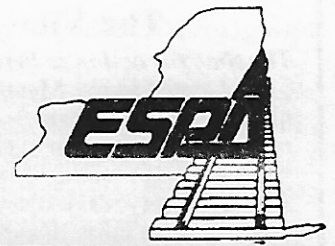


The ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

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



WORKING FOR A MORE BALANCED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

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May / June 2005

Boardman Nominated to Head FRA

On April 28th the U.S. Senate unanimously confirmed appointment of New York State Transportation Commissioner Joseph Boardman, the Bush Administration's nominee to head the Federal Railroad Administration in Washington. Boardman's nomination was proposed on March 17.

Mr. Boardman had strong support from both parties; his nomination was presented by Senator Schumer, who said he was supporting it "in part because he assured me he would fight hard for Amtrak," according to an AP article by Devlin Barrett. Boardman has energetically advocated more government support for rail within the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), where he chaired the Standing Committee on Rail Transportation. In this capacity he commissioned two AASHTO reports to document the benefits and investment needs of rail for both passenger and freight transportation in the U.S. These have been viewed as landmark documents and have helped broaden AASHTO's focus to include rail. Boardman's nomination was strongly endorsed in a letter from the National Association of Railroad Passengers. (Cont'd on page 5)

Amtrak Reviewing Empire Economics

Under intense pressure in Washington, Amtrak is going to extra lengths to review ways to cut costs and become more efficient. The Empire Corridor is getting special attention in part because of its large volume of service and in part because New York is one of the few states that do not contribute to operating expenses for non-NEC corridors.

Amtrak's 2004 figures indicate a \$30 million deficit for the Empire Corridor—the largest deficit for any single corridor Amtrak operates. Competition from Jet Blue's low cost flights from upstate points to New York City has contributed to a 28% decline in station usage west of Schenectady since 1999—the last year before Jet Blue began flying to Buffalo and Rochester (Syracuse flights began the following year). While Amtrak ridership has increased at Albany, Hudson and Rhinecliff, this growth has not offset the losses west of Albany. Overall, Empire Corridor ridership has fallen 8% during this period. Delays from CSX trackwork are compounding the problem this summer.

Possible changes may result—in train frequency, on board amenities or both. Hopefully Amtrak management will look at possible improvements first, including advertised special fares. The group fare for more than two is one such experiment, but conclusive results are not yet in. New York may be asked to contribute to keep the existing service going. *Frank Barry*



ESPA's Director of Legislative Affairs Frank Barry with House of Representatives member John R. Kuhl Jr. at the NARP Spring meeting in Washington.

Heavy Freight Volume and Track Work = Major Amtrak Delays

CSX has started its 2005 season track improvement program across Upstate New York with the first major multi-week tie and rail replacement project focusing on the Amtrak used line between Amsterdam and Little Falls. As a result of the frequent single track operations around the work sites, very heavy ongoing CSX freight volumes and other complicating factors, Amtrak trains in recent weeks have been experiencing very significant delays, especially between Schenectady and Utica. While this particular work zone will soon be completed, other major projects are slated for areas further west towards Buffalo over the coming months.

In an attempt to address these delays, effective Monday, May 2, the schedules for eastbound trains #282, #284 and #286 have been lengthened 40-50 minutes between Niagara Falls and Albany. Please note that the currently distributed printed timetables DO NOT reflect the adjusted earlier departure times for these trains at upstate stations. Please contact Amtrak for the current up to date departure time information. In addition, passengers and those meeting trains are encouraged to contact Amtrak to determine the current status of trains running west of Albany, as delays should still be anticipated.

While ESPA recognizes the importance of this necessary CSX trackwork, we strongly urge CSX to better serve the traveling public by expediting Amtrak trains whenever possible.

Empire Corridor Schedule Changes

There are several changes with the April 25, 2005 Empire Corridor schedules that will affect your travel, although the number of trains operated remains the same:

The 9:00am Albany departure to New York on weekdays has been eliminated.

Train 284 will operate 1 hour 10 min earlier from Niagara Falls on weekdays and will provide a new 11:00am weekday departure from Albany with a New York arrival at 1:25pm. (Train 284 remains the same for its Saturday schedule, operates as Train 280.)

Train 256 operates daily except Saturday and thus retains the Noon Albany departure to New York daily, which was the timeslot of Train 284. (Cont'd on page 6)

The View from the Cab

The time for action is here!

As I stated in my March column, there have never been more formidable obstacles to the very future of passenger rail service across our state and country than there are this year. With our trains, particularly those running west of Albany, in very real jeopardy, there has never been a greater need for us to unite in support of our cause.

As was clearly stated by Congressman Sweeney at our recent Annual Meeting, the battle over Amtrak's continued existence and securing the funding which it needs, will be an extremely hard fought one this year. As ESPA has done many times over our 25-year history, we stand ready again to do whatever is necessary to get our message out. But we need your help NOW! For our voice to be effectively heard in Albany and Washington, we need your financial support.

I strongly urge each of you to please respond as generously as possible to the enclosed Special Appeal. ESPA has accomplished much in our twenty-five history, but perhaps our biggest challenge of all lies ahead in the coming months. Please be assured your Officers and Coordinators will use our funds wisely, as we fight to preserve and enhance both service here in New York and across the nation.

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

Bruce B. Becker, President

2005-06 State Budget Accord Includes Proposed Transportation Bond Act

The recently enacted state budget for 2005-06 contains an appropriation of \$20 million dollars for passenger and freight rail projects for the coming year. From these available funds, which are administered by NYSDOT, the state's approximate \$4.4 million subsidy of the operation of the *Adirondack* is paid.

Also, as part of the overall budget package, voters will be asked to approve a \$2.9 billion transportation bond this November. If approved, the resulting funding would be roughly evenly split between the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the state Department of Transportation. The portion that DOT would receive would fund a variety of transportation related projects statewide, with highway and bridge repairs likely to be a major component. Details of the specific projects and proposed funding levels to be included in the Bond proposal are still being formulated in Albany, with a goal of presenting the overall plan to the public by early summer.

ESPA has submitted a list of passenger rail projects for possible inclusion and funding from the Bond. Included in this list is the long delayed Albany-Schenectady double tracking; construction of the fourth Rensselaer Station boarding track; repairs to the Hudson River bridge; enlarged parking facilities at Rhinecliff; construction of the Lyons and Dunkirk stations and repairs to the rock cut on the Empire Connection near the George Washington Bridge.

Ohio Association Annual Meeting

The Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers 2005 Annual Meeting will be held Saturday, June 25 from 1:00pm - 6:00pm at Laurello Vineyards in Ashtabula, Ohio. Keynote speaker: Ohio Congressman Steve LaTourette, Chairman of the House's Subcommittee on Railroads. All interested persons are urged to attend: \$45 per person includes a one-year membership to OARP. For more details or to register, call 614-228-6005.

Senator Bruno Proposes Funds for High Speed Rail Study.

On March 17, 2005, State Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno announced a very ambitious plan for the creation of a new High Speed Rail Corridor between New York City and Buffalo. The Senator's plan calls for trains traveling up to 200 mph, which he stated could cut travel times to only 1½ hours between New York and Albany, and just over three hours New York to Buffalo. The Senator is seeking \$5.0 million in state funds for a detailed study of the feasibility of such a system and its estimated total costs.

While ESPA applauds the Senator's initiative and his clear understanding of the need to improve the public transportation systems of New York, we urge him to not forget the relatively inexpensive incremental passenger rail improvements needed across the state, which could provide service enhancements and time savings in the near future.

Bruce Becker

Acela Crisis Effects Empire Corridor

The ongoing *Acela* equipment crisis is affecting the Empire Corridor, with Amtrak being forced to substitute less desirable high capacity coaches on both the *Maple Leaf* to Toronto and the *Adirondack* to Montreal. The former Metroliner coaches, which have been used on the Adirondack for some time, are now back in premium fare Metroliner Service between Washington, New York and Boston. Likewise, the long distance Amfleet II coaches recently assigned to the *Maple Leaf*, have been reassigned to similar Acela substitute services. Reportedly, Horizon fleet coaches from the west coast will be used on the Empire Corridor in the coming months and until the *Acelas* are returned to full service.

Bruce Becker

Schumer Amendment Raises Transit Benefit

Sen. Chuck Schumer submitted an amendment to the new surface transportation bill to raise the tax-free transit benefit employers can provide to employees from \$105 to \$155 per month next year. This was adopted by the Senate Finance Committee on April 19th and will be submitted as part of the committee's amendments to the full bill that funds highways and transit. "I will continue to fight to bring the transit benefit up to par with the parking benefit (now \$200 monthly) to give commuters more incentive to travel using mass transit. This significant transit benefit ... will make New York a more livable place," Schumer said.

Senator Schumer was awarded a seat on this important committee when Congress convened in January.

Frank Barry

Rochester Subway to be Filled In

After lying empty since 1956, Rochester's subway tunnel under Broad Street will be filled in with tightly packed dirt so it can never be used. The city claims it can no longer afford the expense of maintaining the supports under Broad Street in the hope that some other use will emerge. The subway itself was laid on the bed of the original Erie Canal, which was later relocated. The old canal bed was converted to a subway trolley system in the 1920's. The city will spend \$20 million to fill it in, a process expected to start in December and last two years. (*From Skyscraper Page.Com, submitted by Orrin Getz*)

Amtrak Facts: Amtrak expended \$49,277,453 for goods and services in New York in FY04.

Bush Administration and Amtrak Board Present Plans

Both the Bush Administration and the Amtrak Board of Directors formally presented their plans for reforming Amtrak in April. Amtrak has accepted some elements of the Bush plan but rejected others. In a letter to Amtrak employees, President David Gunn recognized that some of Amtrak's plan may be controversial. But, "None of us should be under any illusion that business as usual will be acceptable in the current climate.... Reform will happen, and we can either shape (it) or be its victim. What it comes down to is unless we change, we will not survive."

A comparison between the two plans follows:

OVERALL BUDGET

BUSH: *Funding unspecified and subject to appropriation process. Zero for 2006 unless Bush plan accepted.

AMTRAK *\$1.8 billion for 2006, declining to \$800 million by 2011. Reliable funding mechanism needed.

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

BUSH *Separate track from train operations by creating separate corporations, one to operate trains and maintain equipment, another to maintain tracks and dispatch traffic of all users; Amtrak would remain as "holding company" for administrative purposes.

*States must form Interstate Compact to manage all rail operations through contracts with train operator, track maintainer and other users, beginning by third year.

*Federal grants for deferred maintenance available once compact formed.

*New York-Albany service considered part of NE Corridor.

AMTRAK: *Amtrak to keep Northeast Corridor and acquire sections owned by Metro-North and MBTA. No break up—Amtrak to continue operations, dispatching and maintenance.

*Federal government to provide funding to bring NEC to state of good repair.

*Operating costs allocated so "all users (pay) proportionate share." (This presumably will increase costs for commuter and freight users).

*New York-Albany not part of Northeast Corridor.

OTHER CORRIDORS

BUSH: *Federal government to continue current funding for two years only, subject to its approval of business plan for each route.

*Federal grants for "backlog" deferred maintenance.

*Feds may pay 100% of approved capital project costs in year 2, 80% in year 3, 60% in year 4, 50% after that.

*All funding to be contracted through states or interstate compacts after year 2. States or compacts of states to determine routes and service levels. Federal government "not to subsidize service the local entity itself would not subsidize."

*Access to freight railroads for new routes must be negotiated—Amtrak's current rights would not apply.

AMTRAK: *Federal government to cover 80% of capital project costs as it does for highways.

*Once capital grant program in place, states or interstate compacts gradually assume operating deficits by 2011.

LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS

BUSH: *Federal government may cover full operating cost during first year, 40¢ per passenger mile during second year, 20¢/pas. mi. in third year, 10¢/pas. mi. in 4th year, none after that. (2004 fully allocated cost for long distance trains was 46¢/passenger mile, 30¢ for direct cost only.) *States or interstate compacts to make up

shortfall (trains to skip stops in nonpaying states). Otherwise trains to be discontinued.

AMTRAK: *Federal government to continue paying entire cost, but trains must meet yet to be established performance standards. Amtrak to attempt to improve performance of trains that fail. If unsuccessful, states or federal government may be asked to make up shortfall. If they refuse, train may be discontinued.

COMPETITION

Bush: *States must put route operations up for competitive bid to receive grants, or justify not doing so. Other operators to be given equal access to freight railroads for existing routes.

AMTRAK: *Test contracting out operations on one or two routes. Test outsourcing of some services and work now performed in-house.

LABOR

BUSH: *Corporation must negotiate substantial operating cost reductions with its employees to become competitive with private sector.

*Amtrak employees to be offered \$50,000 buyout.

AMTRAK: *New employees to be put into Social Security rather than Railroad Labor Retirement System.

*Amend legislation so labor contracts terminate when they expire rather than remaining in force until replaced.

*All intercity passenger operators to be subject to same labor laws.

Both proposals agree on some issues. First, states, not Amtrak or the federal government, should determine service levels, frequencies and any expansion of service in non-NEC corridors. And, after a phase-in period, states should pay all operating costs not covered by fares.

Both agree competition is desirable and that Amtrak's right of access to freight railroads should be made available to others for operation on existing routes. And both agree on need for federal capital grants, to be administered by states or interstate compacts for corridor development, which should reduce operating expenses.

Disagreements focus on the organization of Amtrak itself, the percentage of federal financing for corridor development, and financing for long distance trains. Many believe the Bush plan will ultimately end most long distance train service. And it is possible that forcing states to pay full corridor costs could end some service too.

But the more serious disagreements may come from others. Many in Congress are critical of forcing states to pay operating expenses. Senator Lott has openly disparaged the Administration proposal. Freight railroads have made it plain they don't want multiple operators. And labor leaders are furious with the reforms Amtrak has suggested. AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department President Ed Wytkind called on the Bush appointed Amtrak Board to resign and said "Transportation labor will do everything within our power to prevent Amtrak's Board from destroying Amtrak from within." (Transportation Weekly, 4/26)

If these strongly divergent positions are not resolved, bankruptcy could still happen this Fall.

Frank Barry

Corrections to the 2005 Officers & Coordinators Address List Published in March:

Bruce B. Becker	E-Mail: bbecker@westwoodcc.cc
Karl Greenhagle	E-mail: Kjz7vxq@frontiernet.net
Stan Kozaczka	E-Mail: skozaczka@cazenovia.edu
Richard Kulla	Add Financial Secretary to Title
Steve Strauss	E-Mail: sfstrauss@erols.com

Budget Process Advances in Congress

Amendments to provide full funding for Amtrak were offered to budget resolutions in both the Senate and the House. The Senate amendment, offered by Senator Robert Byrd (D., WV), was defeated 46-52 on March 16th—even though eight Republican Senators had signed a February 14th letter urging full funding for Amtrak. Four Republicans who had signed the letter nevertheless voted against the amendment and one Democrat—Bill Nelson (Fla.), joined them. Several said they were not opposed to Amtrak but did not like the way Byrd proposed to find the money. New York Senators Schumer and Clinton both voted for the amendment.

This followed a news conference and pro-Amtrak rally at Washington Union Station led by Sen. Thomas Carper (D. Del.) the previous day at which Senator Clinton said the Bush plan takes passengers from “All Aboard to Everyone Off.”

But the House, normally less friendly to Amtrak, actually countered the Senate’s rejection. A March 3rd letter signed by 21 Republicans was instrumental in bringing about a successful amendment to add \$1.2 billion for Amtrak to the initial budget resolution, which had included only the Administration’s figure.

Authorizations Progress

The Senate subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine held its hearing on Amtrak reauthorization on April 21. David Laney, Chairman of Amtrak’s Board of Directors and President David Gunn presented their long awaited plan and \$1.8 billion budget request, which adopts some of the administration’s principles with longer phase in periods (see separate article).

Sub-committee Chairman Trent Lott (R., Miss.) said getting Amtrak reauthorized this year is “one of my top priorities,” and that he is determined to pass such a bill.

In the House the full Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved by voice vote a multi-year Amtrak Authorization bill (HR-1630) that would fund Amtrak at up to \$2 billion for each of the next three years. It also passed HR-1631, the Railroad Infrastructure Development and Expansion Act (RIDE-21) introduced in 2003 by Don Young (R., Alaska) and Oberstar (D., Minn.), Jack Quinn (R., Buffalo) and Corinne Brown (D., Fla.). This bill would allow states or interstate compacts to issue \$24 billion in federally tax-exempt and tax credit bonds at \$2.4 billion annually for ten years. It would extend the Swift Rail Development Act, authorizing \$100 million annually for corridor development. Finally, it would expand the Railroad Rehabilitation and Infrastructure Financing Loan Program by increasing its funding authority from \$3.5 to \$35 billion in outstanding loans at any one time. Eighty per cent may be used for high-speed rail or maglev; 20% for shortlines or regional freight railroads.

Appropriations Less Encouraging

Unfortunately developments were less encouraging on the appropriations front as transportation subcommittees in both chambers are now chaired by new Amtrak critics. The House Appropriations Subcommittee held hearings on March 18 and April 27 and sub-committee chairman Joe Knollenburg (R, Mich.), who replaced Ernest Istook, attacked Amtrak in both sessions. He said, as Transportation Secretary Mineta has, that it would be cheaper to buy air tickets for everyone, and that \$1.8 billion for Amtrak is not achievable. (The claim that buying airline tickets would be cheaper assumes all Amtrak passengers go to places served by low cost airlines and are willing to fly).

Two days after the second hearing Knollenburg received a letter from 22 Republican members urging the full \$1.8 billion for Amtrak. New York signers included Sherwood Boehlert, who helped draft the letter, John McHugh, Sue Kelly, Peter King and Randy Kuhl. John Sweeney and Jim Walsh did not sign; they are on the committee the letter is addressed to. Sweeney spoke up in support of Amtrak during the first hearing, criticizing the Bush proposal to “dump” funding responsibility onto the States.

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee held its hearing on April 21st, at which Amtrak presented its plan and \$1.82 billion budget request for 2006. Transportation Secretary Mineta expressed pleasure that the Amtrak board had incorporated some Bush Administration demands. But Bush’s Office of Management and Budget Director Joshua Holton said the Administration budget figure for Amtrak is still zero.

On a more positive note a bi-partisan group of Representatives is planning to form a Passenger Rail Caucus. This was to be launched in Washington on May 5th.

Frank Barry (from NARP Hotline and Congressional Press Releases)

Transportation Summit in Utica, New York

The Utica based Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and Congressman Sherwood Boehlert have teamed up to bring a special conference to Utica on June 20, 2005. Congressman Boehlert and other speakers will discuss the changing nature of regional transportation in the greater Utica region. The ever expanding Central Regional Transit Authority of Syracuse recently struck a deal to take over operations of Utica’s Utica Transit Authority (UTA) regional bus services.

This sounds like an interesting day of transportation topics and an ideal forum to discuss future development patterns and their reliance on the transportation network. The WIB website quotes Congressman Boehlert on this point... “*there are opportunities we need to discuss, new ways to connect people from all across the region with the opportunities at Griffiss Park, and all of our suburban communities that are working to grow new jobs.*” The rail component of the regional and statewide transportation system will be included in the program. The Summit will take place at stylish Hotel Utica, which has served as a centerpiece of controversy and hope for Utica’s downtown revitalization efforts. Find out more about the Summit at www.working-solutions.org

The summit will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, June 20th, at Hotel Utica. A light breakfast will be served prior to the start of the program at 9 a.m. The summit is open to employers, agencies, local governments and others interested in transportation issues. The summit is free, but reservations are required. Contact Dina Graziano of the WIB at 798-3673 or dgraziano@working-solutions.org.

Ben Gottfried/ WIB

Amtrak Seeks ESPA’s Input

Amtrak’s Empire District Superintendent, James Turngren, wants to hear of your New York State Amtrak travel experiences. Whether everything was great or if there was room for improvement, Jim welcomes our input, as he strives to provide the best possible service on the Empire Corridor. Please send your written trip reports and comments, including specific dates, train numbers and employee names as appropriate to:

James Turngren District Superintendent, Empire District Amtrak
525 East Street Rensselaer, NY 12144

MTA 2004 – 2009 Capital Program: \$9 Billion More Debt, Fare Increases

In September 2004 the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) which operates New York City's mass transit as well as the commuter railroads in the downstate suburbs surrounding New York City, proposed a new \$27.8 billion five-year capital program for 2005 – 2009, a successor to a series of five-year capital plans beginning in 1982 when the MTA system had deteriorated into deplorable condition. The proposed 2005 – 2009 plan was divided into a \$17.2 billion 'core' program, and \$9.9 billion for 'system expansion.' The MTA does not set aside funds to offset depreciation of its properties, and therefore when subway cars, commuter trains, signals or track wear out, or stations become decrepit, their replacement or rehabilitation is counted as a new capital investment. Such items constitute the bulk of the \$17.2 billion 'core' program.

In addition, the MTA proposes several 'system expansion' projects. The first, 'East Side Access', in its current form proposes construction of a second Manhattan terminus for the Long Island Railroad, excavated 100 feet deep in the rock under Grand Central Terminal. In 1980, this same basic scheme would have used the lower level of Grand Central Terminal, at an estimated cost of \$1.2 billion; the deep-tunneled version is now estimated to cost \$7.9 billion. The second 'system expansion' is the Second Avenue subway, originally proposed for construction in the 1950's using a \$500 million bond issue. The MTA now estimates it will cost \$16.8 billion. Since the combined cost of these two projects plus other proposals exceeds \$24.6 billion, the \$9.8 billion requested for 'system expansion' would only fund a start on these projects, but provide nowhere near the amount needed for their completion.

In April 2005 as part of its 'on-time budget' the State Legislature announced that it had funded the MTA 2005 – 2009 Capital Program at a somewhat reduced level, providing \$15.4 billion for most but not all of the 'core' program and \$2.1 billion toward's the State's share of starting East Side Access and the Second Avenue Subway. Should transit riders celebrate? Let's take a closer look.

In reality, the Legislature and Governor Pataki have provided very little new money: a \$350 million per year increase in sales taxes and fees in the downstate region, which the MTA estimates will enable it to issue \$5.1 billion in new bonds for which the \$350 million, will cover debt service. The MTA hopes that \$6.6 billion of the program will be paid for by Federal funds. For the remaining money, the largest component is a legislative authorization for the MTA to issue \$4.2 billion in new 'fare-backed bonds.' These are bonds whose debt service must be paid for out of the MTA's operating budget. 'Fare-backed bonds' are a device which then-MTA Chairman Richard Ravitch devised in the early 1980's to provide \$4 billion for the MTA's first five-year capital program. Ravitch urged that this device never be used again. But in the 1990's, as Governor Pataki cut New York State's contribution and Mayor Giuliani cut New York City's contributions to MTA capital programs, the State increasingly resorted to 'fare-backed bonds' to fund the MTA. 'Fare-backed bonds' circumvent New York State's Constitutional stipulation that any State debt must be approved by New York voters.

By October 2004, the MTA's debt had reached the staggering total of \$19.7 billion, with a further \$7 billion of bonds due to be issued as the 2000 – 2004 Capital program is completed. Debt service costs on these MTA bonds are projected to reach \$1.3 billion in 2005, and increase to \$1.7 billion annually in 2008. The State Legislature's action on the 2005 – 2009 MTA Capital Program will increase the MTA's debt still further, to an astonishing

total exceeding \$30 billion.

Debt service, on an already huge debt, which is about to increase by at least 50 percent over today's levels, is the MTA's most rapidly increasing cost. The Legislature and the Governor's actions on the 2005 – 2009 Capital Program make the situation much worse. State lawmakers professed to be surprised when the MTA raised fares in 2003 to offset escalating debt service costs. But obviously, requiring the MTA to finance its capital expenditures with debt, while providing no money for debt service, leaves the MTA no choice but to raise fares.

Needless to say, Governor Pataki and New York State legislative leaders have not announced that their financing plans for the MTA mean that the agency will have to sharply increase subway fares and commuter fares after 2005. But unless new revenues are allocated to the MTA – at this moment, none have been proposed – MTA transit riders and commuters are in for a rough, and much more expensive, ride.

Christopher Wasiutynski

Boardman Nomination (Cont'd from page 1)

Last summer Boardman conducted a series of hearings around New York State to get input for developing a new master plan for transportation. He made it clear that rail must be treated as an important part of the state's transportation infrastructure, and this is reflected in the resulting report Trouble Ahead, which came out last November.

In 1999 he received the ESPA President's award for his initiative in developing a high-speed program for New York State with Amtrak. Although that initiative failed, due in part to a 3-year delay in passing rail tax reform legislation, this does not seem to have lessened Joe Boardman's enthusiasm for rail.

"I think this is a time of greatest opportunity to improve intercity rail in this nation. Amtrak will be part of the solution. All the states and stakeholders, including ESPA, have an opportunity and a responsibility to press us to make this happen," he told ESPA shortly before his nomination was approved.

In his April 12th confirmation hearing Boardman listed intercity passenger rail as one of his three priorities: "Congress and the Administration must work together to reform the existing, failing system," he told the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. "If confirmed I will work tirelessly to bring about a new era for America's intercity passenger rail system."

When Senator Frank Lautenberg (D, NJ) asked if he thought states, including New York, could pay for the full operating costs of corridor trains, Boardman responded "I don't think any state volunteers unless called upon...New York will be committed to supporting passenger rail."

Boardman grew up on a dairy farm in Rome, and got his bachelors degree at Cornell's College of Agriculture. While there, he started driving campus buses to earn pocket money. This led to an early career in transit—he managed local bus companies in Rome, Utica and Binghamton before moving to the State Department of Transportation where he was appointed transportation commissioner in 1997. His background in public transit has given him a deep understanding and commitment to public transportation, including rail.

Commissioner Boardman's nomination offers hope that the Bush Administration may be willing to accept a constructive compromise regarding our national rail system rather than forcing Amtrak into bankruptcy or eliminating support for long distance trains as it has threatened to do. Hopefully Commissioner Boardman can bring the parties together so each wins enough to declare victory, the trains keep running and a strong foundation is laid for improvement.

Frank Barry

2005 – 2006 ESPA Meeting Dates

Saturday, June 25, 2005	Schenectady – The Parker Inn
Saturday, August 6, 2005	Utica – Trackside Tavern
Saturday, October 1, 2005	Saratoga Springs – Amtrak Station
Saturday, November 19, 2005	Rhinecliff
Saturday, January 11, 2006	Schenectady – The Parker Inn
Saturday, March 11, 2006	Annual Meeting Schenectady

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

Postage Savings used for Passenger Rail Advocacy

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

Empire Corridor Schedule (Cont'd from page 1)

Train 64 will operate one hour earlier from Toronto, at 8:30am, but keeps its 9:45pm New York arrival. The time at US customs will now be a scheduled 2 hours 5 minutes. The earlier Toronto departure breaks the connection from VIA Rail's train from London, Ontario and also breaks the connection from VIA Rail's overnight train from Montreal to Toronto.

Train 257, the 3:45pm New York departure to Albany, no longer stops at Yonkers.

The westbound *Lake Shore Limited* (Train 49) will operate one hour later from New York, at 3:50pm. Train 49 arrives in Chicago at 9:30am, 47 minutes later than the prior schedule.

Time has been reduced between Albany and Buffalo, as Train 49 will arrive Buffalo at 11:47pm, just 40 minutes later. The shuttle

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel: 716-759-2315. e-mail: RWLenz@aol.com. Deadline for material for July/August issue is June 30, 2005. Material may be reproduced if credit is given ESPA and to the writer.

train from Boston to Albany continues, so no switching of cars is required in Albany, and the Albany dwell time for Train 49 has been reduced to 25 minutes. The eastbound *Lake Shore Limited* (Train 48) will depart Chicago at 7:55pm, 20 minutes later, and arrive New York - 3:25pm, the same time as the winter schedule.

Printed Schedule Corrections:

Train 248, the 8:10am from Albany to New York does operate on both Saturdays and Sundays, as this train is incorrectly shown as "Mon-Fri only" in the printed April 25 Amtrak System Timetable.

Due to the *Acela Express* being pulled from service along the Northeast Corridor, it's advised to check the Amtrak web site for the latest update.

Temporary schedule adjustment – Due to the HUGE delays being encountered on CSX with track work, 40 to 50 minutes has been added to the schedules of trains #282, #284 & #286 between Niagara Falls and Albany. Check Amtrak web site for latest updates.

Gary Prophet

Around the World

Spain - Work has begun on the 28-mile tunnel under the Pyrennes, which will form part of the HS link between Barcelona and France. When completed, trains will travel between Madrid and Paris, the distance of Chicago and New York, in less than eight hours.

Cotton Tail Limited

The Western New York Railway Historical Society's annual "Cotton Tail Limited" was very popular with 225 passengers aboard Amtrak #288 from Niagara Falls to Buffalo-Depew.

ESPA MEMBERSHIP - NEW OR RENEWAL

The Empire State Passengers Association is a volunteer network of people working to improve intercity rail, mass transit and bus service in New York State.

- Introductory membership (\$10.00 for one year)
- Renewal membership (\$24.00 per year)
- Renewal - Student or Senior Citizen (\$12.50 per year)
- Family membership (\$35.00)
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