

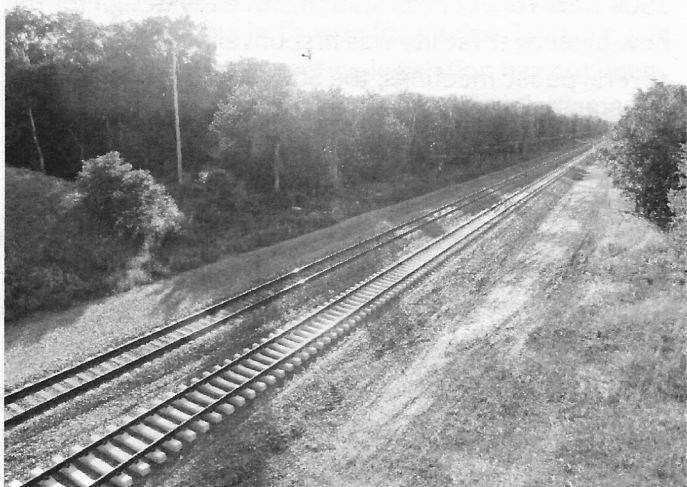


## **Albany-Schenectady Second Track Project**

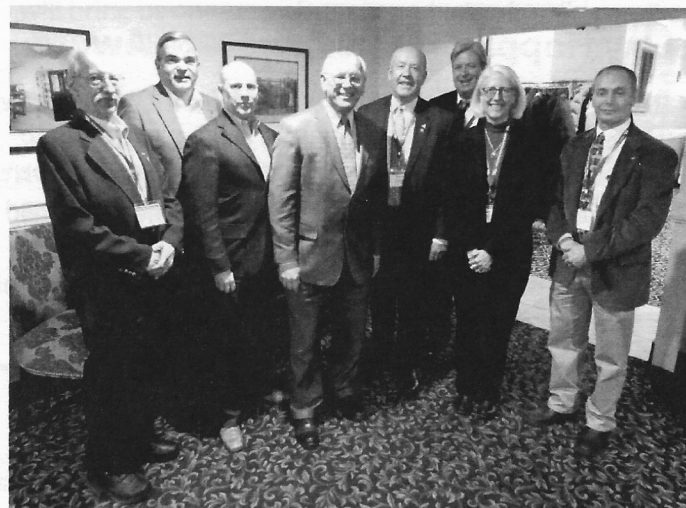
**Advances on with Track Laying**



After preparing the roadbed last year, the placement of new mainline ties and track began this spring, starting on the West Albany Hill. The \$83.1-million stimulus ARRA Higher Speed Rail project should be completed by year's end after ballasting, interlocking, and signalling work. Photos shown are looking west from New Karner Road. Check out more project photos the ESPA Facebook page.



**ESPA held its 36th Annual Meeting & Lunch on Saturday March 5<sup>th</sup> 2016 at Proctor's grand Key Hall in beautiful downtown Schenectady, NY**



Among the dignitaries who attended the NARP/ESPA annual meeting were Congressman Paul Tonko ( NY-20th District), Mayor Gary McCarthy (Schenectady), James Mathews (CEO of NARP), Caroline Mael (Amtrak Senior Regional Director State Supported Corridors East), and Bill Hollister (Amtrak Northeast Government Affairs Director). A photo gallery of the event and slide-by-slide presentations by invited guest speakers are on the ESPA Facebook page.





Chris Nadelbach presents ESPA President Bruce Becker with the inaugural *Lew Hoppe Citizen-Advocate Award*

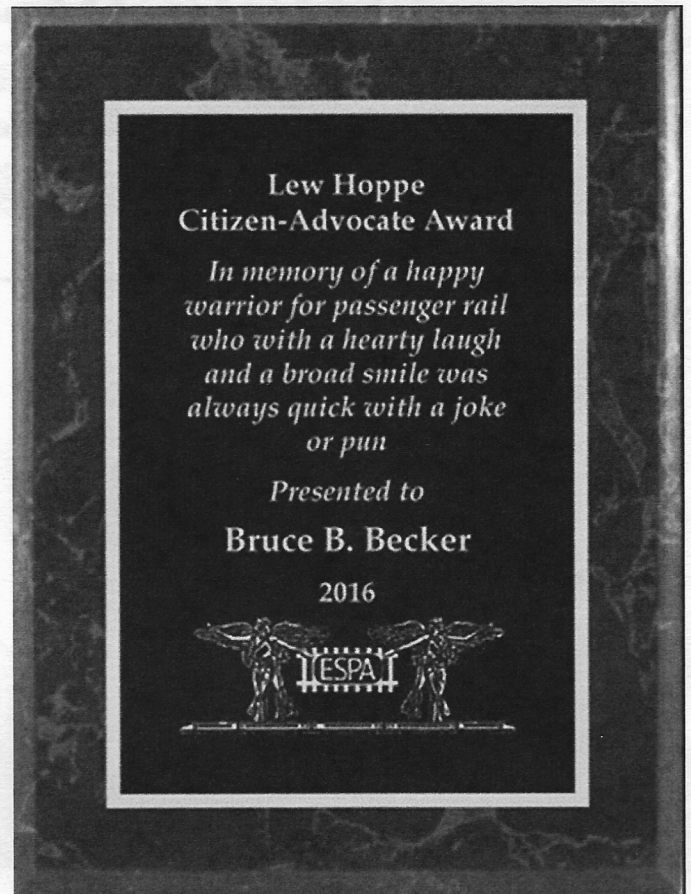
## Lew Hoppe Citizen-Advocate Award

ESPA's 36th Annual Meeting & Lunch on March 5th saw the inaugural awarding of the Lew Hoppe Citizen-Advocate Award to Bruce B. Becker of East Amherst, NY, ESPA's current president. The award was the brainchild of ESPA member Chris Nadelbach who worked hard to find a way of recognizing the efforts of non-professional passenger rail supporters while also honoring the memory of a beloved long-time ESPA member who recently passed away.

The Lew Hoppe Citizen-Advocate Award is a tribute to the memory of an ardent passenger rail advocate with a hearty laugh and broad smile that was always quick with a joke or a pun. Extremely knowledgeable in rail issues, Lewis M. Hoppe held strong opinions, but could be counted on to provide a thoughtful insight into any discussion.

A lifelong Brooklynite, Lew was a dedicated and long-time public servant who, at the time of his passing, was a Co-Executive Director of the New York Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment, located in Lower Manhattan. Lew was a founding member of the Empire State Passenger Association (being assigned Member No. 1), and served as a regional coordinator as well as ESPA president (1989 - 1990). ESPA dedicates this award to our good friend.

This year, in recognition of countless volunteer hours of effectively leading and advocating the mission of the Empire State Passengers Association, and in recognition of significant contributions, both internally and externally, on behalf of the Empire State Passengers Association, this Inaugural ESPA Lew Hoppe Citizen-Advocate Award is hereby presented to Bruce Becker.



## Schenectady Station Rebuild Delayed

The replacement Schenectady Amtrak station has been delayed again because only one bid was received by the state Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). The single bid from Jersen Construction Group of Waterford was just under \$25 million, about 65 percent above the \$15 million cost estimated by the state planners.

The current passenger station was constructed in 1979 after Amtrak's return to downtown following Penn-Central's 1970 by-pass and demolition of the classic 1908 New York Central station. An early design for the new passenger facility was first unveiled in 2007. After several public meetings, the State and its consultants settled on a design which echoed architectural elements of the 1908 station.

State DOT spokeswoman Carol Breen said, "We're in the process of reviewing the documents now to find out where the difference is." After review, NYSDOT would decide what to do next. The alternatives could involve a station redesign or seeking another round of bids.

The bid documents for the new station issued last  
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October called for construction of a temporary station on adjacent land, followed by demolition of the current facility and new station construction. Work was scheduled to begin in 2016 and be completed in late 2017 or early 2018. That schedule would have meshed well with other Schenectady redevelopment projects that include a casino, a hotel, and several new apartment and condominium complexes.

Like many traditional railroad stations, the Amtrak-owned passenger facility is located in the heart of the downtown commercial, business and entertainment district. The planned design included a block-long covered walkway leading to the central bus transfer location operated by regional bus operator CDTA.

On March 5th, Schenectady's *Daily Gazette* published an editorial entitled: "Don't skimp on Schenectady's new train station." The editorial urged city leaders and state officials not to fall victim to the temptation to significantly scale back on the planned new station. While officials might have to consider slight modifications to the design or materials, the *Gazette* said, "In no way should they abandon the grand plans for the station in favor of something cheap and uninviting."

*Tony Rudmann*

## **Adirondack Preclearance Program Advances**

Long sought plans to ease delays of Amtrak's New York City – Montreal *Adirondack* at the US–Canada border came closer to reality in March with the introduction of U.S. legislation and an endorsement by new Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Currently, the **Adirondack** can be delayed as much as one hour by border inspectors in both the United States and Canada. While a March 2015 agreement between the countries signalled a desire expand U.S. pre-clearance facilities in Canada for marine, land, air, and rail, necessary implementing legislation has not been adopted by the US Congress or Canadian Parliament.

On March 1st, New York Senators Charles Schumer and Kristen Gillibrand joined 7 other Senators by introducing legislation demanded by the US Department of Homeland Security to implement the pre-clearance agreement. Representative Elise Stefanik (NY-21) co-sponsored identical legislation in the US House.

On March 10th, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau endorsed the 2015 US-Canada pre-clearance agreement

with his intention to support bringing ratification legislation before the Canadian Parliament for approval.

When both countries complete the agreement and implement legislation, a pre-clearance facility will be built at Montreal's Central Station to allow both Canadian and US border officials to perform their inspections.

For rail passengers, the *Adirondack* would enjoy shorter travel times. In addition, Vermont's plan to extend the current *Vermont* from St. Albans to Montreal could make that train another user of the pre-clearance facility.

"Implementing pre-clearance for passenger trains travelling between New York and Canada will be critical to both increasing efficiency and economic opportunities," said Senator Schumer. "This legislation will bring us one step closer to reducing horrible wait times and boosting tourism opportunities."

Garry Douglas, President of the North Country Chamber of Commerce, said, "This agreement will allow common-sense solutions to challenges such as how to speed cross-border Amtrak service."

*Tony Rudmann*

## **\$500 Million Available for New TIGER Grants**

US Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx has announced \$500 million will be made available for transportation projects across the country under the eighth round of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) competitive grant program.

Since 2009, TIGER has provided nearly \$4.6 billion to 381 projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. According to Secretary Foxx, demand for program funding has been overwhelming with nearly 6,700 previous applications requesting more than \$134 billion for surface transportation projects in previous rounds.

The grant program supports innovative projects, including multi-modal and multi-jurisdictional projects, which are difficult to fund through traditional federal programs. These federal funds leverage money from private sector partners, states, local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, ports, and transit agencies. The 2015 TIGER round alone leveraged \$500 million in federal investment to support \$1.4 billion in overall transportation investments. New York State  
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applicants have received a number of grants during previous TIGER cycles. In 2015 Buffalo was awarded \$18 million to rebuild the lower Main Street segment of the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority's Metro Rail light rail service. Also, \$10 million was awarded the Vermont Agency for Transportation to fund track upgrades to extend Amtrak's *Ethan Allen* from Rutland to Burlington.

Entities applying for TIGER grants do not usually announce they are seeking funds from the program. However, New York has a number of rail related projects which might be suitable for TIGER funding. Among the possible projects are: Governor Cuomo's proposed "Empire Station"; the Livingston Avenue rail bridge between Albany and Rensselaer; replacing Amtrak's Schenectady Station.

Applications for this year's TIGER program were due April 29th and awards are usually announced in late September or early October.

Tony Rudmann

## Polish High Speed Rail Service should be a Paradigm for America's NEC

On September 21, 2015, US Senator Chuck Schumer issued a press release saying that Amtrak was expected to sign a contract for a \$2.5 billion program which would create more than 750 jobs in upstate New York, but the announcement was premature. As of March 2016, negotiations between Amtrak and two potential builders are still continuing, one is likely Siemens, while the other, thanks to Sen. Schumer, is Alstom.

If Alstom wins the contract for the 28 train-sets then the *Pendolino* is likely to be the basis of the design for what could be called *Acela 2.0*, a 160-mph electric multiple unit (EMU) high speed train. The *Pendolino* was developed in Italy in the 1970s; the current *Acela* train-sets were built by Canada's Bombardier 15 years ago.

The present *Acela* consists of 8-car train-sets derived from Alstom's TGV trains and Bombardier's LRC coaches with 'power cars' (streamlined electric locomotives) at each end which carry no passengers. In contrast, the latest *Pendolino* ETR 610 is a 'distributed-power' train where all cars carry passengers, and the propulsion equipment is mounted under the floors of various train cars. Capacity is increased since all cars carry passengers, and the extra bulk and weight of power cars is unnecessary.

Capacity is important because the *Acela Express* is Amtrak's most profitable service, whose revenues far exceed its operating expenses, with existing trains frequently sold out due to only 304 passengers per train. The Amtrak specification for the new trains call for at least 425 seats per train, an increase of 40 percent.

Lastly, if the *Pendolinos* that might be ordered by Amtrak resemble the *Pendolinos* delivered recently in Europe, then they would be far more energy efficient, as well as physically efficient, compared to *Acela* trains, by carrying far more passengers in trains which consume less energy, and are of lighter weight, thus reducing operating expenses.

An idea of how recently built *Pendolinos* look and perform is provided by recent orders in Europe, including Poland, which has undertaken a complete re-launch of its inter-city services built around the Alstom train-set.

Poland had built a high-speed line rail line in the 1970s, running from its capital, Warsaw, south to Krakow, its second largest city, and Katowice, a major science, cultural, and industrial center. With geometry designed for 250 km/h (155 mph), the new Central Rail Line was ideal for high speed services, but for years it was used for, at first, only freight, and then standard passenger trains. Poland at the time had no rolling stock capable of even 100 mph, let alone 155-mph!



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After Poland joined the European Union in 2004, financing for infrastructure upgrades and new rolling stock became available. European Train Control System (ETCS), a very sophisticated signal system which transmits track profiles and signal instructions to an on-board computer which displays a safe braking curve on a monitor to the engineer, was installed in 2013, providing the cab signalling needed by high speed trains. ETCS satisfies all the requirements for our Positive Train Control (PTC).

In 2011 Alstom won a contract to provide twenty *Pendolino* ETR 610 trains capable of 155 mph to be delivered by 2014. The first *Pendolino* was delivered in Poland in August 2013. On test runs in November 2013, the *Pendolino* reached a record 182 mph. Revenue service by the *Pendolino* began in December 2014. The new modern trains, combined with track upgrading and a \$3 billion rebuild of the connecting Warsaw-Gdansk line to allow speeds up to 125 mph, caused rail ridership on Poland's busiest passenger line, the Warsaw-Krakow route, to increase 70 percent by mid-2015.

The *Pendolino* ETR 610s operating in Poland are seven-car trains carrying 402 passengers including 45 in First Class, 355 in Second Class, 2 handicapped seats, plus a cafe car. Each trainset weighs 395 tons carrying 402 passengers, compared to a weight of 565 tons carrying 304 passengers for the *Acela Express*. The order by PKP Intercity of Poland cost 665 million Euros (approximately \$730 million) partly financed by a European Investment Bank loan for the twenty trains, including 17 years of maintenance by Alstom at a dedicated maintenance depot in Warsaw for the *Pendolinos*.

Ironically Poland, which was bankrupt after the collapse of Communism in 1990, now has a more modern, higher-performance fleet of high-speed trains than the US has on the Northeast Corridor.

The Polish *Pendolinos*, however, do not tilt like other sets in Europe and Britain. The use of straight-as-an-arrow right-of-way removes this need from Polish services. The name "Pendolino" comes from the Italian word for "small pendulum" and references the train's original ground breaking technology, including the mechanism enabling the trains to tilt up to 8-degrees in order to take curves at higher speeds than conventional trains while maintaining passenger comfort and safety.

Prototypes were tested in the 1970s and, with the acquisition of patents and technology from British Rail's failed APT tilt train project, a refined ETR 450 *Pendolino*



**ABOVE: The Chinese version of Alstom's *Pendolino* now in high speed service in mainland China**

design enter widespread commercial service in the late 1980s on Italian State Railways. Original developer FIAT Ferroviaria was sold to the French rail builder Alstom in 2000 by FIAT. Alstom has gone on to develop the next generation 'New Pendolino' design class which includes the sets exported to Poland.

Amtrak's specifications are, of course, different from those of European railways. US safety regulations will likely increase the weight of the trains, and "Buy American" rules will increase the cost. The *Pendolinos* for Poland were built in Alstom's plant in Savigliano, Italy (formerly FIAT Ferroviaria) which has 30 years of experience in building successive generations of *Pendolinos*.

Buy-American rules will require Alstom to set up a plant in the US (the likely retrofitting of the existing Alstom factory in Hornell, NY) whose workers will need to learn to make an unfamiliar product. The trains sold to Poland cost around \$450 million for the twenty trains alone, without maintenance. The numbers cited by Senator Schumer suggest that the cost of Amtrak's trains may be double the cost in Europe. However, with the Northeast Corridor already today being better than a break-even operation, a 40 percent to 96 percent increase in Acela Express capacity should still yield substantial profits.

Some writers have pointed out that extra Acela revenues could decrease Amtrak's overall losses and subsidize the national system. This writer believes – others may disagree – that any extra profits should be used to expand rail ridership in the Northeast Corridor. Amtrak's Northeast Corridor fares are far higher than...

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elsewhere in the US. For example, the New York – Washington adult fare for 225 miles by a *Northeast Regional* train is \$88, compared with Chicago – Detroit 281 miles for \$37, Chicago-St. Louis 284 miles for \$27. The high NEC fares undoubtedly impact ridership, and have a negative impact on the NEC economy by increasing transportation costs.

Gasoline does not cost three times as much in the Northeast. Diverting passengers from auto and air travel to rail would serve national goals of saving energy and minimizing climate change. A flexible fare structure on the NEC through better use of 'Yield Management' techniques might attract many more riders than present high fares which dissuade automobile owners from travelling by train.

Wherever the *Pendolino* has gone (from Finland to China) there has been significant improvements in passenger rail travel, inducing far higher rail ridership. Yet improvements in trains and infrastructure are not enough, as the example of Virgin Train's *Pendolino* services on Britain's upgraded West Coast Mainline demonstrates. Here, new train-sets running faster and more frequent over a re-built permanent right-of-way was exploited by an aggressive marketing and fare strategy last decade, boosting ridership from 13 million in 1998 to over 30 million passengers annually today.

Let's hope that Amtrak's new high-speed train-sets married to the necessary NEC infrastructure renewal and expansion to exploit their capabilities to the fullest will result in a passenger rail renaissance like that seen in the UK and Poland. American rail planners should heed the lessons to be learn from overseas.

*Christopher Wasiutynski*

## **Auf Wiedersehen 'City Night Line'**

Deutsche Bahn (DB), the German national railway, will swing the axe down on all the overnight sleeper trains that it operates in Germany. The victim of budget airlines and inter-city busses, expanding high-speed rail services, and new "track access fees" due to the separation of infrastructure from train operators, DB has decided to end its famous 'City Night Line' (CNL) overnight sleeper service.

The overnight sleeper trains will be replaced by overnight high-speed intercity ICE services and intercity busses operated by DB. Some cross-border overnight trains operated by foreign railways like Austria's (ÖBB) may still run into Germany, operated by DB under contract.

Germany is following the example of other countries, including Japan, where most of the "Blue Trains" have been discontinued, or plan to be in the near future. In Japan the Sunrise Seto/Sunrise Izumo operated by JR West connecting Tokyo with western Japan may be the last ones, the trains to Hokkaido from Tokyo will be axed this spring once the Hokkaido Shinkansen is opened.

That seems to leave Russia, Britain, and the good old USA as the last developed nations still investing in overnight sleeping car train services. The British are re-equipping the London-Scotland 'Caledonian Sleeper', the Russians have upgraded their overnight trains and will start a new Berlin-Moscow service, and of course here in America we have the *Viewliner II* order. Interestingly, both the British and Amtrak sleepers are being built by the Spanish rail builder CAF.

*Benjamin Turon*



## **State Lawmakers Work to Improve Grade Crossing Safety**

NYS Assemblyman Tom Abinanti, a Westchester Democrat, is sponsoring a bill that requires a statewide study of railroad crossings by the New York Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). Supporters of the bill in the NYS Senate are calling for that legislature body to pass the bill quickly. The Assembly passed the bill last year but it failed to pass in the Senate.

Independent Democrat Sen. David Carlucci, who sponsors the bill in the Senate, told WMAC Northeast Public Radio, "Right now, we have over 5,300 rail crossings in New York state and we're really flying in the

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dark. We don't know which rail crossings are the most dangerous, which ones need some minor changes, which ones need to be eliminated altogether. And the federal government has come out and said, 'look, we will provide funding, but you need to give us a plan'. And as a legislator, as a leader in New York state, I feel that we don't have the proper information to know which rail crossings are the most dangerous and what changes need to be made at each."

Assemblyman Abinanti's district includes Valhalla, the site of the fatal Metro-North grade crossing crash evening of February 3, 2015, that killed six people and injured 15 others. An EMU Metro-North commuter train collided with an SUV stuck in bumper-to-bumper stop-and-go traffic at a grade crossing.

In February, Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Administrator Sarah Feinberg sent a letter to states asking that they monitor and test crossing signals and adjacent traffic signals to ensure they're synched and operating properly. New York State's congressional delegation, including Rep. Nita Lowey whose district includes the site of the deadly Metro North incident, are working on securing federal money for grade crossing improvements or elimination.

*Benjamin Turon*

## **New Dual-Mode Locomotives are Needed to Replace Aging GE P32 Fleet from the 1990s**

It has come to ESPA's attention that Amtrak's existing fleet of GE P32AC-DM "Dual-Mode" diesel-electric locomotives are now reaching their 20-year service life, and as a result are suffering increasing problems of reliability.



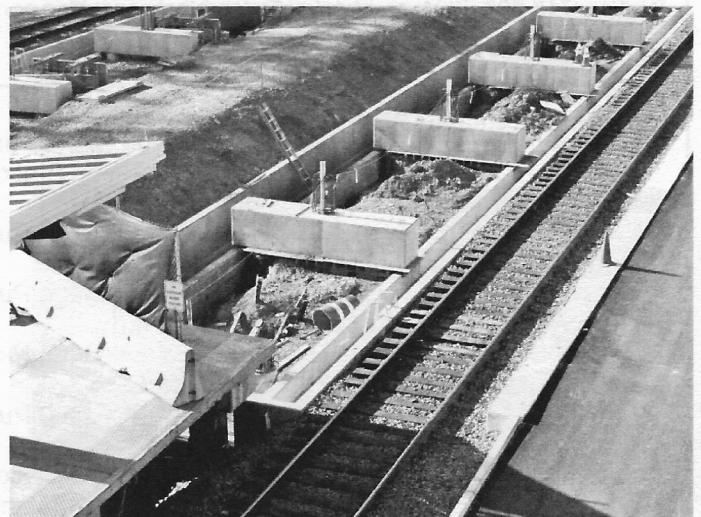
It is the opinion of informed sources that they need to be replaced sooner than later by new locomotives built specifications layout by the multi-agency 'Next Generation Equipment Committee' established by the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) of 2008 that meet the needs of Amtrak, Metro North, LIRR, and NJ Transit. Locomotive builders Siemens Mobility, Caterpillar EMD, and Bombardier, have existing passenger locomotive designs that can be adapted to meet these specifications.

In the coming months ESPA hopes to work with others including state lawmakers to ensure our inter-city service in Upstate NY, with all the new infrastructure improvements, including the long-awaited Albany-Schenectady 2<sup>nd</sup> track, are not all for naught due to the lack of locomotives in working order that can haul trains into Penn Station.

*Benjamin Turon*

## **Work Progresses on Track and Platform Work at Albany-Rensselaer...**

... but the on-going construction, while leading to greatly improved future capacity and reliability, has created, in the short term, delays as the station is now down to two tracks platform tracks, instead of the previous three. As shown below, on-going work to extend the length of the platform will include an inspection trench running along the track underneath the platform. *For more photos visit the gallery section of ESPA's Facebook page.*



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### 2016 - 17 ESPA Working Group Meeting & Lunch Dates

If you would like to become more active in ESPA, our bi-monthly 'Working Group' meetings are the perfect opportunity to learn more about the Association and how YOU can make a difference!

ALL ESPA members (and other interested persons) are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact President Bruce Becker, 716-880-7291 or [bbecker@clearblockconsulting.com](mailto:bbecker@clearblockconsulting.com), for more information or if you are planning on attending a meeting. Advance registration is required!

**All Meetings are 12:00n to 4:00pm**

**Saturday, August 6, 2016 Utica** - Trackside Restaurant  
at Union Station

**Saturday, September 24, 2016 • Schenectady** –  
Backstage Pub

**Saturday, January 21, 2017 • Schenectady** –  
Backstage Pub

**Saturday, November 12, 2016 • Schenectady** –  
Backstage Pub

**Saturday, January 21, 2017 • Schenectady** –  
Backstage Pub

Check [www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org), for the most current information on meeting times and venues...ALL dates, locations and times are subject to change...

### ESPA MEMBERSHIP NEW OR RENEWAL

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

- ☐ Introductory membership (\$10.00 for one year)
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If you are a member of both ESPA and NARP you can save \$5 when renewing your ESPA membership.  
(Renew for \$19 instead of the regular \$24).

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