

# The ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

<http://www.esparail.org>



## WORKING FOR A MORE BALANCED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

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### Summer Travel Brings Sold-Out Trains; Amtrak Expands Consists

With ridership steadily growing on all New York State trains, the number of sold-out trains has dramatically increased in recent weeks. In a repeat of past summers, the primary sell-outs are occurring on weekends, focused on travel north from New York City on Friday afternoons and returning south to the City on Sunday evenings, though other days and times are also very busy.

Travelers wishing to walk-up and buy tickets on Friday afternoons are likely to be disappointed, as frequently there have been no seats available on any trains out of Penn Station from mid-day through early evening. Travel to and from points west of Albany has been particularly strong, including a marked increase in passengers traveling just between stations from Buffalo to Albany.

In response to this increased demand, Amtrak again this year has added extra coaches to select trains. From Memorial Day weekend on, Empire Corridor trains have repeatedly been seen with six car consists (five coaches and the café/business car). A review of the reservation system shows that this added capacity has been quickly sold, generating significant additional revenue for Amtrak.

ESPA urges Amtrak to continue to carefully monitor demand and to add as many additional cars as are available when sell-out conditions are predicted and likely. *Bruce B. Becker*

### 19 Straight Months of Ridership Gains in New York State

May 2011 marked 19 consecutive months of year-over-year ridership gains on the trains that serve New York State.

The *Ethan Allen Express* led the list in May, with ridership up 24.5%, followed by the *Adirondack*, which was up 21.2%. The West of Albany trains ridership was up 10.1% and Hudson Valley trains were up 5.1%. Overall state-wide ridership (a total of 136,513 passengers) in May 2011 was up 7.9% over May 2010. Overall revenues were \$6,144,172 for the month, up 13.3% from the prior year. The long-distance *Lake Shore Limited's* ridership was up 12.1% over May 2010.

FY '11 year-to-date (October 2010 through May 2011) statistics show the West of Albany trains are up 13.3%; the *Adirondack* is up 10.7%; Hudson Valley trains are up 5.8% and the *Ethan Allen Express* is up 2.5%. Total revenue for the period was \$46,270,356, up 7.2%. *(Cont'd on page 7)*

### Canadian National Files to Discontinue Use of Whirlpool Bridge

On May 19, 2011, the Canadian National Railway (CN) formally filed notice with the appropriate Canadian rail agencies of its intent to sell its interest in the rail operations on the Whirlpool Bridge, currently used ONLY by Amtrak's daily *Maple Leaf* to cross the US – Canada border at Niagara Falls, NY / Ont.

The filing also included wording to the effect that CN would discontinue operations on the bridge entirely if its efforts to sell or transfer its interests were unsuccessful. The notice gave a July 18, 2011 deadline for interested parties to make their intentions known to CN. However, the notice went on to state that "If by July 18, 2011, no party has made its intention known, or if no agreement has been entered into within 6 months following this date, CN's Interest will be offered to the federal and provincial governments, to the urban transit authority, and to the municipal or district governments through whose territory the railway line passes. Each party will have thirty (30) days to accept the offer. If no agreement is entered into, operations on this railway line will cease."

This move by CN was not unexpected and reportedly all of the stakeholders (including Amtrak and VIA Rail) are fully engaged in developing a workable, long-term, ownership and maintenance plan for the rail deck of the bridge.

ESPA will continue to closely monitor this situation and offer assistance where necessary in order to ensure that uninterrupted passenger rail operations will continue. *Bruce B. Becker*

### Sen. Schumer Works to Have *Adirondack* Passengers Screened at Montreal

U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said he's pushing to have U.S.-bound *Adirondack* passengers screened in Montreal instead of at the border, the *Glens Falls Post-Star* (N.Y.) has reported. Schumersaidhewantstheplantogo into place by the end of this year.

The move aims to reduce train delays at the U.S. border checkpoint at Rouses Point, N.Y. Business leaders in the region have pushed for the change, saying the train would be more attractive to passengers without an extended stop at the border.

"Businesses along the route from the North Country down through Albany and into New York City have noted that the additional screening checkpoint creates avoidable delays, and disincentive for Canadian business travelers to visit destinations throughout New York," Schumer said.

## The View from the Cab

As we expected, the ESPA membership's and the general public's response to our 'Ninety Now...' position statement has been overwhelmingly positive. I want to thank the countless ESPA members and others who took the time to contact me and extend their support for our position. Well summed up by this comment "I certainly endorse "Ninety Now" as the **realistic** way to go...", the sentiments expressed indicate a growing frustration that **NO** actual construction work has yet to be started in New York State. Several folks made note that in Vermont, actual track improvements on the Vermonter route are even ahead of schedule!

CSX also positively recognized our position statement. However, in a subsequent discussion with CSX representatives, I made it clear that ESPA was **NOT** directly supporting CSX's 90mph maximum speed position for west of Hoffmans, but rather that we are supporting the need for a reasonable compromise in order to move the already funded improvement projects forward now! CSX did reiterate that they have **NO** opposition to the second Albany - Schenectady main track being operated at 110mph.

However, not surprisingly, the response from FRA and NYSDOT was less than positive. Perhaps best summed up as 'We think we know what is in the best interests of the public, regardless of what the public says', both organizations expressed concerns that our position was in essence giving in to unrealistic demands by CSX. In response I emphasized that our members and the traveling public want reasonable results now. I did note that our statement clearly included our goal of future 110mph operations, wherever practical, but that waiting for many years (perhaps even decades) in order to attain a 'perfect world' with extensive 110mph running across upstate, is simply not acceptable to us.

So where does this all leave us?

To clarify (as I understand it), all of the ARRA funds (which includes the money for the vital Albany-Schenectady second 110mph main track) must, by law, be obligated by USDOT by September 2012. The expenditure of the funds and the actual construction then must be completed by 2017.

This then brings us to the potential prospect of NYS losing the ARRA funds if no '**Service Outcome Agreement**' is reached with CSX and approved by FRA in the coming 14 months.

In addition, the longer this process takes, the greater the possibility that Congress may vote to 'rescind' the previously awarded, but not yet obligated HSR funds. The House Republican leadership has already taken steps to do this and while such legislation, on its own, would not likely pass in the Senate or be signed by President Obama, there is a real risk that such wording might be included in broader, 'must-pass', legislation (i.e., the debt ceiling issue) which could be approved and signed into law. If this were to occur, we here in NY could be left empty handed!

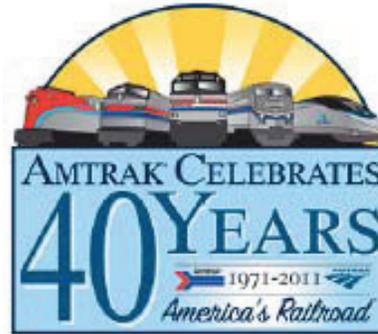
And as I noted in the last issue, it is vital for ESPA members that live in the districts of newly-elected members of Congress to make their voices heard in support of Amtrak and passenger rail. Please attend district open houses and voice your support for Amtrak and HSR funding. Your representatives need to hear that there is support for passenger rail in New York State. We can't let negativity and 'tea partiers' overcome the fact that New Yorkers support rail and are increasingly turning to Amtrak as a preferred travel option.

As always, never hesitate to let me know how I'm doing or

to offer suggestions on what our organization could do better...

*Bruce B. Becker, President*

## Amtrak 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Train to Visit Albany August 27th and 28th



Amtrak's 40<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary Historical Exhibit Train will make a public stop at the Albany-Rensselaer Station on Saturday and Sunday,

August 27th and 28th. The train will be open for tours from 10:00am to 4:00pm both days.

The train's three converted baggage cars contain a treasure-trove of Amtrak's 40-year history, including several interactive presentations which should be very popular with kids (especially the display of Amtrak locomotive whistles with buttons to push for audios of each whistle). Also included are unpowered F40 No. 406 and an Amfleet I café car, which contains a NARP HSR display and a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gift Shop. There is also a heritage sleeper for crew use. The train will be pulled by one of Amtrak's four heritage paint scheme P-42 locomotives.

The Albany stop will feature a number of displays outside the train and a variety of family-oriented activities. ESPA/NARP members will be staffing the café car display area and a NARP membership table outside.

Visit the ESPA web site for more information and up to date details. This will be the train's only New York State stop, so make plans NOW to visit.

*Bruce B. Becker*

## 70 Amtrak Engines Funded by FRA Loan

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has announced a \$562.9 million loan to Amtrak to fully fund 70 new, energy efficient, high performance electric locomotives. The locomotives will operate on the Northeast and Keystone Corridors beginning in 2013, replacing 64 units in service between 20 and 30 years with an average of 3.5 million miles traveled. The loan amount consists of \$465.9 million for the engines and \$97 million for maintenance facility upgrades and spare parts.

The federal loan comes from the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) program, enacted by Congress, which authorizes direct loans and loan guarantees up to \$35 billion. The new loan to Amtrak is the largest single loan approved by the program since its 1998 beginning.

Twenty two freight railroads and two passenger railroads (Virginia Railway Express and Amtrak) have loan agreements under the program. Loans can fund up to 100 percent of a railroad project with repayment periods of up to 35 years and interest rates equal to the cost of borrowing to the government. Amtrak projects that improved ticket revenue from more reliable locomotives can fund debt service payments to repay the loan.

## **NO Special Saratoga Race Service this Summer; State Fair Service is Scheduled**

Again this year, Amtrak has decided NOT to offer weekend packages to the popular Saratoga Race Track during this summer's race season. For many years Amtrak marketed and promoted a package which included round-trip rail fare to Saratoga, a bus transfer to and from the race track, admission to the track and a track race guide. While in recent years package patronage had declined, the offering had been immensely popular in the 1990's, with Amtrak even operating special trains directly to and from Saratoga during some seasons.

However, travelers interested in making one-day weekend round trips to the historic race track can still do so this year from New York City and all other points in the Hudson Valley, utilizing the northbound *Adirondack* scheduled to arrive in Saratoga at 11:57AM and then returning on the southbound *Ethan Allen Express* scheduled to leave Saratoga on both Saturdays and Sundays at 6:57PM. Race fans will be on their own for transportation to and from the track (taxis are usually readily available) and for track admission. This season's racing starts on Friday, July 22 and concludes on September 5.

Amtrak will again be stopping select Empire Corridor trains directly at the **New York State Fairgrounds** in Syracuse during the Fair's August 25 to September 5 run. This service, which caters mainly to one-day fair patrons from Buffalo and Rochester, has in the past been offered in conjunction with a 'Kids Ride Free' special fare. Specific details are not yet available; please check the ESPA web site, [www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org), for the latest information on the Fair service.

*Bruce B. Becker*

## **New \$527 Million TIGER Program Announced**

A new \$527 million round of competitive grants has been announced under the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program. This third round of special funding for rail, transit, port and road projects will be paid for from appropriation authority identified as "national transportation investments" in the approved federal budget for federal fiscal year 2011 which was signed into law on April 15.

According to an interim notice published in the July 1<sup>st</sup> Federal Register, pre-applications are due October 3<sup>rd</sup> and final applications are required by October 31, 2011. A half-day seminar and webcast providing program information and guidance on the application process is scheduled for July 18<sup>th</sup>.

Two previous rounds of funding in 2009 and 2010 provided \$2.1 billion to 126 projects in 50 states and the District of Columbia. Demand for this transportation improvement money was overwhelming, with more than 2,500 applications filed requesting \$79 billion.

The previous TIGER grants awarded last October included \$16.5 million which fully funded the new Niagara Falls passenger station. Rail projects garnered 20 percent of awards nationwide, transit projects won 26 percent and road projects received 29 percent of available funds.

The FFY 2011 program emphasizes actual construction; only planning and design costs for actual construction are includable in requests. Each applicant may only submit three applications for consideration, but joint applications from two or more eligible entities will not be counted against the "three application" limit. Grant awards may not be less than \$10

million or more than \$200 million except in defined rural areas. Rural area awards may not be less than \$1 million. No more than \$131 million may be awarded to projects in a single state. TIGER grants provide up to 80 percent of total project cost.

*Anthony Rudmann*

## **Mica Unveils Passenger Rail Plan**

House Transportation Committee Chairman John Mica unveiled a plan called "Competition for Intercity Passenger Rail in America Act" on June 15<sup>th</sup>. The plan incorporates competitive bidding and private sector involvement to bring high-speed rail to the Northeast Corridor and to operate intercity passenger rail nationwide.

Among the major provisions of the plan is the transfer of title to the Northeast Corridor to the U.S. Transportation Department, including all assets, property and trains. Corridor assets would be leased for 99 years under direction of a new Northeast Corridor Executive Committee which would be responsible for developing public-private partnerships to manage and operate the Corridor infrastructure. In addition, intercity service supported by states would be opened to private sector bidders selected by states.

A June 22<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Committee hearing on the Mica plan drew testimony suggesting some major flaws. The plan could sever the Northeast Corridor north of New York because Amtrak does not own 93 miles of the right of way. Also, transfer of the Corridor from Amtrak would trigger default on almost \$1.5 billion in previously issued bonds. In addition, new private operators do not have guaranteed access to freight rail track.

In 2009, the U.S. Transportation Department solicited the private sector for expressions of interest in developing high-speed rail service on the Northeast Corridor. That solicitation did not generate a single proposal.

*Anthony Rudmann*

## **Ready to Roll: The Saratoga and North Creek Railway**

As of this writing the Empire State's newest passenger rail service is ready to roll on the 14th of July. The Saratoga and North Creek Railway will offer both shuttle and excursion trains between the City of Saratoga Springs and the Village of North Creek over sixty miles of the D&H's former Adirondack Branch.

The Chicago based short line and tourist operator Iowa Pacific recently concluded its franchise agreement with Warren County and the Town of Corinth which own the tracks from Saratoga to North Creek. This marks the first time the Iowa Pacific has worked with local governments to bring about a new passenger and freight rail service.

The holding company operates six short line freight and tourist railroads here in the U.S. and four more in Great Britain. The company also offers general rail (car repair, storage, and leasing) and industrial site development services. This is Iowa Pacific's first US venture east of Chicago.

The railway's website ([www.sncrr.com](http://www.sncrr.com) or phone 1-877-726-7245) is currently up and running with a full schedule and purchase of tickets now available. A crash marketing campaign has begun to build up public awareness of this fledgling enterprise.

The branding of the service has rapidly evolved; it's now a "railway" instead of the "railroad" of previous months. This change is likely a historic tribute to the original parent companies of the branch line, the Adirondack Railway which was bought by the Delaware & Hudson Railway. The promotional material and

*(Cont'd on page 6)*

## News in Brief

- **NYS High Speed Rail Planning Board Remains in Limbo...** To date, there has still been **NO** public information released concerning the High Speed Rail Planning Board, which was created by then Governor Paterson and the state legislature in mid-2010. Reportedly some appointments to the Board have been made, but no meetings have been held. ESPA continues to monitor this matter closely.
- **NYS High Speed Rail Project and Progress Summaries** are now available on the ESPA web site, [www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org). These lists, which will be updated regularly, contain full information on all the statewide Intercity Passenger Rail improvement projects currently funded (from a combination of federal, state and local sources) and the current progress of each project.
- **Ballston Spa Second Main Track Construction has NOT Yet Started...** While earlier reports indicated that CP Rail was prepared to start construction immediately on this fully funded and obligated two-mile segment of new track, as of press time no work has actually started.
- **ESPA Logo Clothing NOW Available...**

You can now order a full range of Lands End clothing items with a full-color embroidered ESPA logo, via a direct link on the ESPA website to the exclusive ESPA Lands End storefront. This is your opportunity to wear the ESPA Logo proudly and to garner interest in our cause.

All items featured on the storefront are available for direct individual order and payment, in whatever size and color you may select. Having the ESPA logo added to your item is **ONLY** an additional \$5.95 per item!

## Open Seat on NARP Council Representing New York...Candidates Sought

As a reminder, there is currently a vacant seat for New York State on the National Association of Railroad Passengers Council of Representatives. A search is now on for candidates interested in being appointed to this seat.

Requirements to be considered are:

- You must be a member of NARP, in good standing for at least one year.
- You must be willing to attend, at your own expense, at least two out four Council meetings held during a two-year period. Annual Spring Council meetings are held in Washington, DC in late April or early May, and Fall Council meetings are held at other locations around the country in October.

The individual appointed to this seat will stand for election in the Council elections to be held in the spring of 2012, in conjunction with that year's Spring Council Meeting.

All interested and qualified candidates are encouraged to contact Bruce Becker, NARP Northeast Division Leader, to learn more about the position, the responsibilities it entails and the satisfaction possible in knowing you are making a difference on a national basis. Bruce can be reached at 716-880-7291 or via e-mail at [bbecker@esparail.org](mailto:bbecker@esparail.org). Bruce B. Becker

## Vermont Route Improvements Funded

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced a \$72.6 million grant to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation for restoration of a rail line, improving 50 miles of track and infrastructure on a direct route from Springfield to East Northfield along the Connecticut River Valley.

The July 1<sup>st</sup> announcement said that improvements will allow restoration of the original passenger route of the *Vermont* which was shifted to a longer alternate route after track conditions deteriorated in the 1980's. The new project will include construction of new stations in Greenfield and Northampton.

*Vermont* service improvements began last year with a \$50 million grant to the Vermont Agency of Transportation for improving 190 miles of track between St. Albans and Vernon, Vermont. Taken together, the two projects will shave nearly an hour off the Amtrak train's travel time within Vermont and Massachusetts.

According to the Transportation Department: "Long term, the investments in Vermont and Massachusetts will also increase reliability and for future expansion of service to Montreal, Quebec." The *Vermont* line operates daily between St. Albans, VT. and Washington, DC; it saw a sixteen percent ridership increase in 2010.

*Anthony Rudmann*

## Amtrak Seeks ESPA's Input

Amtrak's new Empire District Customer Service Quality Supervisor Jay Green wants to hear of your New York State Amtrak travel experiences. Whether everything was great or if there was room for improvement, Jay welcomes our input, as the entire Empire Corridor team strives to provide the best service possible. Please send your written trip reports and comments, including specific dates, train numbers, stations and employee names as appropriate to Jay at: Jay Green, Customer Service Quality Supervisor, Amtrak 525 East Street, Rensselaer, NY 12144 [jay.green@amtrak.com](mailto:jay.green@amtrak.com)

Please also send a copy to Bruce Becker, so we can track trip experiences and follow up as necessary. Thanks for your help...

## New CSX GenSet Engine Receives Funding

CSX unveiled a new environmentally friendly engine at June 30<sup>th</sup> ceremonies in Selkirk, New York. The new "GenSet" switching engine emits just 20 percent of the nitrous oxide and particulate matter of older locomotives. Its carbon dioxide emissions are reduced by 25 percent in comparison to other engines.

The \$1.4 million switcher was purchased with \$1 million in federal stimulus funds and another \$400,000 from CSX. According to CSX spokesman Bob Sullivan, the new Selkirk switcher brings to 21 the number of GenSet locomotives in the companywide fleet.



## **Amtrak Begins *Gateway II* Planning Initiative for New Hudson River Tunnel**

Howard Sackel, Amtrak's Assistant Vice President, NEC Gateway Program, announced the beginning of a new planning effort -- *Gateway II* -- which will consider a broader range of options for expanding Hudson River rail passenger capacity than an earlier plan unveiled at a press conference called by NJ Senators Lautenberg and Menendez on February 7, 2011. The earlier *Gateway* plan, developed by Amtrak only four months after NJ Governor Chris Christie cancelled the deep cavern Access to the Region's Core (ARC) tunnel plan, called for an expansion of Penn Station southward requiring the condemnation of dozens of buildings and the displacement of thousands of jobs.

Details for the Gateway II plan, presented by Sackel at the June 27, 2011 Raritan Valley Rail Coalition meeting, are sketchy. Amtrak continues to argue that new tracks and platforms are essential and that any new tunnel plan must also include a track connection to existing tracks at Penn Station. ESPA and its statewide counterpart across the Hudson-- the NJ Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP) and many other rail advocacy organizations have long favored an earlier ARC plan that would have brought the new Hudson River tunnels directly into existing tracks and platforms at Penn Station and then connected them to existing tracks and platforms in the Lower Level of Grand Central Terminal.

This connection plan would have cost less to build and to operate and would have attracted more passengers and diverted more motorists than the deep cavern plan. No cost estimate was offered for the Gateway II plan, but the initial plan would have cost even more than the failed deep cavern plan. Sackel did say the Gateway II plan "would not preclude" the later construction of a direct track connection to the NJ Transit Bergen lines at Secaucus that would permit one-seat ride service to Penn Station from NY's Orange and Rockland Counties.

Earlier, on May 9, 2011, USDOT Secretary Ray LaHood announced that \$450 million of the \$2 billion in Federal funds set aside for the cancelled Florida High Speed Rail project would be programmed for improvements on the New Brunswick-Trenton segment of Amtrak's NEC line. An additional \$295 million would be allocated to MTA to construct an underpass for Amtrak trains at Harold interlocking in Queens. However neither of these investments will produce a significant saving in travel time on the NEC.

For the Penn Station-Grand Central connection plan, favored by rail advocates to be advanced, a close level of cooperation between Governors Christie and Cuomo would be essential. There is little evidence that this will occur anytime soon. Stay tuned. *George Haikalis, ESPA Manhattan Coordinator*

## **Transit Advocates Urge Restoration of One Day Pass to Ease Grand Zero Congestion**

When MTA raised its fares last December it eliminated the one-day pass, citing limited use -- less than 0.8% of riders used the pass. It also noted extensive "scamming" where enterprising individuals would slide their passes through turnstiles and admit unwary travelers at a bargain price and pocket the money themselves.

Now with the Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> opening day of the World Trade Center Memorial approaching, elected officials representing Lower Manhattan are calling for the deluge of tourists to use existing subways and buses rather than flood already overcrowded streets with more tour and charter buses. Rail advocates are urging these officials to press MTA to restore the one-day pass, a pricing feature available in almost every global tourist center. Advocates claim that the one-day pass was little used because it was overpriced and that MTA did little to promote it. With so little use, scamming could hardly have been a revenue drain. The clock is ticking on the tenth anniversary of 9/11 with only a few months to go. With MTA's automated vending machines, the pass, which was eliminated almost overnight could be restored immediately. *Smart* cards are not needed, just *smart* management!

*George Haikalis, ESPA Manhattan Coordinator*

## **Next meeting of Regional Rail Work Group**

Rail advocates from the NY- NJ-CT area continue to meet on a monthly basis. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, July 27, 2011 6-8pm at Hoboken City Hall. For more details check [www.rtwg.org](http://www.rtwg.org) or contact George Haikalis at 212-475-3394 or [geo@irum.org](mailto:geo@irum.org)

## **70 Amtrak Engines (Cont'd from page 2)**

between Washington and Boston and up to 110 mph on the Keystone Corridor between Philadelphia and Harrisburg.

Siemens indicates it is adding 250 new manufacturing jobs to fulfill the contract. Work will be done at its plants in Norwood, Ohio (traction motors and gear units), Alpharetta, Georgia (traction converters and braking choppers) and Sacramento, California (final assembly). Certain safety related parts have been subcontracted to PHW, Inc. in East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The full-funding agreement completes a process begun in the summer of 2009 with issuance of a "Request for Proposals" seeking 20 AC propulsion engines capable of 125 mph with an option for 40 additional units. Seven vendors attended the mandatory pre-bid conference. Fine tuning of Amtrak's Fleet Strategy Plan led to the larger 70 unit firm order.

The list on the Federal Railroad Administration website of RRIF loan agreements executed with railroads indicates that about \$1.7 billion has been obligated. Eligible borrowers include railroads, state and local governments, government-sponsored authorities and corporations, joint ventures which include at least one railroad, and limited option freight shippers intending to construct a new rail connection.

*Anthony Rudmann*

## **VIA Rail Announces "Transformation"**

The new chair of VIA Rail Canada, Paul Smith, said that "VIA Rail is undergoing one of the biggest transformations in the corporation's history" and that, when complete, "it will be a market leader, offering Canada's best travel experience." He noted that VIA Rail is expanding track capacity, rebuilding its locomotive and car fleets, and modernizing its passenger stations and information technology systems in a five-year, C\$923 million capital improvement program projected for completion by 2013.

*Via Rail Canada*

## Ready to Roll (Cont'd from page 3)

locomotives sport D&H inspired paint schemes of blue, yellow, and grey.

This line will be more than a “mere tourist railroad”—it will be in fact a new component of our intercity passenger rail network. The service is intended to facilitate the interchange of passengers with Amtrak, as well as day trips to Saratoga from Adirondack vacation homes and resorts.

Of the trifecta of new train services, the early morning and evening Thursday to Monday *New York Express* is timed to travel south from North Creek in the morning to meet the southbound *Ethan Allen Express* at the Saratoga Springs Amtrak Station and travel north after the evening arrival of the northbound *Ethan Allen*.

The trains and crew will make “real time” practice runs July 6-9, and on July 12th there will be a press run from North Creek to Saratoga Springs and back for local officials and the media before the official public opening.

The original start date was to have been July 1st, but last minute clearing of trackside vegetation was ordered by Federal Railroad Administration inspectors and had to be carried out first—trees and bushes were obscuring views for motorists down the tracks at grade crossings. Otherwise the FRA found the line to be in a good state of repair.

Recent heavy flooding along the Hudson River did no significant damage to the tracks, although the historic station in North Creek was flooded. Repair crews from the Warren County were able to quickly make the necessary repairs.

For rolling stock, the railroad has brought east two stainless steel full-length dome cars originally built by the railcar builder Budd in the 1950s for the Santa Fe Railway. They saw nearly two decades of service with the Santa Fe on its streamliners, including the famed Super Chief.

With the creation of Amtrak, all the Santa Fe domes were sold to the new Virginia-Florida Auto-Train which was willing to pay a higher price than Amtrak. Following the bankruptcy of the Auto-Train and its takeover by Amtrak, the domes were sold to separate parties until being reunited in the late 1980s by Holland American Lines for its Alaskan “land-cruise” McKinley Explorer train.

After about a decade and a half of service in the land of the midnight sun these cars were sold off, being replaced by new “Ultra-Domes” from Colorado Railcar. Nine were purchased by Iowa Pacific, and four by the Royal Gorge Route Railroad. The two dome cars the railroad brought east are the ‘MATANUSKA’ and ‘TANANA’, the first is named after a glacier and the second after a tributary of the Yukon River. The two cars still sport their Holland American Westours paint scheme.

In addition to the two domes the railroad has brought up two stainless steel double-decker coaches, late of the Long Island Railroad. They also still sport their original paint-scheme complete with MTA and LIRR markings. The commuter cars retain their original “two-by-three” seating.

The Iowa Pacific’s rear-platform business car Caritas is also present on the new line. It is unknown (to this writer) if the coaches of the previous operator, the Upper Hudson River Railroad, will be used. In bad need of rebuilding, these ancient cars included several heavy-weight coaches from the 1920s. For locomotives the railroad has brought east three diesel-electric locomotives including two EMD BL2s from the 1940s

and a GE B39-8E from the 1980s. The BL2s are rare birds; they were briefly manufactured by GM’s EMD for branch line service in the 1940s, to replace steam engines and compete with rival ALCO’s new RS diesel-electric locomotives.

Considered to be “ugly-ducklings” when compared to the graceful lines of the more common “bulldog nose” E and F-units, the BL2 was a transitory step to the later “road-switcher” freight diesels of the 1950s. With the BL2, the designers tried to style a body shell that evoked streamlined passenger trains while retaining the desired utilitarian features of railroad work including good sight lines for the cab crew and end platforms for the yard crew.

The D&H’s Adirondack Branch was in fact an original home to the rival Alco’s RS diesels which were first purchased to haul ore from the Tahawus titanium mine during World War Two. These were the first diesels operated by the D&H, with steam still dominating the coal hauling “Bridge Line” from Pennsylvania to New England and Canada.

The extension from North Creek to the foot of the High Peaks was funded by the US Government for the war effort. Today these tracks, still owned by National Lead, are overgrown by decades of vegetation growth. There is talk of conversion to a bike trail, or that the mine could be reopened due to the growing demand for titanium and rare earth minerals.

A one-way pass is \$27 for dome and \$13 for coach and an all-day pass is \$40 for dome and \$19 for coach. Seniors and children are eligible for discounts. The dome cars will feature tableside food and beverage service. The coaches will also have refreshment service... just like the old LIRR trains to Ronkonkoma.

According to the Glen Falls *Post-Star* the railroad is also working on its promised winter ski train, including preliminary negotiations with the Gore Mountain Ski Center on vacation packages that would include joint ticketing and marketing. This project is being kept financially separate from the summer trains.

Winter ski trains ran briefly before World War Two from Schenectady and New York City, but created an outsized place in the memory of local residents. Excitement is building in anticipation of the new service—evidenced by a large banner hung over Main Street in Corinth.

This also represents the beginning of fulfillment of years of investment by local politicians in the project, including the late Gerald Solomon, a popular Republican congressman from Warren County. Some \$10 million was invested to rebuild the once defunct railway, which now dove-tails with the alpine sports expansion of Gore Mountain which saw 200,000 skiers last year.

If the Saratoga and North Creek Railway succeeds in equaling the hopes and dreams of local people, it will become a paradigm for expansion of tourist-oriented intercity-passenger rail in the Northeast and across the continent.

The Iowa Pacific’s new enterprise was covered previously in the May-June 2011 newsletter; *Adirondack Trunk: Great Doings in the North Woods*. For more on the Adirondack Branch including history and recent events please also see online the May-June 2010 Newsletter article “Repairs to Former D&H Adirondack Branch Ongoing,” and the November-December 2010 Newsletter article “Trial Tourist Train Runs in Warren County.”

*Benjamin Turon*

## ESPA Passenger Goal Achieved

The July 14<sup>th</sup> beginning of scheduled passenger service between Saratoga Springs and North Creek marks achievement of a long term goal, ESPA Vice President Gary Prophet points out. The 2004 “ESPA: A Vision of Passenger Rail and Public Transportation in New York State 2004-2008” includes as a goal: “Extending rail service to North Creek from Amtrak connections at Saratoga Springs.”

ESPA congratulates Iowa Pacific Holdings and its president, Ed Ellis (formerly with Amtrak), for starting the first new scheduled passenger service in New York State in 25 years.

## Receive the ESPA Express Earlier and Help Us Go ‘Green’!

For members providing their e-mail address, the ESPA Newsletter will be-mailed at the same time it is forwarded to the printer enabling you to receive the newsletter one to two weeks earlier than by mail. The postage savings can be used for passenger rail advocacy. E-mail address submitted will only be used by ESPA. Send e-mail address to [www.rwlenz@aol.com](mailto:www.rwlenz@aol.com)

Thank You! Robert Lenz, Editor

## Empire Corridor Travel Tips & Discounts

- Check out the ESPA Web Site ([www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org)) for the complete details of the 2011 ‘New York by Rail Magazine’ Amtrak discount program...
- All Empire Corridor trains require reservations. While advance reservations are encouraged, last minute passengers will always be accommodated if space is available on a particular train. Booking as early as possible will provide the best possible fare. Amtrak accepts reservations up to 11 months in advance of your travel date! Travel during off-peak periods (mid-week, early morning or late evening) will generally be the least expensive.
- AAA and NARP members receive 10% off most regular fares, with a three day advance purchase requirement. Senior citizens, veterans and many students can receive a 15% discount off most fares.
- Visit [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com) and select ‘Hot Deals’ for the latest discount program information. Select Empire Corridor trains are now being featured as part of Amtrak’s ‘Weekly Specials’, offered for sale every Tuesday through Friday.
- Join the Amtrak Guest Rewards program and earn points towards free travel and more.

### Travel Tip:

Booking as early as possible will provide the best possible fare. Amtrak accepts reservations up to 11 months in advance of your travel date. Travel during off-peak periods (midweek, early morning or late evening) will generally be the least expensive.

## Things to Keep in Mind When Writing Your Elected Officials

A couple of pointers to maximize the effectiveness of your message:

When writing elected officials, keep your message brief (one page or 4-5 E-mail paragraphs) and to the point (talk about only one issue at a time). While E-mail is convenient, many offices are overwhelmed with E-mail correspondence; especially spam. For optimum effectiveness, fax is the best way to communicate with your legislators. Don’t discount E-mail, but don’t be surprised if you do not receive a response. Send all U.S. Mail to district offices, not Washington, D.C. Anthrax/poison screening is still in effect.

Refrain from insults! Anger accomplishes nothing. If you choose to call, you may ask to speak with the elected official’s legislative aide for transportation. Offer to follow up a phone call with a fax or E-mail with more details.

## 19 Straight Months (Cont’d from page 1)

The *Lake Shore’s* ridership is up 12.1% for the year, with revenues of \$19.8 million.

Overall New York State on time performance in May was 76.3%, up a modest 1.3% from May 2010. YTD OTP for the corridor stands at 79.9%, down 3.1% from the prior year.

By route segment, the May results were:

- Hudson Valley trains attained 86.9% OTP (up 5.4% from May 2010)
- West of Albany trains were 83.1% on time (down 1.6%)
- The *Ethan Allen* came in at 64.5% (down 1.6%)
- The *Maple Leaf* was 50.0% on time (down 8.1%)
- The *Adirondack* was poor at 32.3% on time (down 8.1%)

The *Lake Shore* attained 66.0% OTP (down 0.9% from May 2010)

*Bruce B. Becker*

The latest national passenger rail news can be viewed on the NARP (National Association of Railroad Passengers) web site: [www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org)

## There’s Always a Reason to Ride Amtrak

Niagara Falls	<a href="http://www.niagara-usa.com">www.niagara-usa.com</a>
Buffalo	<a href="http://www.buffalocvb.org">www.buffalocvb.org</a>
Rochester	<a href="http://www.visitrochester.com">www.visitrochester.com</a>
Syracuse	<a href="http://www.visitSyracuse.org">www.visitSyracuse.org</a>
Utica	<a href="http://www.oneidacountycvb.com">www.oneidacountycvb.com</a>
Albany	<a href="http://www.Albany.org">www.Albany.org</a>
New York City	<a href="http://www.nycvisit.com">www.nycvisit.com</a>
Montreal	<a href="http://www.tourisme-montreal.org">www.tourisme-montreal.org</a>

## 2011 ESPA Working Group Meeting Dates

If you would like to become more active in ESPA, these '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, 716-741-6384 or [bbecker@esparail.org](mailto:bbecker@esparail.org), for more information or if you are planning to attend a meeting. Advance registration is required!

Saturday, August 20, 2011	Utica – Piers and Blake Restaurant 12:00n - 4:00pm
Saturday, October 1, 2011	Schenectady – Backstage Pub 12:00n - 4:00pm
Saturday, November 19, 2011	Schenectady – Backstage Pub 12:00n - 4:00pm
Saturday, January 21, 2012	Schenectady – Backstage Pub 12:00n - 4:00pm
Saturday, March 10, 2012	<b>2012 Annual Membership Meeting</b> - Schenectady

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/NARP Member

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).

## 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 or Senior Citizen (\$12.50 per year)
- Family membership (\$30.00)
- Sustaining membership (\$50.00)
- Patron membership (\$75.00)
- Corporate membership (\$100.00)
- Lifetime membership (\$300.00)

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

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel: 716-759-2315. e-mail: [RWLenz@aol.com](mailto:RWLenz@aol.com). Deadline for material for September/October issue is August 29, 2011. Material may be reproduced if credit is given ESPA and to the writer.

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