

THE ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION



Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

Vol. 15, No. 5

October -November 94

Susquehanna Service Starts in Syracuse

Saturday, September 24th was a big day for Syracuse. Over 200 people watched as a refurbished Budd Rail Diesel Car (RDC) and a Chinese steam locomotive approached from opposite directions. Both trains waited as officials drove spikes to complete the track between them. The ceremony, which inaugurated the New York Susquehanna & Western's new passenger service, took place at the new Susquehanna station in downtown Syracuse next to upscale Armory Square.

An impressive array of state and local officials participated, including state Transportation Commissioner John Egan, Assembly Majority Leader Michael Bragman (who represents northern Syracuse), County Executive Nick Pirro, Mayor Roy Bernardi, and NYS&W President Walter Rich.

The parallel to the 1869 Promontory Point golden spike ceremony may have seemed presumptuous to some, but the event actually signified a bold initiative for Syracuse, with potential consequences far beyond this state. For with that ceremony, Syracuse publicly staked a major part of its long term economic development strategy on a restoration of rail passenger service - becoming perhaps the first U.S. city to do so to such an extent. Initially criticized by many (including some in ESPA) as a frivolous use of public funds, the "On Track service" (for Onondaga County) was praised by Mr. Bragman and others as a "tremendous public-private partnership." Walter Rich said he'd never been involved in any project that generated so much excitement.

On Track actually has three distinct elements—a weekend tourist train which on Saturday made two runs as far as Tully, on the old Lackawanna line to Binghamton; a dinner train service, and the RDC shuttle. The latter runs about four miles between Carousel Mall, on the city's northern edge, downtown Armory Square and the Syracuse University Carrier Dome. All will use track refurbished with state funds secured by Michael Bragman.

Steam tourist trains and dinner trains have proven their ability to attract business, including tourism. However except in Scranton, Pa., Austin, and Houston, Texas, most originate in out of the way rural places, far from population centers. They are often an important element in tourism, attracting city folk to places they might not otherwise visit.

Having lost many manufacturing jobs, Syracuse, like many cities, has been fighting a battle to revive its inner core. City leaders have decided to get into tourism in a big way, and On Track is a big part of their plan. They have apparently figured that if trains can bring tourists to rural areas, they can bring them to downtown Syracuse too.

Perhaps the most innovative—and risky—part of the experiment is the shuttle. Who would ride a train that goes only four miles, makes only three stops, runs only every 40 to 60 minutes, and requires passengers to climb steps to reach the tracks? Tourists, that's who. As Walter Rich explained to ESPA, project

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Will new Genesis P-40's replace the turboliners? Photo Bill Brizzell

Turboliner Turning Point?

A recent rash of fires in Amtrak's turboliner power units has raised doubts about the future of these trains, and in the process aggravated differences between Amtrak and the New York state Department of Transportation (DOT). None of the five fires that occurred over the summer caused significant injuries, but they did lead Amtrak to substantially reduce turboliner assignments. The two oldest RTG trainsets, (built in France in 1974), have been removed from service for extensive inspection of their electrical systems.

Currently, only 3 of the 7 RTL turbo trainsets (Rohr, 1976) are running, and these are limited to New York-Albany-Schenectady trips except on Fridays and weekends, when one set goes to Syracuse, another to Niagara Falls. This reduction

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High Speed Commission Appointed

A new Temporary Commission on High Speed Rail and Maglev Transportation met for the first time on September 22. The 13 members, appointed by Governor Cuomo, include Transportation Commissioner John Egan, John Shafer, Director of the New York Thruway, Vincent Tese, State Director of Economic Development, Francis Murray, State Energy Commissioner, Thomas Young, Chair of the New York Power Authority, Senator Norman Levy, Transportation Committee Chair, and Michael Bragman, Majority Leader of the Assembly. It also includes various representatives of the private sector, from firms not directly involved in high speed rail or maglev according to Lt. Gov. Stan Lundine's office.

The Commission's first meeting, in New York, was chaired by Mr. Lundine. The group is expected to work until December, 1995, helping to shape the state's plan for developing and implementing high speed rail service and maglev technology.

The state hopes to break ground for a maglev research center at Stewart Airport and to begin high speed tests with a rebuilt turboliner train in November.

-Frank Barry

Editorial: *Spend it Now!*

Last year the Governor and the legislature earmarked \$20 million to begin developing 125 mph rail service in New York. Unfortunately there was a catch; these funds could only be spent if matched at the federal level. At the time, there was hope that the federal government would develop a high speed rail program to provide a match, but this now appears unlikely to happen soon. With only \$20 million appropriated for the entire country and progress blocked by disputes over liability, waiting for the federal government probably means putting high speed rail on hold for several more years.

But our state has been a leader in the past. Why should we wait for everyone else now? There is a certain inconsistency about being a leader and waiting for the federal government.

We think the state should move now to spend the money in ways that will immediately improve present service and at the same time build a foundation for high speed service when it comes. We can think of two obvious possibilities: first, the \$20 million could probably doubletrack the entire 17 mile stretch between Albany and Schenectady, instead of just the West Albany Hill as is now planned. This would completely eliminate the 25 minute delays that now occur when two trains approach this single track stretch at the same time. And it would provide an important foundation for the future: waiting in sidings is hardly consistent with high speed travel.

A second alternative would be to use some or all of the funds for faster locomotives (or upgraded turboliners) for 125mph service along the lines of the work now being done at Hornell. In past years the Department of Transportation (DOT) has opposed using state funds for equipment because they could not be sure it would always stay in New York. But California is buying equipment, and if our state wants genuinely fast trains, it may have no alternative. Amtrak is unlikely to concentrate its scarce resources on high speed trains for New York when the same money would go much farther buying conventional equipment for use systemwide.

If New York helps to upgrade the turbos, 10 minutes or so can be cut from the schedule immediately by eliminating the engine change in Albany. And when a fast track is built, the turboliners will be able to utilize its potential immediately without waiting for development of a faster train.

Either possibility would improve both present and future service. The important thing is to get things moving.

-Frank Barry

ESPA Active in State Planning

During the last few weeks the state Department of Transportation (DOT) has conducted numerous meetings and hearings on the State's transportation system. Hearings were held to gain input on a new State Master Plan to replace one developed by commissioner Franklin White in 1984. Input has also been sought on the state Transportation Improvement Plan, required by the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1990. And DOT has invited ESPA's Frank Barry to serve on a committee to advise the Department in developing an Intermodal Management System. Its purpose is to develop criteria to select projects from an intermodal perspective instead of viewing modes separately.

A number of other ESPA members have participated in the process, including President Steve Salatti, Vice President Bob Lenz, Hudson Valley Coordinator Dick Kulla and New York City Coordinator George Armeit.

A common theme in many meetings has been the need for better information about possible connection between transportation modes—a need emphasized by ESPA

Congress Sets Amtrak Appropriation

The conference committee set up to reconcile the U.S. Senate and House transportation appropriations completed its work on September 22nd, appropriating over a billion dollars for Amtrak for the first time ever. The \$1.012 billion figure includes \$40 million for the Farley Building project, and at least \$20 million additional appropriated for high speed rail studies:

Federal Appropriation for Amtrak
Figures in millions

Function	FY '94 Actual	Amtrak FY '95 Request	Clinton FY '95 Budget Request	House FY '95	Senate FY '95	Final Approp. FY '95
Operating	\$351.7	\$437	\$380	\$376.7	\$392	\$392
Mandatory	\$137	\$150	\$156	\$150	\$150	\$150
Capital	\$195	\$337	\$252	\$245	\$230	\$230
Farley	\$10	no request	\$90	0	\$40	\$40
NECIP	\$225	\$270	\$199.6	\$165	\$230	\$200
Totals	\$918.7	\$1,194	\$1,087.6	\$936.7	\$1,042	\$1012

However even this relatively generous amount was \$182 million short of Amtrak's request, with \$45 million of the shortfall in the operations area. With 1994 revenues substantially lower than predicted, very difficult decisions may still be necessary in 1995. (The empire Service was a bright spot in an otherwise gloomy picture, as Empire ridership grew by 2.3% in July and 6.2% in August).

Also, serious threats are emerging in the Amtrak authorization process in both houses. Rep. Joe Barton, a conservative Texas Republican, has introduced an amendment to HR-4111, the Amtrak Authorization, that would strip Amtrak train crews of the 6 year layoff protection they presently enjoy if a route is discontinued. And Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison may introduce a similar amendment to S-2002, the Senate Amtrak authorization bill.

This move represents a sophisticated threat to passenger service in the U.S., particularly on long distance routes like that of the *Lake Shore Limited*. The current labor protection clause requires Amtrak to pay laid off employees their wages for up to 6 years after a route is closed. While many feel this gives rail labor undue privileges, this requirement played a major role in keeping the system intact during the Reagan-Bush budget attacks, as it made dropping routes uneconomical. If a route is dropped, laid off employees must still be paid, but without the revenues generated by their train.

According to the National Association of Railroad Passengers, removal of the labor protection clause, plus poor years and tight budgets could set off a vicious spiral. Once a route is discontinued, political support would likely decrease among affected states and localities, causing lower future appropriations, leading to more route closings, and so on.

Exactly half of Amtrak's 30 trains covering more than 500 route miles actually originate in, or pass through New York. The same is true of the 26 overnight runs.

-Frank Barry

Late Flash

Congress passed the Transportation Appropriation, including the Amtrak figures recommended by the Conference Committee, during the last week of September. But on September 28th the Amtrak Board of Directors directed management to eliminate a \$193 million deficit projected for 1995. President Downs announced plans to cut 600 management positions. Service cuts may be announced in November for implementation January 1st. NARP has called the deficit estimate overly conservative, noting that Amtrak is projecting no revenue increase for 1995, even after spending \$11 million for winterization to prevent recurrence of the problems experienced last winter.

Amtrak News

• Florida Service to be Revamped

The October 30 timetable change will bring major revamping of service to Florida, generally improving Empire Service connections.

The *Palmetto* will be extended to Tampa instead of terminating in Jacksonville. It will carry sleepers and operate on an overnight schedule, leaving New York at 9:25AM, instead of 7:23AM. It will run roughly three hours earlier northbound, arriving in New York 9:24PM instead of 12:10AM.

The *Silver Meteor* will lose its Tampa section; the entire train will run through to Miami via Orlando, operating about 3 hours earlier southbound, one hour earlier northbound. The *Silver Star* will split at Jacksonville instead of Auburndale. It will leave New York at 10:45AM, instead of 9:42AM. Northbound it will arrive at 3:30PM instead of 8:06PM.

The *Carolinian* will leave New York 7:20AM instead of 6:20AM.

• Superliner Equipment on the Capitol Limited

Superliner cars begin daily service on Amtrak's popular Capitol Limited October 30, replacing Amtrak's single-level passenger cars.

As the most efficient passenger cars Amtrak operates, Superliner coaches accommodate 77 passengers each. The sleeping car hosts 44 - doubling the *Capitol Limited's* current first-class sleeping car capacity.

This is the third time that Superliners will serve customers on trains operating east of the Mississippi River. Earlier this year Amtrak introduced Superliner service on the *City of New Orleans* between Chicago and New Orleans, La., and last year Superliners began serving the transcontinental *Sunset Limited* from Los Angeles, California to Miami, Florida.

Sample round trip coach fares along the *Capitol Limited* route are as follows:

From:	Round-trip Coach Fares
Chicago-Washington	\$128
Chicago-Cleveland	\$68
Chicago-Pittsburgh	\$88
Washington-Pittsburgh	\$72

• Amtrak Offers A Special Discount Companion Fare

In celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Labor Day, Amtrak provides a special discounted fare for customers traveling with a companion.

From September 1 to December 11, when a customer paying an adult fare travels on Amtrak, his or her companion will receive 50% off the lowest available rail fare. The special companion fare must be purchased between August 19 and October 31.

Amtrak's senior citizen discount which applies on most routes to travelers 62 and older may be used in conjunction with these companion fares.

For Amtrak fare and schedule information, call 1-800-USA-RAIL or any travel agent (listed on page 5).

• Bay Area Train Service Relocates to Emeryville, California

Amtrak's long-distance trains, the *California Zephyr* and *Coast Starlight* began serving the new Emeryville, California station, replacing Amtrak's Oakland 16th St. Station as the San Francisco Bay area's primary station.

All Amtrak Thruway Bus connections to San Francisco, are now located in Emeryville.

Amtrak is discontinuing service to the Oakland 16th St. Station because it was severely damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake and because of freeway construction.

A new Amtrak station at Jack London square is currently under construction and will open in early 1995.

• 1994-95 Ski Packages Feature New Destination for East Coast Travelers

Amtrak offers a comfortable and relaxing way to arrive at four exciting Ski Amtrak destinations in Vermont and New York.

Amtrak's *Montrealer* will take skiers to such famous resorts as Jay Peak (St. Albans, Vt.), Sugarbush and Stowe (Waterbury-Stowe, Vt.), Smugglers Notch and Waterville Valley (White River Jct.) in New Hampshire.

The *Adirondack*, operating between New York and Montreal via Albany, passes through eastern New York State near the major ski areas of Whiteface Mountain near Lake Placid (Westport, N.Y.).

Each Ski Amtrak travel package includes round-trip coach rail transportation, a variety of lodging accommodations, resort amenities, lift tickets, and transfers from the Amtrak station to the resorts.

In Vermont, double occupancy prices range from \$216 to \$314 per person for a two-night package, and from \$349 to \$509 per person for a five-night package.

In New York, double occupancy prices are \$215 per person for a two-night package, and \$369 per person for a five-night package.

In New Hampshire, double occupancy prices are \$191 per person for a two-night package and \$309 for a five-night package.



Whitehall Station under construction. Photo Dr. Margarethe McCurry

Amtrak Station News

• Niagara Falls

The city is pursuing federal funds to relocate and finance construction of a new passenger station. The planned building site, at the Conrail crossing of Main Street, is at the north edge of downtown within two blocks of the Whirlpool International Bridge (rail/highway/pedestrian). This resurrects an 8-year-old plan of the city's to relocate the station closer to tourist sites and facilities, and supersedes a more recent proposal to convert the unused Custom House into a rail station. The current station (at Hyde Park Blvd. & Lockport Road), in service since 1978, is a converted freight building in an industrial/warehouse area located at the NE corner of the city and over 2 miles from the falls.

• Port Kent

Work to construct the track-side shelter (situated within 1/8 mile from the Ft. Kent-Burlington, VT ferry dock has been pushed back until March, '95. Construction should take two weeks and is to be done by town employees. This seasonal stop's shelter should be ready for the spring opening in April.

• Whitehall

Completion of the new station, located in the center of town next to the American Legion post, is expected by the first week of October. The station is modelled after the current Ticonderoga station.

• Rhinecliff

Platform and canopy work is expected to be completed by the end of October. The work includes replacement of the main stairwell leading from the station to the platform.

• Buffalo-Depew

Plans are approved and funding is in place to enlarge the waiting room and construct a station-to-platform canopy. Work is scheduled to start next spring. -Andrew J. Cabal

Turboliners, continued from page 1

has been accomplished with two 4-car Amfleet trainsets borrowed from the Northeast Corridor, and two of Amtrak's new G.E. Genesis P-40 diesels. No internal combustion locomotives are allowed to operate into Penn Station, but P-40's, unlike the older F-40's, are small enough to at least fit into the Penn Station tunnels. They are shut down at the mouth of the Empire Tunnel, then pulled the last mile into Penn Station by an AEM-7 electric, which then takes the entire train out to Sunnyside Yard. The procedure is reversed northbound, but the need to turn the train at Sunnyside adds up to 2 hours to turnaround time. (The bidirectional turbos can be serviced at Penn Station in as little as one hour).

At present trains 248, 257, 281, 284, 285, and 288 are running with Amfleet equipment instead of turboliners, meaning they do not carry the custom class seats advertised in the timetable. P-40 Genesis locomotives are being used on trains 48-49 and 248-283 between New York and Albany. (Assignments vary on weekends). This has deprived Western New York of custom class service entirely, except on weekend trains 289, 281 (Sat.) and 282.

But the long range consequences involve far more than first class seats. Amtrak is considering ways to eliminate the turbo power units altogether, (except for two now being rebuilt by Morrison-Knudsen in Hornell for 125mph tests for DOT). In the short term, elimination would likely be accomplished by dropping one New York-Albany roundtrip, and possibly hauling two turbo train sets with diesel locomotives.

But DOT feels such a move would undercut the state's efforts to introduce 125mph operation in the next few years. Although turboliners were designed for 125mph speeds, the Genesis engines which may replace them are good for only 103mph, the same as the older F-40's. It would be an irony if all turbos are removed from service just as the State unveils the newly upgraded units from Hornell, a week or two after elections. This issue has attracted top level attention on both sides, involving communication between Amtrak President Tom Downs and DOT Commissioner John Egan.

DOT staffers close to the high speed project are concerned that Amtrak is not sufficiently committed to high speed rail to address New York State's objectives. As one told ESPA, "Whatever we get now, we'll have to live with for the next 20 years; we want to be able to do 125." Except for the turboliners, Amtrak does not have any non-electric locomotive capable of 125mph.

However Amtrak is expected to request proposals soon for a 125mph non-electric prototype as an add-on to its order for new high speed equipment for the Boston electrification. But many in Amtrak do not like the high operating costs associated with turbine power. Turboliners burn much more fuel than a diesel and require far more maintenance. And as the recent fires suggest, maintenance requirements are more exacting. The new turbo units being installed in Hornell are expected to address some of these problems. Consequently the state-sponsored 125mph tests of the M-K rebuilds, the first step in Governor Cuomo's High Speed Rail initiative, may play a key role in determining the future for turbo technology.

But while diesels are cheaper to operate than turbos, they are also much heavier, and the added weight will cause much more track wear at higher speeds. Since Amtrak's track agreements with Conrail and other host railroads expire in 1996, it is possible that Amtrak may be charged higher track use fees for high speed diesel trains than for turboliners.

Meanwhile, Amtrak is investigating the causes of the fires—the most dramatic of which totally destroyed an RTG power unit in Penn Station on September 11, disrupting service for many hours. At this point it is still unclear whether the technology itself or other factors are to blame. —Frank Barry

Around the States/World...

- Ohio created a new Rail Development Commission incorporating the Ohio High Speed Authority and the Ohio DOT Rail Division. It can issue bonds, make loans and franchise rail operations.

- *Talgo* is a West Coast success. Passengers are flocking to the Amtrak *Talgo* operation between Seattle and Portland in higher than projected numbers, filling the trains to about 82 percent capacity instead of the 60 percent estimated. (High Speed Rail Association)

- Travelers in France now may avoid changing trains in Paris to connect between the TGV North and TGV Southeast lines by using a new high-speed interconnection line.

- Work has started on the new Hannover-Berlin high-speed line that will bring ICE Train service to the former East Germany for the first time. Travel time will be reduced from 4 hours to 1 3/4 hours when the line opens in 1997.

Support for the project was bolstered by the success of the ICE Train, which has increased passenger use and revenues by more than 30 percent since its inception.

"For 59 percent of the passengers, the decisive reason for choosing the ICE Train was the shorter travel time," said Peter Hafner, international vice president of the German Federal Railway. "We expect to double the amount of high-speed lines by the year 200." Also, the rail link at Frankfurt airport is more popular than ever.

- Spain has approved construction of a Madrid-Barcelona high-speed rail line. The government's endorsement for the project followed reports of the success of the Madrid-Seville AVE line, which is soon to become one of the few profitable routes in the Spanish railway system.

AVE links Madrid with Seville in 2-1/2 hours and has boosted traffic significantly over the former 6-hour train schedule.

"The AVE has lured many airline passengers and generated new business," said Manuel Diaz del Rio, of the Spanish National Railways. The trains have operated with an on-time record exceeding 99 percent.

- **Maglev Advances**

Prospects for maglev technology improved last month when the German Parliament finally approved a plan to develop maglev service between Hamburg and Berlin. It remains to be seen whether the private sector will raise its \$2 billion share of the \$5.6 billion project.

Weekend Trains a Success

According to Howard Robertson, of Amtrak, the new weekend trains to Saratoga added this summer have met Amtrak's expectations, averaging at least 100 people per trip. Robertson said the service would be renewed next summer. Although the service was aimed at one day trippers from New York, more people than expected spent the night in Saratoga Springs, pleasing that city's business community. Local buses provided dedicated service between the station, downtown and the racetrack.

The weekend trains to Toronto have been very popular as well, with over 300 passengers booked on some weekends, despite 84 seat coaches and a two hour delay at the border eastbound.

Batten Kill Begins Service

The Batten Kill Railroad made its maiden tourist run September 24th between the village of Salem, NY and the hamlet of Shushan, NY. The historic 1800's railroad station in Salem is being restored as a museum. The fall foliage tours operate through October 9th, then the Batten Kill plans charter tours and possible special holiday runs.

For a brochure write Batten Kill Railroad Co. BKRR Building, 1 Elbaco Street, Greenwich, NY 12834

ASK YOUR FRIENDS TO TAKE THE TRAIN!

PLEASE PATRONIZE THESE AUTHORIZED TRAVEL AGENTS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGER ASSOCIATION

Clarence	Clarence Travel	(716) 759-7203	(800) 336-3890
Hamburg	Scandia Tours & Travel	(716) 649-1445	
Ithaca	Stone Travel/American Express	(607) 257-2515	(800) 631-6464
New York	Bill Closs/R.G.C. Travel	(212) 677-9290	
Rochester	Automobile Club of Rochester	(716) 461-5000	
Rome	New Horizons Travel	(315) 339-5863	
Syracuse	Drumlins Travel Center	(315) 446-4556	(800) 866-4556
Tonawanda	Courtesy Travel	(716) 695-3550	(800) 695-3750

Authorized Amtrak travel agents who wish to join ESPA, maintain current membership status, and be listed in this DIRECTORY, should send a \$25 check, made payable to ESPA, and mail to: Robert Lenz, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031.

Traveling?

Take along ESPA's Rail & Station Report Form. Through this on going project, ESPA hopes to better serve the train-riding public by being better prepared in documenting any needs for service improvements as well as to pay compliments for outstanding services rendered. For copies write:

ESPA, 10529 Main Street,
Clarence, NY 14031-1684

Thank you for your cooperation!

Metro New York

• Executive Sleeper Discounted

A great disappointment befell the travelling community on August 17 as Amtrak, shaken by several derailments and consequent equipment shortage, had to discontinue the sleeper between New York City and Washington DC.

• LIRR (Re-)Introduces Bi-Level Coaches

Once a characteristic of LIRR commuter trains, bi-level coaches returned to the Route of the Rising sun on August 22. The Monday-Friday rush hour train departs Port Jefferson at 5:44am and begins its eastbound journey from Pennsylvania Station at 4:50pm. Meanwhile, LIRR schedule changes effective August 22 give Dashing Dans and Dannels additional trains to/from Long Island city while restoring mid-day service between Pinelawn and Ronkonkoma disrupted during track reconstruction. Copies of new timetables are available at LIRR stations or by phoning (see Below)

• Late Flash

Through Port Jefferson-Penn Station service was terminated after only one week when the train's rebuilt FL-9AC No. 301 caught fire on a deadhead trip between Jamaica and Caemerer Yard, west of Penn Station. The fire resulted from an overheated radiator grid designed to disperse electrical heat generated by the locomotive's dynamic brakes. All three LIRR FL-9AC's are now out of service pending retrofitting with higher capacity dynamic brake cooling grids. But the FL-9AC's have other problems; a decision on whether to restore the service is expected soon.

• LIRR Has New Telephone Numbers

Contacting the LIRR got a lot easier in August with the installation of a new telephone system. Below is a listing of the most frequently called numbers:

Branch Line Managers	(718) 558-8228
Problems and Complaints	(718) 558-8228
Group Travel and Tours	(718) 558-7498
Ticket Refund Assistance	(718) 558-3488
Lost & Found Assistance	(718) 558-8384
LIRR Police	(718) 558-3300 or (516) 733-3900
LIRR 24-Hour Travel Information Center:	
• New York City and Jamaica	(718) 217-LIRR
• Nassau	(516) 822-LIRR
• Suffolk	(516) 231-LIRR

• NYCTA May Introduce Monthly Passes in 1995

A long standing ESPA goal for improved transit in New York City may be realized next year: unrestricted monthly bus and subway passes, ending multi fare zones in the Big Apple. Proposed price: \$75.00; downside is that to "pay" for revenue losses NYCTA management claims will occur with these passes, single ride fares will increase to \$1.50.

• Staten Island Transit Needs Under Study

New York City's fastest growing borough (and soon to be separate city!) is having its transit needs studied by the Group Planning Division of STV under a contract with NYCTA.

Presently, the island borough has a 14.3 mile rapid transit remnant of an old B&O subsidiary, and buses. Plans include reinstating rail service, probably light rail, along the North Shore with connections across the Bayonne Bridge to the now gestating Jersey Coast rail line.

• Possibility of Coordinated Commuter Rail in New York?

One negative relic of glory days of PRR, NYNH&H, NYC and LI is poor or non-existent coordination of commuter service in New York. Responding to a query from ESPA member Haig Rakidjian, Donald N. Nelson, MN president, noted that MTA subsidiaries (MN & LI) are actively considering a link of these two systems (and by extension, NJTransit) offering coordinated MTA commuter rail service from Montauk to Poughkeepsie and form Port Jervis to Greenport. To this end, MN undertook a survey (not yet completed) of residents in its territory. Meanwhile, LI ponders the feasibility of entrance to Grand Central Terminal via 63rd Street Tunnel. Mr Nelson noted an undertaking of this magnitude requires a great deal of time, effort and coordination by MN and LI as well as Amtrak and NJTransit. Perhaps the most serious challenge is the apparent incompatibility of power pickup: LI uses overrunning third rail, MN has underrunning third rail and NJT draws from catenary. No problem is insurmountable and where there is a will there is a way. ESPA members and friends are encouraged to write MTA, NJTransit and regional agencies asking that coordinated commuter rail in around and through the New York region become reality.

-John A. Fink



4" x 7"

ESPA Bumper Stickers Available

Members can obtain our new bumper stickers by sending \$1.00 (3 for \$2.00) to ESPA, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031-1684. Help promote passenger rail service! Send for your bumper sticker today!

• **ESPA Downstate Regional Meeting** - Monday, October 17, 1994; Monday, November 21, 1994; - 7:00 PM at New York University, Waverly Building, 32 Waverly Place, 5th Floor, Conference Room. All are welcome.

Next offices and coordinators meeting December 3, location to be announced.

• For latest **National Rail Passenger News**, call the N.A.R.P. Hotline - 900-988-RAIL.

On Board On Track

As a guest of the On Track inauguration, your author received a free ticket on the first Susquehanna excursion, timed to leave the brand new Syracuse Armory Station at noon. Our 8 car train consisted mostly of silver fluted streamlined coaches with very comfortable seats, although a couple of ex-Long Island commuter coaches were included as well. Motive power was NYS&W's WW1-design Chinese Mikado steamer 142, actually built in 1989.

With 300 people aboard, it soon became apparent this would be no pokey daisy picker run. We picked up speed as we rolled above the streets on the old Lackawanna elevated right of way, and the engine really began to talk as we tackled the hill past the University stop next to I-81.

Diesel powered trains, multi-track right-of-ways and sealed windows minimize the sensation of speed. Amtrak passengers are often surprised to learn they are travelling at 80mph, because most of us judge speed from the vantage point of a car, in which we are much closer to the ground. But a hardworking steam engine, open windows, and trees close to the track, all exaggerate the sense of speed. Our top speed was 30mph (the 142 was designed for freight) but "We're really moving now," was a typical comment. And as the engine charged the grade, up past the quarry toward Jamesville, often loosing its footing, it was hard to think otherwise.

Then there was the whistle—a classic, high pitched wail, trumpeting our coming to everyone around. With whistle shrieking for the crossing, we slammed through Jamesville village, stopping cars dead in their tracks, bringing people out of the store, and parents to their knees to wave beside their children. It's hard to imagine that anyone who saw or heard could remain unmoved.

It took us nearly an hour to make the 22 miles to Tully, (including an unscheduled 7 minute stop to disentangle some ceremonial bunting from the 142's valve gear). Lackawanna trains were allowed 34 minutes in 1952, and one can drive to Tully in 25 minutes today—but no one seemed to mind.

-Frank Barry

Susquehanna Service , con't from page 1

planners don't really expect to fill the RDC with crowds of Syracusans who could easily drive or take a bus. Rather the aim is to use it to connect several major activity centers that will each bring people in from outside—to shop at the Carousel Mall, watch a game or other event at the Dome, or visit the expanding Museum of Science and Industry at Armory Square. Once a visitor comes to Syracuse to do one of these things, the shuttle ride can be a pleasant enticement to see or do something else—without worrying about parking or getting lost. As Mike Bragman put it, "The important thing is to keep it going until all the activity centers are up and running—then the benefits will be obvious to everyone."

From this perspective whether or not the RDC covers its cost may be less important than whether it succeeds in bringing

people in and getting them to see and do more than they would otherwise. County Executive Pirro dramatized the stakes, promising that "on Monday, we will announce a major convention we've been working to attract for five years." The availability of the shuttle could well give Syracuse an edge in attracting conventions and other large groups to its downtown—particularly when participants arrive by public transportation. Eventually, the shuttle will extend to the new intermodal rail-bus station, to be located just east of the Carousel Mall. And there is even talk of going to the airport.

In the meantime, NYS&W has committed to run an "Orange Service" shuttle from the Carousel Mall (where there is ample parking space) to the Carrier Dome (where parking is scarce) at 15 minute intervals for major games and events this Fall.

If the shuttle works, it could make suburban commuter service look viable in Syracuse and it may lead other cities to look at their railroad tracks as assets for development rather than eyesores to be eliminated. It is essentially a cheap light rail system—avoiding the Buffalo expense of tunneling or even laying tracks and hanging trolley wire in city streets. But it also sacrifices some of the convenience and flexibility such a system provides. For this reason the shuttle is an important experiment: if it fails, rail projects will become more difficult, not only in Syracuse but elsewhere as well. But the tripartite strategy tends to insure against failure; even if one element fails, it is unlikely that all will do so.

-Frank Barry

For Excursion Information, call 1-800-for-Train

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THE ESPA EXPRESS
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