

# 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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Sept/Oct 2003



### Another Successful Year of State Fair Service

Over 1,100 New York State residents took advantage of Amtrak's special service to the New York State Fair in Syracuse, during its 12-day 2003 run. While on par with last year's volume, ridership would have been significantly higher had it not been for two days of rail service disruptions during the fair caused by a CSX freight train derailment between Rochester and Syracuse.

Phil Larson, Amtrak's District Superintendent, reported that over 60,000 persons visited the Amtrak booth at the fair and that a record number of timetables and travel planners had been distributed. Larson also noted that he is hopeful that the Central New York Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society will permit Amtrak to use a caboose, owned by the Chapter, for its booth and display space at next year's fair.

Larson also sincerely thanked those ESPA members who volunteered at the Amtrak booth and noted that he looks forward to future Amtrak/ESPA joint efforts at similar public events.

### Secaucus Station Opens in New Jersey

On Saturday, September 6, the Secaucus Rail Station opened, after 8 years of construction and with a total expense of \$600 million. That expense includes the track work required in the area on the numerous rail lines and includes the 312,000 square foot station itself an expense of \$170 million. The station also has 100,000 square feet of retail space. The Secaucus station connects 10 of NJ Transit's 11 rail lines, providing passengers with new travel options, simply by taking an escalator from one high level platform to another. For now, there will be no extra fare to change trains at Secaucus, as the current fare to Hoboken will be the same as the fare to New York City's Penn Station. For passengers from the Bergen, Pascack Valley, and Port Jervis lines, who had to ride to Hoboken and take a PATH train to Manhattan, passengers can now change trains at Secaucus and then have an 8-minute ride into Penn Station. It will shave 15-20 minutes off travel time to Manhattan from Passaic County in New Jersey and Rockland and Orange Counties in New York State. (Cont'd on page 5)

### New Yorkers Help in Amtrak Fund Fight

The full House, and the Senate Appropriations Committee both acted on Amtrak's appropriation for 2004 on September 4th. The House came up with only half of Amtrak President David Gunn's requested \$1.8 billion—matching the \$900 million the Bush administration proposed, a figure Gunn has said will lead to a shut down. The Senate Appropriations Committee did better—offering \$1.35 billion and forgiving the Bush Administration's \$100 million loan to Amtrak for another year, making the effective amount \$1.45 billion. While this would not shut down operations, the shortfall would cause serious consequences according to Gunn.

Several New Yorkers played positive roles in the House; Jack Quinn (R., Buffalo) and Sherwood Boehlert, (R., Utica), along with Mike Castle, (R., Del.), presented an amendment to give Amtrak the full \$1.8 billion. Quinn ended his comments with a "hypothetical question" for his fellow Republicans: "Next August, when the (Republican Convention) is held in New York City I want to know who is going to answer the questions when there is no Amtrak service..?" John Sweeney, (R., Clifton Park), strongly supported the amendment, noting that "Congress has not been hesitant to subsidize private entities like airlines.." But he later told the Albany Times Union that Amtrak should cut its cross country routes to "improve (its) more popular routes, primarily along the coasts" (9/6).

Although 219 House members had signed a letter to appropriators requesting \$1.8 billion for Amtrak in June, Appropriation Sub-Committee Chair Ernest Istook (R., Okla.) raised a point of order and Quinn withdrew the amendment. The issue was the matter of offset—where would the additional money come from? Quinn's amendment would have cut the amount for the Treasury Department by 4%, which would have alienated some members. While the June letter got a bare majority of the House, it did not specify where the extra money would come from, and voting to take money from something else is a lot more difficult than simply asking more money for Amtrak. As a result there was a good chance the Quinn amendment would have failed. This would have put Amtrak in a worse position for the upcoming negotiations with the Senate than having no vote at all, according to National Association of Railroad Passengers Director Ross Capon. (Cont'd on page 3)

### I Love New York - Kids Ride Free

Amtrak is offering a great family opportunity to see the sights throughout New York State and save money doing it. Now through November 16, one child can travel free with the purchase of one regular adult ticket. Offer is valid on Amtrak's Empire Service, Adirondack, Maple Leaf, Ethan Allen and Lake Shore Limited within New York only.

## The View from the Cab...

My sincere thanks go out to those ESPA members who have so generously responded to our 2003 Special Appeal. To date, over \$3,900 has been contributed to support the work of the Association this year. If you haven't already given, please consider doing so today.

I continue to work on several initiatives of interest and benefit to the Association, including...

- \* The potential of ESPA collaborating on production of a TV documentary on the construction of the Rensselaer Rail Station.

- \* Providing Amtrak with ongoing feedback and input as they explore options for an Empire Corridor Fare Reorganization.

- \* Establishing closer ties with the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers and exploring mutual opportunities to work closer together on planning for rail improvement projects in the greater New York Metropolitan region.

- \* Providing input to NYSDOT for its organizational "Transformation"

Look for updates on these and other projects in the coming months. As always, I welcome your comments, critiques and suggestions, on how ESPA can better attain our goals of improved passenger rail service in New York State. Don't hesitate to contact me at anytime. *Bruce B. Becker, President*

## From the Treasurer

Having become ESPA's Treasurer in April, I have discovered that this position involves more work than I had expected. Even with the help of President Bruce Becker, Budget Director Rich Kulla, Editor Bob Lenz, and Membership Director Stu Greenberg, the Treasurer position still requires an equivalent of several full workdays each month in order to do the job properly. Our post office box receives, on the average, over 150 pieces of treasurer-related correspondence monthly!

I thank Jack Ross for his tireless work in the over 17 years that he served as ESPA Treasurer. He conveyed to me records, logs, and lists that were in order and easily understandable. I hope I can do this job with the same devotion, meticulousness and longevity as had Jack Ross.

Just as Amtrak has reformed its operations, ESPA has done likewise. ESPA is a growing association, now having over 1500 members, and in order to run it more effectively, several changes have been approved and adopted:

- \* Membership Cards are now sent with your ESPA Express Newsletter mailing, rather than by a separate mailing, in order to save postage costs.

- \* Early Stamping of Newsletters now indicates if your membership is due for renewal. If your newsletter has a Reminder Stamp on it, please don't wait for us to send you a Reminder Card. You can help ESPA use its donations more efficiently by remitting dues when first notified.

- \* Include the 1st page of your newsletter with your renewal check. This page includes a renewal form and your mailing label. The label includes important information in order for us to account your renewal, including your current address, member number, and the month and year when your membership expires.

- \* Reminder Post Cards are still being sent to past due members. Always return this card with your check and remit promptly.

- \* If you have moved or no longer wish to be a member, please notify ESPA at PO Box 434, Syracuse, NY, 13209, or by e-mail at [ajcabal@aol.com](mailto:ajcabal@aol.com)

I thank those officers and members for their help and words of encouragement. I look forward to serving this very vital and effective association well into the future. *Andrew L. Cabal*

## Turboliner Update

Amtrak continues to operate one weekday round trip between Albany and New York using either Set #1 or Set #2 of refurbished Turboliner equipment. Operational reliability of the first two sets continues to meet both NYSDOT and Amtrak expectations.

In early September Amtrak took delivery of Set #3 from Supersteel. It is expected that Amtrak will shortly be reconfiguring one Turboliner set into a six car train (2 power cars, three coaches and one food service car) and then will conduct a series of road test runs with the expanded consist. Amtrak is reportedly seeking to have a total of five six-car trains ultimately produced by Supersteel, down from the state's original goal of refurbishing a total of seven five-car trains.

As of press time however, all work on the remaining four sets is stopped. Based upon the continuing funding impasse between NYSDOT and Amtrak over the project, Supersteel was forced to lay off approximately 60 employees in mid-summer. Supersteel officials have stated that the project will not re-start until they are paid for work already completed and have assurances from NYSDOT and Amtrak that funding is in place for future authorized work.

ESPA continues to closely monitor the progress of this now six-year-old project and strongly urges the State and Amtrak to reach agreement on how to progress it to completion as quickly as possible. *Bruce Becker*

## Rensselaer/Saratoga Springs Station News

Work continues toward a late fall/early winter opening of the rebuilt Saratoga Springs Amtrak Station. The Capital District Transportation Authority, the project's developer, reports that while significant aspects of the building are still to be completed, the overall planned schedule is being met. The rebuilt station will include both facilities for Amtrak and space for community events and programs.

At Rensselaer, the US Post Office is expected to open its new facility within the Amtrak Station by early October. This will generate both considerable business for the station and provide a welcome service to the hundreds of passengers who use Amtrak trains each day. *Bruce Becker*

## Rome Train Station Renovation

The Renovation of the Rome Train Station is now in full swing. Rep. Sherwood Boehlert has announced that federal money set aside in the 2002 budget for the Martin Street station is now available. A \$321,759 grant from the Federal Transit Administration will go toward window restoration, installation of a new mechanical system, attic insulation and new furnishings.

Congressman Boehlert praised the station and the plan to upgrade it to an intermodal hub. The city is now modifying the station to hold the V.I.P. bus service headquarters. Congressman Boehlert praised the options provided by intermodal transportation centers across New York State allowing people choices in their mode of transportation and freedom to travel. Mobility is an important aspect of community development and he pledged to do all he can to bring the needed federal funds back to New York to enhance economic opportunities. *Gary Gianotti*



## Pascack Valley Line Express

New Jersey Transit has added two new speedsters to its fleet of interstate express trains operated for New York State. As of August 8, 2003 Metro North and NJT have teamed up to offer first time ever express trains on this commuter line through northern New Jersey and southern Rockland County. Stations in New York are Spring Valley, Nanuet and Pearl River.

The route is the former 31.5 mile Erie RR New Jersey and New York Railroad. Southbound Express #1604 departs Spring Valley at 6:29 am with stops at Nanuet at 6:35 and Pearl River at 6:40 and then a 26.6 mile non-stop highball to the Hoboken Terminal to arrive at 7:23. The workday can be concluded with #1607- a 5:27 departure from Hoboken which reaches Spring Valley at 6:19 pm. These trains make no stops in New Jersey; the morning ride represents a savings of 15 minutes over existing stop trains in the morning and a savings of 11 minutes on the ride home adding 26 minutes back to the commuter's day.

Metro North Spokesman Dan Brucker calls these trains to our attention in Metro North's ongoing efforts to expand travel options for its "west-of-Hudson" customers. Recent Metro North funded developments include the long-term lease of the former Erie Main north of Suffern, new passenger equipment, and this express initiative. Metro North expects ridership on its west-of-Hudson division to double once the new Secacus Junction, N.J Station opens for full service later this year. *Ben Gottfried*

### New Yorkers Help (Cont'd from page 1)

John Olver, (D., Mass.) proposed another amendment to raise Amtrak funding to \$1.4 billion, the Senate figure, but again Istook raised a point of order which was upheld by the Chair. But two anti-Amtrak amendments, introduced by Thomas Tancredo, (R., Colo.) and Mark Kennedy (R., Minn.)—which would have cut Amtrak funding back to Istook's absurdly low initial \$580 million figure—were defeated by over 320 votes. No New Yorkers supported either amendment.

In the Senate, much credit goes to Patti Murray (D., Wash.), the ranking member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, who was able to move small bits of money toward Amtrak from various sources. Sub-Committee Chair Richard Shelby (R., Ala.), a strong Amtrak critic, complained but did not block the vote. Murray's \$1.4 billion was approved by the full Appropriations Committee and now goes to the Senate floor, where amendments are possible.

At this point it looks likely that Amtrak will have barely enough money to continue through 2004 (an election year) without disruption, but will not have enough for all the repairs Gunn feels are essential. This may lead to a confrontation, as Amtrak's board has already authorized the repairs, based on Gunn's conviction that the work is essential no matter what Congress and the Bush Administration ultimately decide regarding Amtrak. *Frank Barry*

### ESPA'S Rail Show Schedule

Help promote ESPA and passenger rail travel to the public. Help with these ESPA goals: Promote rail travel, encourage the public to write their elected officials, and add ESPA members.

Utica NY October 11 & 12 - Union Station

Binghamton NY October 19 - Heritage Country Club

Syracuse NY November 1 & 2 - Fairgrounds

Batavia NY November 9 - Batavia Downs

Hamburg NY November 22 & 23 - Agri-Center

For more information contact Robert Lenz 1-800-841-2340

## Ideological Warfare Clouds Amtrak's Future

Republicans in both houses of Congress, Senate Democrats, and the Bush Administration are proposing markedly different scenarios for Amtrak's Reauthorization, when the current authorizing legislation expires September 30th. While majorities in both houses had indicated their support for continuing to fund Amtrak, a relatively small group of leaders in both chambers as well as the White House are working to privatize it and turn funding responsibility over to the States. They have vigorously attacked long distance trains and want to limit rail service to a few unconnected corridors linking big cities that are close together.

On July 28th the Bush Administration announced its plan to abolish Amtrak as we know it and pass most of the responsibility for planning, funding and operating trains to states or associations of states. Long distance overnight trains would in all probability disappear within 5 years, as all federal operating support would be phased out. Corridor trains would operate only if states paid for them and paid at least half the cost of any capital improvements besides. The Northeast Corridor would be separated from Amtrak and leased to an interstate compact yet to be formed. The Bush bill commits no dollar amounts, simply authorizing "such sums as may be necessary."

The long overdue Bush bill disappointed many, including some key Republicans. Former Senate leader Trent Lott (R., MS.) said "If after 2-1/2 years that's all they can come up with, they should be ashamed. It is a guarantee to fail." Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson, (R., Tex), who chairs the Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, agreed: "If you turn Amtrak over to the States, it's gone." Senator John McCain was the bill's only sponsor when it was introduced on July 30 as S-1501.

By contrast, authorizing sub-committees in both chambers have presented sweeping legislation to provide adequate sustained funding for the present Amtrak system and for improvements and expansion. Both would sustain and strengthen the national system and fund high speed corridor development on new and existing routes.

Hutchinson, Lott, Olympia Snowe (R., Me.) and Conrad Burns (R., Mont.), introduced the Republican Senate reauthorization bill (S-1505) on July 30. It would create a new federal entity—the National Railroad Passenger Office—to own the Northeast Corridor and Amtrak equipment and to make grants and oversee their implementation. The new office would be responsible for the composition of the national system map and could add or delete routes. After 5 years any route unable to maintain an 80% on time average could be contracted out to a private operator or discontinued. But when delays result from "denial of access to tracks" by the owning railroad, the Surface Transportation Board could impose civil penalties on the track owner.

The On Time provision could turn out to be a sleeper that would affect much of the system, as few routes have achieved 80% on a sustained basis—especially on long distance runs. However freight railroads will vigorously oppose assigning the right to run Amtrak trains to some other entity chosen through a governmental bidding process. They view their tracks as private property and will insist on their own right to determine who runs trains on it.

While the Bush bill gradually transfers responsibility for all operating costs to the states, the Hutchison bill would continue federal funding for operations at a \$2 billion annual level, more than Gunn is presently requesting. S-1505 would also change

Amtrak's status from 'for profit' to 'non-profit', thereby defining it as a service (like transit) rather than a business. This would remove a major source of criticism from those who complain of its failure as a for profit corporation.

S-1505 would promote state involvement by inviting each state to designate a rail transportation authority to prepare and administer a state rail plan. The plan would spell out state policy to preserve, enhance or expand rail service and identify high priority projects to accomplish this. Each state plan would become the basis for 80% federal funding after approval by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation.

High speed corridors and other projects would be encouraged and funded at the highway 80%-20% ratio. Funds would be raised through tax credit bonds by a new non-profit National Rail Transportation Financing Corporation established specifically to finance rail improvements, up to \$48 billion. Funds could be given to either states or Amtrak, but at least half must go to states. No more than 25% could go to the Northeast Corridor and the funds would have to be allocated equitably among regions. According to Hutchison, rail service will be "national or nothing."

Her bill provides somewhat more flexibility than the House RIDE 21 High Speed Rail Bill (HR-2571) which would authorize states to issue bonds for high speed development. Under the House plan each state would decide who to contract with—Amtrak, or another entity, and Amtrak could receive these funds only through the states.

Hutchison's S-1505 is refreshing and significant as a moderate Republican alternative to Bush's approach but it must have Democratic support to pass. Ernest Hollings' (D, S.C.), S-104, the current Democratic alternative, would keep Amtrak intact, but it cannot pass without more Republican support. S-104 provides no new source for funding, depending only on the appropriations process.

Issues to be resolved include: 1) the status of Amtrak—will it continue as is, or be restricted to running trains only? 2) the Northeast Corridor—who will own it, and what role will Amtrak have? If Amtrak doesn't own it, who will dispatch the trains? 3) How much power will the states have? Will states or Amtrak have the final say? 4) Where will the money come from? appropriations or bonds? If bonds, who will issue them? 5) Labor issues: some Republican proposals could reduce labor protection.

Both S1505 and S1501 would separate Amtrak from its ownership of the Northeast Corridor, and end its monopoly on intercity passenger service. Democratic S-104 would continue Amtrak as the sole operator and leave it in control of the Northeast Corridor. S-1505 would create a new funding authority to raise money through tax credit bonds. This could fund not only Amtrak improvements but improvements to freight railroads and high speed upgrades. The Bush bill proposes no funding source.

Ironically ESPA has played an important indirect role in the development of long term funding strategy. Tim Gillespie's presentation at our March 1st annual meeting led him to prepare a paper outlining his idea for a federally chartered Railroad Finance and Development Corporation based on the successful Fannie Mae concept. His paper presents tax credit bonds as a method for generating revenue. The Railway Supply Institute, a lobby of the railroad equipment manufacturers for which Tim provides consultation, has adopted this concept as its recommended policy. These recommendations were adopted by Kay Bailey Hutchison's staff and form the basis for the funding portion of S-1505. There is also

strong interest among Democratic Senators, who may incorporate the concept in an upcoming proposal.

Adoption of long term reauthorizing legislation for Amtrak may not happen this year but support is growing. Gillespie says the idea of a federally chartered finance corporation that would fund improvements to freight railroads, shortlines, Amtrak and new high speed rail projects is pulling a lot of interests together. "As long as all these parties are presenting different ideas, you can be sure Congress won't act," Gillespie told ESPA. "But when they all start pushing for the same thing, action becomes possible."

If support is strong enough, legislation funding all aspects of rail could be included in the next long term highway bill, which will not happen this year, most observers believe. But its inclusion would finally signal Congressional acceptance of rail as a vital form of surface transportation worthy of federal support. It would provide an alternative to the appropriations process that has become more grueling since changes in 1998 and 2000 that sharply restricted the amount of highway and air tax revenues that can be spent for uses outside these modes. *Frank Barry*

## CSX Derailment Before Labor Day

At 11:45am on Thursday, August 28, just before the Labor Day weekend, CSX Train Q-626 traveling from Niagara Falls, with a stop at the Buffalo-Frontier yard, to Selkirk, derailed near milepost 349, which is in Palmyra, located about 20 miles east of Rochester. The eastbound mixed freight blocked both CSX tracks and 13-15 cars derailed and tore up the tracks near Division Street, which is about 2 miles north of the village of Palmyra. Most of the derailed cars were empty Propane tank cars and people living within a half mile of the derailment were evacuated, as one tank car appeared to be leaking. Train 286 (eastbound) arrived at the Rochester station at 11:42am and was waiting for its 11:47am departure when the derailment occurred. Train 286 then stayed at the station for 3-4 hours, then passengers were bussed to Syracuse, where the first westbound Amtrak train was turned to take passengers eastward. Passengers were then bussed west from Syracuse for the rest of the day. Although several reports stated that Train 49 (Lake Shore Limited) would operate Albany to Binghamton to Buffalo, Train 49 did instead operate its normal route west from Albany and was the first Amtrak train to travel between Syracuse and Rochester after the derailment and it arrived in Buffalo just over 2 hours late.

Since both tracks were closed for about 12 hours and after that just one track was opened on Friday, freight train congestion was a large problem on Friday, the day after the derailment and a peak travel day for Amtrak. In fact, 7 of 8 Amtrak trains lost over an hour traveling on Friday between Buffalo and Albany. I happened to be at the Buffalo-Depew station waiting for someone to arrive on Train 63. In the first hour that I was there, 11 freight trains passed the station. Then, two freight trains stopped at the station and waited for relief crews. Unfortunately, Train 63 sat just a couple miles east of the station for 40 minutes while both main tracks were blocked by CSX freight trains waiting for a new crew. Train 63 then arrived in Buffalo 2 hours late, after having departed Syracuse on time.

The freight train was reportedly crossing over from Track 2 to Track 1, when it derailed. Ironically, in December 1987, a Conrail mixed freight train derailed a few autorack cars, while traveling eastbound from Track 2 to Track 1 at this exact location.

*Gary Prohet*

## Little Progress on MTA Reform expected

Two competing MTA reform proposals are expected to be introduced at the special session of the NYS Legislature this fall. MTA's proposal calls for merging the LIRR and Metro-North commuter rail operations into a single entity, while separating the NYC Transit's bus and subway operations into separate companies. It proposes giving the MTA Board the power to allocate operating surpluses from its very profitable Bridge and Tunnel unit rather than rely on the current 50-50 split between transit and commuter rail operations, after an initial \$24 million goes to transit. City transit advocates have long opposed the existing formula because all of the toll facilities are located in the city and some 70% of the revenue comes from city drivers. It is not likely that the state legislature would cede this allocation authority to the MTA Board, which is controlled by the Governor. While there are some positive features of this bill, most transit advocates feel this bill is dead on arrival.

The opposing bill sponsored by the Assembly would establish a separate Inspector General's Office outside of MTA's (and the Governor's) jurisdiction, probably reporting to the independently-elected Attorney General. Traditionally, an IG reports directly to the CEO of an organization, in this case the Chairman of the MTA, not to a political rival of the Governor. This bill is not likely to advance, without Senate support, which seems unlikely.

There is good reason for MTA reform, but it will take a bipartisan effort and considerable preparation. The existing proposals are crisis-driven (MTA's opaque books and contract abuse), but not really well thought out. If MTA weathers its current dilemma, pressure for change will fade and MTA will probably continue as it is.

*George Haikalis*

## City and State Launch Airport to Lower Manhattan Study

The Lower Manhattan Development Corporation has selected the Parsons Transportation Group as the prime consultant for its study of one-seat rail service from Kennedy Airport and from the LIRR Jamaica Station to Lower Manhattan. The study envisions a new tunnel under the East River linking the existing LIRR Flatbush Terminal with a new terminal near the World Trade Center Site. The project, which may cost upwards of three to four billion dollars to complete, will join the long list of rail projects on the region's "wish list". The Bloomberg Administration is strongly supportive of this proposal.

**Secaucus Station** (Cont'd from page 1) For now, this station will only be open on weekends. After the temporary PATH station is opened in lower Manhattan (scheduled for late 2003), then Secaucus Station will also be open on weekdays. Since train commuters changed their commuting routes into Manhattan after Sept 11, 2001, NJ Transit will wait for the PATH access from New Jersey to be restored to lower Manhattan before opening Secaucus on weekdays, in order to prevent severe overcrowding on its trains. NJ Transit expects 2700 passengers on each day of the weekend and expects about 15,000 weekday riders each day once the station is opened on weekdays. The official name of the station is "Frank R. Lautenberg Secaucus Rail Station at Allied Junction", reflecting the senator's ability to have 75% of the funds for this project to originate at the federal level. There were also plans to include 3.5 million square feet of office space and more retail space, and a hotel, but those plans have been placed on hold. *Gary Prophet*

## Fall Schedule Changes

Amtrak plans to introduce new schedules October 27, 2003.

#284 running Monday - Saturday with a 6:05am departure time from Niagara Falls, arriving in New York at 2:25pm.

#286 running Monday - Saturday with a 9:20am departure from Niagara Falls, arriving in New York 5:55pm

#288 returning to its former Sunday/Holiday only 3:00pm departure from Niagara Falls, arriving in New York at 11:45pm

A new #282 Sunday/Holiday only 8:20am departure from Niagara Falls, arriving in New York at 4:40pm is also planned.

#287 will become #281 and leave Penn Station daily at 10:45am, with 7:15pm arrival at Niagara Falls

Most schedules are being reduced by 5 minutes between New York and Albany, with many trains running up to 15 minutes faster between Albany and Niagara Falls.

Amtrak plans to include fare information along with both long distance and northeast timetables in one comprehensive folder.

## Amtrak Seeks ESPA's Input

Amtrak's Empire District Superintendent, Philip Larson, continues to want to hear of your New York State Amtrak travel experiences. Whether everything was great or if there was room for improvement, Phil welcomes our input, as he strives to provide the best possible service on the Empire Corridor. Please send your written trip reports and comments, including specific dates, train numbers and employee names as appropriate to: Philip Larson, District Superintendent, Amtrak 525 East Street, Rensselaer, NY 12144. Please send a copy to Bruce Becker, so we can track trip experiences and follow up as necessary. Thanks for your help...

## Bridge Line Blues, Again

Canadian Pacific Railway has announced its intention to divest itself of the operating responsibility of its Delaware & Hudson Railway division. The line which runs between Montreal, Que. and Scranton, Pa. in the US is no stranger to the re-alignment strategies of various ownership entities. The advent of Conrail in 1976 included expanded trackage rights arrangements to access Buffalo, New York City and Philadelphia and eventual inclusion into the Guilford Transportation Group. After divestiture by Guilford and a brief NYS&W "directed service" agreement in the late 1980's Canadian Pacific stepped in to operate the "Bridge Line" route.

The divestiture process is being handled at CP Headquarters in Calgary, Alb. according to various sources. The operators are being asked to submit operating plans by invitation only with the successful bidder being required to be a non-contiguous, non-class one railroad or operating company. News reports indicate that for the present time CP will retain ownership of the property. The route plays host to Amtrak service between Schenectady, NY and Montreal, Que. for *Adirondack and Ethan Allen services*.

The question arises regarding existing passenger operations on the railway and the substantial NYSDOT investment in its infrastructure. No downgrading or FRA class changes are expected to occur as a result of the operating changes. The D&H division is not a money losing operation; it is a strategic move on the part of CP. The likelihood of a smaller more regional carrier taking over control of the D&H could be an opportunity to expand service. Smaller operators and their employees are more likely to consider passenger needs important and their trains worthy of consideration especially with regard to on time performance.

Going forward, New York efforts to restore passenger train service to New York City via Scranton, Pa. could also receive a boost from an eager smaller operator.

*Ben Gottfried*

## Passenger Train Reaches Delaware Water Gap

On August 30th a passenger train reached the Delaware Water Gap for the first time in thirty years. The 12 car train arrived from Scranton behind Steamtown's ex Canadian Pacific steamer, No. 2317, with 650 passengers aboard—a sellout crowd. The event was staged by the National Park Service, the Lackawanna and Monroe County Railroad Authorities and the Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad—which provided two diesels for help on the grades.

At the Delaware Water Gap riders were treated to a buffet lunch along with commentary from public officials pushing for restoration of rail service to New York. These included Congressman Paul Kanjorsky, (D.), who hopes to acquire the funds for rebuilding the track and buying equipment. As a result of redistricting, he has taken over parts of the state formerly represented by Joe McDade of Scranton.

Rep. Kelly Lewis, who represents the area in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, proposed that funding come from the Pennsylvania-New Jersey Joint Toll Commission, which operates several Delaware River toll bridges linking the two states. This would appear logical because a major purpose of the project would be to reduce rush hour traffic on I-80 across the toll bridge at the Delaware Water Gap. Lewis said the Toll Commission generates millions of dollars which are allocated by the governors of the two states. He said this source could easily furnish the \$40 million needed to match the \$160 million in federal funds being requested—and it could even provide the \$12-15 million needed annually to operate several trains a day. Lewis said this is a new idea and that discussion has only just begun.

Both Kelly and Kanjorsky were pleased to learn of ESPA's interest in extending the service to New York's Southern Tier.

*Frank Barry*

## Meeting Dates

Saturday, October 4, 2003 Rensselaer Amtrak Station  
Mezzanine Level Conference Room 12:30pm - 4:00pm

**Advance reservations to attend this meeting are requested.**

**Please contact Bruce Becker by October 1.**

Saturday, November 22, 2003 The Parker Inn, Schenectady

Saturday, January 10, 2004 The Parker Inn, Schenectady

Saturday, March 6, 2004 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, 518-383-5985 or [bbecker@albanycc.cc](mailto:bbecker@albanycc.cc).

## Late Flash!

The Senate Transportation Appropriation bill includes \$5 million for the engineering study to extend service to Scranton. The full Senate must still approve it.

## Downstate ESPA Meetings

ESPA continues to host monthly downstate meetings, in cooperation with NJ-ARP and the Committee for Better Transit. The Regional Rail Working Group meets the Third Wednesday of each month, at 6pm, at the Conference Room, NYPD Downtown Center, 104 Washington Street, just north of Rector St., in Lower Manhattan. At the September 17, 2003 meeting transit planner Bob Previdi will present his concept for using the Second Avenue subway as a regional rail distributor. Following meetings will be on October 15 and November 19, 2003. Save the dates and plan to attend. A key product of the working group has been the development of the Penn Station Metro-Hub plan for increasing capacity by "through running". NJ-ARP recently signed on to this plan. A copy is available on the web at [www.auto-free.org](http://www.auto-free.org) or by calling. For more information contact ESPA Manhattan Coordinator George Haikalas at 212-475-3394 or [geohaikalas@juno.com](mailto:geohaikalas@juno.com)

## ESPA MEMBERSHIP - NEW OR RENEWAL

The Empire State Passengers Association is a volunteer network of people working to improve intercity rail, mass transit and bus service in New York State. 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.

- Introductory membership (\$10.00 for one year)
- Renewal membership (\$20.00 per year)
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*Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel: 1-716-759-2315, Fax: 716-759-2791. e-mail: [RWLenz@aol.com](mailto:RWLenz@aol.com). Deadline for material for the Nov/Dec issue is October 31, 2003. Material may be reproduced if credit given to ESPA and to the writer.*

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