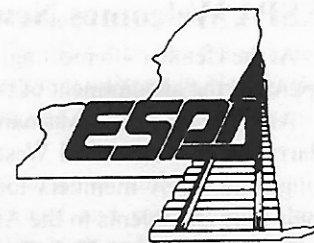


# THE ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

<http://www.trainweb.org/espa>



## Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

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*Photo by Bob Lenz*

Missing track at Syracuse Intermodal station still awaiting completion of Park Street Bridge. Work stopped in January 1999 when the adjacent CSX bridge sank less than an inch when drilling first started for the new span. The connection when completed will allow On-Track to connect the station with the downtown Armory Square area, Syracuse University and points south.

### No Amtrak Funding Yet

As of press time, Congress had yet to finalize 2004 funding for Amtrak, even though we are already one month into the 2004 fiscal year. However the Senate did accept its Appropriation Committee figure of \$1.346 billion. An expected amendment by Sen. Christopher Bond (R., Mo.) to reduce this did not materialize, reportedly because of lack of support.

The next step is for a Conference Committee to work out a compromise between the House \$900 million shutdown figure and the Senate's \$1.346 billion. Anything less than the \$1.346 billion will severely cut into President Gunn's plans to catch up on deferred maintenance, as this is already \$354 million below his requested \$1.8 billion plan.

Normally the Conference Committee compromises between the high and low figures. Given the strong support for Amtrak in both chambers, a high figure should be possible. But according to a New York Times article (Oct. 24) and statements by some staffers, the conference committees are now excluding most Democratic members from the process since the Republicans came in charge and now have the votes to override anything Democrats suggest.

This makes the outlook far more difficult for Amtrak, which is supported by most Democrats but by only about half the Republicans on the Transportation Subcommittees that will be doing the negotiating. While House Appropriations Committee Chair Bill Young has supported Amtrak on all major votes in recent years, both subcommittee chairs have been outspoken opponents of Amtrak, along with others such as John Culbertson (Tex.) and Sen. Bond. Senate Appropriations Chair Ted Stevens' record has been mixed.

*Frank Barry*

### Amtrak withdrawing from NY High Speed

Amtrak Chief Engineer David Hughes told National Association of Railroad Passenger (NARP) Directors that Amtrak has withdrawn from New York's high-speed infrastructure program. In response to a question at the NARP Board meeting in New Orleans last month he said "It was very painful last year when we decided we had to pull out of our contract with New York." He said Amtrak "has no intention of doing the infrastructure work because we will never recover any of our investment in it."

Hughes said Amtrak has written New York with a proposal for operation of the turboliners. Negotiations are continuing with the State regarding payment for the extra costs involved in their operation, as their fuel consumption and maintenance costs are considered higher than those of diesel locomotives.

It is not immediately clear what will happen to the double tracking between Albany and Schenectady and high-speed incremental projects between Albany and New York, to say nothing of improvements west of Schenectady. However the Hudson Valley study to identify the most cost effective incremental improvements to reduce running times south of Albany is reportedly underway with good cooperation from all parties. The badly needed 4th track for the Rensselaer station is one of the projects being considered.

*Frank Barry*

### Amtrak Issues REALLY New Timetable

Amtrak normally issues new timetables twice a year, so the appearance of a new one doesn't usually constitute much of a news item. But this one does. The new October 26th timetable not only consolidates all Amtrak's trains in one document instead of issuing a separate one for the Northeast, but for the first time in 20 years it also includes sample fares. A great deal of thought has clearly gone into its layout and presentation. The list of stations gives names and phone numbers for connecting transit services, which previously was done only for the Northeast. Other new features include diagrams of the various sleeping accommodations with bed dimensions, as well as a two-page spread for Auto Train with map. A list of arrivals and departures from Chicago makes it easy to calculate connections at a glance. All the popular discounts are listed in one place—including the 10% discount for members of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP). The Amtrak map is featured prominently inside the front cover instead of hidden in the very back. And there is much more.

In an era when most transportation companies have given up on timetables altogether and adopted fare policies that make buying a ticket feel like investing in the stock market, Amtrak is bucking the trend. The new timetable conveys a respect for the passenger's intelligence and will be especially welcome for those of us who like to know more about our trip than simply when it begins and when it ends.

*Frank Barry*

## ESPA Welcomes New Regional Coordinators

At the October 4th meeting, the ESPA Officers and Coordinators approved the appointment of two new regional coordinators.

Anthony Rudmann was named Capital Region Coordinator and Barry Adler was named Westchester Coordinator. Both of these long-time ESPA members look forward to actively contributing their time and talents to the Association.

The Central New York Coordinator's position remains vacant. ESPA members interested in being considered for this opening should contact Bruce Becker.

## Amtrak Seeks ESPA's Input

Amtrak's Empire District Superintendent, Philip Larson, continues to solicit your feedback on your New York State Amtrak travel experiences. Whether everything was great or if there was room for improvement, Phil welcomes our input, as he strives to provide the best possible service on the Empire Corridor. Please send your written trip reports and comments, including specific dates, train numbers and employee names as appropriate to: Philip Larson, District Superintendent, Empire District Amtrak 525 East Street Rensselaer, NY 12144

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

## October Amtrak Schedules

Amtrak's schedules for the Empire Corridor changed on October 27, 2003. There is an increase of service on Sundays, as the 9:15pm from Albany to New York City returns, with a start in Niagara Falls. Since April, on Sundays, Amtrak had both trains that start in Niagara Falls departing in the morning, with no service after the Toronto *Maple Leaf* from any Empire station. The return of Train 288 is a benefit to for weekend travelers returning downstate from western and central New York and also from Albany with the additional train on Sundays.

The trains from New York City to Western New York have been spread out, with Train 281 moving an hour earlier and thus more than 2 hours before Train 283. The *Lake Shore Limited* retains its schedule as the last westbound to Western New York and the first eastbound from Western New York. ESPA had requested that Train 284 operate ahead of 48, so that travelers would have the first train each weekday across the start to be a reliable train, as Train 48 continues to have an on-time rate of less than 5%.

One benefit of the new schedule is that the *Cardinal* will start/end in New York City, instead of Washington, on its journey through West Virginia, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and to/from Chicago. It will depart NYC at 9:25am and arrive in Chicago at 11am the next morning, on its tri-weekly schedule. The eastbound departs Chicago at 7:30pm and arrives New York at 11:30pm the next evening. This eliminates a time-consuming and often unreliable late evening connection in Washington to stations along the Northeast Corridor.

### No Sleeper Washington to Boston

During the month of November 2003, the *Federal*, which is the overnight train from Boston to Washington, will operate without a Viewliner sleeper. This is due to Amtrak's on-going shortage, especially of sleeper cars. Numerous times in recent months, the *Federal* has not had a sleeping car, which infuriated passengers who expected a comfortable overnight in first class accommodations.

Gary Prophet

## SCORT Meets in New York

AASHTO's Standing Committee on Rail Transportation met in Buffalo Sept. 14-17, hosted by its Chairman, New York Transportation Commissioner Joe Boardman. Participants included state transportation officials from across the U.S. as well as railroad and supplier representatives and many consultants. Frank Barry and Roy Davis attended from ESPA.

Commissioner Boardman said his goal was to get states to agree on a set of principles for rail legislation from Congress. "We agree on 80% of the issues, but we're focusing on the things we disagree about, and this is holding us up," he told ESPA. "We need to build on what we agree on." The emphasis on principles was echoed by other speakers as well, though from different perspectives. Principles presented by the Association of American Railroads, which represents freight railroads, included the following:

- \*Intercity passenger rail service requires ongoing public support. "If policymakers determine that intercity passenger service provides essential public benefits—and freight railroads believe it does—then the costs should be borne by the public."

- \*Freight railroads should receive full compensation for use of their assets by intercity passenger operators—Amtrak's "incremental cost basis does not come close to the full market value of Amtrak's access to (freight) railroad's tracks."

- \*Intercity passenger rail should be provided by one entity—Amtrak. Amtrak's right of access should not be transferred or franchised.

- \*Future high speed (90 mph and above) "corridors should be sealed and where feasible, passenger trains should operate over (separate) tracks. Further, Amtrak's statutory right of access should be eliminated for high-speed operations."

Anthony Perl, a transportation professor at the University of Calgary and former NARP board member, presented principles for a "new vision" to revitalize U.S. passenger rail:

- \*A ten year time frame is needed to achieve substantial ridership gains.

- \*A national intercity rail plan should develop projects to be implemented by states and public-private partnerships.

- \*Federal funding match should be the same as for highways and transit—an 80-90% federal share.

- \*The intercity rail network must be integrated into existing air and road networks; "It should be as easy to change between modes as to change within a mode." Perl pointed out that both air and highway communities have a clear vision, and that "air and highway people understand the synergy between freight and passengers." Freight railroads, however, "see passenger service as standing in the way of commercial success." Perl's new book "New Departures" compares the evolution of U.S. rail passenger service to that in other countries and recommends policy changes needed here.

Federal Railroad Administration head Alan Rutter attempted to explain the proposed Bush Administration Amtrak legislation: "What we came up with is based on outreach to a lot of people. States asked us, 'if we're going to pay for this, couldn't we be able to choose someone besides Amtrak?'" The bill allows this but Rutter acknowledged that it would be difficult for freight railroads.

Rutter said the administration does not think operating support should be provided indefinitely and that capital funding should be based on existing systems for transit: "We tried to choose something that wouldn't be reinventing the wheel—and there is a lot of discipline there in handing the money out." Rutter noted that the bill didn't specify the amount of money (Cont'd on page 6)



## Downstate ESPA Meetings

NYC metropolitan area ESPA members are most welcome to attend Downstate ESPA meetings. Held in cooperation with NJ-ARP and the Committee for Better Transit, the monthly gatherings are at the Conference Room, NYPD Downtown Center, 104 Washington Street, just north of Rector Street in Lower Manhattan, 6-8pm, on the third Wednesday of each month. The next three meetings are November 19 and December 17, 2003 and January 21, 2004.

For more information call George Haikalis at 212-475-3394 or send a note to [geohaikalis@juno.com](mailto:geohaikalis@juno.com)

## Warrington Endorses ESPA

### "through-running" plan at Penn Station

NJ Transit Executive Director George Warrington endorsed the ESPA/NJ-ARP plan for through-running at Penn Station, New York as a way to increase train capacity at this crowded station. At a September 19, 2004 meeting with NJ-ARP officers, Warrington agreed that it made sense "in principle" to consider this plan since a new tunnel under the Hudson River to relieve congestion would still be some ten years in the future. In October, NJ-ARP and ESPA members then met with NJ Transit Planner Rich Roberts to discuss this proposal in more detail. Roberts was "ready to dance" but needed a partner. ESPA members are arranging a meeting with new LIRR President Jim Dermody to advance this effort. The Penn Station Metro-Hub plan developed by the Regional Rail Working Group — a Downstate coalition of transit advocates — was approved by ESPA and later by NJ-ARP in September. The plan is posted on [www.auto-free.org](http://www.auto-free.org) along with other information about the Regional Rail Working Group.

*George Haikalis*

## PATH/Lex Connection gains momentum

Congressman Jerrold Nadler, whose district includes the devastated World Trade Center complex and the Downtown PATH terminal, requested that planners from MTA and PANYNJ review a proposal developed by NJ-ARP and ESPA members for a direct track connection between PATH and the Lexington Avenue subway as part of the rebuilding process. The link, proposed long before the Trade Center was built in the 1960s, has resurfaced as a possibility in the aftermath of the tragic events of 9/11. The connection opens the way for more convenient transit connections between Jersey City, Hoboken and Newark, New Jersey and many neighborhoods in Manhattan. For more information about this proposal contact [geohaikalis@juno.com](mailto:geohaikalis@juno.com)

*George Haikalis*

## NYC Transit Service Changes

In February 2004 the completion of NYCDOT work on the Manhattan Bridge will allow the reopening of all four subway tracks on the Manhattan Bridge for the first time since 1990. This will allow trains traveling over the bridge to serve both the Sixth Ave. and Broadway line stations.

## Rhinecliff Parking

The parking lot at Rhinecliff is inching closer to a long awaited expansion. Under the plan, the land currently owned by CSX just south of the Rhinecliff station will be paved, if the NYS DOT can find the funds to do so. The latest is that this is close to happening, but no firm commitments have yet been made.

## Permanent Amtrak Funding Set Back

Work on a vehicle for permanent funding received a major setback in the House when the Ways and Means Committee voted to remove the funding provisions from RIDE-21. This was Jack Quinn's (R., Buffalo) and Don Young's, (R., Alaska), bill to authorize tax exempt and tax credit bonds to raise \$24 billion for high-speed corridors. Although William Thomas, (R., Cal.) who chairs the Ways & Means Committee had voted favorably on all recent Amtrak votes, he nonetheless removed the bond provisions from the bill when it reached his committee. According to one staffer, the issue was jurisdiction—this bill came out of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee but involved taxation issues under the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee. Chairman Thomas reportedly did not like voting on someone else's bill, although he made positive remarks about Amtrak. Because a number of bills are being developed with tax and revenue implications the Ways and Means Committee feels a need to keep control, according to this staffer. Although Thomas' action was supported by a party line vote, committee member Amo Houghton (R., Corning), did say he thought the committee should not slam the door on financing rail projects through bond proposals.

Transportation consultant Tim Gillespie said other factors may have played a role too. He pointed out that this committee approved a \$128 billion tax cut for a group of manufacturers on the same day. Those affected were strongly united and had flooded the committee with a clear, strong message. But the committee apparently received few signs of support from railroad interests affected by RIDE-21. "Until the rail community really gets behind something, they won't get anything," Gillespie said.

Action now shifts to the Senate where staffers for Senators Ernest Hollings (D., S.C.) and Thomas Carper, (D., Del.), are working on another bill, to be called ARRIVE-21. This bill, like Kay Bailey Hutchinson's earlier S-1505, would fund a Rail Infrastructure Finance Corporation (RIFCO) to issue tax-credit bonds—up to \$30 billion over 6 years. Proceeds would fund states and/or Amtrak for high speed and intercity passenger rail projects as well as freight rail improvements. It would direct the federal government to develop a national rail plan and a 50-year intermodal blueprint for an efficient transportation system. It would authorize approximately \$1.5 billion annually for Amtrak to cover capital and operating expenses not funded through RIFCO. And it would require states to develop their own rail plans in order to get RIFCO grants. Finally it would modify the Hutchison bill's provision to allow privatization of Amtrak routes that fail to achieve an 80% on time average.

Other sponsors are Frank Lautenberg, (D., N.J.) and Susan Collins, (R., Me.). More Republican support is critical, including that of Hutchison. ARRIVE-21 is being developed as a rail component in the new TEA-21 surface transportation bill. If the effort to insert it succeeds, it will be a real breakthrough. But the Bush Administration opposes tax credit bonds so it will not be an easy sell.

*Frank Barry*

## Thank you Mischler's Florist

ESPA again wishes to thank Mischler's Florist and Greenhouses at 118 South Forest Road Williamsville NY for their generous donation of flowers to beautify the Buffalo/Depew station.

Mischler's 716-632-1290

## Ridership Highest Ever

Amtrak served a record 24 million passengers in Fiscal Year '03 (ending September 30), the highest annual ridership ever experienced by the nation's passenger rail service in its 32-year history.

Despite a number of adverse conditions this year, including a lagging economy that has effected the travel industry overall, the Iraq war, the Presidents' Day blizzard, the Northeast blackout and Hurricane Isabel, Amtrak's ridership topped the previous record of 23.5 million passengers set in 2001.

Long-distance trains showed substantial improvement over last year, with those in the Eastern region of the country improving ridership by 3.8 percent and those in the Western region improving by 6.6 percent.

Ridership on shorter distance routes in West increased by 11.7 percent over last Year while decreasing slightly in the East (-1.6 percent).

## VIA Funding Increases

A new funding package to revitalize Canadian Inter-city passenger rail service worth \$692.5 million over the next 5 years was recently announced.

Coupled with the 401.9 million announced in April 2000, the funding provides VIA Rail with the means to address urgent capital needs related to rolling stock, infrastructure and health and safety. This new investment addresses VIA's long-term capital needs, ensuring that its current network and service levels are sustainable into the future, while preserving the option for higher speed rail at a later date.

## 2003-2004 ESPA Meeting Dates

Saturday, November 22, 2003 The Parker Inn Schenectady  
11:30am - 4:00pm Advance reservations are required.  
Please contact Bruce Becker by November 19.

Saturday, January 10, 2004 The Parker Inn, Schenectady

Saturday, March 6, 2004 Annual Meeting - Schenectady

If you are interested in becoming more involved in ESPA, these meetings are the perfect opportunity to learn more about the Association and how you can make a difference. ALL ESPA members are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact President Bruce Becker, 518-383-5985 or bbecker@albanycc.cc, if you need information or are planning on attending a meeting.

## G&W Bidding for D&H

The Genesee & Wyoming Railroad has begun discussions with CP Rail regarding purchase or lease of the Delaware & Hudson. CP has been barely covering its costs on the D&H and is looking at various alternatives for its operation. Amtrak's *Adirondack* train uses the northern portion of the line between Schenectady and Rouses Point en route to Montreal.

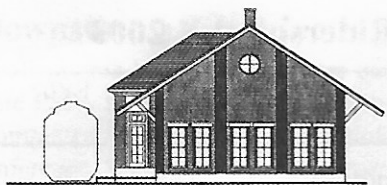
A half century ago the 104 year old G&W was a mere 15 mile shortline that linked the town of Retsof in Livingston County with several major railroads without touching either of the counties for which it was named. Today it is a holding company based in Greenwich, Conn., that is the second largest operator of shortlines in the U.S. Its holdings and affiliates include over 20 short line and regional railroads in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Australia and even Bolivia. The Company operates over 8000 miles of owned and leased track and plus more than 3000 miles under other track access arrangements.

Frank Barry

## Amtrak Ridership FY 2003

	FY03	FY02	% change vs. FY02
<b>EASTERN REGION</b>			
Acela/Metroliner	2,936,885	3,213,981	-8.6
Ethan Allen	35,585	38,522	-7.6
Vermont	60,891	66,843	-8.9
Regional	5,974,806	5,760,499	+3.7
Federal	179,154	215,141	-16.7
Maple Leaf/Empire	1,201,242	1,240,857	-3.2
Downeaster	254,030	245,135	+3.6
Clocker	1,957,903	1,978,533	-1.0
Keystone	886,003	948,899	-6.6
Adirondack	86,120	91,060	-5.4
Carolinian	217,807	215,033	+1.3
Piedmont	39,159	44,352	-11.7
Special trains	36,693	34,728	+5.7
Silver Star	245,530	252,240	-2.7
Three Rivers	137,234	126,659	+8.3
Cardinal	72,230	74,023	-2.4
Silver Meteor	286,321	248,467	+15.2
Capitol Limited	153,969	145,750	+5.6
Lake Shore Limited	265,715	287,779	-7.7
Palmetto	194,609	205,930	-5.5
Crescent	255,531	245,660	+4.0
Pennsylvanian	124,372	75,617	+64.5
Auto Train	199,804	201,580	-0.9
<b>Eastern Region Total</b>	<b>15,801,593</b>	<b>15,957,288</b>	<b>-1.0</b>
<b>WESTERN REGION</b>			
Chicago-St. Louis	254,946	225,629	+13.0
Hiawatha	417,366	404,009	+3.3
Wolverine	326,367	299,729	+8.9
Illini	102,684	92,143	+11.4
Illinois Zephyr	103,924	94,480	+10.0
Heartland Flyer	46,592	52,584	-11.4
Pacific Surfliner	2,179,427	1,725,234	+26.3
Cascades	589,947	579,646	+1.8
Capitols	1,139,136	1,080,109	+5.5
San Joaquins	782,778	734,236	+6.6
International	80,890	91,714	-11.8
Kentucky Cardinal	19,179	20,707	-7.4
Missouri Service	139,823	144,201	-3.0
Pere Marquette	73,392	60,127	+22.1
Special Trains	71,425	62,884	+13.6
Empire Builder	415,722	368,061	+12.9
California Zephyr	323,389	326,991	-1.1
Southwest Chief	273,271	255,858	+6.8
City of New Orleans	181,802	158,747	+14.5
Texas Eagle	155,003	129,208	+20.0
Sunset Limited	105,033	97,366	+7.9
Coast Starlight	444,430	445,646	-0.3
<b>Western Region Total</b>	<b>8,226,526</b>	<b>7,449,309</b>	<b>+10.4</b>
<b>Short Distance Total</b>	<b>20,194,154</b>	<b>19,761,015</b>	<b>+2.2</b>
<b>Long Distance Total</b>	<b>3,833,965</b>	<b>3,645,582</b>	<b>+5.2</b>
<b>Amtrak Total</b>	<b>24,028,119</b>	<b>23,406,597</b>	<b>+2.7</b>





Change trains at Binghamton.... The new NYS&W Binghamton station will be a sleek and stylish destination and transfer point.

## Area Railroads Eye New York Travel Market

Binghamton New York is to be the future home to a revived passenger railway system. During the first week of October 2003 New York Susquehanna and Western Railway (NYS&W) officials announced the completion of their purchase of the historic former Delaware & Hudson freight house. The freight house will be converted into a passenger facility as part of an effort to prepare for rail passenger operations between Syracuse and Binghamton. Binghamton's new station is a crucial strategic link for the Syracuse to Binghamton passenger route as the city lacks a passenger rail terminal. The railroad has restored historic stations at Cortland and Marathon and has a new station facility in Syracuse. Railroad officials plan to start renovations soon on the former D&H freight house building as they commence with the first phase of the project.

NYS&W railroad officials have been working with NYSDOT and other State and local agencies on the ongoing rehabilitation of their Syracuse and Utica branch lines, which converge at Binghamton. To date some \$10 million in state and railway funds have been committed to the project aimed at upgrading tracks in anticipation of the new services to be offered and to provide improved freight service. NYS&W spokesperson Nathan Fenno adds "we see ourselves and our railroad as a valuable transportation asset for New York State". When asked what the service might look like, Fenno went on to say "we have no specific plan as of yet, but we do believe our passengers will require a high level of service and providing that will be our highest priority".

The rail route is connected to New York City via Scranton, Pa. This portion of the rail system is being promoted for high-speed passenger service which could commence sometime around 2007. Political and business leaders in Pennsylvania and New Jersey have been pushing hard to fast track the project and yield the significant economic benefits of this new transportation system. The Senate version of the 2004 funding bill now includes \$5 million to complete the engineering study necessary for Federal Transit Administration approval.

The New York- Binghamton- Syracuse rail riding experience is the kind of Spectacular Mountain railroading most of us associate with European railroads. Indeed, the route is literally carved out of mountainsides throughout the run in Pennsylvania. The route was considered an engineering marvel when it was built with the final result being a route which is remarkably straight and capable of running trains at high speeds through the mountain passes in the Poconos. The builder of the route, The Lackawanna Railroad, has a legendary history of running fast trains around, over and through this rugged terrain.

## HUB STATION

The new Binghamton station would serve as a rail transportation hub as rail plans emerge in the years ahead. Lines from Buffalo, Syracuse, Utica and Cooperstown/ Oneonta all converge at the new Binghamton facility. New developments in railcar

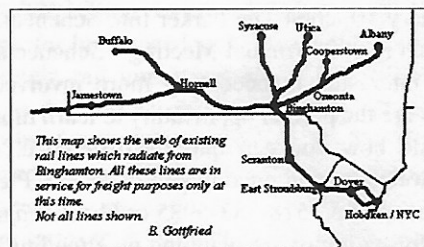
technology are available now, which make passenger service feasible on light density branch lines. The NYS&W has the unique distinction of being the only large regional railroad in New York to have extensive passenger facilities and experience in passenger car maintenance and repair.

The current debate in Washington swirls around how new rail transportation projects will be financed and maintained. The desire of states such as California, New York and Texas to develop their railway systems has grown in intensity as these states try to develop new "smart growth" planning strategies. Railroads do not require the constant paving, plowing, lighting, patrolling and maintenance of highway systems; instead, they require the initial infrastructure investment and funding for operations. Many states are beginning the process to identify new dedicated funding sources for their rail service plans.

In Binghamton, State Senator Tom Libous has been a strong proponent of the Binghamton- Syracuse route. "Getting passenger trains on the tracks between Binghamton, Syracuse, Utica and other areas is going to be a great step forward for Upstate New York," noted Senator Libous. "Improving our infrastructure with this project, the upgrade of Route 17 to I-86 and renovations at Greater Binghamton Airport is key to speeding up the growth of our economy." Binghamton was last served by passenger trains in 1970 by the Erie-Lackawanna Railway.

This rail plan is unique in the level of cooperation between state and railroad officials and the can-do attitude of all the parties involved. Empire State Passengers Association president Bruce B. Becker said, "Binghamton has the opportunity to establish a first class transportation system and connection to the greatest city in the world". He noted however that many obstacles remain including insurance indemnification for the railroad operating companies, determining optimum service levels and obtaining adequate public funding support for the service.

*Ben Gottfried - Susquehanna Region Coordinator*



## JetBlue Fares Go Up

As JetBlue continues to have a loyal following and many planes continue to sell out between JFK Airport and Buffalo, JetBlue has been raising its fares. In fact, most of their one-way fares on Fridays and Sundays are now over \$90 each way and most are \$100 each way, much higher than Amtrak's fares. On other days of the week, one-way fares are typically \$60-80. JetBlue's \$44 one-way fares to Buffalo from JFK Airport typically require 3 weeks advance purchase and are available only on selected flights

## Fare Discounts Available

For travel within New York State and to all points along the Northeast Corridor, Amtrak continues to offer a 20% discount off regular fares when passengers reserve tickets using Promotion Code V529. This discount is not valid on *Acela Express* or *Metroliners* and will not be honored during peak travel times and holiday periods. Contact Amtrak for full details.

## SCORT meets (Cont'd from page 2)

to be allocated or where it would come from; "if we had done that, we probably wouldn't have gotten a bill out of the administration at all!"

Joe McHugh, Amtrak's Vice President of Governmental Affairs, said Amtrak can survive on the Senate's figure of \$1.346 billion for next year, "but things will start to fail. We're rebuilding the AEM-7's; their insulation is so old it's cracking, arcing and catching fire. We've fixed 3 units, but want to do 7 more next year." He also noted the difficulty Amtrak faces because there are so few suppliers: "Practically nobody in the U.S. builds cars any more; only three companies make couplers, only two make wheels and only one company can make high speed concrete ties. We have to get our interlockings overseas."

Amtrak Planning Director Gil Mallory said Amtrak wants to pass scheduling and fare decisions over to the states. "We want to evolve a policy where we take the risk on the cost side. We will give you a projection of revenue, but we want states to take the risk there. We have control over costs, but no control over the amount of travel." His remarks were based on Amtrak's intent to require states to pay full costs of corridor trains within their borders, which he said would be the goal for fiscal year 2005, beginning next October.

Congressman Jack Quinn, (R., Buf.) who chairs the Rail Subcommittee in the House of Representatives, said it's not an easy time to work on railroad issues: "We have given Amtrak just enough money to fail...Now the federal government is coming to the states saying 'we have a plan—we want more money from you'." Quinn said it's his job to make sure the politics happen, "but what worries me is we have folks in the House who want Amtrak dismantled. Then they want to bring it back in some other way—but I don't think that's possible. Once it's dismantled it's too difficult to bring it back."

A month after the meeting the Public Strategies Group, which had been contracted to compile positions and priorities of the various states, issued its report. Among its recommendations were the following:

- \*States need to forge new alliances, especially with the Class I freight railroads (and) seek out win-win legislative solutions.
- \*The federal government must continue to be held accountable for sustaining a viable and stable intercity rail transportation network that meets the needs of both freight shippers and passengers.
- \*The states must create a vision of a robust national rail network

supporting economic growth and vitality...to attract the sizeable investments needed. In this vision both freight and passenger rail customers will be supported with world-class service. This vision must be built incrementally...However bringing the nation's rail infrastructure merely up to a "state of good repair" is not likely to be...sufficiently compelling to cause investors to (make) this high priority.

For this writer there were two fundamental messages: 1) freight and passenger interests must stop fighting and start collaborating for either to win anything substantial, and 2) a compelling vision must be articulated before significant money will flow.

Frank Barry



Always expect a train!

Freight trains do not follow set schedules.

### ESPA MEMBERSHIP - NEW OR RENEWAL

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