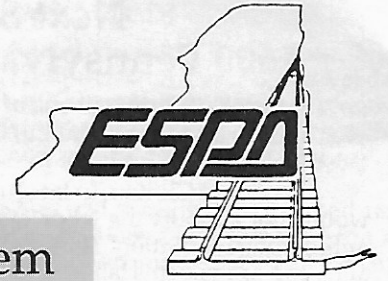


# THE ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION



## Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

Vol. 18, No. 5

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 97

### Labor Impasse Threatens Amtrak Survival

Just when it appeared that Amtrak might have weathered its worst crisis ever, labor leaders have pushed it to the brink again by opposing authorizing legislation needed to avert bankruptcy. The legislation, known as the Amtrak reform bill (HR-2247), passed 36-30 in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, chaired by Bud Shuster (R., Pa.). It has yet to pass the full House.

HR-2247 is critical because Republican leaders, including both enemies and supporters of Amtrak, have made it clear that their price for Amtrak's survival involves reforms to make it more efficient. The \$2.3 billion for Amtrak capital improvements included in the Tax Fairness Act as a result of Senator Roth's efforts, cannot be spent unless reforms are enacted.

Shuster's reforms would end the federal requirement for 6 years of full salary severance payments for laid off workers and end the federal ban on contracting out for services. While this would not bring immediate changes it would require Amtrak to renegotiate these issues with unions on an accelerated schedule.

Present law requires Amtrak to pay laid off employees for one full year after layoff for every year they have on Amtrak's payroll, up to six years, if the layoff resulted from closing a route. It also bars Amtrak from contracting out any work (other than food services) that would result in layoffs for its own employees.

Ironically labor leaders supported the proposed reforms two years ago—in fact they reportedly helped to write them. At the time, Susan Molinari's Sub-committee on Railroads had proposed stronger reforms that would have simply reduced the six years of labor protection to six months and given Amtrak the right to contract out without giving the unions any say.

Rep. Jack Quinn of Buffalo played a key role in the 1995 negotiations. As the son of a locomotive engineer and a moderate Republican on the Railroad Subcommittee, he was in a good position to see both sides. He offered an amendment to make any changes in labor protection and contracting out subject to collective bargaining. Labor initially supported this, and labor representative Greg Lawlor was quoted in the August 3, 1995 Journal of Commerce as saying: "We think this is a good compromise on Amtrak. We hope it goes forward. We like it." But only hours after agreement was reached, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the Transportation Communications Union abruptly changed their position and demanded additional "firewall" language to prevent this agreement from affecting freight railroads. The Shuster bill contained language addressing this but the unions wanted it more specific. Quinn, Sherwood Boehlert (R., Utica) and other moderates who had supported labor, backed off. But nearly two months later, tacit agreement was apparent when the House approved the bill 406-4 with Quinn's collective bargaining provisions and without the freight "firewall". It never reached

*continued on page 4*



*Work continues on the Utica, N.Y. station.*

### Little for Intercity Rail in State Budget

After the Assembly proposed \$50 million for implementing New York-Buffalo high speed rail in this year's budget, the actual result was disappointing for rail supporters. Despite the State's first surplus in several years, there was no new money at all for high speed service to Buffalo. But the budget does include \$500,000 to study high speed service to Monticello (pop. 6600). It also includes \$20 million for the State's share of the Farley Building Project to move Amtrak's New York City terminal across 8th Avenue into the Post Office Building. And finally there is \$400,000 for the Adirondack Railway, thanks to separate efforts by Senator Ronald Stafford (R., Plattsburgh), and Assemblyman Marc Butler (R., Herkimer). Much of this may be spent on the presently unused northern end of the line for roadbed rehabilitation.

The Monticello study was promoted by Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver. Staff member Tom McGrath explained that it was part of an economic development effort for the once popular Catskill resort area. Funds for the study were included to "see what part rail might play," according to McGrath. With recent bankruptcies of two major resort hotels, there was interest in finding an alternative economic base for the region, and high speed trains could make commuting a possibility. The study would not necessarily be limited to high speed service according to McGrath. McGrath said Monticello was designated as the end point because it was assumed to be the center of the area.

*- Frank Barry*

### Travel Advisory

Amtrak has designated Orlando as the new Florida origin and destination for the Sunset Limited and has revised the train's schedule between Houston, Texas and Jacksonville, Fla. The eastern terminus for the Sunset Limited had been Sanford, Fla., which remains a station stop. In addition to Orlando, a stop in Winter Park, Fla., has been restored to the train's schedule.

## Next Stop: 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW

Amtrak's future is in one of its most precarious positions ever, and it's up to President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore to decide the future of passenger rail in America.

President Clinton, in late July, assured union interests he would not support the labor reforms contained in Amtrak's authorizing legislation. These reforms are modest and reasonable, and are reforms labor agreed to in 1995 anyway. The key provisions would remove from law the six-year severance package Amtrak workers are now entitled to, and end the ban on contracting out services. Amtrak workers would not be without protection; their protections would be subject to negotiation, as they are in most other industries.

The authorizing legislation must be passed, because without it Amtrak cannot receive the \$2.3 billion in capital funding approved in the budget, which the President signed into law in August. The \$2.3 billion would be sent to Amtrak in two payments, in 1998 and 1999. This funding is the key to Amtrak's future, and will give Amtrak the funding it needs to provide the level of passenger rail service Americans want.

It is hoped that The White House will focus more carefully on the disruptive consequences of an Amtrak shutdown, which is indeed a possibility -- as soon as next year -- if Amtrak does not receive the \$2.3 billion sitting untapped in the budget.

**What can ESPA members do to break this impasse and keep Amtrak in business?**

**Contact the White House. The sooner the better. The people to reach are President Bill Clinton, Vice President Albert Gore, and White House Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles. Letters can be mailed to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20500. One letter copied to all three is acceptable, and letters do not have to be long. They will be counted!**

--John Boffa, ESPA Washington Representative

## DOT Evaluating Adirondack Proposals

July 8 was the deadline for proposals to develop the Adirondack Railroad, and the Department of Transportation (DOT) hopes to announce its decision in October. The State owns the 119 mile right of way from Remsen to Lake Placid and has issued a permit to the Adirondack Scenic Railroad for its tourist trains out of Thendara.

The request for proposals resulted from 5 years of study and planning, beginning in 1991, to determine the best use for the corridor. Three public hearings and a Citizen Advisory Committee (on which ESPA member Andrew Cabal participated), convinced the state that the preferred option was rail use over the entire corridor with compatible recreational trail uses, including snowmobiling, encouraged.

The State has solicited developers to accomplish this, and is now weighing their proposals and gathering additional information. If no viable proposal emerges, the State may turn parts of the corridor over for development as trails. But John Harwood, of DOT's Contract Management Bureau, was cautiously hopeful: "There's a lot of public interest in this, and we want to see it work," he told ESPA. One of the proposals came from Adirondack Scenic, according to Douglas Ellison, its Executive Director. This group already plans to begin service from Utica to Thendara next year.

- Frank Barry

## Late Flash!

The Shuster Committee's revised ISTEA legislation does NOT allow states the flexibility to use its funds for Amtrak.

- Frank Barry

**ASK YOUR FRIENDS TO RIDE THE TRAIN**

## Super Steel to Rebuild Turbos

On August 7, Governor Pataki announced the Department of Transportation's decision to award Super Steel of Schenectady the contract to rebuild two turboliner trainsets for 125MPH service. This will allow the company to add 35 workers, increasing its total work force by one third. The first rebuilt train is due one year from now, but many details, including whether one of the trains to be rebuilt will be the turboliner already in service or one of those still in storage, have yet to be finalized.

The rebuilt trains will have new turbo power units, heating, air conditioning, seats and outlets for computers. The project will be financed by \$10 million from New York State and \$10 million from the federal government. Work is still underway to acquire funding for the remaining trainsets. The U.S. Senate's 1998 transportation budget includes \$5 million for New York's existing turboliner program plus \$4.5 million to develop new turbine electric technology. While these amounts are not earmarked for New York in the House appropriation, there is potential support there since the program will involve research by the University of Texas—and that state is well represented in the House leadership.

- Frank Barry

## Amtrak Revenue & Ridership Rise

Amtrak posted an increase in both overall ridership and revenue for the third quarter of Fiscal Year 1997 (April, May, June). Ridership rose 2.9 percent compared to the third quarter of FY96, from 5.04 to 5.19 million passengers. Passenger revenue for the third quarter improved 6.5 percent from \$232.6 million in FY96 to \$247.7 million for FY97. The improvement was attributed to a strong marketing campaign and better equipment utilization.

### Northeast Corridor Strategic Business Unit (SBU)

The Northeast Corridor (NEC), encompassing Amtrak service from New York State and New England to Newport News, Va., saw ridership increase 2.0 percent from 2.78 million passengers to 2.83 million during the third quarter. NEC revenues increased 5.9 percent from \$114.5 million to \$121.2 million. The *Metroliner* service is on-target to set an all-time high in ridership in FY97, with an increase of 3.2 percent. Ridership on the *Empire* and *Keystone* corridors, saw increases of 9.3 percent and 8.3 percent respectively over FY96 numbers.

### Amtrak Intercity SBU

The Amtrak Intercity business unit, experienced strong revenue increases of 8.7 percent in third quarter FY97. Even with the discontinuance of the *Desert Wind* and the *Pioneer* in May 1997, Amtrak Intercity ridership declined only .9 percent compared with third quarter 1996. The *Piedmont* had the highest ridership gain (60%). The *Piedmont* and several other short-and-medium distance routes are financed in part by the states through which they operate.

## Amtrak to Go Back to Las Vegas?

On May 10, 1997 Amtrak train service between Los Angeles and Las Vegas ended with the last run of the *Desert Wind*. The train was discontinued as part of Amtrak's latest attempt to cut costs, in reaction to shrinking federal support.

Amtrak West CEO Gil Mallery is now working to restore passenger rail service on the 340-mile segment between Los Angeles and Las Vegas using Spanish Talgo train sets. Amtrak West has set a goal to initiate the service in June 1998.

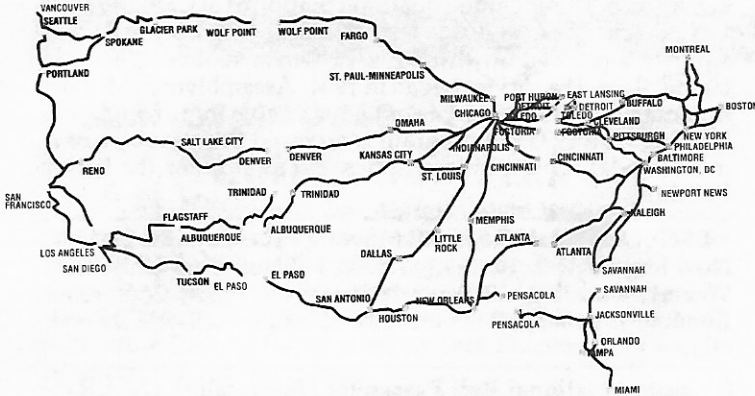
The seven and a half-hour *Desert Wind* travel time is to be reduced to five and a half-hours for the Talgo trains. The faster running time is expected to attract more passengers than the *Desert Wind* did. The Spanish Talgo trains have been popular on Pacific Northwest Amtrak services and are designed to operate at higher speeds on existing tracks.

--TRAC-Train Riders Association of California

• **New Albany-New York City Service** - Amtrak hopes to add additional ALB-NYC service with the Fall Schedule. Train #240 would depart ALB around 5:10 a.m., arrive NYC about 7:30 a.m. Monday-Friday. Train #255 would depart NYC 1:45 p.m. Monday -Friday. On Saturday, there will be a departure from NYC at 11:30 a.m. and from ALB at 4:15 p.m.

• **FOUR REGION TRAVEL PLAN**

Amtrak has changed its three region travel plan to four, as shown on the map below.



Explore one to four regions, starting at \$168 round-trip on the Special Amtrak Explore America Fare.

- \* \$168 Round-trip, any one region
- \* \$218 Round-trip, any two adjacent regions
- \* \$278 Round-trip, three or four regions
- \* \$68 Round-trip travel within Florida

Lower fares available for shorter trips. Prices are good for up to 30 consecutive days of travel and include stops at up to three locations en route. Customers age 62 and over receive a 15 percent rail discount, while up to two kids ages 2-15 can travel for half-fare when accompanied by an adult. Prices are good for travel through 12/18/97, with reservation made by 11/15/97.

**Experience NHL Action in Buffalo with Amtrak's Empire Service**

Amtrak's Buffalo Sabres package includes:

- Roundtrip transportation from Albany-Buffalo
- Transfers to Radisson Suites Hotel in Buffalo
- Overnight accommodations & full breakfast
- Pre-game festivities and game ticket

Take advantage of Amtrak's new package with the Buffalo Sabres. Package is available for selected weekend dates October-April. Catch the Sabres vs. Montreal Canadiens Oct. 17, Sabres vs. NY Islanders Nov. 22 or Sabres vs. NY Rangers Nov. 28. Call for details and a complete list of rates.

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

Albany, NY	Express Lansing Travel	(518) 438-4441	(800) 767-1840
Clarence, NY	Clarence Travel	(716) 759-7203	(800) 336-3890
Hamburg, NY	Scandia Tours & Travel	(716) 649-1445	
Ithaca, NY	Stone Travel/American Express	(607) 257-2515	(800) 631-6464
New York, NY	Bill Closs/R.G.C. Travel	(212) 677-9290	
Rochester, NY	Automobile Club of Rochester	(716) 461-5000	
Pittsford, NY	Town & Country Travel	(716) 381-2850	FAX(716) 381-1987
Tonawanda, NY	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 \$35 check, made payable to ESPA, and mail to: Robert Lenz, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031.

**Amtrak Ridership by Route  
Fiscal Year-to-Date - October through July**

<u>INTERCITY SBU</u>	<u>FY 1996</u>	<u>FY 1996</u>	<u>% CHANGE</u>
Silver Star	291,990	227,062	(22.2)
Silver Meteor	291,542	214,085	(26.6)
Silver Palm		151,304	100.0
Three Rivers	202,349	116,476	(42.4)
Pennsylvanian	167,529	137,271	(18.1)
Cardinal	64,990	64,515	(.7)
Capitol Limited	153,452	143,943	(6.2)
International	88,720	100,547	13.3
Lake Shore Limited	284,959	290,109	1.8
Crescent	172,651	203,221	17.7
Auto Train	192,621	197,210	2.4
Carolinian	193,832	194,039	.1
Piedmont	21,292	34,821	63.5
Empire Builder	248,477	266,846	7.4
California Zephyr	371,196	351,816	(5.2)
Southwest Chief	188,616	204,452	8.4
City of New Orleans	129,408	142,150	9.8
Texas Eagle	80,020	81,210	1.5
Sunset Limited	119,289	100,365	(15.9)
<u>Special Trains</u>	<u>32,514</u>	<u>33,823</u>	<u>4.0</u>

<b>TOTAL INTERCITY SBU</b>	<b>4,364,273</b>	<b>4,466,749</b>	<b>2.3</b>
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**NORTHEAST CORRIDOR SBU**

Metroliners	1,692,833	1,761,742	4.1
Ethan Allen Express		23,115	100.0
Vermonter	60,252	69,326	15.1
Northeast Direct	4,693,567	4,597,001	(2.1)
Clockers	1,381,306	1,229,266	(11.0)
Keystone	446,569	534,836	19.8
Empire	807,591	866,330	7.3
Adirondack	73,971	76,078	2.8
<u>Special Trains</u>	<u>27,417</u>	<u>30,559</u>	<u>11.5</u>

<b>TOTAL NORTHEAST CORRIDOR SBU</b>	<b>9,183,506</b>	<b>9,188,253</b>	<b>.1</b>
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**WESTERN SBU**

Coast Starlight	314,291	385,950	22.8
San Diegans	1,237,576	1,290,113	4.2
Pacific Northwest Corridor	239,599	263,999	10.2
Capitols	357,031	393,659	10.3
San Joaquins	447,744	545,880	21.9
<u>Special Trains</u>	<u>26,600</u>	<u>31,868</u>	<u>19.8</u>

<b>TOTAL WESTERN SBU</b>	<b>2,622,841</b>	<b>2,911,469</b>	<b>11.0</b>
<b>SYSTEM TOTAL</b>	<b>16,170,620</b>	<b>16,566,471</b>	<b>2.4</b>

**Traveling?**

Take along ESPA's Rail & Station Report Form. Through this ongoing 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

## Labor Impasse Threatens *continued from page 1*

the Senate floor however, so did not become law.

This year labor leaders are opposing the agreement Lawlor spoke so highly of in 1995. With Shuster's approval Quinn again tried to work out a compromise, this time proposing tighter firewall language as labor had requested in 1995. But this time labor representatives raised numerous objections to Quinn's proposals and argued against the reforms per se. So Quinn again backed away—as Michael Pietkiewicz, of Quinn's staff, put it, Quinn felt the union arguments "simply were not strong enough to justify changing our position on the bill."

The linkage with freight railroads is important to the unions because legislation passed in 1976 requires freight railroads laying off employees due to a merger to provide them at least as much protection as Amtrak provides—and unions had won six years of payment for laid off Amtrak employees when Amtrak was created in 1971. Before 1976 the minimum for freight railroads involved in mergers was 4 years of labor protection—a standard established by the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) in 1940. The 1976 law also applied to transit workers as a result of a link between transit and freight employees established in 1964.

The proposed Amtrak reforms would not automatically reduce protection for freight and transit employees, but if Amtrak negotiated a shorter protection period, unions feared the new law might allow freight railroads and transit operators to try to do the same—(although the ICC 4 year minimum would still apply.) Quinn's latest proposal would have clearly prevented any connection with freight railroads, but the unions have not accepted this and are instead working to defeat Shuster's labor reforms altogether. President Clinton has supported labor's position and blocked an attempt by Sen. William Roth (R., Del.) to include Amtrak's authorizing legislation in the overall budget reconciliation bill—which would have avoided its current uncertain passage through Congress. Clinton even put out word that he would veto any bill that includes Shuster's labor reforms.

On July 30 the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee barely approved HR-2247 with all but one of the committee's 31 Democrats opposing, while all the Republicans supported it. In short, a deadlock exists—Republicans are refusing to allow Amtrak to survive without Shuster's reforms while President Clinton is threatening to veto these reforms if they pass. HR-2247 now lacks modifications that labor could have achieved if it had supported Quinn's compromise.

Sam Nasca, who represents United Transportation Union (UTU) in New York, told ESPA that labor had opposed inclusion of the Shuster reforms in the Senate bill in 1995. He also said labor is even more concerned now because of the large number of employees likely to be laid off by the Conrail merger. But Nasca said he is hopeful something will be worked out to save Amtrak in the end. A highly placed Congressional staffer called such optimism naive. "The unions think we're going to bail Amtrak out no matter what," he said, "and that's simply not true."

Then, on September 2nd labor turned its attack toward Amtrak management. UTU's Chairman Frank Little called for an investigation into Amtrak management by the Office of Management and Budget, the General Accounting Office, the Inspector General, the Senate Commerce Committee, and the House Rail Subcommittee. UTU wants an investigation of management buyouts, of an increase in the number of highly paid managers, of the use of former Amtrak managers as consultants, and of pay raises to executives "while UTU workers and other rail labor workers have been working without a contract for more than two years," according to a UTU press release. In July, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE) set a strike deadline for September 5 for its workers on the Northeast Corridor. On August 21 President Clinton sided against the union on the strike, invoking the

Railway Labor Act to appoint a panel to investigate the dispute and make recommendations. This will postpone any strike until at least October 21.

The confrontation by labor leaders is an extremely high risk strategy because it gives ammunition to those in Congress who want to close Amtrak down without taking the blame themselves. Many people find it hard to understand why able bodied workers should be paid by taxpayers for six years for not working. Railroaders understandably don't feel they should be penalized for mergers and route closings. But few factory workers got such generous protection when their factories closed. Airline and bus employees have sacrificed a lot to keep their jobs—and they are the competition. The six year provision has been helpful in preserving Amtrak because it makes it extremely costly for the government to close the whole system down—but in the present climate, it is virtually impossible to advocate.

One thing is clear: if Amtrak is to survive, union leaders must make adequate funding to build a healthy national system a top priority—instead of arguing over what happens to their laid off members after the jobs are gone. Amtrak's passengers cannot save the system alone. Legitimate issues regarding labor and management can be taken up after survival is assured.

- Frank Barry

## Conditional Trust Fund for Amtrak

In response to the long campaign to allocate a portion of the federal gasoline tax for Amtrak, Congress and President Clinton included \$2.3 billion for Amtrak capital improvements in the "Tax Fairness Act," passed just before the August recess. But in a surprise last minute switch, they spared the gasoline tax from providing the revenue needed, despite the Senate's June 27th 77-21 vote to take 1/2¢ from the gas tax for an Amtrak trust fund.

It turned out that Republican Congressional leaders, including Newt Gingrich and Senator Trent Lott, had promised \$85 billion in tax cuts, but had identified only \$83 billion. So they asked Senator William Roth (R., Del.) and other Amtrak trust fund supporters to present it as a tax cut rather than a reallocation of tax revenue.

Turning government spending into a tax cut initially seemed an almost impossible task. But an ingenious staffer came up with the idea of giving tax credits to Amtrak for federal taxes paid in prior years by private railroads which lost money on the passenger trains Amtrak was created to absorb. This was accepted; the reasoning, as explained to ESPA, was that if Amtrak had been a private corporation it would have been liable for federal taxes, but also could have received tax credits for its losses.

Ironically, the \$2.3 billion figure is close to the \$2.023 billion collected from railroad passengers by the federal ticket tax in effect from 1942-1962—a period when the federal government spent virtually nothing on railroads. (This amount would be far larger if adjusted for inflation!) While the trust fund represents a huge victory for Amtrak, there is still one huge catch. Amtrak will get the money only if Congress and the President pass authorizing legislation. This was attempted in 1995 but failed in the Senate, and it was not attempted at all last year. An attempt to include it in the budget bill this year failed as a result of still unresolved labor disputes. (See article elsewhere in this issue).

- Frank Barry

## Could High Speed Trains Reach Monticello?

Monticello was at the end of a circuitous New York Ontario & Western Railroad branch until the entire NYO&W was abandoned in 1957. However at that time passenger trains had not served Monticello for at least 10 years. The NYO&W found it easier to get passengers to Monticello by taxi from Fallsburgh, on its mainline 8 miles to the north. In 1951 its train took 3 hours, 9 minutes to cover 109 miles from Weehawken to Fallsburgh.

*continued on page 5*

## Rail Project Status Report

Late in 1993 Governor Cuomo and legislative leaders agreed on a four year spending plan for a special "petroleum business tax" generated largely by highway users. The program included approximately \$30 million for rail projects, roughly one third of which involved intercity rail passenger service. About half of the projects were promoted by ESPA. Assemblyman Michael Bragman, who then chaired the Transportation Committee, played a leading role in including rail in this program.

A requirement for passenger projects was a dollar for dollar match by Amtrak or the federal government. Consequently the intercity passenger program was expected to reach \$21.5 million. Now that the four years are up, what are the results? The projects, and their current status, are listed here:

1. *Doubletracking, Rensselaer - Schenectady* - \$3.25 million. This project, a major ESPA goal, has not advanced because no federal match has been found. However an offer by the Capitol District Transportation Authority (CDTA) in connection with the Rensselaer station project may resolve this (see below). And the State Dept. of Transportation (DOT) has managed to help upgrade the existing siding east of Schenectady.

2. *Strategic improvements to attain 125MPH* - \$2.5 million. These funds were used to prepare for the turboliner demonstration program in which Amtrak's rebuilt turboliner exceeded 125MPH in the 1995 tests between Albany and Stuyvesant, 17 miles south. State funds were used to resurface track, improve signals and realign one curve; Amtrak and the federal government provided \$5 million to rehabilitate the train.

3. *Hudson Line Grade Crossing Improvement* - \$250,000. This is being used to move a dangerous private crossing at Castleton owned by the Hamilton paper company. In February 1995, train 248, traveling at 99MPH, hit a truck there, throwing 1500 lb rolls of paper into the air. No one was injured only because the train hit the middle of the trailer rather than the truck cab. The present crossing does not allow a truck to stop without blocking parallel highway 9J which is right next to the track.

4. *Study of expansion of high speed service to Buffalo* - \$500,000. Proposed by Assemblyman Michael Bragman, this amount has not been spent.

5. *Rensselaer Station Improvements* - \$1 million. Originally intended simply to build high level platforms and possibly improve track layout this has become a major intermodal economic development project under the imaginative stewardship of CDTA. As presently conceived, it will cost up to \$35 million and will radically change the face of Rensselaer, providing an upbeat gateway to the Capital District. Funding of \$18 million has already been identified, according to CDTA director Jack Reilly, including flexible funds from ISTEA, and a special \$7.5 million grant promoted by Senator Al D'Amato and others. Ground breaking took place on May 20, and design work is presently underway. Construction could start next year.

CDTA has offered to incorporate the double tracking west of Albany into the Rensselaer improvements. Reilly says track realignment would be a big part of the Rensselaer project, and combining this with the doubletracking could reduce costs for both by eliminating separate bidding processes, increasing economies of scale and streamlining management. And since the Rensselaer project already has substantial federal funding, this idea would incidentally overcome the main obstacle to doubletracking—the lack of a federal match.

6. *Expansion of Depew Station and platform canopy* - \$150,000. Amtrak has matched this amount with \$150,000, and work should start in September. The waiting room wall will be moved 30 feet west, greatly expanding the passenger area. A platform canopy will be built from the station to the track and extended west to the existing canopy at the mail handling facility.

*continued on page 6*

## Newsbriefs

**Federal Grant for High Speed Crossing Protection.** New York's Department of Transportation has been awarded \$280,700 to test a new system for protecting a private crossing from high speed trains. The system will involve barriers that are automatically locked and can be opened only by calling the dispatcher.

**GEC ALSTHOM,** which has just acquired the Hornell railway manufacturing business in New York, recently won an order for six high-speed electric locomotives from the Maryland Mass Transit Administration (MTA). The Company is supplying "American Flyer" high-speed trainsets to run on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor and is a member of the FOX consortium to develop a high-speed rail project in the state of Florida.

**Bombardier to Expand Plan.** As a result of its contracts to build high speed trains for Amtrak, and 680 subway cars for New York City, Bombardier will double the size of its plant in Plattsburgh. New plant construction will be completed early next year. Bombardier will also build a test track on the former Plattsburgh air base capable of testing trains at 40MPH. All this will result in a five fold increase in its work force, to 600 people. (from the Albany Times Union).

**New train to Port Jervis.** Metro-North and New Jersey Transit reportedly plan to add a new express train to Port Jervis, which will run non-stop as far as Suffern, beginning with the Fall timetable change.

**New Crossings for Fishermen?** After closing many crossings to keep people off its tracks, Metro-North and Governor Pataki have promised to work with Hudson Valley communities to provide safe public access to the river. The agreement was announced August 7, when John Cronin of the Hudson Riverkeeper Fund planned to openly cross the tracks illegally to get arrested in order to draw attention to the issue. But instead of police, lawyers for Pataki and Metro-North showed up to announce the new policy. (From New York Times)

**Adirondack featured on television.** PBS has produced an hour long television documentary of the *Adirondack* train and the region it serves, including notable personalities along the route. The program highlights the rich history and scenery of the Hudson Valley and Lake Champlain regions, with many photographs from a helicopter and lineside locations. Conductors Rick Palmer and Craig Allyn are featured, along with some of their regular passengers. It is an upbeat program, which gives the *Adirondack* the recognition it deserves. Amtrak is underwriting showings on various PBS stations, and Adirondack area tourist agencies have reported many telephone calls from outsiders wanting to visit the region by train.

**Support Grows for Funding.** Amtrak welcomed the backing of U.S. Senator John H. Chafee (R-R.I.) in what may be the most crucial Congressional debate in Amtrak's 26-year history. Senator Chafee, a long-time advocate for Amtrak, announced his support for passage of the Amtrak authorized bill.

### Monticello *continued from page 4*

Today, the closest trains (Metro-North) stop at Middletown, 24 miles away. This track is in excellent condition, suitable for 79MPH in places. The fastest train takes 1 hour, 36 minutes for the 72 miles from Hoboken with 6 intermediate stops. The fastest Shortline buses cover the last 24 miles from Middletown to Monticello in 30-35 minutes. Running the trains non-stop might shave the combined running time to 2 hours. But express buses already provide a one seat ride from Port Authority—in Manhattan—to Monticello in 1 hour, 50 minutes.

Although a new railroad might theoretically be built between Middletown and Monticello, Shawangunk Mountain and the deep valley at Wurtsboro would pose formidable barriers. Even if its promoters succeed in bringing gambling to the Catskills, it would be hard for to justify the cost for such a venture. But as Orrin Getz, ESPA's Rockland County Coordinator says, "I'm glad to see it. The area west of the Hudson gets a lot less attention than communities on the east side. Maybe they'll at least find a way to improve the service we have." *Frank Barry*

## Rail Projects *continued from page 5*

7. **New Syracuse Intermodal Center** - \$1.5 million. Construction has already begun at the new site, near the Syracuse regional market, sports stadium, Carousel Mall and route I-81, and completion is projected for next year. Total cost is estimated at \$18 million. The new building will serve intercity and regional buses arriving in Syracuse, allowing for intermodal connections not practical at the present East Syracuse station. Most of the space will be devoted to buses, which are far more numerous in Syracuse than trains, but the Amtrak section will be 5 feet wider than initially planned in response to requests from ESPA and Amtrak. The high level platform station will also serve the New York Susquehanna & Western (NYS&W) Ontrack RDC shuttle train to downtown and Syracuse University (see below).

8. **Restore and Reopen the Fort Edward Station** - \$100,000. The \$100,000 has been more than matched by a \$350,000 historic renovation grant from federal ISTEA enhancement funds. After a long delay in acquiring the station, design work is now underway and construction is likely next year. This project has generated major support and interest from the community. An early promoter was Amtrak conductor (and ESPA member) Craig Allyn who told ESPA "I don't like leaving my passengers standing in the rain."

9. **Construction of a new Amtrak station in Lyons** - \$250,000. Efforts to get Amtrak to stop in Lyons have been underway for at least 7 years. Amtrak and Conrail granted approval in 1991, but the following year Conrail imposed a new obstacle, requiring that the Corning secondary switch be moved so passengers would not have to cross this track to get to the new station. Cost was estimated at \$1 million, an amount considered prohibitive. Attempts by the town to get Conrail approval for a cheaper solution, such as crossing lights and gates, have been unsuccessful.

10. **Reopen the Dunkirk station for Amtrak service** - \$62,500. As in Lyons, no construction has been possible because Dunkirk has been unable to meet escalating Conrail requirements. Efforts to obtain an Amtrak stop in Dunkirk have been underway since at least 1989, and approval was finally granted by both Amtrak and Conrail after a 1995 rally generated 400 letters of support. Amtrak's 1996 summer timetable even showed planned stopping times for the Lake Shore Limited.

But in May, 1996 Conrail imposed new requirements, including \$100,000 to relocate a signal which it had moved too close to the station after Conrail gave permission for Amtrak to stop there. Mayor Margaret Wuerstle appealed to the New York Department of State for help, and last March Conrail scheduled a meeting to work out problems. But Conrail canceled the meeting on two days notice due to its impending merger with CSX, and no progress has been possible since. ESPA is requesting cooperation from CSX for both the Lyons and Dunkirk stops.

11. **Study moving downtown Buffalo station to Main St.** - \$50,000. This funding was arranged by Assemblyman Sam Hoyt (D., Buffalo) to study the feasibility of relocating the Exchange St. station two blocks west to the lower level of Buffalo's Auditorium. The study has been completed and recommends two options, costing \$6-7 million, to provide an underground station with convenient access to Main St. and Buffalo's light rail system. Like the Rensselaer project, this has potential to become a key part of an extensive redevelopment effort. The auditorium is now unused,

but plans are being developed for its restoration as well as for development along the nearby lakefront.

12. **Delaware & Hudson improvements** - \$3 million. Intended for freight and passenger improvements, some of this money will be used to restore a passing siding at Port Henry. Many passing sidings were removed after the Canadian Pacific acquired the D&H in 1991, and this has contributed to poor Adirondack on-time performance. Construction has not yet begun.

13. **Rehabilitate Syracuse to Jamesville line** - \$3.15 million. Although not intercity service, this item is worth mentioning because it funded inauguration of NYS&W's On Track shuttle in Syracuse. This included boarding platforms at Carousel Mall and Syracuse University as well as a new two story station at Armory Square, a downtown area where redevelopment is taking place. The service began in 1994. Assemblyman Michael Bragman (D., Syracuse), played a major role in providing the funding. The 1993 rail program is replaced this year by a new multi-modal fund which includes \$20 million for the Farley Building.

- Frank Barry

• **ESPA Downstate Regional Meeting** - Tuesday, Oct. 21, 1997; Nov. 18, 1997; Dec. 16, 1997 - 7:00 PM at New York University, Waverly Building, 32 Waverly Place, 5th Floor, Conference Room 554, go left off the elevator to end of hall. All are welcome.

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

## ESPA Membership

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. Keep informed with The ESPA Express. Keep the pressure on for safe, efficient, environmentally sound transportation. Dues and contributions support ESPA's publications and advocacy on the passengers' behalf.

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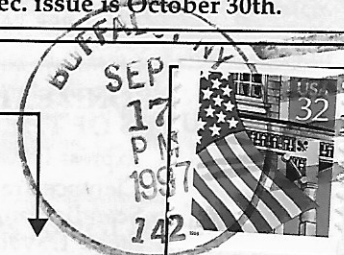
Please make checks and money orders payable to: ESPA, c/o John Ross, 4 Maplewood Court, Greenwich, NY 12834.

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel. 716-759-2315, Fax: 716-759-2791, e-mail: RWLenz@aol.com. **Deadline for material for the Nov.-Dec. issue is October 30th.**

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