



Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

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Spring 2018

RPA/ESPA 38th Annual Meeting

Held at Key Hall at Proctors in Schenectady on March 10, 2018, Bruce Becker of the Rail Passengers Association (RPA – formerly NARP) gave a presentation on why the NARP rebranding, along with commentary on the new Siemens locomotive and coaches bound for Amtrak corridors in California and the Midwest.



(Bruce Becker, Don Nimphius, and Gary Prophet, photo above)



Ron Epstein, NYSDOT Executive Deputy Commissioner, giving a presentation on ongoing state investment into passenger rail. This includes several new stations, various track infrastructure work, and the pending release of the Empire Corridor HSR EIS study.

New Amtrak Lakeshore Ltd. Menu in June

Amtrak Media Relations announced a new menu for the Lake Shore Limited effective June 1st, the same date Amtrak officials have said new Viewliner Dining cars will join the route. The media relations April 19th posting said the new menu would also be used on the *Capitol Limited*.

Amtrak will offer contemporary and fresh dining choices for sleeping car customers instead of traditional dining car service. Sleeping car customers will choose meals delivered to their bedrooms or roomettes or eaten in a private café or lounge car.” Lunch & dinner entrees mentioned in the release are: chilled beef tenderloin, vegan wrap, chicken Caesar salad or turkey club sandwich. Breakfast items mentioned are: assorted breakfast breads with butter, cream cheese and strawberry jam; Greek yogurt; and sliced seasonal fresh fruit plate. “Meals will be delivered to the train just prior to origination, eliminating on-board preparation.” Train stocking points are New York City, Chicago and Washington, DC.

Unanswered is the question of continued availability of current dining car offerings such as slow cooked beef flat iron, roasted chicken, railroad French toast, natural angus burger, and pasta with meatballs on the Lake Shore. For the *Capitol Limited*: scrambled eggs, three egg omelet, buttermilk pancakes, and Amtrak signature steak were not mentioned.

Also unanswered is if any dining car service will be available for coach passengers and if the diner will become “a private café or lounge car.”

Bob Dorsch, Vice President of the Amtrak Long Distance Service Line, said, “our continued success depends on increasing customer satisfaction while becoming more efficient.”

Initial reaction from long distance customers and potential customers was overwhelmingly negative and internet website Railway Age editor-in-chief headlined his commentary “Want Air Line food? Take Amtrak.” One of the editor's comments was “Gag me with a plastic spoon!”

Tony Rudmann

Go Green and Save \$\$

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Our postage and printing cost savings will give ESPA more resources to further its passenger rail advocacy mission.

Please send your e-mail address to:
www.rwlens4@gmail.com.

(Continued on page 4)

New Buffalo Exchange Street Station Unveiled

At a public open house held on April 16th at the Buffalo Transportation Pierce-Arrow Auto Museum, drawings of the proposed Buffalo-Exchange Street Station were revealed by NYSDOT to attendees and the press. It is to be built on the site of the existing station, replacing the 1952 brick building built by the New York Central.

This is a continuation of the process that began in autumn 2016 when the current building's roof leaked after heavy rain, partially collapsing a drop ceiling. The existing station's roof was eventually repaired—but not before a process was undertaken to replace it. Last March a site selection committee of stakeholders and notables choose a downtown location over sites in the Larkin District and at Buffalo Central Terminal.

There was strong support by local residents and the railfan community for Central Terminal, and some support for Larkintown where a station would be close to downtown (1.5 miles) yet could still be served by the Lake Shore Limited. ESPA supported the downtown location due to its proximity to the NFTA Metro Rail a block away on Main Street—as well as the numerous hotels now located at Canalside and in Downtown.

A year went by and NYSDOT is actually moving full speed ahead on building a completely new station at the cost of \$20 million. This summer, a design team will be selected with a notice to proceed for station design and construction to begin in autumn of this year. Planned project completion is summer of 2020.

The new station will be over twice as large as the existing building at 4,800 square feet and raised 9 feet to bring it level with Exchange Street. The building will also be closer to Exchange Street to bring it out of the shadow of the elevated I-190 Niagara Thruway. The new station will be built so that at some future date a Phase Two expansion can be done, moving intercity buses to the site from the existing NFTA Downtown Terminal.

There will be a new ADA-compliant 540-foot long high-level platform connected by stairs and a ramp to the station. The question of whatever two tracks could be maintained within the formerly double-track right-of-way is still unresolved. CSX reportedly wants to have a second freight bypass track, but modern wider track centers and the need to bring the new platform out into the existing track bed to maintain six feet of clearance around highway support columns may make that impossible. If so, an interlaced gauntlet track may be required.

The biggest feature may be the broad pedestrian walkway that will be built connecting the plaza outside the new station building to the Canalside Metro Rail station on Main Street. It is about a 5-minute, one thousand-foot walk that will be made more attractive by replacing existing car parking under the elevated expressway with pedestrian paving, attractive landscaping, good lighting, wayfinding signage, and perhaps public art installations.

Given that the paramount reason for keeping the station on the current site was its proximity to the Metro Rail and the Canalside redevelopment—vastly improving that pedestrian connection for passengers walking to and from the station

compared to today's dismal wasteland—the new station and walkway will give the Queen City a more attractive and highly functional intercity transportation gateway.

For images of the project and existing station please visit our Facebook post on the new station at: www.facebook.com/esparail/posts/1778397768873364.

Benjamin Turon



New Buffalo Exchange Street Station

(see Map on page 5)

Schenectady Station Construction

Work is speedily progressing on the new station building for Schenectady with masonry walls and roof steel work in place by May. Murnane Building Contractors were even working on Saturday in the snow and rain to meet the project completion date of November 2018. Its mighty impressive already, looking a bit like the Great Wall of China, according to one local passerby, due to its gray masonry and arched windows.

For now, passengers coming to or leaving Schenectady are using a modular station Amtrak placed on the north side of Liberty Street. This station is utilizing the station's newly paved long-term parking lot and emergency egress ramp and stairs from the new low-level concrete platform. ESPA advises all using the largely open air temporary station to be fully prepared and to dress accordingly.

Benjamin Turon



Schenectady Station

Gateway Program Funded: Rising Costs to be Investigated

Despite President Donald Trump personally intervening to stop federal funding of the Gateway Program—Congress saw fit to fund this series vital Northeast Corridor projects to the tune of \$541 million in the fiscal year 2018. The \$1.3 trillion omnibus 'Consolidated Appropriations Act' spending bill was signed into law on March 23, 2018 by the unhappy president to fund the federal government, from defense to transportation.

The 'Gateway Program' refers to several projects to improve, repair, expand, and replace various bridges, tunnels, and track infrastructure between Newark Penn Station and New York Penn Station. The biggest part of the project is two new underwater twin tunnels into Penn Station. The Gateway Development Corporation has been formed under the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to oversee the project with the cooperation of Amtrak, NJ Transit, and perhaps USDOT. Its website is at www.gatewayprogram.org

The bill allocated \$650 million to Amtrak for improvements to the Northeast Corridor, of which Amtrak planned to spend \$388 million directly on the Gateway Program. Another \$153 million would come from Federal Transit Administration grants, for a mandated total of \$541 million. In addition, in the bill there is a further \$2.9 billion made available in discretionary federal grants that NJ Transit, NYNJ Port Authority, and Amtrak can apply for to fund the project. This action by congress bypasses USDOT Secretary Elaine Chao who opposed the project—referring to it as a local matter.

In its last days the Obama administration had committed the federal government to provide half of the funding for the first \$12.7 billion phase of the Gateway Program—with Amtrak, New Jersey, and New York State providing the rest of the funding by borrowing from the Federal Railroad Administration's 'Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Program'. The Trump Administration reneged on that deal, claiming that the entire plan was unfairly reliant on federal assistance.

The omnibus spending bill however also takes aims at the rising costs of the Gateway Program by having the Government Accountability Office study the high costs of transit construction in the U.S.A.—including New York City. According to the New York Times:

“Special attention is expected to be paid to New York City, where recent projects have cost far more than anticipated. Auditors plan to examine contracting policies, station design, project routing, regulatory barriers and other elements that drive cost, comparing practices in different cities in the United States and abroad, officials said. A final report with recommendations is to be issued by the end of the year.”

Several months ago, the newspaper ran “System Failure”, an in-depth three-part exposé on the ongoing trials and tribulations of the New York City transit system. On December 28th the Times published the third article in the series, “Excessive Costs: The Most Expensive Mile of Subway Track on Earth” which laid out how excessive staffing, little competition, generous contracts and archaic rules dramatically inflate capital costs for transit in New York City.

“The first phase of the Second Avenue subway on the Upper

East Side of Manhattan, for instance, cost \$2.5 billion for each mile of track. Another project known as East Side Access, which will carry the Long Island Rail Road to Grand Central Terminal through a 3.5-mile tunnel, is on pace to cost \$3.5 billion per track mile. Elsewhere in the world, a mile of subway track typically costs \$500 million or less. The extension of the 14 Line in Paris, for example, was very similar to the Second Avenue subway project in length, depth, soil type, environmental issues and regulations, but it cost just \$450 million per track mile.”

Basically, the Times concluded that trade unions, construction companies, and engineering consultants with the acquiescence of the politicians whose campaigns they fund have colluded to turn the MTA into the golden goose. As currently managed there's is no incentive to control costs during the planning and construction of transit infrastructure—and every incentive to increase employment and profits at the taxpayer's expense.

The projected costs of the Gateway Project started out as \$14.5 billion in 2011—but are now estimated to be as high as \$20 to 30 billion. However, the higher number includes a lot of “extras” including buying and demolishing one whole block of Manhattan real-estate to build the proposed “Penn South” expansion of Penn Station.

The cost of building two new tunnels under the Hudson River and repairing the existing century old tubes is \$12.9 billion, up from previous estimates of \$7 billion to \$10 billion. And construction of the new \$1.5 billion Portal Bridge in the Jersey Meadowlands to replacing the troublesome century-old movable span as already begun.

Benjamin Turon

New Infrastructure Plan Delayed until after November Election

The new federal administration inaugurated in January 2017 began with a three-pronged agenda to solve problems of healthcare, tax reform and infrastructure within its first hundred days. As we move through April 2018, infrastructure improvement remains uncomplete despite the generally accepted fact that America has a \$4 trillion backlog of needed improvements.

Recent statements from President Donald Trump and Congressional leaders report that the infrastructure program will be delayed until after the November 2018 election.

The original idea was to provide a \$1 trillion plan with \$200 billion in federal money over the next decade. The bulk of the funding would come from public – private partnerships coupling private investors with federal, state and local government. Infrastructure consisted of the usual definition including highways, bridges, aviation, public ports & waterways, passenger and freight rail, the electric grid and broadband internet service. An added item was federal veteran's administration facilities.

Several problems surfaced quickly. Congressmen & local officials indicated they doubted public-private partnerships would work in their rural, thinly populated areas. The usual problem of available federal funding raised its head. The suggestion of raising the federal gasoline tax – unchanged since the 1990's – gathered little support in Congress. The

(Cont'd on page 5)

NY Wins New \$2 Million TIGER Grant

New York State continued its success in winning federal funding under the TIGER discretionary grant program by garnering \$2 million of the \$4.1 million needed for improvements to the Ogdensburg, NY – Prescott, Ontario International Bridge connecting the USA and Canada. The mid-March award was part of the \$500 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program from Federal Fiscal Year 2017 funds enacted in May 2017. The international bridge is the major cross-boarder commercial and personal link in northern New York.

The new awards were made to 41 projects in 43 states. “TIGER grants are targeted investments for our local communities that will increase safety, create jobs and modernize our country's infrastructure,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao. As in previous rounds of TIGER funding, applications far outstripped available funding.

New York has won funding in every TIGER competition including passenger and freight rail improvements. Rail applications in this award package brought \$16 million to New Mexico for the Southwest Chief passenger route, \$10 million to Indiana, \$9.1 million to Oklahoma \$8.5 million to Arkansas and \$3.2 million to Idaho. Funds must be obligated by September 30, 2020 and fully spent by September 30, 2025. Total TIGER awards now total over \$5.1 billion.

TIGER program funding for Federal Fiscal Year 2018 was guaranteed when Congress trebled to \$1.5 billion over ruling executive branch proposed cuts. The application process will begin later this year with an award announcement in the first quarter of 2019.

Tony Rudmann

ANNUAL MEETING (Cont'd from page 1)



Congressman John Faso receives a token from ESPA President Gary Prophet – a NARP “Congress: This is NOT a Dining Car” insulated travel bag.

Hudson Valley congressman John Faso (R-NY19) was well received during his talk that focussed on several infrastructure issues. Rep. Faso sits on the US House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, as well as the Agriculture committee.

He recalled his and his wife's personal experience during

the grade crossing accident in West Virginia when an Amtrak charter train carrying congressional Republicans to their winter retreat at the Greenbrier Resorts hit a truck load of garbage. This crash severely injured several people and killing one of three persons in the truck.

Quick action by those on the train, including several doctors, saved lives. The collision highlighted the importance of safety, including Positive Train Control. Faso said it was essential that PTC be installed, and that Congress was in no mood to extend the federally mandated end-of-year deadline for PTC to be installed by the rail industry.

A frequent rider of Amtrak from Hudson, NY to Washington, DC, Faso talked about how there should be food service on all Amtrak trains in Upstate NY. The fact that you can't even get a cup of coffee is a scandal, other corridor services of similar nature have food service, and so should *Empire Service* between NYC & Albany. The congressman has mention the food service deficiency several times to Amtrak officials, including at a congressional hearing last summer.

Faso discussed the Trump infrastructure plan, outlining his support for privatization of public assets which are self-supporting (like electric power generation and transmission), to generating new money for public infrastructure investment. He cited the example in Australia as a successful privatisation scheme.

However, much public infrastructure can't be privatized because it does not generate a positive income stream, including most highways, passenger rail, and public transit. Here, public money including from the federal government, is necessary. Faso noted that the Federal Highway Trust Fund had been in deficit for many years (\$138 billion in the hole). Something must be done, and he stated to the gathering that there was strong support in the House for additional federal dollars to be invested in the nation's infrastructure, including roads and rails.

The Republican stated that there was strong support for the Gateway Project in the House, but its cost of the new tunnels under the Hudson River into Penn Station needed to be reduced. Particularly, he spoke out against NYS's Scaffold Law which was passed in 1885 and imposes strict liability on builders and property owners to ensure the safety of workers who are at risk of falling from buildings, bridges and other tall structures under construction.

Faso is sponsoring a federal bill that would pre-empt the state Scaffold Law by denying federal funding for projects that fall under the “absolute liability” of the 133-year old law. He stated that there was no evidence that the law made construction safer compared to other states and that a similar effort at the federal level (2005 Graves Amendment) had led to the modernized the rental car industry in New York.

Faso ended his speech by noting that every county in his Upstate NY district had lost population, and this exodus of people and business was economically unsustainable. To address this negative trend, reform of the state's tax and

(Cont'd on page 5)



Congressman Paul Tonko (center) flanked by Gary Prophet of ESPA (left) and Bruce Becker of RPA (right)

regulatory regime was needed to reduce the cost of living and doing business in order to attract new residents and business. He lamented that the top employers in his district were public or non-profit entities, and that a robust private sector is necessary to support the public sector. Representative Paul Tonko, the Capital District congressman (D-NY20) gave a fiery rip-roaring speech to the gathering.

The barnstorming Rep. Tonko sits on the US House committees on “Energy and Commerce” and on “Science, Space, and Technology”.

The congressman called for far greater funding of infrastructure from the federal government, including Amtrak and Gateway. The congress should pass an infrastructure bill that included funding for Gateway.

The gateway Project was not just a “New York-New Jersey” issue Tonko declared, because the closure of the existing century old tunnels for repair would cut the Boston-Washington Northeast Corridor in half, severely disrupting transport in the Northeast and thus the entire national economy.



Kevin Chittenden, the General Superintendent of Amtrak “Empire Service,” and Bill Hollister, Senior Manager of Governmental Affairs at Amtrak for the Northeast, gave a slideshow presentation about ongoing developments and projects in concerning the Empire Corridor and Amtrak nationwide. Benjamin Turon

New Infrastructure (Cont'd from page 3)

suggestion of earmarking some part of the \$3 trillion corporate money held overseas for infrastructure died when repatriation was used to support tax cuts. Creation of an Infrastructure Bank was not approved. Finally, the private sector specialist in public-private partnerships brought to the White House to lead the Administration infrastructure program effort resigned and returned to the business world.

The administration did not send specific legislation to Capitol Hill for introduction and debate. In mid-February 2018, the White House released a 55 page infrastructure plan consisting of broad principals and goals.

The latest statements by the President and Congressional leaders say the infrastructure plan will not be considered until after the November 2018 election in what is usually termed the “lame duck” session.

So, America's infrastructure decay will continue at least until 2019. Anthony Rudmann



Mayor Gary McCarthy, speaking at RPA/ESPA 38th Annual Meeting.



Seasonal Amtrak Train to the Berkshires?

After several months work the Berkshire Flyer Working Group released a feasibility study on creating a seasonal intercity service to Pittsfield, Mass from New York City via Albany-Rensselaer. The trains would be extensions of existing Empire Service trains, just as the Adirondack and Ethan Allen are operated.

The first step would be a pilot program to test the operating feasibility and market demand for such a work, inspired by the *Cape Flyer* service out of Boston to Cape Cod operated seasonally by the MBTA. State Senator Adam Hinds is seeking funding for the pilot service to be included in the fiscal 2019 Massachusetts state budget that begins this July 1

The Berkshire Flyer Working Group determined that the extension of existing Empire Service trains from Rensselaer wouldn't require any significant capital investments, unlike two other alternatives being studied. Gross cost of operating one round trip each weekend during the summer and fall would be \$425,000 over a 20-week period. That figure could be reduced to \$240,000 if the service is able to attract 2,600 passengers over the period.

Interest in extending passenger rail service to Western Massachusetts has been growing for several years yet till recently focus was on the Housatonic Railroad which runs south from Pittsfield to Danbury, Conn where Metro-North service terminate. However, years of little progress led people to wonder if the existing CSX Berkshire Subdivision (former B&A mainline) that already hosts Amtrak's Lake Shore Limited could be utilized instead.

These efforts in the west join efforts in the east to expand intercity corridor service from Boston to Springfield, where the Union Station was recently rebuilt and expanded at the cost of \$90 million. Springfield Union Station sees both Amtrak service to the Northeast Corridor and a new Connecticut commuter service to Hartford and New Haven.

The proposed new service is called "East-West Rail" and has receive broad political support—except from the governor. MassDOT in cooperation with neighboring states studied the concept a few years ago in Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative, with a EIS being released in 2016.

Currently the only intercity service between Boston, Worcester, Springfield, Pittsfield, and Albany is the Lake Shore Limited to Chicago—taking 5 hours 10 minutes to travel the 200 miles from Boston South Station to Albany-Rensselaer.

The New York Central in the 1950s however had a passenger service that while making eight intermediate station stops made the run in 4 hours 15 minutes and then after flood damage in 1955, 4 hours 30 minutes. The "Beeliner" service utilize Budd RDC diesel-multiple unit railcars whose high power-to- weight ratio gave them good grade climbing abilities and a fast acceleration from station stops.

Berkshire Flyer Study located at:

www.massdot.state.ma.us/planning/Main/CurrentStudies/BerkshireFlyerStudy

Northern New England Rail Study located at:

www.massdot.state.ma.us/northernnewenglandrail/Home.

Benjamin Turon

Back to Grand Central

This summer its back to Grand Central Terminal for Amtrak, this time for all Empire Service trains, with no service to Penn Station. The Lake Shore Limited will run through to Boston with no New York section. Long-distance passengers from south of Albany who are bound for points west of Buffalo will have to transfer at Albany-Rensselaer.

This will be required because as part of Amtrak's 2018 'Infrastructure Renewal' program at New York Penn Station the Empire Connection line along the westside of Manhattan will be completely taken out-of- service. From Saturday, May 26th to Tuesday, September 4th all Empire Service, Ethan Allen Express, Adirondack, and Maple Leaf trains will all be rerouted from New York Penn Station to Grand Central Terminal. The Lake Shore Limited will only operate between Boston and Chicago, with New York City and Hudson Valley customers connecting from Empire Service trains at Albany-Rensselaer.

Amtrak will replace the track in the Empire Tunnel, as well as replacing cross ties, grade crossings and 8,000 feet of continuous rail on the Empire Connection line from tunnel to the Spuyten Duyvil Bridge. The Empire Tunnel was built in the 1980s to allow Amtrak trains from Upstate NY to run into Penn Station, and has seen no major maintenance till now.

At Spuyten Duyvil, Amtrak will be updating the bridge's mechanical and electrical equipment, which was corroded by Hurricane Sandy. This will be done by renting the floating crane used in the construction of the new Tappen Zee Bridge to lift the movable rail bridge off its fountains and onto the shore where the rehab work will be done.

Amtrak's reservation systems will be updated to reflect the reroute of trains to Grand Central Terminal once the schedule is determined, and any passenger already booked on a train will be contacted and accommodated on other scheduled services. Amtrak will also have staff and Quik-Trak ticketing kiosks at Grand Central Terminal throughout the Summer.

As of this writing Amtrak, Metro-North, and NYSDOT are still working out the details of schedules and equipment so please check Amtrak.com and Amtrak.com/NYPrenewal for the latest information.

From Amtrak.com

Saratoga & North Creek *(cont'd from page 7)*

sholds, this writer cannot venture a guess. Conversion to a bike trail would be expensive and like the railroad to date require an annual subsidy for maintenance and patrolling, and with no direct operating revenue unlike the railroad. Many tens of millions would be required for trail conversion.

Yet it is not an idea without merit. The rail-trial could even be expanded using old railroad and trolley rights-of- way to Warrensburg and Lake George from the current station in Thurman. Complicating matters is that approval for abandonment would require both state and federal regulatory approval, there is also the issue of easements, and now freight customers.

It does seem ironic that just as the long sought-after freight traffic from the Tahawus Mine and Barton Mine has materialized—that no one, not Iowa Pacific or the County of Warren, is apparently willing to spend another dollar on the Mr. Durant's railroad into the North Woods.

Benjamin Turon

Saratoga & North Creek Suspends Trains

Despite hopeful news during the winter, before the last snowfall in April it appeared that the Saratoga & North Creek Railway may have reached the end-of-the-line.

Throwing down an ultimatum Ed Ellis the Iowa Pacific CEO told Warren County officials that unless they paid him \$5 million to buy the Sanford Lake Branch from North River to Tahawus (most of that trackage is in Essex County) that he would not run any excursion trains this summer. Iowa Pacific also owes \$20,000 in contractual payments to Warren County and has had trouble paying bills to other parties in the past year.

The county which owns the railroad from North River to Hadley (Town of Corinth owns the rest to the interlocking with the Canadian Pacific mainline a mile north of the Saratoga Springs Rail Station) has stated—absolutely not and is exploring its legal options.

Ed Ellis and Warren County have had a trying relationship for several years. County officials have complained to the press of Iowa Pacific having poor communication skills—including making sudden changes in operating plans without informing or consulting with the county government. Still the county renewed the railway's contract in 2016 for five years.

Mr. Ellis claimed that the county had stabbed him in the back by opposing his plans for car storage including former oil tankers. County officials pointed out that he had promised several years ago that he had no plans, saw no need, and would not store tank cars on the railroad. Last fall in a YouTube video Mr. Ellis accompanying himself on acoustic guitar sang, “There's no need to fight/ The cars are not in sight/ You see wilderness every which way.”

There is renewed talk about converting the railroad into a recreational trail. An unnamed third party has approached the county about operating excursion trains this summer in place of Iowa Pacific. But Horicon Supervisor and Warren County Public Works Committee chairman Matt Simpson stated that:

“I don't envision it... We really need to sort out our obligations so we can move forward with whatever process we choose. It's complicated. We're going to take our time and do it right. We need to bring all the stakeholders together and figure out what's best for this corridor.”

The turn of recent events is very surprising because until Mr. Ellis dropped his bombshell—things seemed to be looking up for the Saratoga & North Creek. After missing a year, the snow train ran again, on-and- off due to severe flooding. And more importantly the railroad seemed to have finally gotten two long-term freight customers.

This includes a contract through August 2019 to move freight for Barton Mines, which according to Supervisor Simpson that even after recent developments— Warren County is still obligated under federal railroad law to allow Iowa Pacific to proceed with these regular freight movements this year.

More importantly NL Industries sold their shuttered titanium mine at Tahawus to Paul Mitchell Logging of Tupper Lake which runs a subsidiary, Mitchell Stone Products. The company has stated to the press its intention to ship out by rail the millions of tons of stone already mined from the property and sell it to construction companies,

replacing dump trucks.

The Albany *Times Union* in an editorial has advocated for converting the ninety-mile railroad into a rail trail. The *Glens Falls Post-Star* however after previously endorsing a rail-to-trail conversion—in an April 5th editorial advocated for state investment into the railroad as a railroad because of the freight business.

Some background history: The rail line was originally built by Thomas Durant of Union Pacific fame in the 1860s with the intention of reaching someplace important, but the money ran out and the line terminated in the middle-of- nowhere 62 miles north of Saratoga Springs at North River. A few miles east—a station, freight house, engine house, and turntable were built in the hamlet of North Creek.

The Delaware & Hudson Railway took control of the line in the 1890s—the line becoming the “Adirondack Branch” of the D&H. Further attempts to extend the line west to Blue Mountain Lake, Tupper Lake, or even Lake Ontario before the land within the newly created Adirondack Park became “forever wild” in the mid-1890s was stymied legally by the New York Central—which controlled the other railroads serving the region.

Then during WWII, the federal government overrode the state constitutionally protected forest land to build the 33-mile Sanford Lake Branch due north to the National Lead Titanium mine at Tahawus at the foot of the High Peaks. The ore was hauled out by train until the mid-1980s when the mine shut down.

In the 1990s, the County of Warren and Town of Corinth acquired the tracks from Saratoga to North River and made repairs with federal grant money. In the summer of 2011 the two governments awarded a franchise to short line holding company Iowa Pacific to operate the “Saratoga & North Creek Railway”—replacing the Upper Hudson River Railroad which had previously operated on the northern segment out of North Creek.

While it struggled to attract patrons to its winter “Snow Train” excursions, its summer trains and holiday specials including for a few years a franchised Polar Express operation seemed by all reports to be very popular. In the last few years activities expanded to include rail biking.

However, Ed Ellis continuity talked about the need to develop freight traffic to cover the full costs of maintaining the line. The Sanford Lake Branch was bought by Iowa Pacific from NL Industries to haul the tailings (waste rock) from the titanium mine to the Port of Albany, where they could be shipped out for use in construction. Iowa Pacific also tried to ship out garnet (used as an industrial abrasive, including sandpaper) from the Barton Mine in North River.

Yet Mr. Ellis seemed to run into numerous obstacles, including Canadian Pacific which refused to allow Iowa Pacific to run trains to the port or to interchange with CSX or NS at their Saratoga freight yard. CP Rail also sent the box cars in the test shipments from Barton Mines bound for the Southern USA on circuitous routings through Canada that proved lengthy and unpredictable. To generated revenue, the railroad began storing surplus tank cars on the Sanford Lake Branch—raising a huge outcry from environmentalists, local newspapers, and politicians.

That brings us to the current crisis. As for what the future
(Cont'd on page 6)

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2018 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!

Meeting: June 2, 2018 - 12:00n to 4:00pm
Schenectady - Backstage Pub

Check www.esparail.org, for the most current information on meeting times and venues...ALL dates, locations and times are subject to change...

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- Renewal membership (\$24.00 per year)
- Renewal - Student, Senior, Fixed-Income (\$12.50 per year)
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