

# THE ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

HTTP://www.trainweb.org/espa



## Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

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Photo: Bob Lenz

### Amtrak's State Fair stop proves popular

This year, Amtrak and the New York State Fair teamed up to take riders directly to the Fair. Amtrak offered adults 20% off while kids under 10 rode free, and the Fair offered half-price admission. Todd Garofano, Empire Corridor Marketing Manager, said "approximately 1,000 passengers took advantage of the special offer, with the vast majority of the passengers from the Rochester station". The Fair provided a pleasant, freshly painted shelter and benches to wait in for the return trip at gate #11.

Dave Skoney, ESPA WNY Coordinator and your Editor enjoyed the hassle free trip from Buffalo and a day at the fair. We highly recommend members take advantage of this special offer when offered next year.

### Revenue Service with Refurbished Turboliner Expected Soon

The first refurbished RTG III Turboliner was delivered by Supersteel in early August to Amtrak at Rensselaer for testing. This comes nearly two years after the same set was initially exhibited at the New York State Fair in 2000. NYSDOT and Supersteel officials are now confident that the train is ready for final acceptance testing, with the introduction of revenue service expected during the Fall.

To date, successful test runs have been made to New York's Penn Station to check clearances and insure third rail system compatibility. Other runs over the next several weeks will focus on acceleration and braking tests, as well as passenger amenities. While the trains are designed for and will be capable of speeds of up to 125 mph, upon entering revenue service the Turboliners will be limited to the current top speed of 110 mph along the Empire Corridor.

Reportedly, the second trainset is expected to be ready for service by the end of this year, with the remaining four sets now at Supersteel becoming available over the next 18 months. Set seven, which is currently in service, will be sent to Supersteel soon after the introduction of the first new train and will return to service at the end of the project.

*Bruce Becker*

### Rensselaer Station Opening Soon

With final occupancy lease negotiations now complete between Amtrak and the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), the building's owner, the opening of the new Rensselaer Rail Station will likely occur by the end of September. Work on the building, overhead walkway and high level boarding platforms has been finished. Amenities in the new station will include a café, newsstand, rental car agency, business center and post office.

### Saratoga Station Rehabilitation has begun

Rehabilitation of the Saratoga Springs Amtrak station by CDTA has begun, with actual construction slated to kick off in early September. The fully funded \$5.9 million project will transform the former D&H station built in 1956, into a modern facility, with a greatly enlarged seating area and potential retail space. Track improvements will include a dedicated boarding siding off of the CP/D&H main and space for trains to lay-over between trips.

During the roughly 18-month construction period, Amtrak services will be relocated to a temporary trailer facility.



Photo: C.D.T.A.

*Bruce Becker*

### Amtrak funding moves slowly

When Congress went home for its August recess it left Amtrak enough money to operate through September but did not resolve Amtrak's status for the coming year. A threatened shutdown early in July was averted temporarily by a \$100 million loan, approved by the Bush Administration only days before Amtrak President David Gunn said the corporation would have to close down for lack of funds. Gunn said later that he knew Amtrak's financial situation was bad before he took the job, but had no idea how bad it was. "What I didn't appreciate was the immediacy of the cash crunch," he told the Toronto Globe and Mail on August 21. He said he found Amtrak within days of not being able to meet its payroll, which led him to threaten to cease all operations.

Late in July, Congress passed a supplemental appropriation which included \$205 million to cover Amtrak's estimated shortfall through the end of the fiscal year on September 30th.

## Southern Tier Study Detailed

ESPA has received a copy of the Southern Tier study, which concluded that no rail service from Binghamton to New York is practical until the Lackawanna cutoff is restored and service is re-established to Scranton. The study reviewed six scenarios, including daily and weekend only service on both the Erie (via Port Jervis) and Lackawanna (via Scranton) routes. It examined though service as well as limited service just to connect with commuter trains in Port Jervis or Scranton.

Although service via Port Jervis could be initiated almost immediately, it would be very slow, according to the report. The track on this route is almost all jointed rail, has numerous sharp curves as it follows the upper Delaware River, and is 20 miles longer than the Lackawanna Route. The Lackawanna line to Scranton has mostly welded rail and fewer curves. But rail service could not start until New Jersey and Pennsylvania restore service to Scranton, which the report says is at least five years away.

Statistics for each route follow, assuming one daily round trip. These figures assume Port Jervis startup in 2002, Scranton route startup in 2007. Capital costs would total \$35 million via Port Jervis, but only \$6.5 would be needed for startup (initial demonstration). More extensive work would be finished by 2007. The Scranton route requires minimal upgrades, which could be completed before 2007 startup. Operating figures are given for 2012 when either route would be well established.

	Capital Cost	Running Time to	Ridership startup 2012 Hoboken	Operating startup 2012 (millions)	Deficit 2012
Port Jervis					
Initial demo.	\$6.5 mil.	5:25*	24,607*	\$6.7*	
		5:50**	14,777**	\$4.0**	
Improvements completed	\$28.5 mil.	4:55*	59,662*	\$5.4*	
		5:20**	43,842**	\$3.3**	
Scranton	\$9.0 mil.	4:05*	49,741*	\$5.0*	\$3.2*
		4:30**	34,340**	\$1.5**	.9**

\*through service

\*\*connecting service

The best running times listed are comparable to the fastest times achieved before the service ended in 1970 (4:50 Erie, 4:15 Lackawanna), when even the fastest trains made more stops. However Coach America buses presently make the trip in 3:50 - 4 hours and they go to Midtown Manhattan rather than Hoboken. Dr. Alex Metcalf, of Transportation Economics and Management Systems, which made the ridership projections, said trip times could have been significantly shorter if tilt body trains had been considered. He pointed out that the Talgo tilt-body equipment now being considered for Midwestern high speed trains costs no more than conventional equipment.

The through Lackawanna route train would stop at Scranton, Analomink, Pa., (near Stroudsburg) and Morristown, NJ. The Erie train would stop in Hancock, Port Jervis and Suffern. The report provides clear and well-researched confirmation of ESPA's position that the Scranton route is the only one viable--provided New Jersey and Pennsylvania restore service to Scranton.

Extending the service 77 miles to Corning (running time 1:20) would cost \$8 million for capital improvements, but would not be justified because the operating deficit would be greater than if the train terminated in Binghamton, according to the report. However in ESPA's view the Corning Extension analysis has two major flaws. First, it did not include any intermediate stops, meaning the train would roll right through Elmira without stopping. Corning has 11,000 inhabitants,

Elmira, 77,000. This is a little like starting a train in Niagara Falls and running it through Buffalo without stopping. The analysis assumed that Elmira would either backtrack 20 miles to the west to board the eastbound train in Corning or drive 50 miles east to board in Binghamton.

ESPA interviewed 5 key people involved in the study in DOT, Clough Harbour and Transportation Economics, and all agreed the ridership would be higher if the train stopped in Elmira. But most also noted that the scope of the study was expanded only to Corning, not to Elmira. ESPA requested that the scope be extended through Senator Randy Kuhl. It did not occur to us or Senator Kuhl that we needed to specify inclusion of Elmira as well as the much smaller end point as we thought that would be obvious. But several of those interviewed noted that the Corning Extension was an add-on with no additional funds so there was a desire to keep it as simple as possible.

The report's economic analysis indicated that revenues from the Corning Extension would only cover about half the extra operating cost. However, in our view it would not seem unreasonable that ridership projections might double if Elmira were included as a stop, since the population to be served directly would increase 7 fold.

Surprisingly the analysis also indicated that 50% more people from Corning would take the train if it went through Port Jervis than if it took the much shorter route through Scranton. None of those interviewed could provide a satisfactory explanation for this counterintuitive finding, which made the modeling process seem somewhat questionable.

So if and when trains do reach Scranton, and Binghamton service becomes a possibility, ESPA will push for a more thorough examination of service to Corning, Elmira and even Owego, which historically was the station for Ithaca. In the meantime ESPA hopes New York State will join forces with New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Six senators pushing this project would have a better chance of getting funding than four.

Frank Barry

## Amtrak Woes Delay Station

The plan to build a new \$6 million train station in Rochester won't move forward until the financial future of Amtrak is more certain, the head of the Genesee Transportation Council said. "We're just waiting for Amtrak's situation to stabilize," said Steve Gleason, the council's executive director. He said the agency still supports building the new station to replace the aging one on Central Avenue. However, officials have delayed spending \$2 million on design and environmental work.

The Rochester plan includes an 8,000-square-foot Amtrak station, high-level platforms, a pedestrian bridge to the far tracks, a secured parking lot and a park.

Rick Armon (Rochester Democrat and Chronicle)

## Survey supports Passenger Rail

With similar results to ESPA's 1998 survey, Wisconsin's Association of Railroad Passenger statewide study shows wide support for passenger rail. To the question, "Do you support a nationwide system of passenger trains with increased routes, frequencies, and shorter travel time?" 83% answered "yes".

One fact that both supporters and detractors of passenger rail agree on is that the nation's passenger rail system has never been adequately funded. Travelers return from Europe agog at the quality of passenger rail there and wonder why our intercity rail is so inadequate. All sorts of reasons can be offered, but in fact there's no mystery: the difference between European and American passenger rail is simply the difference between many hundreds of billions of dollars of investment over fifty years vs. an annual average of \$725 million over 32 years. WisARP

## CSX Eases Heat Speed Restriction

On August 18th CSX modified heat related speed restrictions that had delayed Empire Service trains from 45 minutes to 4 hours during the heat spell in early August. The modified restrictions require Amtrak trains to run 20MPH slower than their normal speed limit when temperatures exceed 90 degrees for the second day in a row. However no train will be required to run more slowly than 40MPH. For trains running at the normal 79MPH limit, this will increase running time by roughly 1/3. The impact is less at higher speeds, greater at lower speeds.

CSX had imposed a much harsher speed restriction immediately after the July 29th derailment of the *Capitol Limited* near Washington, DC. This had been the second major Amtrak "heat kink" derailment on CSX tracks in just four months, and CSX said the restrictions would continue until the company could learn more about the cause of these incidents.

The initial restrictions required all passenger trains to slow to 40-45MPH, the same speed as CSX merchandise freights, regardless of their scheduled speed. This almost tripled running time on the 110MPH track south of Albany, causing delays of 30 minutes or more. This restriction was even harsher than for CSX's own intermodal trains, which were required to slow only to 50-55mph. The impact on service west of Albany was far worse; trains to Niagara Falls arrived from 1-1/2 to 4 hours late.

Both derailments, the first of which killed 4 people in Florida, occurred where trackwork had been done recently. As the investigation proceeded, it became apparent that the combination of trackwork and heat, rather than heat alone, was responsible, despite the indiscriminate scope of CSX's initial restriction. According to CSX, the sweeping restriction was necessary to give it time to better understand the problem.

Additional information came to light on August 22 when the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued an investigation update on the derailment of Amtrak's *Capitol Limited*. According to the update, the trackwork started on July 22nd, but "about half way through the work the tamping machine broke and the work was temporarily finished using a pneumatic hand tamper. A 25mph slow order was then placed on the track until the work (could be finished with) the mechanized tamper when it was repaired. The track work remained incomplete at the time of the accident due to delays from weather and other work. Several days after the start of the track maintenance, a track supervisor, who thought the repair work had been completed, lifted the slow order, and the maximum allowable speed of 60 mph was in effect for the accident train."

CSX has agreed to let Amtrak determine when the heat restrictions take effect on the 45 miles between Stuyvesant (North of Hudson) and Hoffmans (West of Schenectady) where top speeds reach 110MPH. These tracks are primarily used for passenger service and are maintained by Amtrak, even though CSX dispatches all movements. Amtrak does not impose heat restrictions until the temperature reaches 95°, which significantly reduces the number of days they will take effect. In most instances the delay between New York and Albany probably won't exceed 15 minutes, because it only applies to the CSX owned track north of Poughkeepsie. Since the restrictions only take effect between 1-9 pm they will not affect most passengers attempting to meet daytime business appointments. However they will still cause 1-2 hour afternoon and evening delays west of Albany.

As of press time it remains unclear how long the restrictions will last. If they continue indefinitely, they will increase Amtrak's cost of operation and weaken the appeal of train travel. However heat speed restrictions are not unique to CSX. "Most all the other big railroads have them," Amtrak spokesman

Cliff Black told ESPA. An Amtrak conductor from the west coast reports that they vary according to the route and time of year. BNSF limits passenger trains to 70MPH if the temperature gets up to 115 degrees on its Needles and Cajon subdivisions, and 50MPH when it hits 120°. Passenger trains must slow to 65mph if it falls below zero in Southern California. According to Bill Becker, a retired track engineer, "New York Central, Penn Central and Conrail also limited speeds on the Empire Corridor during heat waves after it installed welded rail". Another former Conrail track supervisor said the railroad sent out track inspectors when it got hot and placed speed restrictions on sections of track that appeared vulnerable

In conclusion it seems that welded rail, which is much smoother than jointed rail and requires much less maintenance, is nevertheless a mixed blessing for passengers. *Frank Barry*

## Buffalo Bills Express

The Amtrak charter train leaves Albany at 6:00am and makes pick-up stops in Schenectady, Syracuse, Utica and Rochester before arriving at the Buffalo-Depew station. From there, Bills Express passengers board luxury motor coach buses, which take them to Ralph Wilson Stadium. Price includes a ticket to the game and round-trip transportation. For more information and to purchase your tickets, call 1-877-BB-TICKETS and request extension 6. Games served include Sept. 8 (New York Jets), Oct. 6 (Oakland Raiders) and Nov. 3 (New England Patriots). Train and Ticket Prices: Albany/Schenectady \$104, Utica/Syracuse \$93, Rochester \$87. Train Only Prices: Albany/Schenectady \$61, Utica/Syracuse \$50, Rochester \$44.

## There's Always a Reason to Ride Amtrak

<b>Buffalo</b>	<a href="http://www.buffalocvb.org">www.buffalocvb.org</a>	
	Curtain Up	Sept. 20
	42nd Street - Shea's	Oct. 15 - 20
<b>Rochester</b>	<a href="http://www.visitrochester.com">www.visitrochester.com</a>	
	Rochester River Romance	Oct. 12 & 13
	High Falls Film Festival	Oct. 30 - Nov 2
	Strong Museum	On-going Exhibits
<b>Syracuse</b>	<a href="http://www.visitSyracuse.org">www.visitSyracuse.org</a>	
	Carousel Center - two blocks from station	
	Octoberfest	Sept. 20 - 22
	Fall Festival	Sept. 28 & 29
	SU Football vs. Pittsburgh	Oct. 5
<b>Utica</b>	<a href="http://www.oneidacountycvb.com">www.oneidacountycvb.com</a>	
	Adirondack Scenic RR - <a href="http://www.adirondackrr.com">www.adirondackrr.com</a>	
	F.X. Matt Brewing Co. Tours	Daily
	Children's Museum	Daily x Mon

## 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.

- Introductory membership (\$10.00 for one year)
- Renewal membership (\$20.00 per year)
- Renewal - Student or Senior Citizen (\$12.50 per year)
- Family membership (\$25.00)     Corporate membership (\$100.00)
- Sustaining membership (\$50.00)     Lifetime membership (\$300.00)
- Patron membership (\$75.00)

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

## How *Acela* Woes came about

On September 1st the Boston Globe carried a well researched front page article on the background of the *Acela* problems which have made headlines in recent weeks. The article was developed from interviews with present and former Amtrak officials, including Tim Gillespie, who has represented ESPA in Washington this Spring. Globe reporters also interviewed federal officials, legislators and other rail experts--more than a dozen all told.

The Globe article concluded that *Acela*'s problems resulted from unfortunate decisions made under intense pressure from lawmakers in Congress and the Clinton Administration. The most serious error, according to several of those interviewed, was Amtrak's decision to order 20 trainsets unlike anything that had ever been built without extensively testing a sample first. "The way you would prefer to do a project like this is to have a prototype, run the wheels off it for a year or so, and get it where you want it," Amtrak President David Gunn told the Globe. "But poor Amtrak has been so underfunded and in such dire straits it didn't have the luxury of taking its time."

Gillespie said Amtrak's supporters and enemies in Washington both "put tremendous pressure on Amtrak to get *Acela* on line."

Amtrak "needed to make a big splash," James Coston, of the Amtrak Reform Council (ARC), told the Globe. "They pegged their ability to become self-sufficient on the *Acela*." The Amtrak Reform Act of 1997, which mandated self-sufficiency by 2002, only increased this pressure.

The choice of Bombardier and Alstom to build the train was based on economics, not technology. Beginning in 1993, Amtrak invited several manufacturers of European high speed trains to send a trainset to the U.S. for preliminary testing on the Northeast Corridor. Spanish, German and Swedish "off-the-shelf" trains were tested, but Amtrak ordered a modified French TGV train that was never tested in the U.S. Bombardier, based in Canada, had built the latest Superliner cars and many mass transit heavy rail cars; Alstom built the TGV trains. Their price was \$50 million below that of Siemens, of Germany, the only other bidder in the end. And perhaps most important, the Canadian Export Development Corporation came up with a low interest loan in order to promote Canadian products. It was an offer Amtrak, strapped for cash, could not refuse.

The decision to buy a train based on the French TGV appeared reasonable on the surface. The TGV was the fastest train in the world. Its reliability and safety were unsurpassed. But from the beginning it was clear that the *Acela* would not be an off-the-shelf TGV.

The European railroads use a signal and control system designed to prevent collisions. There have been only a couple of significant TGV accidents since these trains began running in 1981 and no one has died. But the U.S. has based its strategy more on preventing fatalities when accidents occur than preventing the accidents themselves. Only in a few places in this country do locomotives utilize control systems that will stop a train if the engineer fails to obey a signal. Instead, U.S. locomotives and cars are built to withstand the forces of a collision or derailment, and this explains why relatively few people die in U.S. train accidents that do occur. But this design standard requires far heavier cars and locomotives than those used in Europe. And heavy locomotives and cars are not compatible with high speeds.

Amtrak lobbied the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), which sets construction standards, to ease the crashworthiness requirements for the *Acela* because it would run only on Northeast Corridor tracks. This is one of the places where fail-safe signals are in place and virtually all grade crossings have been eliminated. Amtrak actually placed its order before the FRA decided the construction standards for America's first high

speed train. In fact, FRA's decision did not come until two years later, after the work had begun.

In the end, the FRA did not lower its "compression" requirement (to withstand a collision) for the *Acela*. Consequently its locomotives had to weigh nearly twice as much as those used in Europe and Japan--a requirement that "would put unheard of pressure on its wheels and suspension," according to the Globe.

Tom Till, ARC's Executive Director, told the Globe that this was like "taking a Ferrari chassis and putting an M-1 tank on it." So the problems with wheels and suspension that have plagued *Acela* from the beginning, should hardly come as a surprise, according to the Globe. And it is not clear that any of the trains which were tested here could have met the FRA requirements without similar problems. So if the difficulties with *Acela* wheels and "yaw dampers" (which prevent side to side motion or "hunting" by the wheels) are resolved, it will be a first. Bombardier insists they will be.

FRA based its decision on differences between European and American operating practices. The TGV reaches its fastest speeds on almost straight track, free from grade crossings, on which there are no conflicts with freight or local trains. All trains run at the same speed, and cab signal controls prevent any collision due to engineer error.

However, while this difference is valid, the TGV's success is due largely to its ability to operate also on conventional tracks beyond the very high-speed sections. It shares these conventional tracks with freights and slower passenger trains--a situation much like that of the Northeast Corridor. And on these sections it runs more slowly, at speeds comparable to those of the Northeast Corridor.

Amtrak management must share the blame for the train's difficulties, according to allegations in a \$200 million lawsuit filed by Bombardier, which is responsible for maintaining the trains as well as building them on schedule. The lawsuit alleges that Amtrak management insisted on technologies prone to failure and had serious difficulties making decisions. They "micro-managed the interior design to the point of absurdity, taking months to choose drapes, lighting and seat coverings."

Most importantly, a year after production began, Amtrak decided to widen the trains by four inches. This unfortunately reduced the ability of the cars to tilt, or lean into curves without the risk of contacting a train on the adjoining track. This meant they could not go around curves as fast as planned, which is one reason they cannot make the promised 3 hour New York to Boston running time.

Because there was no prototype to test, the trains are being modified as problems occur, but this is not being done uniformly. In fact different modifications have been made on each train, meaning that no two trains are alike. Over 200 modifications have been identified as needed so far, and as a result, full utilization is years away, according to the Globe. Although these changes are not safety related, the conditions discovered have affected performance; in fact during July one *Acela* train broke down every day on the average. For this reason, Amtrak will take its time restoring them to full service.

Gunn concluded that although he will never order another *Acela* high speed train, he is glad to have it. "When it runs, people like it. It's comfortable. It's a quick trip. And it's the only strongly profitable service on the railroad." *Frank Barry*

### TRAVEL ADVISORY

VIA Rail Canada will reroute its overnight Toronto-Montreal night train, the *Enterprise*, through Ottawa on October 27.

New Amtrak Thruway bus service connects *Downeaster* trains in Portland to Bangor with three daily trips, taking about two hours.

Amtrak's Fare code V529 offers a 20% discount off normal rates between all stations in New York State through Dec. 13, 2002.

## Central New York Rail Corridor

The New York State Senate and the New York Susquehanna and Western Railroad have formed a partnership to establish and enhance quality passenger and freight rail service in Central New York.

The 2002-03 state budget included \$3 million towards an eventual \$14.65 million project to establish passenger service between Binghamton and Syracuse, and Binghamton and Utica. The program also stresses the importance of freight service and the benefits to industries now on the lines, and potential new businesses and jobs that enhanced rail service could bring. The program is an extraordinary example of the public and private sector coming together to serve the public good.

Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno calls it "another example of the Senates' continuing efforts to improve the upstate economy". Senator Thomas Libous (R-C Binghamton) shares the same enthusiastic view saying, "we're very excited to establish passenger rail service that connects Binghamton to the Amtrak system". The two rail lines which are being upgraded begin in Binghamton and diverge at Chenango Forks with one line continuing on to Syracuse and the other going to Utica.

These two lines represent the northernmost extension of the once Lackawanna Railroad. Passengers and freight were funneled through Binghamton to connect with service to New York City. This was the "Route of Scenic Delight" and the famed route of legendary trains such as the *Lackawanna Limited* and the later day *Phoebe Snow*, which traveled through Pennsylvania and across New Jersey on the high speed "cut-off" route.

Today, however, we are witness to a renewed interest in these upstate lines as a (for now) stand alone operation for the benefit of New York interests. Towns served by the Syracuse line will include Cortland, Homer, Tully and Jamesville; Utica line communities will include Greene, Norwich, Sherburne, Waterville and New Hartford.

Senate and Assembly members are enthusiastic about the prospect of working with the New York Susquehanna and Western and its parent company, Delaware Otsego Corporation and its dynamic leader, Walter Rich. Mr. Rich and his management team are well known for providing creative solutions to railway problems in the multi-state area served by the company. State funding will be used to upgrade the physical plant of the two lines which have not served the needs of the traveling public since passenger trains were dropped in 1958. The intervening 44 years have shown us that alternative thought in transportation is possible. Senator DeFrancisco (R-C Syracuse) expressed this sentiment when he said, "I am pleased that the Senate has agreed to commit \$3 million to help restore this key rail system which provides service in a triangle formed by Syracuse, Binghamton and Utica". This triangle of opportunity is formed by a superbly engineered, albeit neglected, transportation artery worthy of public investment and support.

The question of who will ride the trains and what businesses will benefit from improved freight service is yet to be determined. Marketing and promotion will undoubtedly play a key role in the success of the venture. The cities and towns served by the railroad will each have their own reasons and ideas for making the service a success; it would be hard to imagine a downside to the plan. Sources close to the project anticipate further announcements and project specifics to be revealed in the early fall. Anticipated 2003 start-up of at least the Syracuse-Binghamton service is likely. ESPA will continue to follow the project closely and assist in any way possible. *Ben Gottfried*

## Downstate ESPA completes Penn Station Metro-Hub Plan

Downstate ESPA meets monthly as part of the Regional Rail Working Group, which also includes members of the Committee for Better Transit and the NJ Association of Rail Passengers. This past year the working group has focused on developing a short term plan for increasing peak hour train capacity at Penn Station in New York. By "through-routing" trains between points in New Jersey and points in Long Island, capacity can be increased by 50%. This occurs because time-consuming conflicts between inbound and outbound trains are avoided.

Capacity gains can produce substantial benefits. New train capacity from New Jersey would permit increases in service on crowded lines and would allow new services from lines that do not have direct service, like the Montclair/Boonton Line and the Raritan Valley Line. On the New York side, increasing LIRR capacity would allow trains to serve riders in Queens, who must take long bus trips to overcrowded subway lines. The capacity gain will also permit early introduction of Metro-North Hell Gate service to Penn Station, benefiting transit riders from eastern Bronx and Co-op City, as well as Westchester and Connecticut. A new Metro-North Hudson Line Penn Station service could also use the Amtrak Empire Corridor line.

To make full use of this new capacity, the working group has proposed that the commuter lines be merged into a regional rail system, with frequent service and integrated fares. With most of the region's commuter rails coming together at Penn Station alternatives to travel by car become possible.

The Penn-Station Metro-Hub plan is posted on the following website: [www.auto-free.org](http://www.auto-free.org) or drop me a note to request a copy (address below). *George Haikalis, ESPA Manhattan Coordinator.*

**Next Stop - Downtown** The terrible events of 9/11 have renewed interest in regional rail options for Lower Manhattan. The next several meetings of the working group will focus on this issue. One plan being advanced by NJ participants is a direct link between the Downtown PATH line and the Lexington Avenue Local. Other options including bringing commuter rail service to Lower Manhattan using subway lines or building new tunnels.

In addition, a key feature of each meeting is a discussion of intercity rail issues. A key concern is the impact of high fares on Amtrak ridership in the Northeast.

Why not join us on the third Wednesday of each month, 6-8pm, September 18, October 16, November 20, December 18. The meetings are held at: Conference Room, NYPD Downtown Center, 104 Washington Street (just north of Rector Street) Lower Manhattan. For more information contact George Haikalis 212-475-3394. Washington Square Village, 5D NYC 10012.

**Haverstraw-Ossining Ferry**...Faster and more frequent. The 'Sea Otter' saves 20 minutes a day in travel time to/from Grand Central (about 70 minutes travel time). The ferry now meets 14 express trains to/from Grand Central a day, up from the previous eight daily. Parking at the Haverstraw lot is now free, saving \$30 a month. For Transit of Rockland bus riders, the monthly UniTicket is good for travel on the ferry.

## Metro-North Railroads On-Time Performance -YTD

Harlem Line - 98.3%,	Hudson Line - 98.5%
New Haven Line - 97.8%	System - 98.1%

## Amtrak funding (Cont'd from page 1)

Although the Bush Administration wanted to provide another loan instead, Congress rejected that approach, as the interest for it would simply have had to be paid from the 2003 appropriation, increasing the government's cost. On August 2nd President Bush signed the supplemental appropriation, which funded many other programs besides Amtrak.

The fiscal year 2003 appropriation did move ahead just before the August recess. On July 25th the Senate Appropriations Committee approved \$1.2 billion for Amtrak and this bill now awaits full Senate action. The House Appropriations Transportation subcommittee has not acted however; it may approve a lower figure for Amtrak, closer to the Bush Administration's recommended \$521 million. However anything less than \$1.2 billion is likely to recreate the shutdown crisis sometime next year, especially in view of the extra costs incurred by Acela trainset problems, heat speed restrictions and derailments.

New York representatives John Sweeney (R., Saratoga Springs) and Jose Serrano, (D., Bronx), serve on the House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee and should be contacted by ESPA members in their districts. Both have supported Amtrak in the past, but need to hear support now, especially for long distance trains. Other representatives should be contacted as well, including President Bush.

Authorizing committees in both houses have developed bills to replace the 1997 authorizing legislation that expires this year, but they differ widely in philosophy. Senator Hollings S-1991, which would provide funding for expansion, is being blocked from reaching the floor, according to the New York Times (8/24). A major battle is likely next year over privatization, long distance trains, the form of financing (bonds, loans or straight appropriation) and the extent to which states will pay operating costs.

New York's Empire Service may be at special risk because our state provides no operating support for this service. Except for the Northeast Corridor itself and one other route--the Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac corridor--all other short distance routes and corridors receive operating support from the states they serve. The Empire Corridor generates the third highest ridership of all Amtrak routes. In 2001 it carried 1.3 million passengers, a figure exceeded only by California's Pacific Surfliner (1.69 million) and the Northeast Corridor main spine itself.

According to this report, the \$36.5 million expense Amtrak incurred operating the Empire Corridor last year was more than it lost on any other short distance route except the Northeast Corridor. The next most costly corridor was the Pacific Surfliner service, which cost Amtrak \$26.1 million after California paid \$21.5 million in operating assistance. (California also subsidizes connecting buses, which contribute passengers, and the state pays to advertise Amtrak service).

David Gunn singled out New York in a July 31 interview with Wes Vernon for the National Corridor Initiative newsletter: "There is a great inequity in terms of the funding of services; New York State gets a free ride, relatively speaking." Gunn pointed out that Senate Appropriations Chair Patty Murray comes from Washington State, which pays both operating and capital support for its Cascade service. "She says she is tired of having the Northeast get Amtrak service for free while other states have to subsidize any service they get; as she put it, 'I don't intend to play by those rules.'"

New York has committed at least \$100 million for capital improvements through Governor Pataki's high speed rail program, which is supposed to be matched by Amtrak. It has also spent substantial amounts for Amtrak stations and invested large amounts to upgrade the lower Hudson segment south of Poughkeepsie owned by Metro-North. But all this is for capital improvements, not operating costs. Some of these improvements, such as the new Rensselaer station, and possibly the turboliners, may actually increase Amtrak's operating costs although they will hopefully generate enough new revenue to more than offset any increase. But in the long run, New York is likely to feel increasing pressure to contribute to the costs of the operation. *Frank Barry*

## ESPA Meeting Dates 2002

October 5, 2002 Schenectady, November 23, 2002 Rensselaer, January 11, 2003 Schenectady, March 1, 2003 Annual Meeting - Schenectady.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in ESPA, these meetings are the perfect opportunity to learn more about the Association and how you can make a difference. Please contact President Bruce Becker at 518-383-5985 or via e-mail, [bbecker@albanycc.cc](mailto:bbecker@albanycc.cc) (Please advise if planning on attending).

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel: 1-800-841-2340, Fax: 716-759-2791. e-mail: [RWLenz@aol.com](mailto:RWLenz@aol.com).  
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