



Cuomo Has Positive Meeting with Trump on Gateway

Governor Andrew Cuomo had what he called a “positive meeting” with President Donald Trump on the Gateway Program on November 28 last year. The governor stated, “I think it's fair to say that the meeting was a positive meeting... I think it's fair to say that the president was receptive to what we were talking about, and the president said that he wanted to take the next steps to find a way forward. The president is skeptical of government construction contracts; I am skeptical of government construction contracts.”

Mr. Cuomo stated that he would consider building the new tunnels under the Hudson River to Penn Station with a successful public-private partnership model that was employed to rebuild the NYS Thruway Tappan Zee Bridge at a cost several billion lower than original estimates. Recently, billion-dollar cost overruns and delays measured in years of various MTA tunneling projects have created skepticism of the ability of New York to manage public-transit mega-projects.

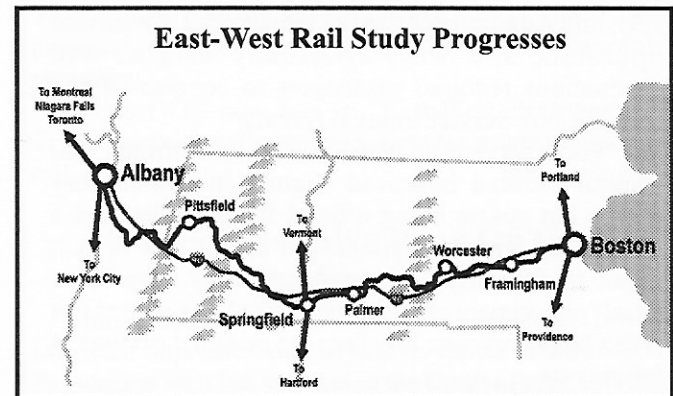
On October 17, 2018, the governor had a dead-of-night tour of the 108-year old Amtrak tunnels that, combined with their age and seawater flooding damage from Hurricane Sandy, need a complete rebuild. The fear is that one or both of the existing tunnels might need to be closed for rebuilding before the new tubes are built, resulting in a dramatic reduction in commuter and inter-city passenger service west of New York City.

During the after-tour press conference, Mr. Cuomo called on Mr. Trump to act to get the project going — including providing a 5-min video selling it to the president. This video is available for viewing on YouTube at: “NY Gov. Cuomo Gateway Tunnel Video”.

While Mr. Cuomo was upbeat after the meeting, as of January 2019, no action been taken by the federal government. In addition to funding (the Trump Administration having pulled out of a previous agreed deal from the Obama Administration), USDOT has yet to sign off on the gateway Project's environmental review.

Currently the project is being managed by the Gateway Development Corporation under the aegis of the Port Authority of NY & NJ. As part of the governor's Fy2020 executive budget, a bill was introduced that would create the gateway Development Commission to facilitate the project and co-ordinate the related activities of New York and New Jersey, Included would be a board of

commissioners comprising of three members appointed by NYSDOT, NJT, and Amtrak, to ensure the completion of the passenger rail project between Newark, NJ and New York City.
Benjamin Turon



The East-West Rail study by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) of potential passenger rail service between Boston-Springfield-Pittsfield has begun. Its East-West Passenger Rail Study Advisory Committee, made up of thirty prominent public officials and regional planners selected from across the state, met for the first time at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission offices in Springfield last year on December 18. Broad and serious support by multiple public officials, including State Senator Eric Lesser (D) of Longmeadow who has champion the idea of East-West Rail since taking elected office in 2015, moved Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker (R) to authorize MassDOT in June 2018 to retain a consulting firm (WSP USA) to complete in 12 to 18 months a \$1 million study on Boston-Springfield-Pittsfield rail service.

(Cont'd on page 5)

GO GREEN

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www.rwlens4@gmail.com.

View from the Cab

For October 2018, Amtrak's overall system ridership was even with the prior October. On the Northeast Corridor, both Acela Express and Northeast Regional trains between Washington, DC, and Boston each increased 2%. In addition, the various state-supported corridors also increased an overall of 2%.

However, long distance trains decreased 5.5% overall; the Cardinal and Capitol Limited each saw ridership decreases of over 13%, and the Lake Shore Limited decreased 5%.

For the last 6-month period of Fiscal Year 2018 (April 1 through Sept 30, 2018), the Lake Shore Limited's ridership decreased 26%, as Amtrak continues to downgrade this popular train; for June, July, and August, no Albany - New York City section operated, and west-of-Albany origins and destinations required passengers to connect to and from Empire Service trains at Albany.

Food service on the Lake Shore Limited and Capitol Limited improved slightly in mid-January with a hot option being offered for breakfast and a second hot option available for lunch and dinner, albeit to Sleeping Car passengers only. The "Box Meal" experiment on these two trains had resulted in a much larger revenue loss than the minimal savings in labor costs.

Additionally, the dining car is only available to passengers in sleeping cars, which excludes the majority of passengers on the train. In the recent past, half of the dinners served on the westbound Lake Shore Limited were sold to coach passengers, market segment that is now completely excluded from spending money for a decent or even not so decent boxed meal in the dining car. Coach passengers and Business Class passengers now have only the café car as an option for meals on the Lake Shore Limited.

When I was on Train 48 departing Chicago in December before the café car even opened, a few business class passengers had set up their laptops and occupied 2 tables, 1 table was stacked with boxes, and the other tables were reserved for the crew, so not a single coach passenger could use any of the tables in the café car. This train needs to re-open the dining car for all passengers, improve its food selection, have a full lounge car, and offer direct checked baggage service to Springfield and Boston (which was recently discontinued).

ESPA's 39th Annual Meeting will be on Saturday, March 9, 2019 in Schenectady, about a five-minute walk from the new Schenectady Amtrak Station. Please mail in the enclosed form and join us as we will have many great speakers. The \$40 registration also includes a three-course lunch. Elections of ESPA Officers will also take place. If anyone wishes to nominate an ESPA Member for an Officer position, please contact Gary Prophet at 917-647-2973 or at thegp@aol.com.

Gary Prophet, ESPA President

Cuomo Discusses MTA in Radio Interview

Governor Andrew Cuomo recently undertook about a dozen half-hours interviews with WAMC Northeast Public Radios Dr. Alan Chartock on that station's three-hour long morning 'Roundtable' program discussing a wide range of topics, including several conversations about the future of the Metropolitan Transportation Agency (MTA). Cuomo rejected Dr. Chartock's contention that the governor run the MTA. Cuomo stated that the MTA's design is a "mess" as a result of nobody wanting to be responsible for fare increases. Cuomo said that it should be redesigned so that someone is responsible for the agency because currently, in the governor's opinion, "nobody runs that mess."

Mr. Cuomo called for reorganizing the MTA, stating that "somebody has to run it" and that under its current "1960s holdover" setup no one did because the Mayor of New York and leaders of the State Senate and Assembly each have unilateral veto power over its budget. In addition, the governor's 6 appointees do not make up a majority on the MTA board of 17 individuals. The board includes 4 from New York City and 7 from the surrounding counties. Cuomo also pointed out that the hiring for the MTA is done by the New York City Civil Service System.

Cuomo called once again for congestion pricing, "constant long-term funding for the MTA... through tolling in Manhattan's central business district." The governor's proposed congestion pricing plan would have New York City and New York State split any funding shortfall 50/50.

The governor also defended his new plan for rebuilding the NYC Subway's Canarsie Tunnel used by the L Train. The MTA had been planning to close the tunnels for 15 months starting on April 27 for a complete rebuilding, disrupting the commute of countless New Yorkers, when Mr. Cuomo, on January 3, announced that there was a better plan that would eliminate the need for the shutdown.

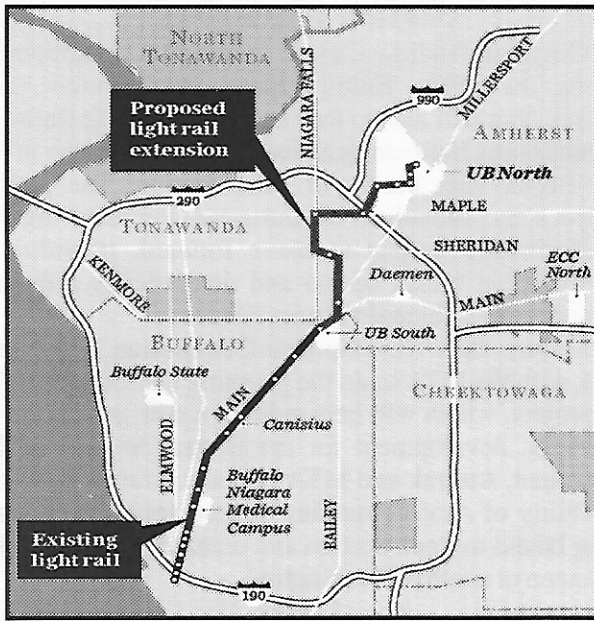
The original plan required the complete closure of the tunnel for rebuilding the concrete bench walls on each side of the track bed that contain the electrical and signaling cabling. Large portions were damaged by flooding in October 2012 by Hurricane Sandy, causing corrosion of the cables housed within the bench wall that may still be corroding from the inundation of salt water.

Under the new plan developed by team of engineers from Cornell and Columbia Universities, and approved by Parsons Brinckerhoff (now WSP), the firm that did the original reconstruction plan, the heavy cabling would now be mounted on racks alongside the tunnel walls, while the old cabling would be sealed in the repaired bench walls. This work could be done with more limited service closures overnight and during weekends.

Dr. Chartock's stated to Mr. Cuomo that, "the MTA is not all that happy, or some people on the MTA are not all that happy, with your plan on the L Train. You made real news here when you talked about the L Train a couple of weeks ago. Now you brought in a bunch of "junior-geniuses"

(Cont'd on page 4)

Buffalo MAP



Expansion of Buffalo Metro Rail Picks Up Speed

The last months of 2018 saw several developments in the effort to expand the Buffalo Metro Rail, the only rail rapid-transit line in Upstate NY. The existing 6½-mile long downtown-to-city line route opened in 1986, terminating at the South

Campus of the University of Buffalo (UB) — and the long-dormant plan to extend it three miles north to the UB North Campus in the suburb of Amherst has been revived.

The Niagara Frontier Transit Authority (NFTA) has received nearly \$778,000 from the Federal Transit Administration to study development potential along the route of the proposed Amherst expansion. The NFTA, partnering with the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council, will work with local municipalities to undertake urban planning work geared toward maximizing private economic development opportunities of “transit-oriented-development” around the proposed new Metro Rail stations.

NFTA planners have made a major change to the route of the proposed Amherst extension. The length of its new underground section from the South Campus station will be significantly shortened by having the tracks rise to the surface at the southern end of Niagara Falls Boulevard, instead of running beneath Bailey Avenue to Sheridan Drive.

NFTA Executive Director Kimberley A. Minkel said that the revised plans will save \$200 million from \$1.2 billion project estimate. The reduction of subway tunnel from almost 10,000 linear feet to about 3,900 will eliminate the need for a expensive tunnel boring machine; instead, cut-and-cover will be used to get the rails to where they will run on the surface northwards on Niagara Falls Blvd.

The project is scheduled to complete the final environmental impact study (EIS) by 2020 so that conceptual engineering and cost estimates of the right-of-way, station site plans, utilities relocation, and traffic studies can begin. With this completed in 2021, the NFTA would

next apply to the FTA Capital Investment Grants Program for federal construction funding, with project completion in 2025.

On December 6, a public meeting was held at the Sweet Home Middle School in Amherst on the Metro Rail expansion.

For more information please visit the project's website at: <http://www.nftametrorailexpansion.com>

Benjamin Turon

Cuomo Moves to Boost Upstate Transit

Transit systems of Upstate NY will receive a 5.3% increase in State Transit Operating Assistance funding due to an “Expand Supplemental Auto Rental Surcharge to Fund Upstate Public Transportation Systems,” introduced as part of the Cuomo Administration's executive budget. Current state law imposes a 6% auto rental tax statewide that is directed to the State's highway and bridge program, with a supplemental surcharge of 5% imposed only in the Metropolitan Commuter

Transportation District (MCTD) which is directed to Downstate public transportation systems, including the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

The bill would expand the existing special supplemental auto rental surcharge from the MCTD to the remainder of the State. The additional funding will be directed to Upstate public transportation systems that lie north of Dutchess and Orange counties.

Niagara Falls Ontario

GO Rail Service Ahead of Schedule

GO Transit, on Monday January 7, began limited weekday commuter service to Niagara Falls, Ontario with one daily southbound and northbound trips complimenting the existing round-trip frequency of VIA Rail's Maple Leaf.

The current weekday Toronto-bound 06.39 trip from West Harbour GO in Hamilton will now start at Niagara Falls at 05.19, stop in St. Catharines at 05.41, and then continue with the regular stops and schedules.

The current southbound 17.15 trip from Toronto Union Station to West Harbour will continue to St. Catharines at 19.22, and finish at Niagara Falls at 19.47. The cost each way is \$(CDN)19.80 with a Presto card, or \$(CDN) 22.30 cash.

Metrolinx spokesperson Anne Marie Aikins stated, “It's just the beginning, but our plan is to offer more regular service, so you'll have more options.” GO Transit has long-term plans for more extensive commuter rail service in the future to Niagara Falls. This will require considerable capital investment and working out a plan to deal with maritime traffic on the Welland Canal which host railway CN currently crosses via a movable bridge. Ships have priority over trains which can result in lengthy delays for rail traffic.

It should be noted that VIA Rail Canada previously operated a Niagara Falls morning departure to/ evening arrival from Toronto for many years, well until the early 2000s, with conventional equipment covering the 88 mile route in 1h50m each way (compared to the 2h32m journey time by GO operating low level boarding commuter equipment).

Benjamin Turon

Election Results Encourage Passenger Rail Supporters

The results of the November general election were encouraging to people supporting intercity passenger rail preservation and expansion. The voting followed a year where both houses of Congress rejected the Trump Administration efforts to cut both Amtrak and transit funding.

The voters decided to change House control giving the Democratic Party a 30 plus majority. As a result, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will be chaired by Oregon Representative Peter DeFazio. According to the new Chairman, "we are approaching a transportation crisis in our country. As Chairman, I will be a tireless advocate for the kind of infrastructure investment that results in job creation, increased economic growth and decreased emissions." The Committee's Railroad subcommittee will be headed by Illinois Congressman Dan Lipinski who has been an outspoken supporter of intercity and commuter rail. Returning to Congress, members on the Transportation Committee are Sean Patrick Mahoney (D-18) and John Katko (R-24), whose districts include Empire Corridor stations. Three newly elected Empire Corridor Congressmen are Antonio Delgado (D-19), Anthony Brindisi (D-22) –a former member of the Assembly Transportation Committee—and Joe Morelle (D-26) – former Assembly Majority Leader. Congressman Morelle has been appointed to the House Rules Committee. Other returning Empire Corridor Congressmen are Paul Tonko (D-20) and Chris Collins (R-27). North Country Congresswoman Elise Stefanick (R-21) district includes most Amtrak stations north of Saratoga along the route of the Adirondack.

In the New York State Senate, 17 of the 63 seats saw new members and majority control shifted to the Democratic Party for the first time in more than a decade. The Transportation committee will be chaired by Senator Timothy Kennedy of Buffalo, the first upstate transportation leader since the 1960's. Other members of the transportation committee are: David Carlucci (D-38), Joseph Robach (R-56), Catherine Young (R-57), Thomas O'Mara (R-58), and Michael Ranzenhofer (R-61). Another New Yorker with an interest in passenger rail success is Southern Tier Congressman Tom Reed (R-25) whose district includes factories making Amtrak Viewliner cars and the replacement Northeast Corridor high-speed trainsets. A recent New York Times interview of new Senate members quoted Syracuse area Senator Rachel (D-53) as saying she wanted to travel to Albany by train but was disappointed by the Amtrak schedule.

In the State Assembly, 22 of the 150 seats had new members elected. New Members assigned to the Transportation Committee were Johnathan Jacobson (D-104), Marjorie Byrnes (R-133) and Karen McMahon (D-146). Assemblyman William Magnarelli (D-129) will chair the Committee.

Tony Rudmann

Agreement for Metro-North Penn Station Expansion

Governor Andrew Cuomo announced an agreement among the MTA, Empire State Development, and Amtrak, that will lead to four new Metro-North Railroad stations being built along an underutilized rail line in the east Bronx with access to Penn Station. The parties signed a memorandum of understanding allowing the transformative project to move forward, providing a much-needed transit option and dramatically reducing commute times for many Bronx residents.

Empire State Development Corporation is going to work with the MTA to do the planning and expedition of the project, which will help unleash a new generation of economic development for the Bronx. As part of the agreement, Amtrak and MTA will also jointly study the feasibility of Amtrak running several trains daily from Long Island to Penn Station and continuing either north to Boston or south to Washington.

Press Release, NYS Governor's Office

Cuomo discusses the MTA (Cont'd from page 2)

as we say, who came up with a plan for cables as opposed to rebuilding the whole tunnels. And my question is: "are they right?"

The governor replied, "they had this design. They were going to close down a tunnel. It's a \$400 million plan. And then a review team comes in and says there is a better way to do it, which by the way is how other countries around the world are doing it. I understand why they're defensive. The same consultant who did the first plan has talked to the academic review team and accepts their recommendations as better."

Continuing, the governor said, "If you go to Google and you google new tunnel construction, you will see that there is a new way to build tunnels. This is a perfect example. When the MTA builds something, their imperative, their design imperative is basically re-build what exists. That's how they build. That tunnel was built in 1910. Who rebuilds a tunnel with 1910 architecture?"

On January 17, the MTA officially announced that a new plan would go forward with construction requiring a shutdown of one tube on nights and weekends, but with L Train service being maintained 24/7 with trains running about every about 20 minutes during the partial shutdowns. To the news media, an MTA official stated anonymously that the management of the agency can bypass the MTA board and enact the new plan because it is expected to cost less than the full shutdown of the old plan.

It seems like 2019 could be a very consequential year for determining the future funding and organization of the MTA. For more details on the Cuomo Administration's policy position on the MTA, please visit the governor's website and read the "Statement from Director of the Budget Robert Mujica on the MTA" posted on January 13, 2019.

Benjamin Turon

East-West Rail Study (Cont'd from page 1)

The rail study will examine the costs, benefits, and investments necessary to implement a service with the speed, frequency, and reliability necessary to be considered a competitive option for travel along the corridor. This will include at least one alternative that will achieve 90-minute travel times between Springfield and Boston. The rail line under study is the former Boston & Albany, now the Berkshire and Boston Subdivisions of CSX, with the MBTA owning the line from Worcester to Boston for its commuter rail service. This will be the second study within a decade on Boston-Springfield rail service.

The Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative (NNEIR) EIS study, released by MassDOT in 2016, recommended as its final alternative the upgrading of the existing railroad between Boston and Springfield for higher speed/higher frequency passenger rail service. The central improvements were restoring the second mainline track of the formerly double-track railroad, and increasing top maximum authorized speed from 60 to 79 mph.

Boston-Springfield travel time was estimated at 2-hours, with a frequency of nine new round-trips daily (not including Amtrak's Lake Shore Limited), with eight of those runs extending to New Haven and one to Vermont and Montreal. Currently the Lake Shore Limited takes 2h28m to cover the 98 miles. Additional service to Vermont and Connecticut was also examined, with most Boston-Springfield trains running through to Harford and New Haven.

Initially, the new East-West Rail study was only going to examine Boston-Springfield, but protest from the Berkshires led to the scope being expanded to Pittsfield which is currently served by only the daily Lake Shore Limited. To the oversight panel was added State Senator Adam Hinds (D) from Pittsfield, Pittsfield Mayor Linda Tyler, State Representative Smitty Pignatelli (D) from Lenox, 1Berkshire: the Regional Economic Development Organization and Regional Tourism Council of Berkshire County, and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

Significantly, Rep. Pignatelli, during an interview with WMAC Northeast Public Radio, voiced his support not only for East-West Rail, but also for a new Boston-Albany service via Pittsfield. A Boston-Albany corridor service would be of great benefit to New York's Capital District, as well as for other Upstate residents who wish to travel more conveniently to Boston by train.

Pittsfield, population 42,000, is 151 miles from Boston by rail, and has only the single round-trip frequency of the Lake Shore Limited, with a current travel time of 3h49m, and station patronage in 2018 of 8,270. Berkshire County, population 131,219 is home to several major tourist attractions including in Tanglewood in Lenox, seven miles south of Pittsfield.

Saratoga Springs, population 28,000, is 178 miles from New York City by rail and served by two roundtrip daily frequencies of the Adirondack and Ethan Allen, with a current travel time of 3h34m. The Amtrak patronage in 2018 for Saratoga was 37,303. This would seem to demonstrate that an increase in train frequency could greatly increase Amtrak ridership at Pittsfield.

However, continuing future East-West Rail service all the way to Albany-Rensselaer would do even more to boost ridership for the entire service. Albany-Rensselaer is at the heart of a metro region of over a million people and is the 9th busiest station in the Amtrak system with 790,550 patrons in 2018.

From Rensselaer, connections from a future East-West Rail service could be made with Amtrak corridor service to New York City, Central and Western New York, the Adirondacks, Vermont, Montreal, and Toronto. At Rensselaer is an existing Amtrak crew base, maintenance facility, and a (currently shuttered) food service commissary.

This writer believes that there is a latent desire for more transportation options for travel to and from Boston and Upstate NY. If Massachusetts were to reach out to New York with an offer to co-operate on a new Boston-Albany corridor service, there should be a very favorable response.

MassDOT now has an "East-West Passenger Rail Study" webpage at: www.mass.gov/east-west-passenger-rail-study.
Benjamin Turon

Passenger Rail's Poor OnTime Performance

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) recently asked the Supreme Court to hear its appeal of the case Rail Passengers won last summer in the Court of appeals for the DC Circuit, seeking to put the long-running argument over on-time performance and who gets to measure and enforce that standard on the October 20129 docket.

Host railroads where Amtrak operates its National Network trains are once again going to court to fight the right to run unreliable railroads that strand passengers. Rail Passengers is already working with its partners to file our own amicus brief with the Supreme Court later this month. The move comes as no surprise after the DC Appeals court rejected AAR's effort to get its case re-heard by the entire Appeals Court.

With on-time performance last summer at record lows, America's rail travelers had been waiting for years for the courts to step in and protect the rights of the traveling public-rights that Congress has clearly, unmistakably, and repeatedly written into law, and rights for which your Association has gone to bat, in Congress AND in federal courts across the U.S.

At its core, AAR's argument is that Amtrak is a for-profit corporation like any other, and giving it power to work with FRA regulators to set OTP standards is giving that corporation an unfair competitive advantage.

Our position, which the Appeals court vindicated, is that the lower courts erred in gutting the protections passed by Congress in the 2008 Passengers Rail Investment and Improvements Act (PRIIA) and that the Appeals court got it right

Read more about this case and why it's important to passengers on our blog, at:

<https://www.railpassengers.org/happening-now/news/blog/blame-the-lawyers-part-2/>

Rail Passengers Association

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ESPA Working Group & Meeting

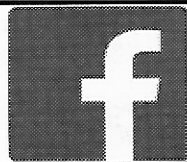
ALL ESPA members (and other interested persons) are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact President Gary Prophet at thegp@aol.com for more information or if you are planning on attending a meeting. Advance registration is required!

Next Meeting: TBA

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 RAP can save \$5 on their ESPA membership fee for Renewal or higher member levels (Renew for \$19 instead of the regular \$24)



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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)*

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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.

Check www.esparail.org, for the most current information on meeting times and venues...
***** Stay in Touch with ESPA Via Facebook at www.facebook.com/espa**

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel: 716-759-2315.
Email: www.rwlenz4@gmail.com Deadline for material for Winter Issue is March 31st, 2019.
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39th Annual Meeting
of the
Empire State Passengers Association
and
Rail Passengers Association

Saturday, March 9, 2019

11:00am – 4:00pm

Key Hall At Proctors State Street Schenectady, NY

*The Entrance To Key Hall Is From Inside The Proctors Theater Arcade (Opposite The Box Office)
Two Blocks From The Amtrak Station – Free Parking Available In Lots Behind Proctors*

Confirmed Speaker:

Bruce Becker – Vice-President Operations – Rail Passengers Association

Invited Speakers:

Representatives From Amtrak, MTA & The Freight Rail Industry
Federal, State & Local Government Officials

Full Program Registration Includes The Meeting And A Three Course Luncheon...

Full Early Bird Discount Registration - \$40.00 Per Person
(Registrations Must Be Post Marked By February 26th)

Full Late Registration - \$45.00 Per Person
(ALL Registrations Post Marked After February 26th)

Meeting ONLY (No Lunch) Registration - \$25.00 Per Person

Please complete and return this form with your check for the appropriate registration fee, to be received **NO** later than March 2, 2019. (**NO** cancellations after this date).

Please Note: Written confirmation of your meeting registration and payment having been received is **NOT** provided unless specifically requested (i.e. tickets are not mailed to you in advance of the meeting). **Meeting registration begins in the Key Hall foyer at 10:00am.**

Please make checks payable to **ESPA** and mail to:

Gary Prophet
Empire State Passengers Association
86 Cedar Lane
Ossining, NY 10562

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