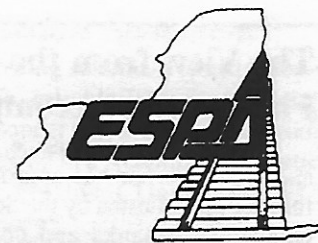


The ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

<http://www.esparail.org>



WORKING FOR A MORE BALANCED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Vol. 30, No. 3

May/June 2006

NYMTC Approves THE Tunnel

On March 16th the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) formally approved the Trans Hudson Express (THE tunnel), previously called Access to the Region's Core. This project would bring tracks through two new tunnels from New Jersey into new platforms next to Penn Station.

NJ Transit, the project's chief sponsor, can now petition the Federal Transit Association (FTA) for preliminary engineering funds since the requirement for bi-state support has been met.

THE tunnel is being promoted aggressively by New Jersey, but has attracted less support from New York State leaders than East Side Access, the Second Avenue Subway and other projects entirely in New York State. But the project will serve both states, and will allow more travelers to enter the city via transit. It will not, unfortunately, accomplish the New York area Regional Rail Working Group objective of bringing New Jersey Transit into Grand Central, which is closer to most employment centers than Penn Station. ESPA Coordinator George Hikalas chairs this group. (see page 5)

Frank Barry

Boehlert to Retire

Congressman Sherwood Boehlert, a senior Republican member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee and longtime friend of Amtrak, has announced his intent to retire at the end of the year. Boehlert, whose 24th Congressional District includes part of the Empire Corridor, has been a consistent supporter and defender of Amtrak and is responsible for funding rehabilitation of the Utica and Rome stations as well as the Adirondack Railroad.

He has co-sponsored high speed rail bills, signed Congressional letters urging funding for Amtrak and written pro-rail op Ed pieces. His advocacy and support earned him the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) Golden Spike Award in 2004. Boehlert said then that he frequently travels by train, even taking the *Lake Shore Limited* for travel to the Midwest. ESPA, NARP and Amtrak will miss him greatly. Had he continued he might have become chairman of the powerful T&I Committee, which would have greatly increased prospects of a strong Amtrak reauthorization bill.

Boehlert's retirement has spurred several candidates to enter the race to succeed him including State Senator Ray Meier (R) and Seneca Falls Mayor Brad Jones (R) as well as Oneida County District Attorney Michael Arcuri and Cortland Mayor Bruce Tytler, both Democrats. Any ESPA members who encounter these candidates campaigning this summer should ask them where they stand on full funding for Amtrak and passage of reauthorization legislation in the House. (This applies to candidates in other districts as well.)

Steve Strauss

Help Needed

Once again, the Bush Administration is trying to cut much needed funding from Amtrak. Their 2007 budget request of \$900 million for Amtrak — while an improvement over last year's zero funding — would still result in the elimination of all Amtrak service. Besides the fact that the capital budget is cut nearly in half, operating funds are for all intents and purposes eliminated.

Please ask your Representative to reject this cut and instead support Amtrak's request for \$1.8 billion so that they can continue to safely run trains nationwide. www.vote-smart.org

Passenger rail ridership has grown every year since September 11, 2001 because it provides Americans a travel choice that reduces our dependency on foreign oil, mitigates congestion in urban areas, and provides badly needed transportation in rural regions. **Thanks for your help!**



Crawfordsville students receive NARP's Youth Rail Passenger Citizenship Award. Could a school group in New York State work to improve its rail station, or other community buildings?

Students Grow Ridership in Crawfordsville

Amtrak ridership has increased by a third in Crawfordsville, Indiana since a high school class took on the task of cleaning up the town's decrepit station. The neglected bus shelter-like structure was rumored to be one of the worst on Amtrak's system. It was littered with refuse and its plastic windows had become opaque and some were broken.

Ms. Helen Hudson's English Class stepped in as part of a federal TechKnowBuild program that provided laptop computers to each student. But there was a catch: in return, the class had to carry out a project that improved their knowledge and their community. It took awhile, but they finally settled on sprucing up their town's train station. This in itself was educational—like numerous adults in Crawfordsville, many of the students didn't know their town had a train station. Some had never even seen, much less ridden a passenger train. (Cont'd on page 7)

The View from the Cab...

Finally...An accomplishment to report!

As reported in this issue, the state legislature has included and the Governor has approved the initial years \$22 million funding as requested by the Senate High Speed Rail Task Force. Our sincere thanks and congratulations must go to State Senator Joseph Bruno for his leadership in establishing the Task Force and for helping insure that its funding request was fulfilled.

I am pleased to report that at our last Officers and Coordinators Meeting, your Association's leadership moved unanimously to research and pursue the creation of a new tax-exempt 'Friends of ESPA' organization, to work in partnership with ESPA towards our goals. Two principal advantages of such a new sister organization include the ability of members to receive favorable tax benefits for their donations to our cause and the ability to seek grant money to expand our outreach and educational efforts. I will keep you informed on the progress of this initiative over the coming months.

As I reported in the last issue, after many years of outstanding service to the Association, Maggie McCurry, our Adirondack Regional Coordinator, is stepping aside. Accordingly, the position of ESPA Adirondack Regional Coordinator position is currently vacant. ESPA members interested in being considered for this open position should contact me. 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.

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

Initial Year High Speed Rail Program Funding Approved

The recently passed and approved FY 2006 New York State budget includes the requested \$22 million for the initial year projects outlined in the State Senate High Speed Rail Task Force Report released last December. Championed by State Senator Joe Bruno, the Rail Task Force, which is headed by John Egan, plans to this year introduce a new weekday express train between Albany and New York's Penn Station, with direct service to Saratoga Springs, as its first tangible service improvement.

The \$22m will also hopefully fund some smaller near-term infrastructure improvements, which will increase service reliability and overall running times. In addition, the initial planning and engineering work for future improvement projects will commence over the coming year.

The budget also contains language authorizing the expenditure of \$3.0 million contained in last fall's voter approved transportation bond act. These funds permit two specific projects to advance: initial planning for high level platforms and increased parking at Rhinecliff; and engineering for the long sought double tracking between Albany and Schenectady.

Lastly, the budget contains \$20 million for ongoing statewide rail improvements and includes funds for the continued operation of the state sponsored *Adirondack* between Albany and Montreal.

Bruce B. Becker

Guest Editorial: Amtrak's 35th Birthday

35 years ago today, Amtrak assumed operation of America's passenger trains nationwide, with no clear mandate from Congress. Many believe that the unspoken mandate was to provide political cover for the elimination of all intercity passenger trains. If that is true, it isn't surprising that America lost 60 percent of its passenger trains on May 1, 1971.

The fuel crisis of 1973 made it difficult to kill the American passenger train altogether, but that hasn't stopped people from trying every year since. Despite the annual attacks, Amtrak has successfully maintained a core network that will be increasingly important to our economy in the years ahead.

With China and India driving up the demand for oil, we have entered a much more severe and longer lasting fuel crisis. We can no longer afford the annual Amtrak funding circus.

While America has dithered over pennies for Amtrak, our worldwide competitors have invested billions of dollars in highly productive, fuel-efficient railroad networks. Soon, in both Europe and China, high-speed trains will link cities as far apart as Chicago and the East Coast. As fuel costs go up, they will simply take more trips by train. We will be stuck at home, unable to afford the trip.

And to make it worse, the highway trust fund is expected to be bankrupt in three short years. Simply maintaining the existing highway network will require a substantial tax increase. There will not be enough left over to grow the system.

We must begin an aggressive program to expand the passenger train network nationwide and we must do it soon. Railroads carry more people at higher speeds for a fraction of the investment needed for highways. Shortened travel times, more productive travel and reduced fuel consumption come as part of the package.

By investing the cost of just two tanks of gas in faster trains today, we can build a stronger economy and prepare for even higher gas prices in the future.

The first step is to stop bickering about Amtrak and get to the hard work ahead: Working with freight railroads to upgrade their tracks for faster and more frequent trains, both passenger and freight. It is the only affordable option.

Rick Harnish, Executive Director, Midwest High Speed Rail Association www.midwesthsr.org

Higher Gas Prices, Lowered Rail Fares and Increased Reliability Boost Ridership Across Upstate New York...

As reported in Amtrak's February 2006 Monthly Performance Report, ridership on trains operating west of Albany was up 17.8% in February 2006 as compared to February 2005 and up 14.8% to Amtrak's February 2006 budget. Even more impressive, west of Albany revenues were up 22.8% in February 2006 compared to February 2005 and up 14.9% to budget. Other ridership increases were noted on the Ethan Allen Express to Rutland, up 9.8% and on the Lake Shore Limited, up 17.0% in February 2006.

Year-to-date (October '05 through February '06) ridership figures show west of Albany trains up 8.5%; the *Ethan Allen Express* up 9.0%; the *Lake Shore Limited* up 18.5% and the *Adirondack* up 2.7%, as compared to prior year numbers.

With mild winter weather, on-time performance improved to 75.4% for all New York State service trains in February. Unfortunately, the Lake Shore Limited lagged far behind at only 34.8% on-time.

Bruce B. Becker

Simplified Dining on Amtrak

April 24th saw the introduction of Amtrak's 'Simplified Dining' concept on the *Lake Shore Limited*, with all of Amtrak's other long distance trains (except the Empire Builder and Auto Train) slated to also be changed over by the beginning of the busy summer travel season.

The 'Simplified Dining' program is the first phase of Amtrak's planned multi-year program to significantly reduce the loss it incurs in providing food and beverage services, which reportedly totaled over \$100 million in FY2005. As part Amtrak's successful FY2006 federal appropriation, Amtrak was ordered to cut this loss.

'Simplified Dining' encompasses several distinct operational changes, primarily aimed at reducing labor costs:

- Base dining car staffing levels are reduced from 5 employees (1 Steward (LSA), 2 servers (SA's), 1 Chef and 1 Kitchen Assistant) to 3 employees (1 Steward (LSA), 1 server (SA) and 1 Chef). The reduced staffing level will allow up to 96 patrons to be served during any given meal period. If the anticipated passenger load on a train is expected to require additional dining car capacity, an additional server will be added to allow serving up to 142 patrons and a third server will be added if the per meal count will be higher than 142.
- As has been mostly the case for the past several years, all entrees are now pre-cooked/pre-portioned off the train and thus only require re-heating once on board. 'Simplified Dining' has eliminated cooked-to-order steaks at dinner and various style eggs and pancakes at breakfast. After experiencing initial problems, starches and vegetables are once again being prepared on-board, permitting patrons various choice options.
- The majority of the service and kitchenware is now disposable, thus limiting the dishwashing task. Stainless utensils are still be used at all meals, along with appropriate tablecloths and napkins.
- In order for the reduced staffing levels to be able to provide the required level of service, a staggered reservation system has been instituted. Over a four-hour meal period, a maximum of 8 persons are accommodated every 15 minutes. After the initial two seatings (thus 16 persons in 30 minutes), a 15 'recovery' period is included, before the next seating starts. Amtrak is counting on this staggered seating system to permit the single Chef adequate time to prepare and plate meals efficiently, while actually improving the service level for the patrons. Indeed, the new system should avoid making dinners wait to be approached by their server, as the former 'fill the whole car at once' system often did.

The second phase of the cost reduction program includes the design and construction of the so-called 'Diner-Lite' combined diner-lounge cars. Aimed at eliminating the need for separate dining and lounge/café cars on most trains, the 'diner-lite' concept will reportedly permit all-day sit down dining, in addition to providing the customary to-go service, all in one car. It is yet to be seen how Amtrak will address the need for sightseeing capabilities on these cars, which are particularly popular on western trains. The introduction of trial 'diner-lite' service is likely still over a year away.

If properly executed, 'Simplified Dining' may actually improve the passenger experience, while demonstrating Amtrak's real commitment to reducing costs. The long-term survival of overnight trains may well depend on this.

Bruce B. Becker

(*Ed Note: Having ridden on the Sunset Ltd., Texas Eagle, Capitol and Lake Shore Limited in the last month, service under the new system has worked very well! - R.W. Lenz.*)

Amtrak Adopts Mission Statement

Amtrak has developed the following statement to articulate its mission: it aims to provide "Safe, reliable intercity passenger service in an economically sound manner that will exceed customer expectations". The statement appeared in a Reading Eagle article from an interview with Acting President David Hughes in connection with Amtrak's 35th birthday.

Amtrak has been criticized for lacking such a statement of purpose. It will now be important to establish specific benchmarks against which safety, reliability, economic soundness and customer expectations can be measured. (*From TRAINS Newswire, May 1*)

Amtrak Takes Over Acela Maintenance

In March Amtrak worked out an agreement with Alstom to take over responsibility for maintaining the 20 Boston-New York-Washington high-speed *Acela* trains. Under the initial contract, all maintenance had been managed by Alstom, which headed the consortium that built the trains. Under the new agreement Amtrak will be responsible for the maintenance while Alstom will provide technical assistance and manage the supply chain for parts and overhaul kits. The five-year contract is expected to be worth approximately \$80 million.

ESPA's Passes Open Door Resolution

At our April Officers and Coordinators meeting ESPA adopted a resolution urging Amtrak to beginning a policy of opening all train doors at stations with high-level platforms between Albany and NYC. Given the frequent, corridor-like service and higher ridership at these stations, ESPA believes that the use of all doors at station stops would reduce station dwell times and require on-board train staff to more diligently "walk the train" as is the common practice on trains operating on the Northeast Corridor. While conductors often open all doors when arriving in Albany or Penn Station, an inefficient single or double door boarding policy is often used in this corridor. The resolution will be forwarded to Amtrak management in New York State for their review. Steve Strauss

The Depot Theatre at Westport

Amtrak's *Adirondack* train stops at the historic Westport Theatre/Railroad Station daily, Bed & Breakfast accommodations are available just across the tracks. The 28th season features:
Ain't Misbehavin' June 23 – July 9 Fats Waller musical
It Could Be Any One of Us July 14 – 23 A British whodunit
Camelot July 25 – September 3 A timeless tale of enchantment, love & honor
To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday September 15 – 24 A romantic comedy with a ghostly twist.
Box Office 518-962-4449 www.depottheatre.org

ESPA's Input Sought

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

Amtrak Asks \$1.6 billion

On March 16th Amtrak presented its 2007 budget request for \$1,598 million at a Senate Appropriations transportation subcommittee hearing. This is less than the \$1.8 billion it requested last year but more than the \$1,294 million it actually received. The breakdown, in millions:

	<u>2007 Request</u>	<u>2006 Received</u>
Operating Funds:	\$498	\$490
Capital Improvements:	730	495
Debt Service	295	278
Working capital, reserves	75	31
	DOT Discretion	
Total	\$1598	\$1294

The request made the following points:

*The capital amount includes half the cost of a two-year project to replace the Thames River bridge in Connecticut, as well as upgrading the Northeast Corridor CETC electric power and traffic control system.

*Amtrak will focus on reducing costs in food service, equipment maintenance and other areas. (This has already begun—food service employees demonstrated in Chicago last month following close to 100 layoffs.) Labor consumes 80% of passenger revenues, and some work rules date from the steam era. “These constraints need to change,” according to the request.

*Amtrak proposes transitioning corridor operating costs to states over four years, beginning in FY2008. In return states will set service levels and designate service operators. But “for this to be effective, a federal capital matching program of 80-20% federal-state funding should be in place.”

*Amtrak is conducting a “long overdue comprehensive, clean slate review of the (long distance) network to identify a route and service structure that makes sense for the future. We will present our recommendations later this year.”

Besides its basic request, Amtrak recommends \$275 million additional to alleviate chokepoints on freight railroads that delay Amtrak trains; provide matching grants to states for corridor development; refinance Amtrak debt to reduce future debt service costs; and begin meeting anticipated Americans with Disability Act requirements. These additional funds would not necessarily be administered by Amtrak.

Amtrak is requesting only 20% of its 2007 operating costs from the federal government. Over half (56%) will come from passenger revenues while states will contribute 6%. Profits from ancillary businesses including real estate and commuter service, will generate the remaining 18%.

Amtrak’s estimated operating deficit for the current year will be \$553 million, requiring it to draw on reserves and possibly the DOT Secretary’s discretionary funds, since the 2006 appropriation includes only \$490 for operations.

Finally Amtrak expects to introduce more competition—mainly by outsourcing some functions, including food service. But the request also quotes the following key goal from the Board’s April, 2005 Strategic Reform Initiative as an issue to be addressed in reauthorizing legislation: “An end to Amtrak’s virtual monopoly on intercity rail passenger service with ...increased competition...to spur efficiency, productivity and performance improvements.”

During the Senate hearing, DOT Inspector General Mark Dayton said Amtrak needs \$1.4 billion just to keep the existing system going with no improvements in state of good repair and little margin for error. He credited Amtrak with some improvement in reforming food service as well as progress in controlling operating

costs. But in another attack on long distance trains, he called continued federal support for first class (sleeping car) service “unacceptable.”

Federal Railroad Administration Director (and former New York State Commissioner of Transportation) Joe Boardman also carried the Administration line, saying, “Amtrak’s business model is flawed and must be reformed.”

After the hearing, Amtrak Chairman David Laney told reporters Amtrak may “scrap, reconfigure or add lines” in order to meet demands for reform. It is uncertain what consequences this may bring.

Frank Barry

CSX: Build We Must

CSX Transportation has identified its two heavy-duty freight corridors between Chicago and Florida and Albany, NY to northern New Jersey as needing immediate capacity enhancement. CSX has tapped RailWorks Corporation to add the mainline muscle on the Chicago to Florida segment; CSX will work on the Albany to Northern New Jersey portion with Company track gangs. Work on the Chicago to Florida segment is underway with siding extensions in Georgia and Tennessee and five new sidings in Kentucky.

RailWorks spokesperson Kathy Simpson points out to ESPA that freight railroad traffic growth and increases in transit ridership nationwide are driving the need for railway infrastructure construction outsourcing. The CSX contract (announced on April 27, 2006) calls for RailWorks to install about 13 miles of new main track and an impressive 19 turnouts for \$17 million. Work is to be accomplished without serious disruption to CSX traffic on the adjoining main tracks. A basic provision of the contract calls for contractors to maintain fluid freight traffic movement on the targeted mainlines during the construction of the new tracks. The RailWorks contract does not include signaling for the new track components.

Ms. Simpson also noted that transit operators are also considering infrastructure needs in view of their recent ridership gains (from high gas prices) and long-term growth they anticipate in the coming years. This is an excellent example of needed new railway infrastructure investment coming together in a resourceful and timely manner. The Chicago to Florida segments will be completed and in service this year.

Ben Gottfried

Japan to Produce Fuel Cell Locomotive?

According to a report from Agence France-Presse, the East Japan Railway Co. will soon start testing a one-car prototype fuel cell train. The car will carry two 65-kilowatt fuel cells to supplement electricity produced by a generator. They will be capable of 100KPH (62.5 MPH). The railroad hopes to run fuel cell trains next year in mountainous terrain west of Tokyo, and expected to use 20% less energy than conventional equipment.

Fuel cells generate electricity through a chemical reaction between oxygen and hydrogen that leaves water as the sole by-product. The April 14th article was based on a release from the Jiji Press news agency. American technology where are you?

Frank Barry (*From TRAINS newswire, April 12*)

Glad you have train service? Wish the service was better? Would you hate to lose it? The National Association of Railroad Passengers is a national advocacy organization working to promote your mobility and enhance your quality of life by supporting passenger trains as a transportation choice. Visit: www.narprail.org

Battle of the Bunkers Continues

Transit advocates from New York and New Jersey continue to take strong exception to MTA's and NJ Transit's \$12 billion plan to build two separate Deep Cavern terminal stations in Midtown Manhattan. ESPA and NJ-ARP have long supported a plan that would link existing platforms and tracks at Grand Central Terminal and Penn Station as part of a plan for a new Hudson River tunnel. The stations would be linked by a new track connection under 31st Street and Park Avenue. New York transit advocates support a plan to bring the LIRR into existing platforms and tracks that lead to the Upper Level Loop at Grand Central — world's largest railway station.

Both plans are feasible and are supported by detailed studies completed by two well-respected engineering firms. Parson Brinckerhoff laid out the Penn Station-Grand Central connection — the “mother of all train station connections” — as part of its work on the Access to the Region's Core (ARC) study, which was a collaboration of NJ Transit, MTA and Port Authority of NY and NJ. The Canadian-based Delcan Corp. confirmed the practicality of the Upper Level Loop Alternative (ULLA) for LIRR East Side Access in a study funded by opponents of the 50th Street Vent Plant.

This oversized vent facility was added by MTA at the last minutes when they realized they had not provided adequate ventilating capacity for the LIRR Deep Cavern station to be constructed some 150 feet below Park Avenue. Delcan found that the Upper Level alternative would save \$1.2 billion in construction cost, could be completed three years sooner and would save LIRR commuters three to four minutes per trip, each way. Penn Station Grand Central connection — called Alternative G in the ARC study — would give west-of-Hudson commuters access to Manhattan's East Side, the largest cluster of office buildings in the nation. Yet this alternative would cost 10 to 15% less to construct, and have lower operating cost than the alternative NJ Transit finally selected — a Deep Cavern station some 100 feet under Macy's.

The Governors of both states must share the blame for this collapse of regional cooperation. Taxpayers and transit riders will bear the burden of this failed transit planning. Governor Pataki is desperately anxious to begin the tunnel boring machine contract for the LIRR project, even though less than half of the funding for the project is available. The hope is that successive Governors will be forced to bail out this ill-conceived project. In the case of NJ Transit's “go it alone” Deep Cavern, funding is even more problematic.

Both of these Deep Cavern terminal station were conceived before the tragic terrorist attack of 9/11. Now many security experts and fire safety officials have raised doubts about the practicality of rapid egress of passengers from these Deep Cavern stations in the event of a fire or terrorist attack. In each case some 8,000 passengers could be trapped 100 to 150 feet below the street. Since alternatives are available that are less costly to build and more rider-friendly there is no need to place transit riders at risk. Recently ESPA joined four other transit advocacy groups in the region in requesting that fire safety and homeland security officials closely examine the risks associated with these bunker stations. With a change in leadership in New York assured next year, it is important that leading candidates be approached on their support of more sensible alternatives.

The Regional Rail Working Group (RRWG) meets on the third Wednesday of each month in Lower Manhattan. All ESPA members living in the New York metropolitan area are invited to attend. Because the date for the next regular meeting, Wednesday, May 17, 2006, falls on the same day as MTA's public hearing on the revised Environmental Assessment for the 50th Street Vent Building we will skip the meeting and ask RRWG members to attend the hearing and speak out against the Deep Cavern terminal station for the LIRR. The hearing will be at MTA Headquarters, 347 Madison Avenue in Midtown Manhattan beginning at 6pm. To speak one must sign in by 7pm at the latest. Written comments can also be submitted to MTA.

Regular monthly meetings of the RRWG will resume on the following month, on June 21, 2006 6-8pm, at the Conference Room, NYPD Downtown Center, 104 Washington St., just north of Rector Street in Lower Manhattan. Please check our website www.rrwg.org or call 212-475-3394 for more information.

George Haikalis, ESPA Manhattan Coordinator for Regional Rail

Governor Orders MTA to Build Stadium Station

On April 26th the MTA Board approved \$40 million for a Metro-North station near the new Yankee Stadium in the Bronx after Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg confirmed that they wanted it done. The money was left over from \$645 million set aside to extend the N Subway line to La Guardia airport. That project, a favorite of Mayor Giuliani, died after his term ended. The MTA's 2000-2004 Capital Plan had also included \$5 million for the design of the station.

The project, also known as the Yankee Stadium Multimodal Transportation Center, will have two island platforms for passengers and an overhead station area and walkway. Each platform will be long enough to accommodate a 10-car train. The MTA plans to have 8-10 trains departing from the station after each home Yankees game. Two trains would be routed north on the Hudson line to Croton-Harmon and Poughkeepsie, two would travel on the Harlem line to White Plains and Brewster, and 2-4 would be routed on the New Haven line to Stamford and New Haven, CT. In addition, two trains would shuttle to and from Grand Central Terminal. Trains would also be scheduled prior each Yankees game. Bronx politicians would also like the new station added as a station stop for local trains between Grand Central and Croton-Harmon. The new Yankees Stadium stop is scheduled to open in April 2009 for the home opener of the Yankees in their new Stadium, which will be built next to the existing Yankees Stadium.

Last January ESPA wrote to the State and City in support of the project. However the City still plans large new parking facilities that will encourage driving and increase neighborhood congestion according to the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a transit advocacy group. TSTC and several other groups have also asked that the Yankees contribute to the station's costs.

Gary Prophet

Operation Lifesaver: Always expect a train! Freight trains do not follow set schedules!

A Broken Trust

Garden State transportation customers in New Jersey are suffering through a tough financial crisis with their transportation trust fund (TTF). New Jersey uses the TTF to fund statewide transportation projects for highway and transit capital programs. The fund was established in 1984 by the Kean administration; it was intended to be self-sustaining primarily through State gasoline taxes but because of the political backlash of suggesting increasing taxes and budget woes over the intervening years the fund suffered. The annual increases necessary to adequately fund the program were not enacted and the diversion of funds away from the TTF and into the general fund further exasperated the problem. The fund has established \$7 billion in long-term bond debt as of 2006.

Newly elected Governor Corzine has proposed refinancing the current portion of the long-term debt (about \$800 million) by refinancing the bonds over the longer term. This reduces the current interest and principal due and frees up money for transportation projects in the near term. The Governor also proposes restoring 1.5 cents per gallon of the gas tax to the TTF, which had been previously diverted, about \$72 million, for the current year. This shortsighted solution has the effect of pushing off the debt onto the children and grandchildren of Garden State taxpayers. Simply stated, it took the fund 22 years to accumulate \$7 billion in debt, the Corzine plan will double that amount in just 5 years.

Advocacy groups across the State are calling for a more realistic pay-as-you-go approach by raising the State gasoline tax by 18 cents per gallon. This will allow for needed repair and modernization of the transportation system in New Jersey. This is the "wrong way to go" according to Brian Tobin Executive Director of the Associated General Contractors Association of New Jersey. The group asserts the State needs to face reality and properly fund its transportation network. The Association's members build highway and transit infrastructure throughout the State.

Mr. Tobin goes on to point out to ESPA that a "pay as you go" approach is the best option even though it means a sizable tax increase to motorists. The fund will be effectively exhausted on June 30, 2006, as all TTF revenue will go towards bondholder interest and principal payments leaving nothing available for transportation projects.

State and Federal political leaders across the country have pushed this kind of crisis funding showdown to the forefront, which often results, in plans such as Governor Corzine's which mortgage our future well being. Voters are strung along and told we can expect large public projects without paying for them, at least for now. The folly of long term debt left unchecked weakens our ability to plan for our future and compete in the global marketplace, as our legacy will consist of a costly debt repayments and a mediocre transportation resource. *Ben Gottfried*

Receive the ESPA Express Earlier!

For members providing their e-mail address, the ESPA Newsletter will be-mailed at the same time it is forwarded to the printer enabling you to receive the newsletter one to two weeks earlier than by mail. The postage savings can be used for passenger rail advocacy. E-mail address submitted will only be used by ESPA and not given to any other group. Send your e-mail address to www.rwlentz@aol.com Thank you! Ed

High-Speed RAIL vs. Maglev In Germany

Around 1990 New York State proclaimed its interest in magnetic-levitation technology (maglev) for intercity travel. Futuristic vehicles similar to the German Transrapid would zip from New York to Albany and beyond on elevated guideways at speeds up to 300 mph. The late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan was an enthusiastic supporter. Maglev proponents pointed to the anticipated decrease in defense spending following the end of the Cold War, which could provide room in the Federal Budget for a multi-billion dollar maglev program.

New York State ERDA (Energy Research and Development Authority) carried out studies of maglev between 1990 and 1994, parts of which were not published. In fact, some of the conclusions were sobering. A two-track maglev guideway was estimated to cost about \$30 million per mile. Therefore a New York – Albany maglev would cost over \$4 billion for the guideway alone, and Albany – Buffalo would cost a further \$9 billion. Projected ridership was modest*. Furthermore, while New York State's preferred alignment was to construct an elevated guideway in the air over the Thruway, curvatures on the Thruway between New York and Albany while not conspicuous to motorists were sufficient to restrict maglev speeds to the range between 120 mph and 180 mph, a speed easily matched by high-speed rail.

Germany had constructed a prototype test track at Emsland, on which ran a prototype maglev vehicle named the Transrapid, which foreign visitors were invited to ride. After German reunification in 1991, the German government pondered the question of where a maglev system might be put into operation in Germany, and in 1995 made public the following proposal: the German government would pay the cost of a maglev guideway from Berlin to Hamburg, giving an estimated travel time of 52 minutes compared to about 2 hours 45 minutes for 180 miles by rail, if the private Transrapid consortium (Siemens, Thyssen, Krupp) and a designated operator would build the vehicles at their expense and cover operating expenses in return for operating revenues. Over the next few years, the proponents declined to take such risks.

Meanwhile, German Railways (Deutsche Bahn, DB) did not stand still. From 1945 to 1990 Hamburg was in West Germany, separated from Berlin by a swath of East Germany whose authorities had no interest in facilitating travel between the two cities. The Berlin-Hamburg line was reduced to single track, and the 4-1/2 hour rail trip was drastically slowed by long Iron Curtain border-inspection stops at the outskirts of Hamburg (Schwanheide) and the outskirts of Berlin. After the 1991 reunification, border stops vanished and DB restored double track, and electrified the entire line. Berlin to Hamburg had been one of the best-aligned routes in pre-World War II Germany, hosting the 'Fliegender Hamburger' diesel high-speed service in the 1930's. After 2000 DB upgraded the line further, and the results became evident in late 2004.

On December 12, 2004, rail travel times for the 180-mile (288 kilometer) Berlin-Hamburg route were reduced to 1-1/2 hours, for seven daily round-trip ICE trains, with maximum speeds of 230 km/h (144 mph) and a remarkable average speed of 120 mph. Both top speed and average speed easily surpass those of the Japanese 'Bullet Trains' from 1964 onwards, whose speed was limited to 210 km/h (131 mph).

The Berlin-Hamburg rail upgrading is a remarkable demonstration of what can be achieved (Cont'd on page 8)

Marathon Maple Festival Trains

The Central New York Chapter of NHRS and the NYS&W Technical & Historical Society along with the NYS&W Railroad participated together to provide passenger service to the Marathon Maple Festival on the weekend of April 1st and 2nd.



Maple Fest Train from Syracuse unloads at Marathon as crowd waits to board the first shuttle trip to Cortland.

On Saturday, the Syracuse train carried 66 passengers from Syracuse and Tully, and carried 1206 passengers shuttling between Cortland and Marathon, while the Binghamton train carried 158 passengers. With an absolutely beautiful warm day on Sunday, the train from the north took 83 passengers from Syracuse to Marathon, and carried 1454 passengers on the shuttle between Cortland and Marathon. The Binghamton train carried 203.

The CNY Chapter staffed the trains from the north, with the NYS&W T&H Society staffing the trains from the south, and then assisting on the shuttle trains.

CNY Chapter volunteers provided food service on the Syracuse train and the shuttle trains, with a model train layout in the Cortland station on both days. The CNY Chapter store and train show were set up in the Marathon Station.

Al Kallfelz

Students Grow Ridership (Cont'd from page 1)

In January 2005 the class developed an action plan and on a cold rainy day in March they descended on the station with cleaning implements and garbage bags. They hauled away 60 bags of trash and started repairs on the shelter. The project got a big boost when the local paper began covering their efforts: the student fund raising committee suddenly became the "thank you note committee" as unsolicited contributions began pouring in. Not all were money—the fire department came with hoses to do high pressure cleaning; later the city provided real glass for real windows.

The students became celebrities. "The Lieutenant Governor came to our town and talked with us. She mentioned our project in her speech that evening," one of the class members said in a presentation to the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) directors at their annual meeting in Washington last month.

Last May the class took its first train trip when Amtrak invited them to its Chicago headquarters to present their project to regional staff. "They got to meet people they had been corresponding with," Ms. Hudson said.

The end of classes did not stop their work. Over the summer they landscaped, planting corn, wildflowers and raspberries and they painted part of the shelter to match the old Monon station next door. Their efforts won them an Indiana Main Street Revival Award, and the Midwest High Speed Rail Association gave them its Golden Spike Award last September.

Last month eleven class members took their second big train trip, to Washington on the *Capital Limited* after a long bus trip to South Bend. There they received NARP's Youth Rail Passenger Citizenship Award in the presence of Amtrak Acting President David Hughes and several members of Congress who received Golden Spike Awards. They also met with their own Congressman as well as representatives of Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta and they visited many other Congressional offices to promote rail passenger service.

On Saturday, April 29th, Seniors Elizabeth Helling and Ellen Miller narrated the power point presentation for the NARP Board—a presentation both hilarious ("We sprayed the station with deodorant so it would smell nice"), and deeply moving. After a long-standing ovation, Boardmember and former Amtrak employee John Mills said this was the most inspiring presentation he had heard in over 25 years on the Board.

The inspiration came not just from what the students did, but also from whom they had become. For in the process of what began as a simple clean up project they have learned a great deal about transportation policy and history in the U.S. and have become ardent rail advocates as a result. NARP, which had donated \$500 for their Washington trip, gave them all honorary memberships. Their youthful creativity, energy and enthusiasm brought tears to more than one member of the Board—many of whose members have either gray hair or none at all.

Frank Barry

Proposed Regs

Require High Level Platforms

Revised federal regulations proposed for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) could price rail service beyond reach for small communities. The regulations require that any stations built since 1991 when the first regulations were issued, provide full length "level boarding" for passengers. Although this might be relatively easy in stations served only by Superliners with low-level doors, it would require full-length high-level platforms for all trains serving New York City. All stations needing platform repairs would have to comply by 2010 and others would do so as repairs come due after that.

High-level platforms are convenient but can be prohibitively expensive when a freight railroad owns the tracks. Fast moving freight cars can rock violently enough to cause damage, and high platforms also obstruct wider than normal loads. Consequently, freight railroads usually require sidetracks to take passenger trains off the mainline to serve high-level platforms, as is done now in Syracuse. A "gauntlet" sidetrack overlapping the main track (one rail between the rails of the main), requires less right of way width but still needs controlled signals and switches approaching the station from both directions. This can boost costs well over \$1 million beyond the station itself.

Exceptions may be considered when a high level platform is simply not feasible for engineering reasons or would cause an "undue administrative or financial burden." But the introduction to the regulations say such cases should be extremely rare.

ADA was designed to prevent discrimination toward people with disabilities. For this reason it is not considered enough to just get people with disabilities onto the train with lifts as is done today—it must be done in the most "integrated setting" possible. However the resulting expense may deprive people with and without disabilities in small towns of train service altogether. The town of Lyons, half way between Syracuse and Rochester, has been working for over 15 years to get an Amtrak stop. Each time they thought they were ready to go ahead the requirements have been raised, making the project

(Cont'd on page 8)

High-Speed Rail (Cont'd from page 6)

in upgrading a 'classical' 19th century rail line if the alignment is favorable, and also demonstrates how rail technology has progressed since 1964 in both Europe and Japan. Outside the United States, train speeds between 200 km/h (125 mph) and 300 km/h (187 mph) are now routine.

The Transrapid Maglev is in operation in one place in the world. In 2003 a short 30-kilometer (19 mile) Transrapid line was inaugurated between downtown Shanghai and Shanghai airport. This forms a 'showcase' for the German constructors, and undoubtedly a 'prestige' project for Shanghai. If speeds over 200 mph are attained on such a short route, very heavy braking will be required before the end of the route, potentially wasting energy. Time savings, compared with a 60 mph average speed, are minimal. Over a 19-mile distance, very high speeds are somewhat senseless.

In Germany, the Transrapid maglev's homeland, it seems very doubtful that the German government would now want to invest \$6 billion to \$10 billion on a maglev guideway from Hamburg to Berlin as a means of reducing travel times from 90 minutes to 52 minutes. New high-speed rail lines ('neubaustrecke') are under construction, four new high-speed rail lines** are already in operation, and existing rail lines such as Berlin-Leipzig have received major upgrades. Proposals exist for one or two short maglev lines, but order books for maglev are empty.

Christopher Wasiutynski

(To follow, Part 2: High Speed Rail developments abroad)

* The \$14 billion investment would attract some three to four million riders annually, fewer than New York City subways carry in a single day. Amtrak's current Empire Service, in which New York State has invested less than 3 percent the cost of a maglev system, carries slightly over one million riders annually.

**Hannover-Wurzburg (1991), Mannheim-Stuttgart (1991), Berlin-Stendal-Hannover (1998), and Frankfurt-Koln (2002), all 'neubaustrecke' (author's note).

Chris Wasiutynski

Proposed Regs (Cont'd from page 7)

more complicated and more expensive. CSX is now requiring an island platform with a bridge over one of the tracks to get to it, at an estimated cost of at least 4 million. Only \$1 million is currently available. If the platform must be high level, CSX and USDOT will likely require four switches with controlled signals (two on each main track), putting the cost even farther beyond reach.

If these requirements are enforced in the small communities served by the *Adirondack*, some may lose their train service altogether. (Port Kent, Port Henry and Ticonderoga may be exempted thanks to a waiver for stations that were flagstops in 1990, when ADA was passed). The US Department of

Transportation, which is charged with administration and enforcement of the ADA, has drafted the revisions and is requesting comments by July 28. ESPA will submit a statement requesting flexibility, especially for smaller communities. ESPA does not believe ADA was intended to substitute one form of discrimination for another by depriving everyone in small towns of train service whether they have disabilities or not.

One solution has been developed for the *Downeaster* service in Maine and New Hampshire, where all stops have high-level platforms set back far enough to clear wide loads. At each stop conductors must manually place a lightweight bridge plate across the gap. An ESPA member has also suggested a folding bridge plate that would be hinged to the outer edge of the trap currently used for boarding at high level platforms.

Frank Barry

2006-7 ESPA Meeting Dates

Saturday, June 17, 2006	Schenectady – The Parker Inn
Saturday, August 5, 2006	Utica – Trackside Tavern
Saturday, Sept. 30, 2006	Schenectady – The Parker Inn
Saturday, Nov.18, 2006	New York City – Location TBD
Saturday, Jan. 20, 2007	Schenectady – The Parker Inn
Saturday, March 10, 2007	Annual Meeting – Schenectady

ALL dates, times and locations are subject to change... Please refer to the ESPA Web Site, www.esparail.org. If you would like to become more active in ESPA, these meetings are the perfect opportunity to learn more about the Association and how YOU can make a difference! ALL ESPA members (and other interested persons) are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact President Bruce Becker, 716-741-6384 or bbecker@esparail.org, for more information or if you are planning on attending a meeting.

ESPA MEMBERSHIP - NEW OR RENEWAL

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

- Introductory membership (\$10.00 for one year)
- Renewal membership (\$24.00 per year)
- Renewal - Student or Senior Citizen (\$12.50 per year)
- Family membership (\$30.00)
- Sustaining membership (\$50.00)
- Patron membership (\$75.00)
- Corporate membership (\$100.00)
- Lifetime membership (\$300.00)

Please make checks/money orders payable to ESPA and mail to ESPA c/o Andrew Cabal, P.O. Box 434, Syracuse, NY 13209.

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel: 716-759-2315. e-mail: RWLenz@aol.com. Deadline for material for July/August issue is June 30, 2006. Material may be reproduced if credit is given ESPA and to the

THE ESPA EXPRESS

10531 Main Street
Clarence, NY 14031-1684

Forward & Address Correction Requested

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

FIRST CLASS
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #2
CLARENCE, NY