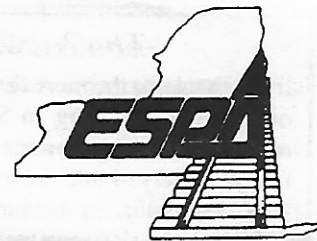


The ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

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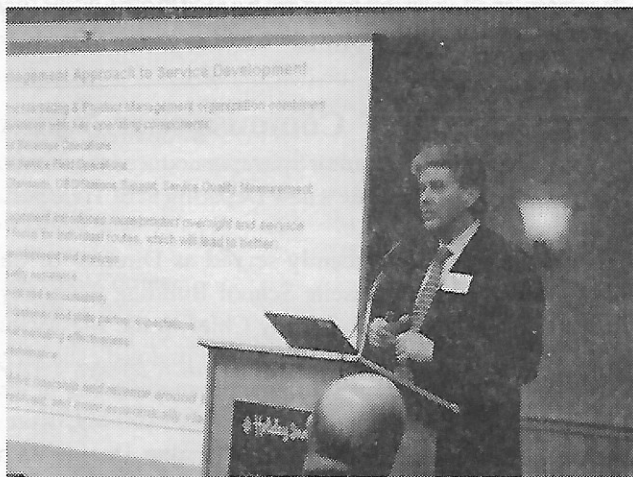
WORKING FOR A MORE BALANCED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Vol. 31, No. 2

March/April 2007

ATK, CDTA, NARP, Finger Lakes, Midwest HSR Reps Speak at Annual Meeting

Five speakers addressed 75 ESPA and NARP members at the joint ESPA/NARP Region 2 meeting in Schenectady on March 10. **Emmett Fremaux** was recently appointed by Amtrak President Kummant as Vice President of Marketing and Product Management. His job, he says, is to “bring together what have tended to be two separate silo organizations—marketing and service delivery.” The key is “developing a good product, delivering it consistently and then marketing it effectively.” (Cont on page 5)



Lake Shore to Run Later

When the Summer timetable takes effect on April 2, the eastbound *Lake Shore Limited* will run roughly three hours later across New York State. It will leave Chicago at 10PM instead of 7:55PM, allowing more time for passengers on late trains from the West to make their connections. The train will cross New York approximately on Train 286's current schedule, leaving Buffalo at 10AM, arriving Albany at 3:40 and New York at 6:45PM. No. 286 will run close to the *Lake Shore*'s present schedule, leaving Buffalo at 7:05AM, arriving New York at 3:25PM.

The new schedule will for the first time in many years offer a day trip from Cleveland to New York, leaving at 7AM—a long time ESPA goal. But returning travelers may want to investigate other options as the westbound *Lake Shore* will still be due in Cleveland at 3:27AM. The Eastbound train will run slower; one hour and fifteen minutes will be added to its schedule, including 45 minutes of additional waiting time (padding) in Toledo and Cleveland.

Unfortunately the new schedule has a major drawback for New York City business travelers returning from Albany in the afternoon. The 4:10 departure from Albany, now filled by No. 286

from Niagara Falls, will be taken by the *Lake Shore Limited*. The 5:15PM slot will remain with the *Adirondack*, meaning that the two most popular slots for returning business travelers will be filled by two of our corridor's most notorious trains. *Frank Barry*

Winter Weather and Derailments Severely Affect Amtrak

A combination of harsh winter weather and CSX freight derailments have played havoc with Amtrak schedules over the past two months, particularly across upstate New York.

In late January, cold and snow crimped rail operations in the Buffalo area for several days and two major snow storms (February 14-15 and March 16-17) have affected the eastern part of the state, resulting in extensive Amtrak delays and cancellations in each case.

Amtrak encountered a particularly damaging type of very fine snow during the February storm, which caused a number of engine failures after being sucked into the air intakes of its locomotives. Trains were stalled for hours at both Whitehall and in the Mohawk Valley before passengers could be rescued by other trains. A number of trains became disabled in and around the Albany area and had to be towed into Rensselaer by remaining operable locomotives.

Amtrak is reportedly now working with General Electric, the locomotive's builder, on remedial measures to reduce the opportunity for snow to enter the engine compartments.

Compounding these winter weather woes have been a series of CSX freight train derailments across the state. Since January incidents affecting Amtrak have at occurred at Westfield, Buffalo, Churchville (west of Rochester), East Rochester, Little Falls and most recently, at Oneida in a widely reported accident that produced several explosions.

The Federal Railroad Administration is reacting to calls from many elected officials to launch an investigation into CSX's maintenance and safety procedures and has announced that its rail inspection vehicles will soon be utilized to analyze CSX's tracks across the state.

ESPA is alarmed by both the CSX derailments and the large number of weather caused cancellations that Amtrak either decided or was forced to make by CSX. In addition, ESPA is deeply concerned with Amtrak's decision not to offer alternative transportation (i.e. busses) for many of the cancelled trains, particularly in areas not directly affected by the derailments and storms. *Bruce B. Becker*

The View from the Cab

My thanks to the more than 75 ESPA members who attended our Annual Meeting in Schenectady on March 10th. As reported in this issue, attendees heard excellent presentations from a variety of interesting speakers.

As I noted in my January column, I am quite hopeful that 2007 may be the year we actually see meaningful progress toward our various goals. In the past month we have met with staff in the Governor's office, where our message was very well received and I now look forward to meeting soon with our new Transportation Commissioner, Astrid Glynn.

I am pleased to announce that the Association is undertaking a very significant step during 2007, aimed at better positioning us for growth and success in the years to come. After several years of careful consideration, your Officers and Coordinators have decided to transition ESPA from its current Non-Profit corporate structure to a 501(c) 3 Not-For-Profit educational organization status. This process, which is now underway (and expected to be completed by year's end) will provide several significant benefits:

- Membership recruitment will be enhanced, as annual dues will be tax deductible for members.
- Special fund raising efforts will be greatly enhanced as gifts and donations will be deductible by the donor.
- We will gain the ability to seek and obtain grants from foundations and other funding sources.

Our principal goal in making this transition is to grow the Association and thus generate the funds necessary to increase our education and outreach efforts to generate support for passenger rail services and public transportation among the general population.

We have retained a prominent attorney who specializes solely in not-for-profit organization work to guide us in this process. We are confident that funds spent now to make this transition possible will benefit the Association many times over in years to come.

I will keep you informed on our progress in this transition and we will announce when the organizational change will take effect.

As always, I welcome your comments, critiques and suggestions on how ESPA can better attain our goals of improved passenger rail service in New York State. Don't hesitate to contact me at anytime. *Bruce B. Becker, President*

Poughkeepsie Station Improvements

Metro-North Railroad continues to upgrade the Poughkeepsie station and add customer amenities. A contract for a variety of repairs to stairs and platform canopies is currently underway with completion late this year. Design is underway for repairs to the station-building roof and for the replacement of windows in the station. This work is scheduled to begin late this year and be completed in early 2009.

The MTA Real Estate Department is developing a Request for Proposals for creation of a restaurant in a portion of the large customer waiting area, and Metro-North and the City of Poughkeepsie are discussing plans to expand the existing parking garage. Just one-half mile south of the Poughkeepsie station GDC Homes is building the Hudson Pointe residential subdivision with 60 new homes. Hudson Pointe is part of a larger, transit-oriented development underway adjacent to the station, which will include a waterfront park, a marina, a hotel and restaurants.

Steve Strauss

Reaching Out!

Rail passenger service continues to be topic of interest for existing and potential stakeholders across New York State. Business groups and environmentally aware planners and policy makers are often unaware that a resource such as the Empire State Passengers Association can be of assistance in helping the message of passenger train development become a part of their respective development agendas.

ESPA, as a part of its ongoing efforts to become a stronger voice in the development of the transportation network is looking for new members to come forward and assist with new outreach efforts. If you are in a position to present the passenger rail viewpoint to a community group or would like to adopt some passenger rail concepts into your existing meetings with potential stakeholders, let ESPA know. We can provide PowerPoint slides, copies of the newsletter and custom tailored resources for your presentation.

Rail passenger advocacy has never had a more meaningful voice than in today's world where environmental policy, energy policy and economic development interests have come together as players in the passenger rail game. If you feel that you could help with outreach to groups in these or other non-traditional areas contact Steve Strauss at straussnyc@verizon.net. Steve is our new Director of Legislative affairs and is anxious to hear your ideas to push us forward.

If you have ever felt, as I once did, that more needs to be said and things need to change, now is the time to come forward and pitch in. ESPA remains an all-volunteer group and we need to draw on the strengths of our members in this new and exciting time. *Ben Gottfried*

New State DOT Commissioner Named

On February 5, 2007, Governor Spitzer announced the nomination of Astrid C. Glynn as the State's new Department of Transportation (DOT) Commissioner.

Ms. Glynn has most recently served as Director of Capital Planning for the Massachusetts School Building Authority and from 2005 to 2006 she was Deputy Chief in the Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development. Previously she served in the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation in various capacities, including Deputy Secretary for Planning, Executive Director in the Office of Transportation Planning, Deputy Secretary for Capital Planning and Multimodal Transportation and Director of Intermodal Transportation. Ms. Glynn earned her B.A. from Bennington College and her J.D. from Albany Law School of Union University.

At press time, while still awaiting formal confirmation by the Legislature, Ms. Glynn is reportedly already hard at work in her new position. ESPA will be scheduling a meeting with her in the near future and we look forward to her speaking at a future ESPA event. *Bruce B. Becker*

Bush Proposes 38% Amtrak Cut

President Bush has proposed only \$800 million for Amtrak for next year, an amount even the USDOT's own Inspector General said was insufficient at a February 28th Senate hearing. This would be a cut of 38% from Amtrak's current budget and just over half its request for next year. David Tornquist of the Inspector General's office said Amtrak had saved \$61 million from operational reforms last year and deserved credit for this. However his office recommended only \$1.35 billion—still a slight increase over present funding.

In a February 5th press release, National Association of Railroad Passengers Executive Director Ross Capon said, "They still don't get it," and pointed out that the Administration (*Cont'd on pg.3*)

Bush Proposes (Cont'd from page 2)

budget completely ignored debt service costs. Besides its cut for next year the Administration has recently proposed to cut Amtrak's current (2007) funds by \$383 million to satisfy needs in the Defense Department.

Amtrak has requested \$1.53 billion for next year and recommends \$150 million additional for state corridor grants and Disability Act compliance. This is down from last year's request (FY-2006) for \$1.598 billion plus \$275 mil., but considerably more than the \$1.294 billion Congress actually awarded for last year. Assuming Congress rejects Bush's \$383 million cut, Amtrak will get the same amount this year as last, since Congressional leadership has decided to simply flat fund most programs in order to concentrate on budgeting for next year.

Highways and transit (which is funded under highway legislation) will get more however, due to increases mandated when highway champion Bud Shuster (R., Pa.) chaired the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Frank Barry (from NARP Hotlines)

Transportation Spending				
	Enacted (millions)		Bush Budget	
	2006	2007	2008	
Highways	\$34,183	\$39,086	\$41,703	
Transit	8,504	8,970	9,442	
Aviation	14,310	14,100	14,077	
Railroads	1,503	1,503	1,081	
Amtrak	1,294	1,294	800	
Amtrak Breakdown			Amtrak Request	
Operations	490	490	0	485
Capital	495	495	500	760
Incentive Grants*	31	31	300	0
Debt Service	278	278	0	285
State Rail Corridors			100	100
Disability Act			0	50

*May be used for operations at DOT discretion.

NARP March Newsletter

Amtrak Authorization Bills Advance

Hearings have been held in both the House and Senate on bills that would authorize funding for passenger rail for several years in the future. Both bills have been recycled from prior years but neither ever came to a floor vote under Republican leadership. On January 16, long time Amtrak champion Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D, NJ) introduced S-294, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, which is basically a recycling of S-1516, introduced by Trent Lott, (R, Miss.), in the previous session. It also includes rail security legislation the Senate has passed unanimously three times. At a press conference earlier in the day Lautenberg said this bill is his "top priority." S-294 already has 29 co-sponsors including five Republicans. Senators Schumer and Clinton of New York have both signed on.

At a hearing on February 27, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell called S-294 the "the best (Amtrak) legislation I've seen in 30 years." In fact every witness praised the bill except Federal Railroad Administrator Joe Boardman, who presented the Bush Administration view—that it should state goals, including ending federal funding for Amtrak operating costs, and limiting Amtrak to a "pure operating company."

On March 1, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D, Md.), introduced HR-1300, called Program for Real Energy Security (PROGRESS), which was introduced during the last Congress but not voted on. HR-1300 also includes RIDE-21, the High Speed Rail legislation passed by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee last year but never considered by the full chamber.

S-294 Key Provisions

- *Authorizes \$9.648 billion for Amtrak operation and capital projects over six years.
- *Initially 3% of capital project money goes to states; state share grows to 33% in 2012.
- *Authorizes \$1.7 billion for Amtrak debt service over 6 years.
- *Requires Amtrak to develop standardized method for establishing costs to insure equal treatment among states.
- *Gives Surface Transportation Board (STB) power to investigate any Amtrak route with less than 80% on time performance for six months.
- *Authorizes STB to award damages against rail carrier's failure to give preference to Amtrak trains.
- *Allows other railroads to bid to operate a limited number of Amtrak routes; Amtrak must share facilities.
- *Requires States to develop State Rail Plans, which are subject to USDOT approval.
- *Authorizes 80-20% federal-state grants for corridor development to states with approved plans.
- *Requires federal government to develop long-range federal rail policy for movement of goods and people.
- *Authorizes \$623 million to improve Northeast Corridor tunnels.
- *Requires a joint DHS-DOT-Amtrak report with recommendations regarding border crossings to Canada.

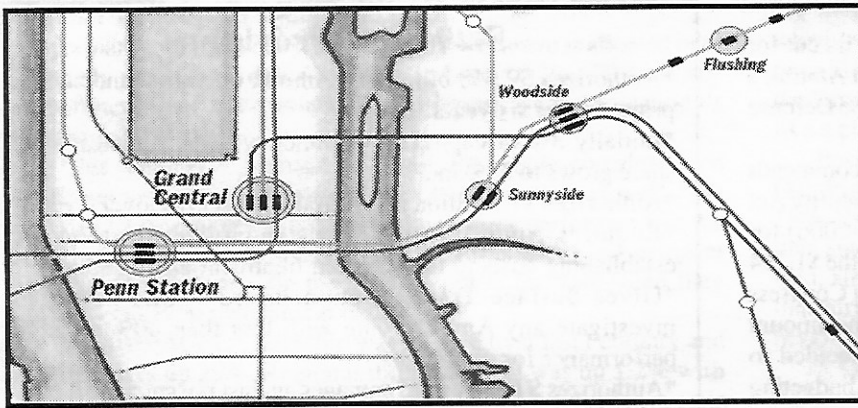
HR-1300 now has 104 Co-sponsors, all Democrats, including the following New Yorkers: Timothy Bishop (Suffolk Co.), Steve Israel (Hauppauge), Carolyn McCarthy (Garden City), Gary Ackerman (Bayside), Josephy Crowley (Elmhurst), Edolphus Towns (Brooklyn), Carolyn Maloney (Manhattan), Jose Serrano (Bronx), Eliot Engel (Bronx), Maurice Hinchey (Saugerties), Michael Arcuri (Utica) and Brian Higgins (Buffalo). **If your Representative is not listed here, please ask him or her to co-sponsor HR-1300. If they are listed, please thank them.**

Both bills authorize funding for passenger rail and provide supportive legislation. Some notable provisions are listed below. Some provisions are opposed by the freight railroads.

Frank Barry

HR-1300 Key Provisions

- *Equalizes employer fringe benefit tax exemption to employees for parking and transit at \$175/month for either.
- *Authorizes \$2.2 billion for expanding and improving transit systems.
- *Authorizes Surface Transportation Board to order tracks to be made available for mass transit and to require level of maintenance for tracks, number of trains and maximum speeds if these cannot be agreed upon through negotiation.
- *Authorizes \$200 mil. annually to states for intercity passenger capital projects 2008-2012.
- *Authorizes states to develop state rail plans.
- *Authorizes \$2.4 bil. annually in tax credit and tax-exempt bonds for 10 years for high-speed rail or magnetic levitation.
- *Lowers definition of high speed from 150mph to 110mph.
- *Requires STB to develop "reliability standards" for railroad operation and maintenance to ensure safe, reliable, and timely delivery of passengers and goods, and to issue regulations regarding their implementation including penalties for non-compliance.



Central Area Plan for Regional Rail

Thru running of **Regional Rail** lines as they converge in Midtown Manhattan increases capacity and connectivity. The Penn Station-Grand Central connection allows west of Hudson residents to reach destinations in East Midtown, the largest concentration of office buildings in the nation. This connection also makes it easier for Bronx, Westchester and Connecticut residents to reach the growing West Midtown area. Putting in place a direct rail service between points north and west of Manhattan, provides an alternative to driving on crowded highways that cannot be expanded.

A two-track connection to Amtrak's West Side line, flowing thru Penn Station, eliminates the capacity constraint of the existing single track tunnel making it possible to add frequent Regional Rail service on this strategically located line. The route from New Jersey thru Penn Station to Long Island is already in place and can be used much more productively with thru-running. The new track connections allow trains to reach existing tracks and platforms at Penn Station and Grand Central, avoiding Deep Cavern terminals, saving passengers travel time and reducing capital and operating cost. In preparing a new conceptual plan for rebuilding Penn Station, an important design requirement is that the level immediately above the platforms be opened up for easy transfer between Regional Rail trains and also between these trains and the subways.

George Haikalis

I-81 Rail Corridor News

New Jersey Transit (NJT) and PennDOT held a series of public meetings during Late January to get public input on the proposed Lackawanna Cut-Off Passenger Rail project between Scranton and New York City. The public input was to be in regard to their draft environmental assessment (ea) submission to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The document presents two scenarios for the I-80 travel corridor between the metropolitan New York region and Scranton:

- 1) *No build*- this option consists of all existing transportation facilities and those likely to exist to year 2030.
- 2) *Build*- This option includes these existing transportation resources plus the restoration of passenger service to Scranton. No major highway projects are being put forward to address the I-80 travel corridor so it would be hard to justify the "no Build" alternative as the environmentally responsible thing to do. Transportation planners, politicians and the traveling public widely agree that I-80 as a travel resource is at the breaking point during peak travel times. The price tag for the project is now estimated to be \$551 million.

ESPA representatives and I-81 Rail Committee members Hank Sommers, Robert Picuch and Ben Gottfried along with I-81 Committee Chairman Jim DiMascio of the Greater Binghamton

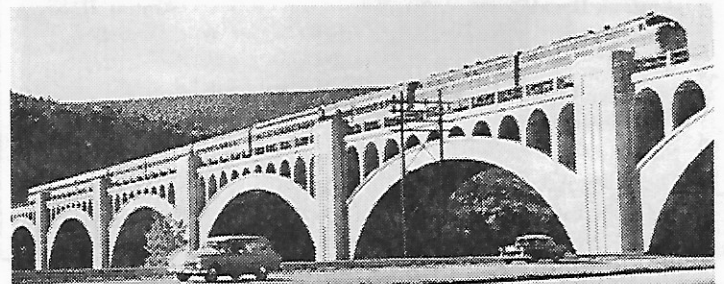
Coalition and NYSDOT multi-modal specialist William Barber met with project representatives at the Scranton meeting on January 17. The NJT team included all officials involved in the planning and preparation of the ea along with their engineering firm Edwards and Kelcey. The group has been aware that an intercity option involving restoration of passenger rail service to New York State via the Binghamton gateway is possible.

Jeffrey Stiles of Edwards and Kelcey noted that significant infrastructure expenditure would be required for the Delaware River viaduct. The 1909 structure has suffered more dramatically than the nearby Paulinskill viaduct in Hainesburg as a result

of the river's moisture and climate. The landmark bridge will be restored to historically accurate standards. The plan also notes that no new trains will be added to the Morris & Essex division timetables, as existing trains would be extended to either Scranton or Andover in New Jersey when service begins.

The project has no firm start date, as funding remains uncertain. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has yet to rate the project, PennDOT and NJT are hoping for a "highly recommended" decision from the FTA where the project will need to compete for Federal dollars with proposed transit plans across the Country. FTA funding for the project is expected to be a 50/50 State and Federal split once the ea and favorable rating are completed.

Ben Gottfried



Troubled bridge over tranquil waters- Extensive reconstruction of the Delaware River viaduct will include demolition of the spandrels and track deck above the main arches. The new concrete pour will duplicate the Lackawanna styling on this signature piece of the restoration project.

Vending Machines Added At Rhinecliff

At ESPA's urging, Amtrak has decided to add two new vending machines (one offering snacks and the other offering hot beverages) at the Rhinecliff station. These offerings will complement an existing cold beverage machine already in place.

Based on the elimination of food service from Hudson Valley trains and with a lack of any other services near the station, ESPA recognized a clear need for additional vending services at Rhinecliff and last year requested that Amtrak investigate adding more machines. After review, Amtrak agreed that there was indeed a need and planning commenced to add the new machines.

Amtrak states that the new machines should be in place soon after necessary utility improvements have been completed. These are expected to be started in the spring.

Bruce B. Becker

Save with "New York By Rail Travel Guide". Amtrak is offering a 50% Off Companion Fare' discount between New York State destinations on Empire Service trains; on the Maple Leaf as far as Niagara Falls, Y and on the Adirondack to Montreal.

NJ Transit's New Tunnel – A Colossal Failure of Interstate Cooperation!

On March 13, 2007 NJ Transit began holding hearings on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for its new Hudson River rail tunnel. While many rail advocates on both sides of the Hudson River support the construction of a new rail tunnel to augment the existing 97-year-old tunnel built by the Pennsylvania Railroad, NJ Transit's plan is deeply flawed. A far better alternative was developed during the final phase of the Access to the Region's Core Study in 2003 — a plan for connecting Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal. That plan called for using existing tracks and platforms at the two stations—taking advantage of unique elements that were incorporated into their design when they were built nearly a century ago—to permit their extension. To go the last mile and make this connection work, transit agencies on both sides of the Hudson would have had to fashion a plan for thru running.

It is not clear why MTA rejected this plan. Some insiders claim that Governor Pataki personally intervened and vetoed the connection because he was advised that it would have helped New Jersey more than New York. With a joint effort rejected, NJ Transit had no choice but to go it alone. Unfortunately, really bad ideas seem to be contagious. NJ Transit has developed a very costly, and passenger-unfriendly Deep Cavern plan under Macy's that is virtually identical to MTA's seriously flawed LIRR Deep Cavern terminal some 150 feet under Park Avenue and Grand Central Terminal.

While many elected officials from New York and New Jersey tout the new plan as model of interstate cooperation, nothing could be further from the truth. There are no minerals in the Manhattan schist that will be excavated. Both states lose badly with both Deep Cavern plans.

With new leadership in Albany and at MTA, these flawed decisions must be re-examined and reversed.

Why connect the stations?

1. *Make it much easier for West of Hudson commuters to reach East Midtown*

Bringing rail service directly to Manhattan's East Side—the largest concentration of office space in the U.S.—means that West of Hudson commuters could avoid the inconvenient and time-consuming transfers on overcrowded stairways and passageways leading to the two subways required to complete this trip. Instead, after a brief stop at Penn Station, their trains would continue to Grand Central Terminal where commuters could easily walk to their destinations.

2. *Avoid time-consuming access to Deep Cavern station under 34th Street and Macy's*

Routing trains from the new Hudson River tunnel directly into existing platforms and tracks at Penn Station—instead of sending them into a Deep Cavern terminal station currently proposed to be constructed under 34th Street and Macy's—would save travelers time and avoid placing them in harm's way.

3. *Increase train capacity at Grand Central*

The connection transforms a key portion of Grand Central Terminal into a thru station, increasing capacity and improving operating efficiency.

4. *Improve access to West Midtown for Westchester and Connecticut commuters*

The connection allows trains from Westchester and Connecticut to operate directly to Penn Station, reaching the many new workplaces planned for West Midtown. Passengers heading

downtown can avoid the overcrowded Lexington subway and instead can select from four north-south subway lines that serve Penn Station directly, or are only a block away at Herald Square.

5. *Ease travel between West of Hudson communities and those in the Bronx, Westchester and Connecticut.*

West-of-Hudson residents face a daunting challenge using public transportation to reach destinations in Northern Manhattan, the Bronx, Westchester and Connecticut. The reverse is true as well. Time-consuming station changes in Manhattan, along with multiple fares, leave most non-Manhattan travelers with only one choice—crowded highways and river crossings. Thru regional rail service opens up many new travel options.

6. *Attract more travelers to the Northeast Corridor High Speed service*

Routing Boston-Washington corridor train service thru the connection gives business travelers from East Midtown a better rail option, reducing dependence on air shuttles.

7. *Route upstate intercity trains through Grand Central to Philadelphia or Washington*

With the connection, trains from Albany and points north and west can be routed through both stations and are aligned to continue to Philadelphia or Washington.

8. *Improve access to Newark Airport*

Travelers from the East Midtown office concentration, and from White Plains and other business and residential locations in Westchester, can more easily reach Newark Airport using the connection.

9. *Reduce capital and operating costs of the new Hudson River tunnel plan*

Using existing tracks and platforms at Penn Station and Grand Central, and building the connection to Grand Central, cuts construction cost by 20%. Thru running via the connection uses crew and equipment more efficiently, significantly reducing operating cost.

There is still time to let your voice be heard. The last hearing on the DEIS is Tuesday, March 27, 2007 in Manhattan. Call (877) ARC-0999 for more information. Written comments will be accepted until April 10, 2007.

George Haikalis, ESPA Manhattan Coordinator for Regional Rail

ATK ...Annual Meeting (Cont'd from page 1)

This requires finding out what customers want and expect, Fremaux said, and the process has begun with Acela Express passengers, who pay very high premiums for extra service. Through market research focus groups Amtrak has determined that customers want equipment that's reliable and clean. "They also want faster service and they want us to be on time—and they want WI-FI Internet connections and much better food and beverage service."

Under pressure from last year's Republican Congress to reduce food service deficits, Amtrak had eliminated hot meals for Acela first class passengers. "In December we restored china dishes and better quality food—and our customer satisfaction food service ratings went up 22% in one month! First class is now selling out on many trains."

Amtrak was also having major difficulty getting its trains to run on time—including its premium *Acelas*. The *Acela* OTP for 2005 was 76%, but it jumped to 85% in 2006. Amtrak's goal for *Acela* is 90%, according to Fremaux, and that is now being achieved. But this "didn't just happen overnight." It happened because Chief Operations Officer Bill Crosbie has been conducting a daily conference call with the major departments affecting *Acela*

Annual Meeting—continued from p. 5

performance, Fremaux explained. Each department is allowed only so many minutes of delay in order to keep OTP at 90%. If any department goes over its allotment, "Guess what—somebody's on the carpet!"

This has had a dramatic effect on the whole corridor, even affecting regional trains, whose OTP has improved as well. "We are absolutely murdering the airlines in on-time performance in the NEC markets—they are averaging below 80%, with a less stringent 15-minute tolerance—on the ground, not at the gate—and they don't even count mechanical delays!"

February ACELA ridership was up 24% over last February and revenue was up 29%. Regional train ridership was up 1.2% with revenue up 7.3%. Although Regional trains carried nearly twice as many passengers as Acelas, the Acelas in February generated more revenue than the regionals. During the last quarter of FY 2006 Amtrak was taking 59% of New York-Washington air/rail travelers and 39% of the New York-Boston market. "We're doing an advertising blitz," Fremaux said; "now that we have a really good service, we're marketing the hell out of it."

Mr. Fremaux said the goal is to extend this approach throughout the company. "We want to give field managers on each route qualitative data on performance and complaints before the crew makes its next trip. We want to trend crews on different trains and within trains so we understand where it's good and where not, so we can drive service intervention where needed."

According to Mr. Fremaux Amtrak is looking at 40 million riders by 2020—nearly twice its current ridership. "This will come primarily through corridors," he said, which will develop in partnership with states. "The key will be a federal-state capital matching program, which may come soon." He doesn't see major growth in long distance ridership because there will likely be no increase in frequency or routes.

Mr. Fremaux had several comments on the Empire Corridor:

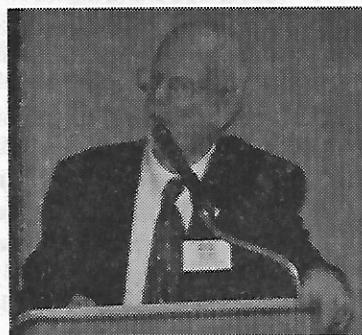
*"I had no idea it was such a scenic and beautiful trip;"

*"We want to get the lawsuit settled so we can run the (Albany-New York) Express Train;"

**On food service:* "I think we should find a solution. I tried with Subway. Cutting Empire food service reduced our food service loss by \$1.4 million. This was the worst performing corridor, which was why it got the axe. We're now running cart service on afternoon *Acelas* and it's almost profitable on certain trains. Cart service might be an option here, perhaps with full service at meal times. It would be great if we could do a joint project so we didn't have to cover all the loss."

**On high Empire fares:* "That really goes to the nature of the state partner relationship. California is not primarily interested in maximizing revenue—they want to maximize ridership, so fares are low—and they cover the loss. But without state support we have to fight to reduce the federal subsidy, and that means doing everything we can to increase revenue." (New York does not contribute to Amtrak operating costs except for the *Adirondack* to Montreal).

Ross Capon, Executive Director of the National Association of



Railroad Passengers, said the Amtrak bills now moving in Congress have a much better chance for success than before. It's very encouraging that HR-1300 has been introduced by Steny Hoyer, the new Majority Leader (D., Md.), he said. "But we're not home free by any means. The House leadership says 'no

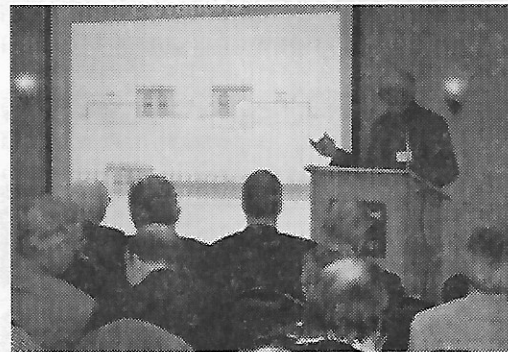
big new spending programs without a means to pay for them, which will require taxes the Republicans don't like—and there's an unwillingness at any level to raise gasoline taxes." Furthermore, the "impending bankruptcy of the Highway Trust Fund is hanging like a cloud over the entire transportation community."

Positive developments for passenger rail include the current Oak Ridge Laboratory Data Book, which shows that Amtrak uses 18% less energy per passenger mile than airlines and 17% less than automobiles (2003 data). "No one has challenged this," Capon said, since Oak Ridge is widely respected as impartial. He noted that airline fuel costs have risen much more sharply than their revenues.

In Great Britain the very compelling Stern Review of the Economics of Climate Change has moved this issue from lip service only six months ago to something that influences people's daily decisions today. Could that happen here? California has passed the first law in this country (AB-32) to require caps on pollution from all sources. They are currently figuring out how to implement it—it will take full effect in 2009.

In answer to a question, Capon said, "We're very lucky to have Joe Boardman as head of the Federal Railroad Administration. Regardless of what he may be required to say in presenting Bush Administration policy, "it's better to have a supporter in that position than not." Capon also conveyed greetings to ESPA from Mr. Boardman, along with a special request to us: "Don't give up!"

Jim Cartin, who previously worked on Amtrak issues in the New



York State Department of Transportation, is now managing the Schenectady station project for the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA). He

reported that the very ambitious Western Gateway Project, which would have cost \$60 million, was not progressed. But some money had been appropriated and Mayor Brian Stratton and Congressman Michael McNulty (D), requested that the Federal Transit Administration transfer the project to CDTA. He noted that CDTA, which provides bus service throughout the capital district, has managed the successful rebuilding of two railroad stations (Rensselaer and Saratoga Springs).

An advisory committee was established late in 2005, Cartin said, and Kise Straw and Kolodner was designated to develop a long-range plan for the Schenectady Station. Preliminary designs were presented at a community outreach session and a follow up session will be scheduled later this spring. The hope is to develop a plan that incorporates the aesthetics of the original station (now torn down) as well as the advantages of a modern structure. The station will be expanded above the track level and designed for bus transfer below.

Additionally Edwards and Kelcey, an engineering firm, was hired to develop a design for repairs to the station. This effort has identified an immediate need for repairs, as there are leaks in the present structure that must be fixed "no matter what." This is estimated to cost about \$2.5 million, Cost for the planned structure is estimated at about \$8 million, which Cartin believes is "doable." But this does not include high-level platforms that may be required under Americans with Disabilities Act regulations now being finalized by the Federal Railroad Administration. And if CSX requires a bypass track around a high level platform, it could elevate the cost substantially.

Annual Meeting—continued from Page 6

Mike Smith, President of the Geneva based Finger Lakes Railway, began railroading as a trackman for the D&H in 1964, then switched to the New York Central, where he enrolled in a management training program. He worked in Grand Central Terminal in New York and on the Empire Corridor and later did marketing for Penn Central and then Boston and Maine. When Conrail sold off branches serving the Finger Lakes he and others put together a successful bid and purchased the cluster in 1995.



“The track was in poor condition and customers were demoralized. The first year we moved only 5600 carloads,” he said. But last year they moved 17,586 carloads: “This growth represents economic decisions by our customers—and this helps the economy grow.” Interestingly “Half our moves now are less than 300 miles and 10% move less than 50 miles—” which contradicts the prevailing wisdom that a shipment must move 700 miles before rail becomes competitive.” The Finger Lakes Railway also runs passenger excursions, including wine trains.

Drawing on prior passenger experience as well as his success in growing his present freight business, Smith suggested several incremental improvements for the Empire Corridor:

1. *Double track only from the Hudson River bridge up to the top of West Albany Hill.* “That’s where a lot of time is consumed.”
2. *Install selective and progressive passing sidings.* “When the NYC went down to two tracks they saved the passenger tracks but lengthened the blocks the cheapest way by taking out every other signal. As a result interlockings aren’t always where they should be. There aren’t enough passing sidings and some are in the wrong places—including the one in Fonda which has several grade crossings and therefore rarely gets used.”
3. *Eliminate slow orders such as the Yost Curve*, also known as Big Nose, between Amsterdam and Utica.

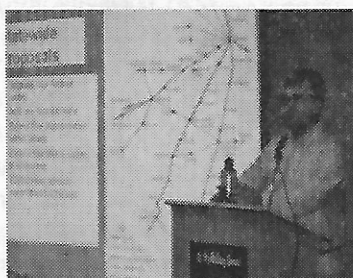
“The improvements must benefit freight service as well as passenger,” Smith said; “CSX doesn’t make much money on Amtrak.”

Smith characterized the present stations along the route as “Fugly”: Niagara Falls and Exchange Street in Buffalo; “Bad”: Depew and Rochester (not enough parking), Amsterdam and Schenectady; “Good”: Syracuse, Utica (good station but most parking is used by county workers, not enough for passengers)

Smith observed that when Empire Trains were switched from Grand Central to Penn Station, through service was promised to Long Island, “but the through services never materialized.” Furthermore, “Penn Station is a terrible facility and Grand Central is located where most people want to go. At least some trains should go to Grand Central.”

Finally Smith pointed out that when Amtrak started up, freight railroads lost free passes for their employees. As a result, “Freight railroad employees no longer have a stake in passenger service.” In particular Amtrak “should pay more attention to dispatchers.”

Rick Harnish, Executive Director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association, explained how Illinois got four new Amtrak trains last Fall. In 2001 the National Association of Railroad Passengers gave the Midwest High Speed Rail Association a startup grant to allow Rick to work full time on rail issues.



“I started with the Chicago-St. Louis line as a model,” he said, pointing out that it was about the same length as Paris-Lyons and it also served Springfield, the state capital. He got a group together including environmentalists and labor union representatives and asked the state secretary of transportation to request a federal earmark. But the answer was “No”.

“The first lesson I learned from this was that politics works from the ground up.” The locals weren’t asking for the Chicago-St. Louis Corridor—not because they didn’t want it but because they had simply given up.” Harnish started speaking to Rotary Clubs downstate. “I heard a lot about dirty toilets and late trains.” This led to his second lesson—that people really cared about trains: “Otherwise they wouldn’t know about the dirty toilets and late arrivals. When I asked groups how many of them had actually ridden the train, invariably more than half raised their hands.” They said they wanted clean toilets, and on time performance and they wanted to arrive before 10AM. Then, “I told them ‘you’re the ones who have to make it happen’ and I told them what they had to do.”

Harnish figured the only way to accomplish this was to add trains. He decided to focus on Chicago-Springfield because many government employees traveled that stretch. He also figured the train was far cheaper than flying or driving. So if state employees took the train the State would save money and this appealed to legislators. He pushed for new trains and incremental improvements to allow faster running and more reliability—for a total of about \$20 million. However “We got close but we didn’t get it.”

“So we realized we really had to get something for everyone in the state, not just one segment. In the Spring of 2006 we put together a proposal to improve the Hiawatha service (to Milwaukee), expand the St. Louis route to five trains a day and double the number of trains on the Carbondale and Quincy lines,” where major state university campuses are located.

He got a lobbyist to push this in the State Capital. And the United Transportation Union lent its lobbyist as well: “We had someone talking to legislators every day.” They also got over 300 local elected officials to sign a letter to the governor along with many Chambers of Commerce.

The Governor’s office finally took the requests seriously but wanted to negotiate. They said there wasn’t enough money for everything the coalition wanted. “They asked us what we could give up. But we couldn’t give up the new trains on any of the routes,” Harnish said; “so in the end we got it all.” The current timetable includes two brand new trains between Chicago and St. Louis and one each to Quincy and Carbondale.

Harnish is now pushing a more comprehensive plan that includes every route ever studied in Illinois. “We have to ramp this up quickly,” he concluded. “Mexico has announced that its oil fields are in decline and won’t be able to meet its commitments to Shell. Iraq, the North Slope and even Saudi Arabia are all in decline. The price of oil has gone way up. We have to demand better train service from both our state legislators and our congressmen.

“European countries are putting in new high speed lines like you wouldn’t believe, and their cities are putting in new street car routes. In Canada, trains run at 100MPH, sometimes even in dark territory (without signals). But here in the U.S., the Federal Transit Administration is changing its regulations to limit the number of new rail projects that can be funded, and the USDOT is about to implement rules that will make new railroad stations unaffordable.”

Frank Barry

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2007- 08 ESPA Meeting Dates

Saturday, April 21, 2007	Rensselaer, NY - Rudy's Italian Restaurant
Saturday, June 16, 2007	Schenectady, NY - The Parker Inn
Saturday, August 4, 2007	Utica, NY - Trackside Tavern
Saturday, Sept. 29, 2007	Rensselaer, NY - Rudy's Italian Restaurant
Saturday, Nov. 17, 2007	Schenectady, NY - The Parker Inn
Saturday, January 26, 2008	Schenectady, NY - The Parker Inn
Saturday, March 15, 2008	Annual Membership Meeting Schenectady Holiday Inn

ALL dates and locations are subject to change...Please refer to the ESPA Web Site, www.esparail.org, for the most current information!

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