

The ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

<http://www.esparail.org>



WORKING FOR A MORE BALANCED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

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November/December 2007

Senate Passes Amtrak Authorization

On October 30th the Senate passed S294 the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, by a vote of 70-22. This bill was a bi-partisan effort, sponsored by Frank Lautenberg (D, NJ) and Trent Lott, (R, Miss.) with 38 co-sponsors, including 5 Republicans and both Senators Clinton and Schumer of New York. It will authorize operating, capital and debt service funding for Amtrak for 6 years, although the percentage of capital funding going to states would increase over the period. It will also give the Surface Transportation Board power to investigate any Amtrak route with less than 80% on time performance and authorize STB to assess damage payments against a freight carrier causing serious delays. It will require states to develop rail plans and authorize grants for corridor development with up to 80% federal share. And it removes the expectation that Amtrak must become profitable. Finally it will allow a limited number of other operators to bid to operate Amtrak routes.

Several damaging amendments were soundly defeated including one by Senator John Sununu, (R., NH) that would have eliminated many long distance trains and another by Tom Coburn (R., OK), that would have suspended most food service.

However this bill is still a long way from reality because the House has not developed a counterpart and the White House has reportedly already expressed its opposition. But while Mr. Bush and his allies may be able to block federal support for expanding Amtrak service for now, the pressure is building as people become more concerned about energy, climate change and congestion. More and more states are taking initiative on their own and it seems inevitable that the federal government will eventually have to make a serious commitment. The question seems to be when, and how much.

Frank Barry

'Bring A New Member To ESPA'

Don't forget that all dues paying ESPA members have until December 31, 2007 to introduce a new member to our organization with a **FREE** One-Year membership.

This is the perfect Holiday season gift for a friend, neighbor or business associate you know who is interested in improved passenger rail service and public transportation in New York State. The new member will receive six complimentary issues of the 'ESPA Express' newsletter; be invited to our meetings and other special events and perhaps most importantly, know ESPA's collective voice in Albany will be strengthened by their being part of our cause.

Please see the enclosed flyer for complete details and to sponsor your new member!

DOT Creates New Passenger Rail Section

As a clear demonstration of Governor Spitzer's stated commitment to build a modern, efficient, higher-speed rail system for New York State, the Department of Transportation has recently created a new Intercity Passenger Rail Section within its organization. This Section is being tasked with advancing the many projects and initiatives necessary to accomplish the Governor's goal.

The new Intercity Passenger Rail Section is being led by veteran DOT staff member Ron Lammerts *(Cont'd on page 5)*

Amtrak's Super Dome Runs On Adirondack

In a surprise but very welcome move, Amtrak brought its sole full length dome car east from California this fall to run for four weeks during the peak foliage season on the *Adirondack* between Albany and Montreal. With only one car available, it was operated northbound from Albany on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, with the return southbound trip on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Open to all passengers on a first come, first served basis, it proved extremely popular, particularly along the scenic shores of Lake Champlain. In addition, the National Park Service's 'Trails and Rails' programs were offered in the dome on weekends.

While the dome car was slated to make its last run on November 11 before returning to California for the busy holiday season, it is hoped that the car will make a repeat visit to New York State next year for an extended period.



ESPA applauds Amtrak for taking the initiative to bring the car east and particularly wants to thank Joe McHugh, Amtrak's Vice-President of Government Affairs for helping facilitate the visit.

Bruce B. Becker

The View from the Cab

The light at the end of the tunnel seems to be getting brighter with each passing month!

As noted on page one of this issue, the recent announcement of NYSDOT creating a dedicated Intercity Passenger Rail Section is absolutely outstanding news. This, coupled with the almost unbelievable move by Amtrak to bring its only remaining dome car from California to operate on the *Adirondack* for several weeks of foliage viewing has made this a truly remarkable fall.

But before we get too euphoric over these and other recent positive developments, we mustn't forget that the state initiated law-suit against Amtrak is still active and until this matter is fully resolved, it is unlikely that any large scale cooperative ventures between the state and Amtrak will be forthcoming. And when a resolution does occur, the state will have to be ready to commit significant funding over a number of years in order to make meaningful progress towards the goals of both ESPA and Governor Spitzer to provide a renewed, higher speed, reliable passenger rail system for the citizens of New York.

Amtrak recently published a booklet entitled 'Critical Link 2007' (available through a link at our web site, www.esparail.org or at www.amtrak.com), which highlights a number pro-rail statistics, including economic developments generated by current rail investment; environmental friendliness ratings for rail versus other modes and energy efficiency ratios. I encourage you to take a look this education piece and read these concise descriptions of why rail makes sense for the United States and then help spread the word. One particular item of interest to Empire State rail advocates noted in the report is that in FY 2006, among Amtrak's rail corridors, the Empire Corridor was ranked fourth nationwide with overall ridership of 1.216 million and more importantly the 142 mile New York to Albany segment enjoyed an amazing 93% share of the combined rail/air market, second only to the 99% rail share of the shorter 86 mile Chicago - Milwaukee Hiawatha Corridor. Recently announced figures for FY 2007 show a 2.5% boost for the Corridor in overall ridership from 2006, which now totals 1.245 million.

As always, I welcome your comments, critiques and suggestions. Don't hesitate to contact me at anytime.

Bruce B. Becker, President

Letter to the Editor

It was gratifying to note in the September/October edition of ESPA Express that an agreement has been reached between the Senate High Speed Rail Task Force and NYSDOT, allowing for release of funds for passenger rail improvement projects.

However, it was MOST disappointing to note that ALL of these projects are in the Albany to New York City corridor. It would seem to me they could have at least "thrown upstate a bone", perhaps a contribution to funds needed for double-tracking between Albany and Schenectady.

In the same issue, the ESPA Express reported on sold-out condition of many trains in the Empire Corridor, proving the popularity and POTENTIAL for passenger rail service west of Albany.

When are the powers-that-be going to recognize this and make changes that will take upstate out of the forgotten poor orphan category?

High speed rail from New York City to Niagara Falls would multiply ridership dramatically.

Joseph H. Radder, Williamsville, NY

Dining Service Changes on the *Lake Shore*

In mid-September, Amtrak abruptly stopped operating full service Heritage Dining Cars on the *Lake Shore Limited*, instead substituting Amfleet II lounge cars which have been converted for use as dining service cars. Concurrent with this change, all-table Horizon Cafés began serving as the train's lounge car.

Reportedly, this change was precipitated by a larger than normal number of the 20 remaining 50-plus-year-old single level dining cars being removed from service for needed repairs at the Beech Grove shops. Enough of these cars are still available to continue offering full dining service on the Crescent and Florida service trains. Amtrak's official position on this change is that it is a temporary move and that adequate Heritage cars should be available at some undefined time in the future in order for the *Lake Shore* to switch back.

In conjunction with this equipment change, Amtrak also converted the *Lake Shore's* sit-down dining service to a casual 'All Day Dining' menu concept. Effective with the fall schedule change, now both the *City of New Orleans* and the *Lake Shore* offer this new style dining, which is listed in the new timetables as "Casual service offering complete meals and appetizers with an all day menu..."

I had the opportunity to sample the new service on the westbound *Lake Shore* out of Albany recently and can make the following observations:

- The Amfleet II 'dining' cars don't appear to be well suited for providing sit-down meal service on busy overnight trains. The center of the car 'kitchen'/service area is cramped and markedly smaller than on Heritage diners. Actual food preparation in the sparsely populated car was slow at best.
- The same staffing level as before worked the car (1 LSA - Steward, 1 Chef, 2 SA - Servers), and this particular crew was friendly and welcoming.
- The 'all day dining' menu purportedly offered continuous food service from 11:00am to 11:00pm, but on my trip, seating stopped promptly at 9:00pm.
- The menu itself offered a selection of four snack/appetizer items; five sandwich/pizza/salad items; 4 dinner entrees served between 5:00pm and 9:00pm and two desserts, in addition to a full range of beverages. It should be noted that the entrees are not served with salads or rolls.
- Breakfast was a separate menu and reportedly offered the now standard Amtrak selections.

In summary, while I believe the 'dine at your convenience' casual menu concept, if properly executed, may well prove to be popular with passengers, the obvious limitations of the Amfleet II cars being run as diners is a very real constraint for Amtrak. Hopefully adequate funding will be forthcoming to allow for the purchase of new single level cars, including properly designed sit-down dining cars.

Bruce B. Becker

82% of New York voters believe that having improved and modernized intercity passenger train service is at least as important as having good highways and airports.

Marist College Institute for Public Opinion

Senate Appropriates Transportation Funds

On September 13th the Senate voted 88 to 7 to approve the Transportation-Housing Appropriation, which includes Amtrak funding for FY2008. The bill contains \$1.37 billion for Amtrak, vs. \$1.294 last year. This includes \$485 million for operating assistance (vs. \$498 requested by Amtrak and \$490 last year). It also contains \$100 million as a 50-50 match for state investments to improve existing service or develop new service.

This bill still has to be reconciled with the House bill, passed in July, which contains \$1.4 billion for Amtrak and \$50 million to match state investments. However the Bush Administration has said the President will veto the bill because both versions contain several billion dollars more than he asked for. Amtrak has been singled out for special criticism even though it forms a tiny proportion of the spending and only \$600 million of the excess. Supporters could override a veto in the Senate but this would be less likely in the House.

Congress has passed a continuing resolution to fund all government programs at current levels until November 17th.

Frank Barry

Committee Approves Tax Credit Bonds

On September 21st the Senate Finance Committee voted 16 to 5 for an amendment to provide tax credit bonds for rail infrastructure. This vote amended a bill to reauthorize funding for aviation and to augment the highway trust fund. The amendment was offered by Sens. John Kerry (D., Mass.) and Trent Lott, (R., Miss.) . If it becomes law this bill could provide a breakthrough for funding rail passenger service expansion. But it still has to be voted on by the full Senate and reconciled with the House version, which does not include a similar provision. And it must be signed by President Bush.

Frank Barry

House Passes Rail Safety Bill

On October 17 the House passed HR 2095, the Federal Railroad Safety Improvement Act. This will require all Class I railroads to implement positive train control systems to override human failures, such as failing to obey a restricting signal or speed restriction, by 2015. It will also lengthen rest time requirements between calls for duty for trainmen and it requires railroads to keep grade crossings clear of brush that limits visibility. It will also increase penalties for safety violations by railroads. Finally, it requires the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to acquire more track inspection vehicles

The bill passed by 377-38, enough to easily override a veto. It has been referred to the Senate, which has no counterpart.

Former New York State Transportation Commissioner Joseph Boardman, who now heads the FRA, has been given a lot of credit for improving rail safety, especially after a fiery derailment on the CSX mainline not far from his home in Oneida County last Summer. After the derailment he ordered a blitz of track inspection vehicles onto CSX that resulted in 10MPH speed restrictions and required re-routing Amtrak trains off the Florida mainline. For the longer term, Boardman has been pushing freight railroads to adopt electronic braking and positive train control. According to Don Phillips, writing in the November issue of TRAINS Magazine, Boardman wants to see safety improvements before he leaves office at the end of the Bush administration. He says the public and its representatives in government are no longer willing to tolerate railroad calculations that it's cheaper to clean up wrecks than to make safety improvements to prevent them.

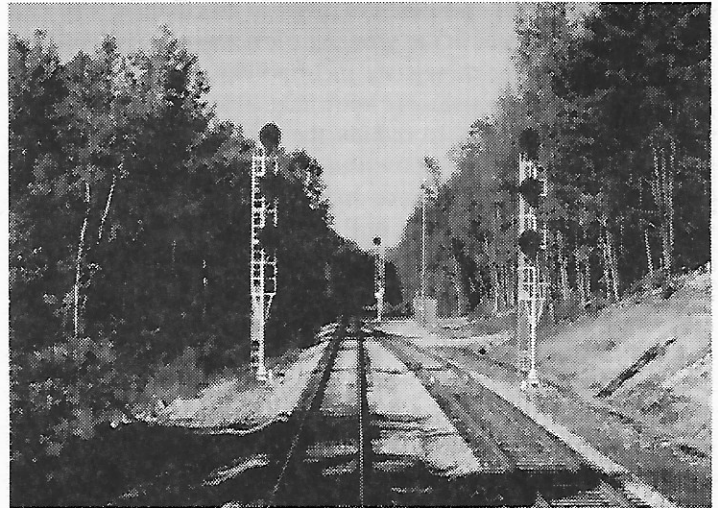
Frank Barry

Binghamton to Scranton Inspection Trip

On October 13, 2007 Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) operated an inspection trip "The Endless Mountain Express" for the Lexington Group which was having its annual meeting in Binghamton, NY. The trip highlighted the improvements underway on the former Lackawanna Railroad between Binghamton and Scranton. Canadian Pacific President and chief Executive Officer Fred Green noted in his letter to the group the importance of the strategic route "*I hope you will enjoy this historic route that is in the process of being expanded to meet the modern demands for freight transportation*". The special train was a mixture of Morristown and Erie passenger cars and Juniata Terminal locomotives (a stunning matched set of E8 Pennsylvania Railroad passenger locomotives).

PennDot and Canadian Pacific are working to improve freight traffic flow on the route through various additional improvements including a CTC signaling system for the entire route between Scranton and Binghamton. CP runs about 14 trains a day on the line with more growth expected from joint efforts with Norfolk Southern and CP on new traffic.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE



New passing siding placed in service 2007 at New Milford, Pa.

Article and Photo by Ben Gottfried

Amtrak Labor Negotiations at Impasse

Amtrak contract negotiations with nine of its unions broke down when these unions rejected National Mediation Board arbitration last month. A 30 day cooling off period has begun during which President Bush is likely to appoint a Presidential Emergency Board. If he does so, the emergency board will have 30 days to present a recommendation and the parties will have another 30 days to reach agreement. If that fails, a strike could occur. If the President does not appoint an emergency board, a strike could occur following a 30 day waiting period after the parties were released by the National Mediation Board. A strike could result if Amtrak unilaterally imposes a new contract unacceptable to the unions—unless Congress intervenes.

Some of the unions have been working under contracts that expired in 1999 as Amtrak has struggled to keep going amid persistent attempts by the White House and opponents in Congress to impose shut down budgets.

Frank Barry

Point of View: Moving toward a three-state Regional Rail "System"

By far the largest capital investment projects in the NY-NJ-CT metropolitan area for "Regional Rail". MTA's LIRR East Side Access Project and NJ Transit's Hudson River rail tunnel project together will cost in excess of \$15 billion - a sum that dwarfs any other public transport project in the nation. Yet, at the end of the day, these massive investments will fall far short of alleviating the basic transportation problems facing the region. Each plan is being developed separately, with the narrow interests of each independent transit agency optimized, leaving transit riders and taxpayers out in the cold. Regional Rail advocates have estimated that as much as two-thirds of the investment in these projects is being squandered by this lack of cooperation among transit agencies. Passengers will suffer, being forced to use "deep cavern" stations some 150 to 175 feet below the street, adding three to five minutes of extra travel time each way, for each passenger. Project costs are rising. Recently MTA turned down a bid for construction of a segment of the LIRR project because it was \$200 million or 30% above estimate. NJ Transit redesigned their tunnel plan for the third time in five years, shrinking its capacity and connectivity, in a desperate effort to contain costs.

What is needed is a simple, coherent plan that brings New York and New Jersey rail operations together in an effective way and begins to make a dent in the growing traffic congestion problem that is engulfing the three-state metropolitan area. Because the governors of all three states are knowledgeable and forceful, there is a golden opportunity to rethink the parochial efforts of each transit agency and forge a consensus for a coordinated regionwide plan. Already, CT's Governor Jodi Rell has suggested a thru-running operation linking her state with important travel destinations in New Jersey by way of Penn Station. With MTA and Amtrak cooperation, this operation, using existing equipment, could be in place in just 90 days. Until senior management at MTA and NJ Transit overcomes petty "can't do" prerogatives at the middle level, everyone will suffer.

MTA contends that its LIRR deep cavern proposal is too far along, and cannot be altered. This is clearly not the case. A far simpler alternative was studied in great detail by a well-respected Canadian engineering firm — the Delcan Corp. MTA officials have embargoed any contact with this firm. They have chosen not to have an independent assessment of the relative security of the deep cavern option compared with a more passenger-friendly plan studied by Delcan that would use existing platforms and tracks on the upper level of Grand Central Terminal — the world's largest railway station. MTA could select the Delcan plan, dropping its ill-conceived deep cavern plan, and gain East Side Access three years sooner in the process. Governor Eliot Spitzer's new appointee to head the MTA Board — H. Dale Hemmerdinger — is a civic minded real estate developer who is Chairman Emeritus of Citizen's Budget Commission. This commission has called for more efficiency in government, and for MTA there is no better place to start than in correcting the serious mistakes being made with its largest capital investment - the LIRR Deep Cavern project. Otherwise, the cost overruns will bury this project!

The key to making these pieces work effectively is for MTA and NJ Transit to agree on "thru-running" between Penn Station and Grand Central. This alternative was the leading contender during the Major Investment Study phase of planning for the Access to the Region's Core (ARC) project, and has the full support of ESPA and the NJ Association of Rail Passengers. This option was rejected by MTA in 2003, after years of study, because it might

help New Jersey more than New York. Sadly, this is not the case. New York has a lot to gain by helping New Jersey advance a plan that eases roadway congestion on both sides of the Hudson River, and makes it a lot easier for travelers to use Regional Rail connections. This is why ESPA has joined an alliance of NJ rail advocacy organizations to urge NJ Gov. John Corzine to bring some sense to NJ Transit's over zealous management that is advancing a separate and unequal deep cavern station, that completely misses the "grand" Moynihan/Penn Station now being planned.

Many of these issues were discussed in an exhibit funded in part by ESPA. To see the exhibit on-line go to www.iron.org and click on Regional Rail.

Regional Rail advocates meet once a month in Lower Manhattan. All ESPA members are invited to attend. Please check www.rrwg.org or call 212-475-3394 to find out more about these meetings.

George Haikalis, ESPA

Manhattan Coordinator for Regional Rail

Canada Pledges Millions for Via Rail

On October 11 the Canadian government announced its intent to invest \$692 million (Canadian dollars) to upgrade and improve VIA service. Most of this—\$516 million—will go to refurbish existing cars and locomotives, upgrade stations and to eliminate speed restrictions and bottlenecks on its main corridor between Quebec, Montreal, Toronto and Windsor. The remaining \$176 million will increase funding for operations, allowing for additional frequencies.

Amtrak Introduces 20%

'I Love New York' Fare Discount

In partnership with the 'I Love New York' tourism program, Amtrak has announced a new 20% fare discount program which is valid for NYS rail travel now through September 2008. Offering a 20% discount off the regular adult fares, the fare discount is only available by 1-800-USA-RAIL and specifically mentioning discount code V464. Seats are limited and will not be available at all times and on all trains.

New Passenger Rail Section *(Cont'd from page 1)*

and includes Agnes Rapoli and Charles Poltenson. Charlie is a past ESPA President and long-time rail advocate from central New York, who only recently joined DOT's headquarters staff. The Intercity Passenger Rail Section reports up to Deputy Commissioner Karen Rae, through the newly reorganized Public Transportation Bureau and Office of Integrated Modal Services.

While they have only been together formally for a matter of weeks, the Section's staff reportedly is already making preliminary progress on a number of critical fronts, including several important issues identified in the Senate High Speed Rail Task Force report produced in December 2005 under the leadership of John Egan.

ESPA is extremely pleased with the creation of the Section, which represents the first time in many years that dedicated DOT staff and resources have been specifically assigned to address the complicated task of providing New Yorkers with improved, reliable rail services across the state. We applaud Governor Spitzer for setting a clear and attainable goal and congratulate Commissioner Glynn and Deputy Commissioner Rae for taking the pro-active steps to create organizational support to accomplish it.

Bruce B. Becker

Big Improvements Begin on Pascack Line

On Sunday, October 28, NJTransit's Pascack Valley line, which serves Spring Valley, Nanuet and Pearl River in New York's Rockland County, nearly doubled its service, adding 8 inbound and 7 outbound runs to the previous 10 in- and 13 outbound runs daily. The trains now run in each direction throughout the day rather than during rush hour only. And for the first time in at least 60 years, they run on weekends too—7 trains inbound, 6 outbound.

These spectacular improvements are the result of four new passing sidings installed in East Rutherford, Hasbrouck Heights, Hackensack and Nanuet, part of a two year, \$19 million effort, approved by the NJTransit Board of Directors in 2004. Metro-North provides funding for service to the three stations in New York.

ESPA Rockland County Coordinator Orrin Getz has been an active promoter of this expansion. *Frank Barry*

Gravy Train Rolls in for Proposed Poconos-NYC Rail Line

The Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority has received \$2 million to continue the process of bringing a passenger train from Scranton to Hoboken, N.J.

U.S. Sens. Arlen Specter and Bob Casey announced the Senate's grant approval Thursday, saying it will be used for engineering to get the project ready for the bid process.

PNRRA chief operating officer Larry Malski said it will also be used to complete any environmental requirements. The bill now goes to Congress for another round of voting and finally to the president before it is final. "These funds will help spur economic growth and will make significant strides to improve Pennsylvanians' commutes on our highway, rail and transit systems," Casey said of the transportation grants earmarked for the entire state.

The \$550-million rail project is slated to have at least four stops in Monroe County. About \$12 to \$14 million already has been spent on environmental studies, track procurement and engineering, Malski said. Malski said the bids to build the entire system could be awarded sometime in 2011 and would then take nine months to finish.

"That's the best case scenario and that's still our goal," he said. "Hopefully by then all the money will have come through."

The railroad authority is waiting on a "finding of no significant impact" for the project from the Environmental Protection Agency. The finding is a review of the entire plan and its environmental impact. As long as the project receives a favorable decision, then work can continue.

Waiting on governmental agencies is what makes a timeline so tricky, Malski said. "We were expecting to receive the decision in mid-summer, and here we are in September," he said. "But we know it's been reviewed and discussed in Washington, so hopefully it will be coming soon."

There is still preliminary engineering to be done, but one thing that won't hold up the project any longer is waiting to purchase pieces of the track. Malski said the entire track is now under the PNRRA's control.

The PNRRA is a regional effort between Monroe and Lackawanna counties to work on the Pennsylvania end of the rail line.

Pocono Record, September 14, 2007
By Michael Sadowski, Pocono Record Writer

Former Metro-North President Assesses the Long Island Rail Road

In one of her early actions as the new President of the Long Island Railroad, Helena Williams hired retired Metro-North President Don Nelson to undertake a full review of the LIRR and prepare a report for her and the MTA Board. Nelson found the Railroad in "good to excellent physical condition and its customer service much improved from earlier experience". He noted improved attention to customers, cleaner trains and higher employee morale than was the case a few years ago.

While recognizing that the new M7 car fleet had brought EMU fleet reliability to very high levels at the LIRR and MNR, Nelson reported that the diesel locomotive fleet "is performing well below acceptable levels with little improvement guaranteed". Nelson said additional attention and resources must be devoted to drainage problems, vegetation control, tie replacement and station maintenance. He said the railroad's signal and control system was perhaps the most neglected of all major infrastructure components and called for greater investments to keep up with rapid technological change in this area. He also pointed out that the railroad has over 54 power substations approaching forty years of service which are all due for replacement.

Nelson's report showed that both the diesel and the dual-mode locomotive fleet had averaged a Mean Distance Between Failure (MDBF) rate of less than 25,000 in each of the last 5 years even though the average age of the entire diesel fleet is less than ten years old. Lastly, the report criticized the LIRR for "too much planning, too little execution" on the so-called Jamaica improvements at Jay, Hall and Dunton interlockings which would modernize signals and interlockings and raise travel speeds through the spaghetti maze of track approaching and departing Jamaica station. (*See article below*)

Other recommended actions: consider electrification of the Central branch to add redundancy and flexibility, complete new diesel repair facility and evaluate growing recruitment and training needs. *Steve Strauss 212-222-2796*

LIRR Proposes Speedup at Jamaica Station

Anyone who travels through the LIRR Jamaica Station can attest to the 15 mph or less crawl that interrupts the largely 80 mph track speed. This is due to speed restrictions rooted in the largely unchanged 1913 track configuration with lines of double slip switches.

Newsday reports that new LIRR President Helena Williams asserts "There's no doubt we can do something better" after a presentation of this proposed program to the MTA. The plan calls for spending up to \$387 million to update the current track layout, add a sixth platform and, potentially, a bypass track by 2013, when the East Side Access (ESA) comes on line. The project also calls for replacing the 1930's interlocking with a centralized, high-tech system. Currently, about 67 trains go through Jamaica during a peak hour. This project would expand current capacity from 79 trains to over 100 an hour. This will support the ESA promised 40% increase in seats to Manhattan. *John Raha*

Climate Change Bill Introduced

On October 18th Senator Joseph Lieberman (I, CT) and John Warner (R, VA) introduced S-2191, America's Climate Security Act which would set limits on greenhouse gas emissions for states and for various industries, and enforce compliance with fines. States would receive allowances to help them reduce emissions and one eligible use for such funds would be to "improve public transportation and passenger rail service and otherwise reduce vehicle miles traveled."

The bill would provide every industry with emission allowances which would decline each year. Additional emission allowances would be auctioned off to the highest bidder.

This bill clearly defies the Bush administration's "voluntary" approach. "We feel voluntary (actions) will not achieve the goal," Senator Warner told his colleagues on the Senate floor. While other climate change bills have been introduced, this bill has significant bipartisan support. Its eight co-sponsors are evenly divided between the parties. But the changes it will require are so different than the current approach that Senator Warner concedes it will not be adopted easily.

On the other end of the spectrum Move On claims this approach does not go far enough because it would reward the biggest polluters for the polluting they have already done, since the allowance is based on past performance. Move-On believes no one should get a free allowance—industries should pay for all the pollution they generate.

On November 1st Lieberman's global warming subcommittee approved the bill 4-3 and sent it to the full Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Frank Barry

Winter Schedule Changes

The Empire Corridor Schedules for the Winter of 2007-08 remain mostly unchanged from the summer. The most important schedule change is that of the Mon - Fri Albany 2:00pm departure to NYP, which has been changed to a reliable 4:15pm departure from Albany.

For the winter Amtrak schedule, additional scheduled time has been added to both the *Lake Shore Limited* and the *Adirondack*, in an attempt to improve their on-time performance. A few minutes has been removed both from many Albany to/from NYP trains and from Niagara Falls to/from NYP trains, but not all the minutes added for track work this past summer have been removed from the schedules.

Gary Prophet

Long Island RR Increases Service

On October 23, 2007, the Long Island Railroad nearly doubled its service to East End communities along the South Fork of Long Island, with the start of rail service that begins in Speonk, and operates east to the Hamptons and Montauk. Three additional frequencies in each direction will operate on weekdays through May 22, 2008, east from the Speonk rail station, which offers free parking. The purpose of this additional service is to provide commuter operations to the east end of Long Island during the construction on County Road 39. State Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr, stated, "South Fork community leaders have long envisioned improved rail and bus service as a means of reducing traffic congestion on the South Fork. The current CR 39 construction project has provided us with an opportunity to request increased rail service." Local communities have agreed to provide connecting bus service from the rail stations to business districts and schools. Rail stations benefiting from this increased service are: Speonk, Westhampton, Hampton Bays, Southampton, Bridgehampton, East Hampton, Amagansett, and Montauk.

Gary Prophet

2007-08 ESPA Meeting Dates

Saturday, Nov. 17, 2007	Schenectady, NY - The Parker Inn
Saturday, January 26, 2008	Schenectady, NY - The Parker Inn
Saturday, March 8, 2008	Annual Membership Meeting – Schenectady Holiday Inn

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 to attend 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.
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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