



Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

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Spring 2020

**Public Transportation Systems Get
Federal COVID-19 Aid**

A total of \$25 billion in federal funds assistance was authorized by the March 27 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) for local public systems which operate bus, light rail, paratransit services, according to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao said: "The grant funding will ensure our nation's public transportation systems can continue to provide services to the millions of Americans who depend on them."

The funds may be used by urban and rural public transit systems under previously established formula to support capital, operating and other expenses. Operating expense incurred beginning January 20, 2020, may pay to maintain transit services as well as paying for administrative leave for transit personnel due to reduced operations during the virus emergency.

The transit grant consists of \$22.7 billion allocated to large and small urban areas and \$2.2 billion allocated to rural areas. The funding will provide a 100 percent federal share, with no local match required. New York State has both urban and rural areas including MTA buses and subways, Regional Transportation Authorities in the Albany, Syracuse and Buffalo area and small bus lines. Because the amount available to each transit system is determined by a complex formula, the specific amounts coming to Empire State entities is not known as this article is being written.

"We know that many of our nation's public transportation system are facing extraordinary challenges and these funds will go a long way to assisting our transit industry partners in battling COVID-19," said FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams.

In addition to the CARES funding, the FTA's pre-existing Emergency Relief Program is available to help transit providers in states where the governor has declared an emergency.

Tony Rudmann

Go Green – members providing their e-mail address are entitled to full-color, electronic ESPA Express newsletter 1 - 2 weeks earlier. Our postage and printing cost savings will give ESPA more resources to further its passenger rail advocacy.

Please send your e-mail to:

andrewjohncabal@gmail.com

Railroad to Recovery

The current Pandemic Emergency from the COVID-19 virus has hit both individual New Yorkers and our greater society as a whole very hard – with large parts of the economy shut down in order to maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the disease. Sadly, many of our fellow citizens have fallen victim to the virus, passing on to another world.

For most of us – fortunately – the biggest challenge has been social isolation and economic hardship. The closure of non-essential business and travel in an economy dominated by service industry employment is a major blow. While some businesses have strived to remain open, many restaurants, hotels, and most attractions by April had shut down, laying off millions of employees.

Therefore, once defeat of the virus is certain, it will be time set forth actions planned during the ongoing crisis, to raise steam and set the wheels of the state's travel, hospitality, and leisure industry back into rapid motion. As we fight the desperate war, we must plan for the glorious peace to come.

Consider that, according to Empire State Development Corporation figures cited by a 2019 *Albany Times Union* article, tourism went from being New York State's fourth-largest industry to its third largest in 2018. It accounted for one in 10 jobs in the state, with an economic impact of \$108 billion in NY State fiscal year 2017.

While New York City sees the bulk of the tourism – welcoming a record 65.2 million visitors in 2018, comprising 51.6 million domestic and 13.5 million international visitors – the Cuomo Administration has been keen on directing some of that mighty flow to Upstate destinations. And in fact, the economies of some Upstate communities – located in the Catskill, Adirondack, Saratoga, and Niagara regions – are heavily dependent on the tourist, wedding, and convention business.

New York State has had a robust program of tourist promotion, spending about \$50 million annually through various initiatives including: I Love NY, Taste NY, and Path through History. Amtrak with state money from the PRIIA Section 209 operating contract does advertise the Adirondack and Empire Service on television, on radio, and in print ads. New York State also supports the

(Cont'd on page 7)

Federal COVID - !

(Law Allows Amtrak 1.2 Billion)

The recently enacted Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) will provide over \$1 billion to Amtrak to support the railroad's activities to prevent, r\prepare for, and respond to the spread of the coronavirus disease, "This \$1 billion in federal emergency assistance top Amtrak will maintain service for its passengers when the economy recovers," said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L Chao.

Coming off record ridership and revenue in 2019, COVID-19 has cut ridership over ninety percent as well as decimated advance ticket purchases.

Trains have been pullrd from certain routes and remaining car consists cut in size. New York state-supported services has had half of its schedule cut, trains reduced to 3 cars, and all service north and west of Albany on the Adirondack and EthenAllen eliminated.

The ARRES funding will be used to offset the loss of ticket revenue which is used to pay Amtrak's employees, but fuel for its operations, construction materials for its projects and otherwise maintain the robust network of inter-city passenger routes, according to the U.S. Transportation Department. The ticket revenues also fund track and infrastructure maintenance programs on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor which millions of Americans use to commute to their jobs every day. The federal department press release of April 10th said the \$1.2 billion consists of \$492 million for the Northeast Corridor and \$526 million for The National network.

The transportation Department announcement indicates the aid funding will "help mitigate the cost impact on America's 28 State-supported inter-city passenger routes, where State governments would otherwise be required to make up ticket revenue shortfalls. At least \$239 million of the funds provided will be used in lieu of any increase in States' payments." Under 2008 federal law, New York State pays about \$44 million each year for its state-supported train service.

Tony Rudmann

U.S. DOT Announces \$311.8 Million Available for Rail Capital Projects

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has opened applications for \$311.8 million in rail capital improvements under the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program. Funded by the recently adopted 2020 Federal Fiscal Year Budget, CRISI is a competitive discretionary grant program available for both passenger and freight capital expenditures.

FRA Administrator Ronald L. Batory said: "I encourage all eligible parties to take full advantage of this funding opportunity." Applications may be submitted for projects that improve transportation safety, efficiency and reliability.

Congestion challenges, highway-rail grade crossings, upgrade of short line or regional railroad infrastructure, relocation of rail lines. Improvement of inter-city passenger

rail capital assets and development of railroad safety technology were cited as possibly uses for the funds.

Of the total available funds, 25 percent are reserved for projects in rural communities which Administrator Batory said, "face unique challenges in safety, infrastructure condition, and passenger and freight usage." In addition, \$45 million is earmarked for the acquisition of rights-of-way, track, or track structure.

The FRA worked quickly to process and announced \$248.5 million awarded from the 2019 FFY budget on March 30, 2020, funding 32 projects in 27 states. No New York State projects won funding but the usual practice only identifies award winners. Maine's Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority was awarded \$16.9 million for work at the Wells Transportation Center.

Applications for 2020 CRISI funds must be submitted by June 15, 2020.

Tony Rudmann

MTA Buys Grand Central Terminal

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority purchased Grand Central Terminal and Metro-North Railroad's Harlem and Hudson lines in March, according to Progressive Railroad magazine referencing Real Estate Weekly. Prior to the transaction, the purchased properties had been under a 280 year lease.

The Grand Central lease was signed in 1994 with American Premier Underwriters which sold the ownership rights to Midtown Trackage Ventures in the early 2000s.

In 2018, the MTA announced it would to buy the terminal and lines rather than rent the properties. The \$35 million price under negotiation would be cheaper than continuing to pay \$2.4 million annual rent for the remaining lease term. In addition, the MTA purchase gives the authority control over development rights along the Harlem and Hudson lines.

Tony Rudmann

New Book on Second Avenue Subway

Phil Plotch, Associate Professor of Political Science at Saint Peter's University in Jersey City, NJ, has written a new, in-depth book on NYC's long struggle to complete the first segment of the Second Ave. subway. Plotch's 288 page book, *Last Subway*, investigates the constant tension between investments in new construction and the need to maintain the existing system. He describes how "uninformed and self-serving elected officials" have created false impressions about the ability to deliver on both new lines and normal maintenance and why it took well over 50 years to build the first operable segment.

Last Subway is available from cornellpress.cornell.edu.

OPERATION LIFESAVER

**Look Both Ways! Always expect a train
Trains run on any track, at any time, in either
direction.**

ESPA Opposes Parking Rate Increase at the Rensselaer Station

The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) held a public hearing for community members and stakeholders on Wednesday, January 29, 2020 at the Rensselaer Rail Station on their proposed parking rate change at the Rensselaer Rail Station. The regional transit agency owns the station (of which, Amtrak, the Postal Service, and MegaBus are tenants). It was stated by a CDTA official off the record at the meeting that the parking rate increase was to offset expensive repairs to the parking garage.

The proposed parking rates: \$14 garage with a \$70, 7-day rate; \$10 in surface lots A, B or C with a \$50, 7-day rate. Parking for up to one hour would be free in all lots, the garage, and top deck.

ESPA President Gary Prophet spoke at the meeting against the proposal, and on behalf of the rail advocacy organization submitted a detailed written comment. Mr. Prophet started by stating that the proposed increase is non-competitive with all other train stations in the State of New York, and even higher than the lowest rate at the Albany Airport.

Most Amtrak stations train stations in Upstate NY – including the two stations just south of Albany, Hudson and Rhinecliff – have free parking. The Syracuse train station charges \$8 per day. The Poughkeepsie and Beacon train stations, which have more train service than Albany, charge \$3.75 for 16 hours of parking, with free parking on weekends. In White Plains and North White Plains, the highest in the MTA Metro-North area, charges \$7.25 for 16 hours and \$10 if overnight.

The Buffalo Airport has parking rates of \$9 a day (\$12 for close lot), Rochester has \$10 a day for surface lot and \$14 a day in the parking garage, and Syracuse has \$10 a day for surface lot and \$12 a day in the parking garage.

At the Albany Airport, the parking garage is \$14, and the surface lot is \$10, which is (unsurprisingly) exactly the same as the proposed rail station rates. However, the Albany Airport also has a distant \$6 a day parking lot with a free shuttle bus that operates 24 hours a day. Therefore, the Rensselaer Rail Station would be more expensive than Upstate airports – even Albany's!

Mr. Prophet stated that higher parking fees will discourage rail travel from the Rensselaer Station, and therefore would work against state efforts to improve the environment. Studies show trains are the most environmentally friendly transportation mode; encouraging potential passengers to drive to other train stations to avoid any parking fee and to get a cheaper train ticket is not good environmental stewardship.

ESPA's recommendation is to leave the parking garage rate at \$12 a day (\$50 a week) and make the surface lots all \$8 a day (\$35 per week). The organization also recommends that the CDTA offer free shuttle bus from the train station to downtown Albany for the first 2 train arrivals from New York City on weekdays, which is at 10am and 11am and from downtown Albany to the train station for 2 of the late

afternoon train departures returning to New York City.

ESPA believes that free parking should be considered on all or selective weekends to promote the use of the train station, as many people today avoid the Albany station on Saturdays because a drive to Poughkeepsie or Beacon results in a lower rail fare and free parking, while encountering less traffic than on weekdays. Finally, EZ-Pass should be utilized at the Albany train station for passengers to pay for parking; in fact, the CDTA at the meeting said they were working on getting E-Z Pass for the station.

Besides Mr. Prophet, Rensselaer Mayor Michael Stammel spoke as well at the public meeting, asking for the City of Rensselaer getting a small cut – Mayor Stammel said 50 cents – to offset the costs of hosting the 9th busiest Amtrak station in the country.

The Mayor pointed out the physical space the train station and rail yard take up within the city limits and the negative externalities of noise and air pollution from trains, buses, and cars. He expressed the fear that rising the parking rate would encourage train passengers to park their cars elsewhere in Rensselaer, taking up spaces for local residents and businesses.

The CDTA in its January press release stated that if the parking rate were approved, it would be enacted on April 1st.

However, at the time of the writing this article, the rates remain unchanged at a daily rate \$12.00 (7 day rate: \$50.00) for the garage, \$8.00 (7 day rate: \$35) for lots A and C, and \$7 (7 day rate: \$30) for lot C. Disabled customers pay only \$6.00 per day in the garage.

Benjamin Turon

Rhinecliff Station Rehab May Start in 2021

Amtrak's Rhinecliff station, originally built for the New York Central Railroad in 1914, may get a needed rehabilitation in 2021. Stairs from the cliff side station to the riverside platform level are noticeably rusted, the elevator to the train level is broken and platform canopies are leaking, according to the *Poughkeepsie Journal*.

In Amtrak fiscal year 2019, the station served 211,139 passengers and generated more than \$7.2 million in revenue.

Amtrak is said to have plan to correct the problems and renovate restrooms, repainting the timber, installing new interior and exterior lighting, placement of new signage and repaving the parking lot. Needed repairs have been delayed because Amtrak does not have clear title to the facility, according to Town of Rhinebeck Supervisor Elizabeth Spinzia. It appears there is a paperwork issue with unpaid property taxes which the Town and Dutchess County are working to resolve so renovations may begin. Supervisor Spinzia noted the station must be ADA compliant by 2021. The station is listed in the Amtrak 2021- 24 Plan to have ADA-compliant status.

In a recent visit, U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) said: “after 15 years of deferred action, I think all stakeholders are ready to get on the same page and help Rhinecliff station get on the fast-track into the 21st century.” Also, the Senator called for ADA compliance.

Tony Rudmann

FRA Proposed Rule on OTP Standards for Amtrak

The Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) proposed rule to establish Intercity On-Time Performance Standards & Reporting was published in the Federal Record on March 31, 2020.

FRA proposes metrics and minimum standards for measuring the performance and service quality of intercity passenger train operations. Consistent with the statutory mandate, FRA and Amtrak jointly developed the proposed metrics and minimum standards.

While not perfect these proposed standards are certainly good enough for railroad passengers. The proposed rule makes for a lengthy read; however, former ESPA president and RPA Operations VP Bruce Becker had reviewed the document and recommends its full support. The new standards will go a long way in reducing delays to intercity passenger trains by host railroads by holding freight railroads accountable for unnecessary delays to Amtrak trains.

In New York, all Amtrak service north, west, and east of the Capital District runs over tracks of freight railroads, including CSX and Canadian Pacific. Between Schenectady, Albany and Poughkeepsie, and on Manhattan Island, Amtrak trains run on tracks maintained and dispatched by Amtrak; south of Poughkeepsie the public host commuter railroad is Metro-North.

Public comments on the proposed rule are being accepted by FRA through June 1, 2020. All rail passengers are strongly urged to support the proposed rule. Please provide personal examples of the difficulties and hardships that you have endured due to late passenger trains in submitted comments. Generic comments along the lines of "freight railroads hate Amtrak" are not deemed by officials as having the weight as personal anecdotes on specific experiences.

For example: "I was on the *Lake Shore Limited* last September and were delayed for 2 hours because of freight congestion, according to the train crew. I hope these new federal on-time standards will lead to better time keeping by Amtrak trains. I ride Amtrak twice a year to visit my grandchildren in Ohio. I don't like flying and the drive is too long at my age."

You may submit comments identified by the docket number FRA-2019-0069 by any one of the following methods: Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and follow the online instructions for submitting comments; or by Mail to: U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Operations, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590.

You can view the proposed rule here... www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/03/31/2020-06245/metrics-and-minimum-standards-for-intercity-passenger-rail-service.

ESPA Members Advance Stockholder Proposal at Norfolk-Southern for On-Time Amtrak Trains

Two ESPA members along with two Rail Passenger Association members, all of whom own stock in Norfolk-Southern Corp., submitted a stockholder resolution last fall that would have requested the company's Board of Directors review the railroads compliance with federal law on operating Amtrak trains on time.

Under 49 U.S.C. § 24308(c), freight railroads are required to give Amtrak trains preference over slower freight trains in dispatching and operations. Non-compliance has been the subject of additional federal legislation, lawsuits, negative publicity about On Time Performance (OTP) and proposed on-time standards from the Federal Railroad Administration (comment period open until June).

The resolution noted Amtrak passengers' general strong support for freight railroads and the negative publicity accruing to Norfolk-Southern from Amtrak statistics showing NS to be the worst performing Class I railroad for operating passenger trains on-time.

Norfolk-Southern objected to inclusion of the stockholder resolution in the Company's annual meeting proxy material via a commonly used appeal to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. The SEC has jurisdiction over many shareowner rights associated with corporate annual meetings and proxy material.

Although the NS stockholders, with assistance from the Railroad Passengers Association's Washington staff, rebutted the company's objections with the SEC, the SEC staff sided with the Norfolk-Southern attorneys and held that our resolution did not meet the SEC guidelines for inclusion in the railroad's proxy material.

While this stockholder proposal was unsuccessful, new efforts are planned to reach out to owners of larger amounts of freight railroad stock (public pension funds, union pension funds and perhaps even mutual funds) to get the attention of corporate boards on complying with federal law and dispatching Amtrak trains in a timely fashion. If you are an individual owner of stock in a freight railroad and would like to participate in these efforts, please send your contact information to: staussnyc@verizon.net

Steve Strauss

Possible Dual-Mode Replacement Plans

This winter Amtrak released its 'Equipment Asset Line Plan', a report on renewing its equipment fleet of locomotives and coaches. It makes for informative and thought-provoking reading, particularly concerning the future of the Empire Corridor.

As readers of this newsletter may be aware, the current Empire Corridor fleet of GE Genesis P32AC-DM dual-mode diesel-electric locomotives built in the 1990s are increasingly unreliable after over two-decades of intensive use, needing replacement sooner than later.

ESPA has stated for several years that the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) needs to take the lead by directly purchasing new dual-modes. However, the Equipment Asset Line Plan seems to indicate that it will be Amtrak – in consultation with NYSDOT – that will make the acquisition. And furthermore, instead of a like-for-like replacement, something more ambitious may be undertaken.

A primary focus of the fleet renewal plan is on replacing the existing Amfleet coaches from the 1970s, which, given the recent purchase Siemens ACS-64 Cities Sprinter, will most certainly be unpowered “integrated fixed consist” trainsets made up of permanently-coupled “trailer” coaches that will undergo maintenance as a unit.

The Railjet trainsets of the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) an example of what Amtrak is likely to employ for most Northeast Regional frequencies. The seven car sets of Siemens Viaggio Comfort coaches (same as those used by Virgin Trains Brightline) – including a rear streamline cab “driving trailer” car – are hauled by a Siemens EuroSprinter electric locomotive, the base design for Amtrak's new ACS-64 locomotives.

Yet there is more. Many have heard the story of Richard Anderson – the recent former Amtrak president – wondering why it was necessarily acceptable for trains traveling south from Washington Union Station into Virginia to take a half hour changing locomotives. This observation has led Amtrak to look for a dual-mode locomotive or multiple-unit trainset solution to this issue, which solving could cut travel times by 15 to 30 minutes for Regional trains serving non-electric territory in Virginia. The Equipment Asset Plan set forth the new 125-mph Hitachi “Azuma” Class 800 bi-mode intercity trainsets utilized in Britain as a possible example of a solution.

Amtrak's expressed interest in multiple-unit “integrated” trainsets opens some interesting options for dual-mode diesel-electric motive power. While the term multiple-unit for passenger trains usually signifies a DMU/EMU trainset – were each passenger car has its own diesel engine and/or traction motors – it can also refer to the motive power being distributed between two power cars. Here Britain's railways provide another example, the iconic “Intercity 125” High Speed Train (HST).

In its report Amtrak also expresses an interest for “tri-mode” trainsets for new Empire Corridor, to be derived from a future dual-mode trainset for the Northeast Corridor. These would be trainsets that could run off diesel power, overhead AC catenary, and DC third rail. The problem with dual- and tri-modes is weight, the report stating the 144-ton dual-mode Bombardier ALP45DM locomotives used by NJT do not meet the speed and weight requirements of Amtrak service on the Northeast Corridor or Empire Corridor.

British Rail in the 1970s had a similar issue of speed and weight in designing a 125-mph diesel high speed train. The train had to have a commercial speed 25% greater than existing 100-mph locomotive hauled express trains; yet do so without increasing stress to the underlying tracks, therefore keeping track maintenance costs within the existing budget.

The solution was double-ending a rake of seven to nine Mark 3 coaches with two 77-ton 2,250-hp power cars – which combined with lowering the unsprung weight (weight of locomotive not carried by the suspension) created a train that at 125-mph was gentler on the rails than previous 100-mph locomotive hauled trains.

A similar solution could be applied to Amtrak's desired dual-mode integrated trainsets for the Northeast Corridor, and possibly Empire Corridor trains. With two power cars the necessary diesel horsepower can be divided in half between two prime movers – while accommodating the additional weight of the electrical equipment necessary for overhead AC and third-rail DC operation – thus reducing the axle-weight of the power cars to an acceptable level.

Another benefit is reliability, should one power car fail, the other can still provide onboard “hotel power” while bringing the train to the next station or with reduced speed completing its journey. For example, the Intercity 125 can still run at 100-mph with one HST power car disabled. A second benefit is that the bidirectional sets allowed for faster turnarounds at terminal stations.

For the Empire Corridor a tri-mode integrated-trainset would also be of great benefit for enabling future electrification north of the existing Metro-North third-rail territory that ends at Croton-Harmon. Dual- mode and tri-mode diesel-electric trainsets make electrification a more palatable project financially and operational, since you do not have to electrify all route miles in one big effort.

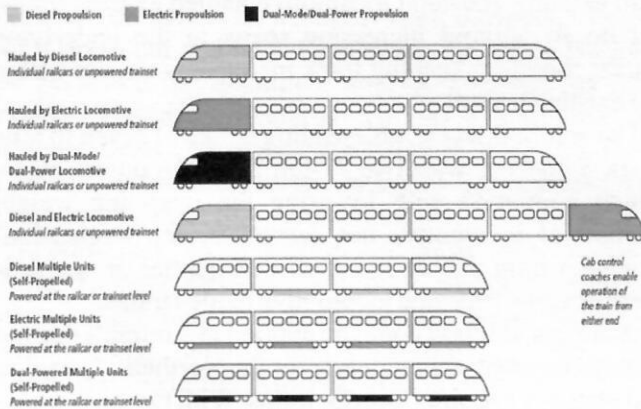
For example: a future tri-mode trainset could run off catenary from Penn Station, switch to the third rail at Spuyten Duyvil, switch to overhead catenary at Croton-Harmon, and then run-off onboard diesel power on unelectrified freight tracks beyond the Capital District. It certainly seems an idea that should be seriously examined, given the mandated by New York State's ambitious 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation.

Yet the most likely and expedient action still is Amtrak and NYSDOT piggybacking on an ongoing Metro-North order to replace its fleet of GE Genesis dual-modes with a like-for-like locomotive; speculation is a modified SC-44 Siemens Charger. The Empire Corridor's pool of Amfleet coaches would then be swapped out for a new fleet of Amtrak's new integrated fixed trainsets for the Northeast Regionals.

Still Amtrak's equipment plan report shows another tantalizing alternative that would make innovatively flexible state-of-the-art trainsets the future of the Empire Corridor. Only time will tell what future will come to fruition.

Benjamin Turon

POTENTIAL AMFLEET I REPLACEMENT CONSIST TYPES



Madison Square Garden: The Elephant Atop Pennsylvania Station

Proposal 30 of Governor Cuomo's State-of-the State Address was dedicated to his vision of "Creating the Empire Station Complex." The plan is expanded online via: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-30th-proposal-2020-state-state-creating-21st-century-empire-station>. However, the proverbial "Elephant in the Room," Madison Square Garden (MSG), is only referenced as to its theater which might be acquired so as to be removed which would allow a stunning view to train travelers of the daylight outside on 8th Avenue facing the historic Farley Post Office



Building. But why stop at that? The MSG should be either removed completely or repurposed into a "Great Hall" for the Station Complex. There are two possibilities that have been discussed. In fact, a remarkable article entitled "Penn Station Reborn" by Michael Kimmelman and Vishaan Chakrabarti, in the September 30, 2016 New York Times does just that and it makes its presentation quite eloquently. Simply put, the MSG would be hollowed out – but with its shell remaining – to allow an open "Great Hall" space within the station that would have natural daylight. The planners intend to retain the circular superstructure and roof, but construct a set of concentric glass walls designed to withstand shattering that would integrate a "passive heat and cooling system that would lower operating costs and let smoke escape through the top in an emergency." At night, the transparent cylindrical structure would glow its greetings to the world.

Finally, far below, many of the support columns now placed on the train platforms could be removed – that would be another major benefit. The logic and appearance and cost are all presented clearly. Likewise, the concept could integrate itself easily within the governor's plan as presented.

The second plan is breathtaking. It is to replicate the old Pennsylvania Station as much as possible if not entirely. Searching the internet with the term "Rebuild Penn Station" will deliver a number of excellent articles plus video presentations, for example www.rebuildpennstation.org includes a tutorial on the old Penn Station and how to rebuild it at a relatively nominal cost considering that the foundations are certainly still in place and modern building materials and methods would be applied.

But the "elephant" must be gotten rid of. Pennsylvania Station serves 650,000 people each day, way beyond its capacity even with the eventual addition of Moynihan Train Hall in the Farley Post Office this December. Penn Station is a monumental

Office this December. Penn Station is a monumental transportation tool that is anchored where it is, but it has been compromised by the structure above it. Furthermore, MSG can be relocated, possibly within the post office annex across 8th Avenue. MSG could use a shot-in-the-arm anyway with modern facilities – it's good for business. In the meantime, brilliant minds have offered New York and the entire northeast two opportunities to do the ultimate upgrade to Penn Station right – not halfway...

Stanley J. Kozaczka

Governor Cuomo Announces Completion of MTA's L-Train Project Tunnel Rehabilitation

The L-Train project completion is timely proof that when we are confronted with a challenge we can build back better and stronger - especially when we work together and think outside the box," stated Governor Andrew M. Cuomo on April 26, 2020. Work on the L-Train project's tunnel rehabilitation during overnights and weekends allowed service to resume on both tracks on April 27. Additional L-Train project work to stations, capacity and accessibility upgrades are slated for completion in Fall 2020. The L-Train tunnel project was completed six months earlier than originally proposed, three months ahead of the new innovative plan that was announced in January 2019. A panel of engineering experts convened by the Governor had determined that a disruptive total shutdown was unnecessary. Completion came through under budget, saving more than \$100 million in project costs.

*From Press Release: Office of the NYS Governor project costs.
From Press Release: Office of the NYS Governor*



Railroad to Recovery (Cont'd from page 1)

New York by Rail website and on board magazine stocked at rail stations and in the coach seatbacks of Empire Corridor trains.

For the 2021 season the state government should launch a robust "See NY by Rail" advertising campaign to leisure travel within the state by our state-supported intercity rail services. As part of this campaign the state should leverage the existing and potential advertising space in MTA trains, buses, and facilities – for example Grand Central Terminal – to set before the eyes of commuters the idea of an easy get-away to Upstate NY.

NYSDOT and I Love NY should also negotiate with Amtrak to allow more promotional fares and travel packages for New York State destinations.

Amtrak nationally, for select destinations of its own choosing, offers promotional fare codes within its reservation system, allowing vacation travel providers to offer discounted tickets and travel packages at off-peak travel times.

The State of Maine has piggybacked on Amtrak's promotional fare codes to offer their own Amtrak travel packages for their *Downeaster* service. New York should do the same for the Empire Service, *Maple Leaf*, *Adirondack*, and *Ethan Allen*. Establishing an Amtrak Promo "V-Code" for the Empire Corridor would allow discount travel packages for Upstate destinations overlooked by existing Amtrak Vacation Packages.

Another action the state could take to encourage more tourist travel by train is to add a baggage car to one of the existing Empire Corridor frequencies, most suitably the *Maple Leaf*. Combined with the existing service offered by the *Lake Shore Limited*, a *Maple Leaf* baggage car would more readily allow the safe and convenient transport of bicycles and other sporting equipment. PennDOT did this for the state supported *Pennsylvanian* last year, NYSDOT should do so for the *Maple Leaf* in 2021.

And last in order to reach communities far from the train station, the state should work to coordinate more seamless transfers between Amtrak and motor coach carriers – including Greyhound and Trailways – through better joint scheduling and through ticketing to destination like Cooperstown and the Finger Lakes. A current (albeit a limited and seasonal) example of a cross-platform transfer is at Utica Union Station where Amtrak connects with some Adirondack Scenic Railroad trains to Thendara/Old Forge.

The combination of transport, lodging, and attractions in a "2021: See New York" campaign of advertising and travel packages could prove attractive to many Northeasterners, who, while not yet wanting to venture too far by air and lacking a car, still will want to take a vacation.

Advertising can place in the minds of masses yearning for the day when they are free of virus the idea of a train trip to Niagara Falls, Old Forge, Schenectady, Ticonderoga, or Manhattan – instead of an airline trip to Florida, the Caribbean, or Europe.

And with so many New York businesses, their employees, and vendors also needing people back in their shops, restaurants, hotels, and attractions, the promotional campaign laid out in this article would be money well spent, resulting in an economic and social return far above the public expenditure.

Benjamin Turon

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ESPA Working Group & Meeting

ALL ESPA members (and other interested persons) are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact President Gary Prophet at thegp@aol.com for more information or if you are planning on attending a meeting. Advance registration is required!

Meetings:

Sat, May 30, 2020 Virtual Video Meeting on Zoom from Noon-3pm. If you wish to attend contact Gary Prophet at thegp@aol.com

41st ESPA Annual Meeting will be in Schenectady March 6, 2021 from 11 am-4pm

ESPA Officers and Coordinators Meeting will take place in August, October, and November, on dates and locations TBD.

Check www.esparail.org, for the most current information on meeting times and venues...

ALL dates, locations and times are subject to change...

ESPA/RPA Member Discount

If you are a member of ESPA and RPA can save \$5 on their ESPA membership fee for Renewal or higher member levels (Renew for \$19 instead of the regular \$24)

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)
- Renewal membership (\$24.00 per year)
- Renewal - Student, Senior, Fixed-Income (\$12.50 per year)
- Family membership (\$30.00)
- Sustaining membership (\$50.00)*
- Patron membership (\$75.00)*
- Corporate membership (\$100.00)*
- Lifetime membership (\$300.00)*

Member
Number _____

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Please make checks/money orders payable to ESPA and mail to ESPA c/o Andrew Cabal, P.O. Box 434, Syracuse, NY 13209. *Premium membership can receive ESPA pin.

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