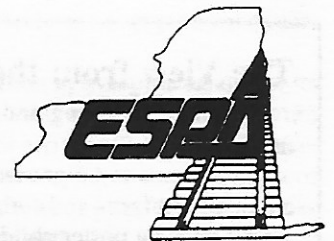


The ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

<http://www.esparail.org>



WORKING FOR A MORE BALANCED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Vol. 32, No. 3

May/June 2008

New State Rail Plan Advances

NYS DOT's ongoing process to develop a new state rail plan (for both passenger and freight) is actively moving ahead towards a final plan release by mid-summer. The new plan will be the first comprehensive state rail plan released in over 20 years!

ESPA, as a principal NY rail stakeholder, has been represented at two plan input meetings held by DOT in the past several months. In addition, we have provided DOT with copies of our Five-Year-Plan and other pertinent documents. Other participating rail stakeholders have included Amtrak, MTA, the Port Authority, CSX, NS, CP and Railroads of New York (RONY) representing the short-line industry.

ESPA has pushed for the inclusion of a policy statement calling for New York State to become an active partner with Amtrak in the operation of the entire Empire Corridor, with New York State contributing a reasonable share of the Corridor's operating costs. In addition, we have pushed for the completion of the many long-discussed infrastructure improvement projects across the state.

Current plans are for DOT to release a draft copy of the plan for public review on May 19. Following this release there will be a 30-day public comment period, during which DOT will be holding three public outreach sessions across the state. Meetings are scheduled in Buffalo on Monday, June 9, starting at 1:30pm (at the Westwood Country Club, 772 North Forest Road, Williamsville, NY); on Tuesday, June 10 in Binghamton (time and location to be announced) and in New York City on Monday, June 16 (time and location also to be announced). Check the NYS DOT web site for the most accurate information on these sessions.

Based on the comments received, DOT will refine the plan and then release the final version. It is expected that the bulk of the passenger related segment of the plan will be outlined in a separate addendum to the main plan (which speaks to the level of passenger detail which hopefully will be contained). Since future federal funding for passenger projects will likely be directly tied to whether the projects and improvements are specifically contained in current state rail plans, this document will be critically important for the future of passenger service.

Bruce B. Becker

Spring and Summer Timetable Changes

Amtrak issued a new national timetable on Monday, May 12, which includes all of the New York State services. Amtrak had earlier revised many Empire Corridor schedules on April 7th, at the start of the Metro-North track work season.

Highlights of the new summer schedules include:

- The *Adirondack* now operates on the same schedule every day, leaving New York at 8:20am northbound.
- Most early and mid day northbound trains out of Penn Station now leave at "20" past the hour, instead of the previous "45" slot.

- The first eastbound train from the west now arrives in New York in time for connections to the south (Atlanta, New Orleans, Orlando and Miami) every day except Sundays. Previously these connections were only available on weekdays.
- The eastbound *Lake Shore* now leaves Buffalo-Depew at 9:35am (25 minutes earlier) but arrives at Albany at the same 3:40pm.

Amtrak has resisted efforts by CSX to add significant additional time to the west of Albany trains this summer. Whether a further schedule revision will be forced on Amtrak by CSX is not yet known.

For complete schedule information, obtain a copy of the new national schedule at any staffed Amtrak station or visit their web site, www.amtrak.com

West of Albany

Ridership Surges In March...

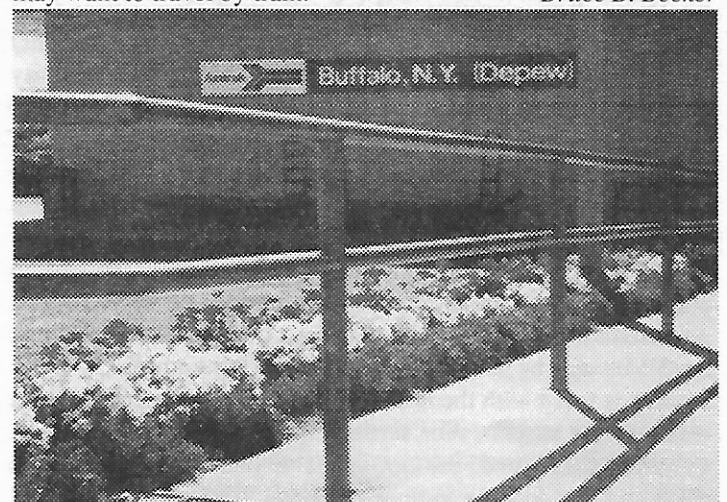
In the biggest increase of any of Amtrak's trains and corridors, ridership on the two Niagara Falls trains and the *Maple Leaf* surged ahead 61% in March as compared to last year, with overall ticket revenue up an astounding 71% over last March.

The other New York State services also all enjoyed healthy gains, with the *Adirondack's* ridership up 26.5% and revenue up 24.2%; the *Lake Shore* was up 26.4% and 33.9% respectively and the *Ethan Allen* was up 10.0% and 15.6%. The Hudson Valley trains had modest increases of 1.4% and 4.9%.

The western New York increases are in spite of continuing poor on-time performance and capacity constraints.

With gas at all time record highs, these increases will likely continue in the coming months. Hopefully Amtrak is willing to provide the necessary equipment to accommodate everyone who may want to travel by train.

Bruce B. Becker



ESPA Beautifies Station (See page 6 for story)

The View from the Cab...

Planning, studying and then more planning (but never much action)....

This seems to be government's response to most of the challenges it faces and certainly passenger rail here in New York State is a poster child for this (I think there have now been over 25 passenger rail studies of some nature conducted in the past twenty years!)

As reported in this issue, NYSDOT is working on revising the now 22-year-old state rail plan, with a final release expected over the summer. What makes this plan different (or so I hope) is that DOT Commissioner Astrid Glynn and Deputy Commissioner Karen Rae are very actively pushing to get it done on time and done well. Instead of farming the plan development out to a consulting firm (which would have likely taken up to 18 months to complete a final plan), DOT decided to use its pool of in-house talent and expertise to complete the job in only eight months.

I encourage everyone to review the draft plan after its release on May 19 (it will be available on the NYSDOT website) and to submit your comments and suggestions, either in person at one of the three scheduled public meetings or via mail/e-mail directly to DOT.

While a plan is only words on paper, I am very hopeful that we will be pleased with the final outcome. The next critical step of course will be to turn all this planning into meaningful action. If we can attain this, all of our collective efforts over the years will finally start to pay off.

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

NARP Spring Meeting Summary...

NARP held its spring Board meeting in Washington, DC April 28 – May 1. New York's six Region Two Board members (Andrew Cabal, Richard Kulla, Lewis Hoppe, John Ross, Steve Salatti and George Haikalis) all attended. Bruce Becker also attended and was re-elected as a NARP Director-at-Large for the next two years.

Meeting speakers included Representative James L. Oberstar (D-MN), and John Mica (R, Fla.), Chair and Ranking Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee; Cliff Black, Amtrak Chief of Corporate Communications; Matt Rose CEO of the BNSF and Tom Simpson, Executive Director of the Railway Supply Institute.

Representative Oberstar announced that the House version of an Amtrak Reauthorization bill would be introduced shortly (this occurred on May 8) and that prospects for Amtrak's long-term future have never looked better.

While most Washington observers fully expect Congress to provide Amtrak with substantially more than the \$800 million proposed by the White House, meeting attendees were cautioned that FY09 may be a very challenging year for Amtrak. Currently Amtrak is faced with the need to make back-pay payments (as a result of the recent labor settlements) totaling \$114 million. Currently these funds are not available and with energy costs rising and the economy cooling, Amtrak will be very hard pressed unless Congress acts to fund these payments.

NARP is also strongly advocating for an additional \$100 million in funds for FY09, to allow Amtrak to repair and return to service over 100 cars currently unavailable for revenue generation. With ridership spiking across the nation and the prospect of new equipment still many years in the future, this added capacity is critical.

NARP Board members traveled to Capitol Hill on Wednesday, April 30 and the New York delegation visited a total of 15 congressional offices, representing New York House members from across the state. The reception at the offices was without exception warm and everyone voiced their support for Amtrak.

The NARP Board will next meet in Portland, OR in October 2008. Board meetings are open to all interested persons and full information is available at www.narprail.org

Bruce B. Becker, President

Amtrak and Enterprise Rental Car Form New Partnership...

Amtrak has announced a new partnership with Enterprise Car Rental, which will greatly improve rental car access at all Amtrak stations in New York. Under the program to be featured in the upcoming 2008 'New York By Rail' magazine, Enterprise will pick-up passengers with advance reservations at each station, transport them to the nearest Enterprise office to retrieve their car and then return them to the station at the conclusion of the rental, in addition to offering Amtrak passengers special discounts and other incentives.

The 'I Love New York' tourism web site will also be promoting this new partnership, along with the current on-going 'I Love New York' 20% Amtrak discount starting in late May. With gas prices already at record levels, this program is bound to be hot with many travelers.

This partnership represents a major accomplishment and we applaud Amtrak and Enterprise for recognizing the value of providing for seamless travel both on the rails and on the roads away from Amtrak's stations.

Bruce B. Becker

Amtrak Offers Trails and Rails Program to Groups on the Maple Leaf...

From Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, Amtrak and National Park Service volunteer rangers from the Erie Canal National Historic Corridor at Fort Stanwix in Rome will be offering special Trails and Rails presentations on the history of the Mohawk Valley by special advance request to groups between Albany and Syracuse on train #63, the westbound *Maple Leaf*.

For more information on this special group program contact Bill Hollister, Amtrak's New York State Marketing Manager, at 518-462-5760.

There's Always a Reason to Ride Amtrak

Niagara Falls www.niagara-usa.com
Buffalo www.buffalocvb.org
Rochester www.visitrochester.com
Syracuse www.visitSyracuse.org
Utica www.oneidacountyvb.com
Albany www.Albany.org
New York City www.nycvisit.com
Montreal www.tourisme-montreal.org

LIRR Outlines \$46M Platform Gap Remediation Program

The gap between trains and high-level platforms became the focus of intense remediation efforts by the LIRR after the tragic 2006 death of a passenger who fell to track level through the gap.

The LIRR described changes to equipment in the next phase of the program to reduce risk to passengers from the gap. The railroad will install heated door sill plates extending 1" or 2" (depending on car type) to help bridge the gap. This effort will cost about \$2800 per car for the M-3/7s and about \$3400 per car for the bi-levels, with work split between Bombardier and LIRR shops. The cost includes changes needed to maintain function, for example, ladder steps for crew need to be relocated. Since the LIRR cars will then be slightly wider, some platforms at Penn Station will require "shaving", and will require Amtrak approval. Completion is scheduled for 2013. Cost of these modifications including those already accomplished totals \$46 million.

By 2007, the program had already included engineering solutions such as:

- Moving 71,000 ft of track closer to 24 platforms at 16 stations
- Realigning over 7,000 linear ft of platform slabs on 16 platforms at 11 stations
- Installing 5,300 ft of platform edgeboard on 9 platforms at 7 stations.

and operating solutions including:

- Zoning off cars by keeping car doors closed at certain locations to prevent passengers from encountering some wider gaps, requiring them to move to other cars to exit
- Relocation of train stop markers on platforms to reposition trains for minimum gaps
- Platform conductors equipped with hand-held radios to observe and assist passengers and communicate with train crews.

The most difficult station is Syosset, located on a curve, with both through express trains and freight traffic requiring clearance from platforms. Relocation of one platform to an adjoining tangent has been set back due to community objections. *John Raha*

Report Shows Delays on Freight Railroad Lines Cost Amtrak and Taxpayers Millions

A new report requested by Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) describes how delays to Amtrak trains that operate over freight railroad lines cost the company almost \$137 million in fiscal year 2006, an amount equal to 30 percent of its federal operating subsidy.

"This report puts in real dollars what these delays are costing Amtrak, taxpayers and rail travelers. Passengers shouldn't have to miss their meetings or family engagements because a freight train is blocking the tracks," Sen. Lautenberg said. "With high gas prices, widespread traffic congestion and flight delays the norm, we must ensure passenger rail is a reliable option for travelers."

The audit was conducted by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Inspector General (IG). Sen. Lautenberg requested the audit in February 2007 to study how much money could be saved from Amtrak's federal operating subsidy if Amtrak was not delayed when using railroad lines. A full copy of the IG's audit is located at: <http://www.oig.dot.gov/item.jsp?id=2273>.

More than 97 percent of Amtrak's 21,000 miles of routes run along tracks owned and maintained by private freight railroad companies. By law, these railroads are required to provide Amtrak with priority use of their track. However, this law is often not

followed and the U.S. Attorney General has never pursued a case. The IG found:

- Delays cost Amtrak \$137 million in overtime salary for its employees, additional fuel costs, and lost revenue from passengers frustrated with not arriving at their destination on time in fiscal year 2006. According to Amtrak, most of these delays stem from freight train interference or other freight-railroad caused delays; and
- Between fiscal years 2003 and 2007, Amtrak's on-time performance for long-distance trains outside of the Northeast Corridor (NEC) fell from an average of 51 percent to 42 percent. On-time performance for shorter corridor routes outside the NEC fell from an average of 76 percent to 66 percent. By comparison, the Acela's current on-time performance is currently 86.1 percent this year. The Acela runs on the NEC, which is owned and operated by Amtrak.

Ultimately, the IG also concluded that this poor on-time performance undermines intercity passenger rail as an option for travelers, weakens Amtrak's financial position by reducing its revenues and increasing its operating costs, and may undermine Amtrak's ability to retain and grow ridership.

In October 2007, the Senate passed Sen. Lautenberg's Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007 (S. 294) which would change federal rail policies for the first time in over a decade and authorize \$11.6 billion in federal rail investment over 6 years. The bill now awaits action by the House of Representatives.

The bill includes a provision to allow the federal Surface Transportation Board to investigate Amtrak delays and issue fines to freight railroad companies if the on-time performance of an individual route falls below 80 percent in two consecutive quarters due to freight train interference. The provision is intended to improve Amtrak's on-time performance and reduce freight railroad-related delays.

Empire Corridor Travel Tips, Discounts...

- * In partnership with the 'I Love New York' tourism program, Amtrak is offering a 20% fare discount program for NYS rail travel now through September 2008. With a 20% discount off the regular adult fares, the program is only available by making reservations directly through Amtrak's 800 number, 1-800-USA-RAIL and specifically mentioning discount code V464 to the agent (it is NOT available via the Amtrak's web site!). Valid on all trains running in New York State and on the *Adirondack* to Montreal (but not on Northeast Corridor trains or on the *Maple Leaf* in Ontario), reservations must be made at least three days in advance of travel and early reservations will help insure the best availability of the discount. For more information and other discount restrictions, contact Amtrak directly.
- * All Empire Corridor trains require reservations. While advance reservations are encouraged, last minute passengers will always be accommodated if space is available on a particular train. Booking as early as possible will provide the best possible fare. Amtrak accepts reservations up to 11 months in advance of your travel date! Travel during off-peak periods (mid-week, early morning or late evening) will generally be the least expensive.
- * AAA and NARP members receive 10% off most regular fares, with a three day advance purchase requirement. Senior citizens, veterans and many students can receive a 15% discount off most fares.

Maine Moving Forward With Rail Plan

The State of Maine is moving forward with plans to expand *Downeaster* service beyond Portland to Brunswick using a low cost Federal loan to pay for the deal. Brunswick is an extension of 27.6 miles using former Maine Central Railroad tracks to reach the coastal city. An intermediate station stop at Freeport is also part of the plan.

Amtrak currently runs five round-trip *Downeaster* trains daily from Portland to Boston, and ridership is up 23 percent over last year. The \$30 million Federal loan, which will be paid back over 25 years, will allow the train authority to run at least two of those round trips to Brunswick by upgrading existing tracks for higher speeds. The goal is to have the Brunswick service running by 2010.

The money to pay back the \$30 million loan will come from taking 50 percent of the tax currently collected on rental cars, for a \$3 million annual loss to the general fund. An estimated \$2.5 million a year will pay back the loan and the other \$500,000 will go toward other transit projects.

A newspaper story in the *Brunswick Times Record* on May 1, 2008 highlighted the impact of the proposed new service: "My hope is that it will be year-round service and, in addition to excursion service, that we'll be running some efficient transport back and forth between Brunswick and Rockland," said Patricia Quinn, director of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority. "Given a choice, people will choose to ride," Quinn said, particularly with gas prices being what they are today.

Maine had been using federal resources since the service to Portland began in 2001 to pay for the annual operating loss for *Downeaster* estimated at around \$8 million per year. Those resources have since dried up and are no longer part of the rail authority operating budget. Maine needed to take decisive action if they intended to preserve the rail service which is so widely viewed as a success by both riders and political leaders.

The legislative action by Maine's government to provide an annual operating grant to the rail authority and a new \$30 million loan gives the Pine Tree State an exciting future for its passenger rail program with a capital and operating plan now in place.

Ben Gottfried

Amtrak Seeks ESPA's Input

Amtrak's Empire District Superintendent Tom Connolly wants to hear of your New York State Amtrak travel experiences. Whether everything was great or if there was room for improvement, Tom 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: Thomas Connolly, District Superintendent, Amtrak 525 East Street Rensselaer, NY 12144. Please also send a copy to Bruce Becker, so we can track trip experiences and follow up as necessary. Thanks for your help...

If you are a member of both ESPA and NARP you can save \$5 when renewing your ESPA membership. (Renew for \$19 instead of the regular \$24).

The Case for Public Transportation

This pro-electric rail section was deleted from the National Surface Transportation Report by the Bush administration:

It is the view of the Commission that public transportation, especially in the form of electric railways, must and will play a significantly larger role in Americans' mobility. Federal transportation policy should not only accommodate but encourage this development.

Many of the factors leading to an increased role for public transportation are widely recognized. They include:

- Increasing traffic congestion, especially in urban areas. In addition to decreasing quality of life, traffic congestion imposes real economic costs. According to the Texas Transportation Institute's 2007 Urban Mobility Report, delays per peak period traveler increased from 14 hours per year in 1982 to 38 hours in 2005 for all urban areas in the United States. For the 14 largest urban areas, delay has risen from 21 hours per peak period traveler in 1982 to 54 hours in 2005.

- The failure of many urban areas to meet Federally-mandated air quality standards. A shift of commuter travel from private automobiles to electric railways (which include some commuter rail, Heavy Rail (subways) Light Rail and streetcars) can play a significant role in reducing air pollution. Public Transportation's Contribution to U.S. Greenhouse Gas Reduction, published by SAIC [Science Applications International Corporation] in 2007, finds that a solo commuter switching his commute to existing public transportation can reduce his CO2 emissions by 20 pounds in a single day or more than 4,800 pounds in a year. Greater savings would result from new electric rail service powered by non-fossil fuel generated electricity.

- The difficulty of constructing new urban freeways in the face of land use, right-of-way cost and environmental obstacles. As has repeatedly been demonstrated, the phenomenon of "suppressed demand" quickly leads to renewed congestion on any new freeways that can be built. Generated Traffic and Induced Travel Implications for Transport Planning, published by the Victoria Transport Policy Institute in 2007, described research reports that found new highways would attract enough traffic to be filled to capacity or near capacity within a few years after they opened.

- The negative impact of automobiles and especially of limited-access highways on urban vitality, which contrasts strongly with the ability of electric railways generally and streetcar systems in particular to stimulate urban re-development.

- The rising price of gasoline, which leads commuters away from the private automobile and towards increased use of public transportation. To these well-known factors pointing toward greater reliance on mass transit, a highly important new consideration must be added: national security. Americans' dependence on automobiles fueled largely with imported oil is the Achilles' heel of our current foreign and national security policy. Rising oil prices threaten the prosperity of our economy, with dependence on oil imported from unstable regions adding the risks of actual fuel cutoffs, limited foreign policy options, and wars over oil sources and supplies. The Energy Information Administration reported that 71 million barrels of petroleum were imported from the Persian Gulf region in June of 2007, 18 percent of all petroleum imports. According to the same source, spot oil prices were \$81.51 per barrel on September 18, 2007, over \$50 dollars more than the \$27.26 per barrel spot oil price just four years earlier.

In the face of the Global War on Terrorism, providing Americans with mobility that is not dependent on foreign oil may be second in

importance only to securing our homeland against direct terrorist attack. Just as the Cold War brought about the National Defense Interstate Highway Act, so we think it probable that the future will require a National Defense Public Transportation Act. Current and near-future national transportation policy should take this likelihood into account.

As we look toward increasing reliance on public transportation, we must recognize that all public transit is not alike. In particular, public policy must acknowledge that buses and rail transit are not fungible. In addition to the obvious advantage of electrification, rail transit, including streetcars, light rail, heavy rail and commuter rail (which should in most cases be electrified once certain densities are reached) serve different markets and perform different functions from buses.

Key differences between bus and rail transit include:

- Rail transit has repeatedly demonstrated its success in drawing riders from choice, people who have a car and could drive but choose to take transit instead, while buses generally carry only the transit-dependent, those who have no other way to get around. This means that rail transit, but not buses, has a significant potential impact on traffic congestion. For whatever reasons, it is a fact that most Americans like riding trains and streetcars but do not like riding buses. If our national transportation policy is to be realistic, it must take this fact into account. A Profile of Public Transportation Passenger Demographics and Travel Characteristics reported in On-Board Surveys, published by the American Public Transportation Association in 2007, reported that 38 percent of bus and paratransit riders had an automobile available when they took a transit trip while 58% of rail travelers had an automobile available for their trip.

- Rail transit, but not buses, has a demonstrated ability to spur development and, importantly, re-development in urban cores. Streetcar systems, which can be built inexpensively, have shown a particularly strong and positive impact on urban re-development. Portland Streetcar: Development Oriented Transit, prepared by the Portland, Oregon, Office of Transportation and Portland Streetcar, Inc., in 2006, found that since 1997 \$2.3 billion had been invested within two blocks of the streetcar right-of-way, including 7,248 new housing units and 4.6 million square feet of office, institutional, retail, and hotel construction. The Little Rock, Arkansas, Regional Chamber of Commerce, in "About Little Rock," calls the River Rail streetcar line, which opened in 2004, a "magnet for new businesses and development, another attraction for large conventions and one of several jewels in the restoration of two reviving downtown areas."

- While bus lines can be electrified, very few have been. In contrast, most new rail transit projects envision electric railways of one variety or another. In our view, both environmental and national security considerations should lead Federal transportation policy to favor electrified over non-electrified modes of travel. What changes in Federal transportation policy do the above considerations suggest? First and foremost, Federal policy should include a clear and unambiguous endorsement of a shift away from the private automobile to public transportation for travel in urban areas. It should be the objective of the Federal government to bring all aspects of transportation policy in line to support and encourage this shift, including provision of adequate resources.

Further, it should become Federal government policy to encourage the growth and spread of electrified rail transit as something that contributes directly to national security as well as strengthens efforts to re-develop our nation's urban cores. Public Transit in America: Analysis of Access Using the 2001 National

Household Travel Survey, published in 2007 by the Center for Urban Transportation Research, found that 53 percent of U.S. households were within one mile of bus service and 40 percent were within one-quarter mile, but only 10 percent of the population lives within one mile of rail transit. National security considerations suggest that funding the spread of electrified rail transit should be considered a national security function, at least in part.

These recommendations in turn suggest at least two actions be undertaken immediately. First, FTA criteria for the evaluation of requests for funding for electric rail projects, especially streetcars, should be re-written to take all relevant factors into account, including development impact, and to remove criteria that are not relevant, such as time of travel for streetcars. Second, the Small Starts funding program, which originated as the Blumenauer bill, should be returned to its original purpose, which was to encourage new streetcar systems. A streetcar system is a logical first step toward electrified rail transit for cities that currently have no rail transit, which means such new starts should receive especially strong encouragement in Federal transportation policy.

More broadly, Federal support for public transportation generally and electrified rail transit in particular should be made automatic, based on the population of the area served. For example, a city of 50,000 might qualify for automatic approval for a bus system (preferably with electric buses); an urban area of 100,000 for streetcars; of 250,000 for Light Rail. FTA approval would not be required for proposals fitting within each category (it would still be necessary for projects that lay outside the approved categories, e.g., Light Rail for a city of 50,000). Currently, a total of 72 urbanized areas have one or more types of rail service. There are 266 urbanized areas with populations greater than 100,000, of which just 27 currently have Light Rail service. 128 of those have populations greater than 250,000, of which only 26 have Light Rail service. Five of the largest urbanized areas without Light Rail do have Heavy Rail Systems, which are the basic level of rail service for those very large areas.

Most of those cities once had electric railways. They lost them, not to the fair market, but to massive government intervention in favor of highways and cars. As early as 1921, government was pouring \$1.4 billion into highways. In contrast, the vast majority of electric railways were privately owned, received no government assistance and had to pay taxes. Further, their fares were often controlled by local governments, which did not allow them to rise despite inflation. As a result, by 1919 one-third of the country's streetcar companies were bankrupt. After World War II, many local governments completed the destruction of their community's electric railways by pressuring transit companies to convert to buses. Bus conversion in turn led many former transit riders to drive instead.

As federal policy is amended to reflect its support for public transportation as the preferred approach to urban mobility, with a strong focus on electric railways, many other specific policies will change with it. In the long term, it should be the objective of Federal transportation policy to provide every American the option of mobility without an automobile. In a 21st century where oil supplies will be increasingly uncertain, such a policy will give our country needed security in the form of security of mobility. For a nation as dependent on mobility as America, security of mobility is as important as security of life, liberty and property. [End of excised section]

2008- 2009 ESPA Meeting Dates

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. Advance registration is required!

Saturday, June 21, 2008	Schenectady, NY
Saturday, August 2, 2008	Utica, NY
Saturday, September 27, 2008	Rensselaer, NY
Saturday, November 15, 2008	Schenectady, NY
Saturday, January 24, 2009	Schenectady, NY
Saturday, March 7, 2009	Annual Membership Meeting - Schenectady

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

ESPA Beautifies Western New York (from page 1)

Applauds go to ESPA's green thumb garden expert David Skoney, who is planting and tending gardens at three Western New York stations this summer.

ESPA has for many years provided and planted flowers at the Depew station, but for the first time Dave is also tending a garden at the Niagara Falls and Rochester stations. With Amtrak's limited

budgets, they are only able to provide for basic lawn care and not for flowers. Through a partnership with Mischler's Nursery in Williamsville, which provides the plants in return for a small sign noting their generosity at each station, the flower program provides a welcome touch of color throughout the summer months for Amtrak's many passengers.

If you live in Western New York and would like to help Dave with the garden duties, send ESPA a message and we'll get you in touch with Dave.

Track Improvements Coming to Corinth

Work is expected to start this summer on improvements to the railroad tracks between Saratoga Springs and Corinth so trains can travel a little faster.

At present, trains using the former Delaware & Hudson tracks through Greenfield to Corinth can only travel 10 miles per hour, according to Corinth Supervisor Richard Lucia.

Using a \$1 million grant from the Department of Transportation, the town of Corinth announced last week that the tracks will be upgraded to a Class II level, which will allow speeds between 35 and 40 miles per hour.

Those working on a new comprehensive plan for Corinth's future see great potential for using the rail line for scenic trains and associated tourism in northern Saratoga County, as well as freight train opportunities serving the former International Paper Company mill in Corinth. The mill remains vacant, but talks continue on bringing a plastic plate and container manufacturing plant to the site.

Corinth Daily News

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.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Introductory membership (\$10.00 for one year) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining membership (\$50.00) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal membership (\$24.00 per year) | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron membership (\$75.00) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal - Student or Senior Citizen (\$12.50 per year) | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate membership (\$100.00) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family membership (\$30.00) | <input type="checkbox"/> 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, 2008. Material may be reproduced if credit is given ESPA and to the writer.

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