway expenditures are roughly equivalent to user tax revenue. And there is a lot of non-user federal tax money spent for airlines. "In 2003 the general fund paid 46% of the costs of the air traffic control system, and this year it will be 40%."

He noted that Amtrak ridership has increased since about last May and revenues have increased since last August. This has been true all across the system. "Many people think long distance trains are primarily cruise experiences, but the average trip is a lot shorter than the length of the route, which suggests most people are using it as real transportation." Last year was the first year ever that Amtrak carried 24 million passengers. And "they're on track to have ridership over 25 million this fiscal year."

But his can't continue under Bush's \$900 million budget, he said, because it provides no room for necessary overhauls. "Gunn's strategy is to move to programmed maintenance rather than emergency repairs." Programmed maintenance is a lot more efficient and avoids the extra costs and negative effects of breakdowns, he explained, but "Gunn's sensible strategy means the \$900 million figure isn't workable."

He advised the group that the best way to communicate with Washington now is a one-page fax. Second best is telephone – leave a short message for the transportation specialist if that person is unavailable – and don't count on them calling you back. E-mail is "very dicey" because most people in Congress get far more of it than they can read. Regular letters should only be sent to district offices, not Washington because of security related delays.

"Get to the point quickly. They need to know what you want. Often they only want to count the number for and against an issue. Then explain simply why the Congressman should be interested, why it's good for his or her district." Capon also reminded the group to include their own name and address – "They want to be sure you are their constituent." Finally, "Stay positive; hostile communication gets you nowhere."

Brian Rowback, First Deputy Commissioner of Transportation for New York State, spoke about the need – and difficulty – of broadening the Department's focus beyond highways. Three things are shaping transportation today, he said: trade, technology and traffic. The global market has led to lots of trade agreements and a tremendous flow of goods – many of them consumed in the Northeast, where there is a great concentration of wealth. Stock is in trucks now, not in warehouses. So market reliability is heavily dependent on the shipment of those goods. Yet traffic has become a huge problem.

Mr. Rowback said his department will look at traveler information—how to get information out to people. "I can't tell you how many times I've been on the Thruway and the traffic has stopped and I have absolutely no idea how long I'll be stuck there," he recounted. As those situations happen more often the alternatives look more viable. He said hand held computer devices "will completely transform transportation choices," and will make a big difference in getting people out of cars.

Rowback said his Department is developing an information exchange network which will focus on highways initially but will eventually "have links to all the other modes; we want to be able to promote the movement of goods—and people—off the highway. We need to relieve the strain on the highway system."

But he pointed out that getting people off highways "gets down to what you subsidize." However, "You will see more effort to co-ordinate rail and bus services."

"The real issue," he said, "is what will happen to the Empire Corridor. The State Transportation Plan is up at the end of the next fiscal year. We need to look at what's viable. What does the public want? What will they support?"

Frank Barry

Congress Funds Amtrak for 2004; 2005 Fight Begins

On January 23rd President Bush signed the Omnibus spending bill (HR-2673) into law, thus guaranteeing \$1.218 billion for Amtrak for the current year (2004). Although the amount budgeted fell far short of Amtrak's requested \$1.8 billion, Amtrak President David Gunn said it would be enough to keep Amtrak running through the year and will allow much of the track and equipment rehabilitation to continue.

The battle for FY2005 funding began with President Bush's budget proposal, allocated only \$900 million for Amtrak. This is the same amount proposed last year, which Amtrak says is a shut-down budget. At a press conference National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) Director Ross Capon asked Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta about Gunn's statement last year that this amount would allow no money for heavy maintenance. Mineta conceded, "Gunn is right on the numbers," but said the Administration wants to push Congress to adopt its proposals for reform.

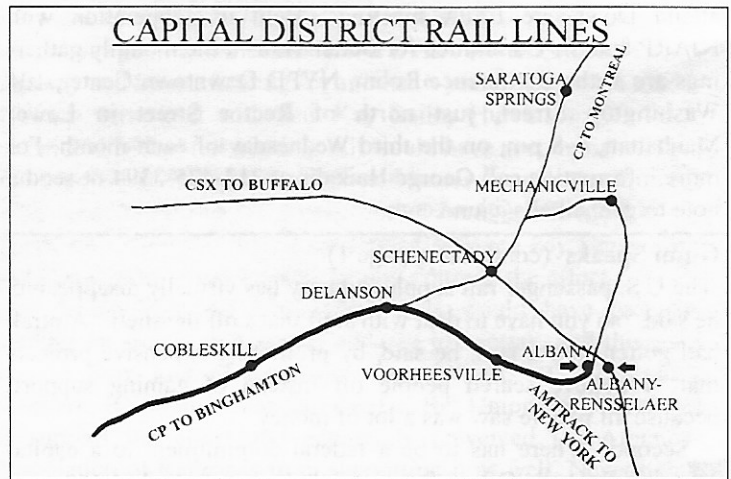
Those proposals would phase out all federal funding for operations forcing states to pay the full costs. The federal government would make grants to states for corridor capital projects but the federal share would be gradually reduced to 50% (vs. 80% for highway projects). All funding for long distance trains would be phased out. Two private companies would be created to operate trains and to maintain the Northeast Corridor. Ultimately states or interstate compacts could put all routes up for bids by public or private operators to encourage competition. Asked at a March 3rd House Appropriations hearing whether private freight railroads would cooperate with private operators other than Amtrak, Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta admitted the big 6 probably would not but said some of the regionals and short lines would. Currently only three Amtrak routes, all in New England, use regional railroads. NARP estimates that these changes would end most if not all long distance routes and produce a balkanized system serving fewer than half the states.

The House quickly took up the battle as Transportation Appropriation Committee Chairman Ernest Istook (R., Okla.) threatened to reduce funding for projects in the district of any Housemember who urges more than \$900 million for Amtrak. The threat went out in a February 12th letter to the Republican's among the House members who signed a letter requesting the full \$1.8 billion for Amtrak last summer. In his letter Istook said, "Amtrak's request must be weighed against other higher priorities. Every dollar for Amtrak is a dollar less for other transportation funding including projects in your ...district."

Last year Istook's subcommittee approved only \$580 million for Amtrak. Fortunately this was raised to \$900 million in the full Appropriations Committee and then to \$1.2 billion in negotiations with the Senate. But the federal deficit is higher this year and such negotiations are likely to be much more difficult. Regardless of Istook's threat, it will be as important as ever for Congressional representatives to hear from their constituents about the need for full funding for Amtrak, especially in the House of Representatives. It is vital to continue to repair the damage from past deferred maintenance as well as from this winter's extended subzero temperatures. Gunn has again requested \$1.8 billion, almost half of which would go for "catch up" repairs and overhauls.

Jack Quinn, (R., Buffalo), who chairs the Rail Subcommittee, will consult with other key Amtrak supporters, according to his press secretary, Charles Keller. "Jack knows the need for repairs is

still there," Keller said; he and other supporters hope to discuss the situation with the chairman of the full committee." *Frank Barry*



Albany Transportation Link At Risk

Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) has filed for abandonment of the Albany to Voorheesville segment of the former Delaware & Hudson (D&H) passenger mainline into the State Capital. This process when completed will allow for the removal of rail and track materials on the line. In years past this route served the passenger trains of the D&H, which would diverge off the Susquehanna division at Delanson to traverse this line segment to arrive at Albany Union Station. Future passenger operations could, presumably, use this route in the future. To this end Albany County is stepping in to preserve the right-of-way, albeit without the tracks which CP intends to remove during the second quarter of 2004.

Albany County Director of Economic Development, Conservation and Planning – Mark Fitzsimmons has informed ESPA that a plan is in place to secure the property. The County intends to "secure the corridor in its entirety" for interim public use as a trail and pedestrian resource and will consider the route in future transportation plans. The County has filed for and been granted by the Surface Transportation Board a rail banking request. Mr. Fitzsimmons and the County consider this 9-mile segment of "intrinsic value" as a complete uninterrupted corridor and understand the importance of its preservation.

This route is laid with 119 lb. rail and was last used to serve the Albany area for freight service in the 1980's. In the 1990's, CP sought to abandon the line between Delanson and Albany in its entirety (26.8 miles) but withdrew the petition during the Conrail breakup. The Railroad subsequently re-filed to abandon the line between Voorheesville and Albany's Kenwood Yard so that freight service could be provided to the Voorheesville Industrial Park. CP traffic to the Port of Albany is currently routed through Mechanicville for delivery to Kenwood Yard by the Saratoga Springs based local. The Albany Port Railroad, which is owned jointly by CSX/CP, sees 3,000 intermodal lifts (loadings) per year.

The effort to preserve this line intact is important to the Capital of New York. It would be a tragic loss to lose this property as a future transportation artery; it is also tragic to pull the rails and eliminate short-term use of the line. The County Department of Economic Development, Conservation and Planning should be commended for their view of the future and their efforts to preserve a passenger and freight route for the years ahead. Perhaps somehow in the analysis of this proposal the fact that a passenger Mainline to a major American city is being lost will reinforce the concept that indeed we do need a more balanced transportation policy, which does not allow important rail links to be removed. *Ben Gottfried*

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Additional New York NARP Directors: Jack Ross, Steve Salatti *Also on the Board of Directors, National Association of Railroad Passengers	

2004-2005 ESPA Meeting Dates

Sunday, April 25, 11am-2:30pm	New York Penn Station
Saturday, June 19, 2004	The Parker Inn, Schenectady
Saturday, August 7, 2004	Union Station, Utica
Saturday, October 2, 2004	The Parker Inn, Schenectady
Saturday, November 20, 2004	Amtrak Station, Rensselaer
Saturday, January 8, 2005	The Parker Inn, Schenectady
Saturday, March 5, 2005	Annual Meeting – Schenectady

If you are interested in becoming more involved in ESPA, these meetings are the perfect opportunity to learn more about ESPA and how you can make a difference. ALL ESPA members are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact President Bruce Becker, 518-383-5985 or bbecker@nycap.rr.com, if you need more information or are planning on attending a meeting.

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel: 1-716-759-2315, Fax: 716-759-2791. e-mail: RWLenz@aol.com. Deadline for material for the May/June issue is April 30, 2004. Material may be reproduced if credit given to ESPA and to the writer.

ESPA MEMBERSHIP - NEW OR RENEWAL

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

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

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

Please make checks/money orders payable to ESPA and mail to ESPA c/o Andrew Cabal, 408 Cherry Rd., Syracuse, NY 13219.

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