



Empire State Passengers Association

Working For A Balanced Public
Transportation Network
For All New Yorkers
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ESPA EXPRESS

News From The
Empire State Passengers Association

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**ESPA
2024 Annual
Meeting
& Lunch**

**Saturday, April 6, 2024
11:00am - 4:00pm
DoubleTree Hotel
Schenectady, NY
Complete Details
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Passenger Rail Hearing Held In Albany - Bruce Becker

The NYS Senate Transportation Committee held a public hearing on January 29, 2024 which focused on the efforts to implement the '90B' higher speed rail plan for the Empire Corridor. The '90B' plan was selected as the preferred option in the Tier One Environmental Impact Study and Service Development Plan for the Corridor released in March 2023.



Transportation Committee Chairperson, Senator Tim Kennedy (D-63) of Buffalo, lead the hearing and was joined by Committee members Senators Jeremy Cooney (D-56) of Rochester; John Liu (D-16) of Queens and Peter Oberacker (R-51) of Otsego County.

Testifying at the hearing were: New York State Department of Transportation Assistant Commissioner for Finance & Integrated Modal Services Janet Ho; Cory Engel, Secretary-Treasurer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen; **Gary Prophet, President of the Empire State Passenger Association**; Andrew Williams, Deputy State Director, New York League of Conservation Voters; and Joseph Alston, Director of Government Affairs for the Business Council of New York State.

In recognition of ESPA's broad knowledge and understanding of the complex issues involved with advancing the program Chair Kennedy afforded ESPA President Gary Prophet almost one hour of the three-hour hearing for his ESPA testimony



and response to questions. ESPA's testimony focused on the Association's full support for the proposed '90B' plan and the benefits it would provide to the traveling public. And in keeping with the Committee's major point of investigation, Mr. Prophet adamantly articulated the Association's position that the timeline of the program implementation must be condensed and that improvement projects leading to additional service across upstate should be a top priority within the next five years. Also expressed was ESPA's ongoing concern that NYSDOT does not

(Continued On Page 3 - Senate Rail Hearing)

Join ESPA, Renew Your ESPA Membership Or Donate To Support ESPA On-Line At www.esparail.org

Executive Director's Report: Steve Strauss

As 2023 ends, the big news was the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) release of their Northeast Corridor (NEC) and National Network grant announcements from the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grant program, along with the selection of the first routes for inclusion in the new Corridor Identification and Development program.

New York did quite well in the NEC grants, winning an additional \$3.8 billion for the Gateway projects in conjunction with the state of New Jersey. In addition, New York received \$1.3 billion for the rehabilitation of the East River tunnels used by Amtrak and the LIRR. The opening of LIRR East Side Access to Grand Central Madison will reduce the customer impact of sequentially shutting down each East River Tunnel for rehabilitation.

Sadly, the FRA decided to make fewer National Network awards and go big. They gave roughly \$8.0 billion to just ten recipients, with the three largest (California HSR; Brightline West; and Richmond-to-Raleigh Corridor) receiving \$7 billion of the distribution. New York's four or five applications, including the Livingston Avenue bridge, went unfunded.

The State did have the entire Empire Corridor and the Adirondack route accepted into the new Corridor ID program. This is an important technical step to receive priority for future capital funding assistance and the State DOT receives \$500,000 for additional planning work in each corridor.

New York's lack of construction funding assistance from the federal government could mean a one-year delay in advancing needed rail improvement projects. It will be up to Governor Hochul to decide whether to move forward with the Livingston Avenue Bridge replacement using State funds and other flexible federal funds.

ESPA continued to lay the groundwork with legislators for paying greater attention to the State's new Rail Service Development Plan (SDP). During Autumn, ESPA members met with senior staff for State Senators John Liu and Kristen Gonzalez to discuss the Rail SDP and what needs to be done to shorten the implementation schedule and spread projects around the state. Thank you to ESPA members Bill Maiman, David Hochman and Alexander Schaffer for attending these meetings. Having constituents in attendance helps focus attention on rail matters and how the Senators can help.

On January 24th I testified in Albany on the NYS DOT budget. For the first time we had a rail improvement plan to critique with respect to schedule and distribution of projects. This should hopefully alter the discussion in a positive way. As noted in our cover story Senator Kennedy held a Senate Transportation Committee oversight hearing on intercity passenger rail on January 29 which provided an extended forum for discussing the '90B' Rail Plan in further detail. Senator Kennedy is a candidate for Congress in a special election to take place in early April in conjunction with the resignation of long-term Buffalo-area Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-26).



Long Distance Equipment RFP Issued - Bruce Becker

Rail advocates who are deeply concerned with Amtrak's aging and increasingly limited Superliner Long Distance cars received an early Christmas present on December 22, 2023, when Amtrak issued a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) to railcar manufacturers to begin the long overdue fleet replacement process.

In a press release announcing the RFP, Amtrak President Roger Harris said "Procuring new equipment for our Long Distance trains is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine our iconic routes through a modern, accessible, and sustainable fleet.

"We believe in the future of our Long Distance service," said Amtrak Board Chair Tony Coscia. "Amtrak's Long Distance network provides vital mobility and an economic link for communities around the country. A new Amtrak Long Distance fleet will help us modernize and transform the service to meet the needs of customers now and into the future."

This step follows a formal Request for Information (RFI) which was issued in December 2022, which was sent to potential railcar builders defining and describing the scope of replacing the Long Distance fleet. Multiple suppliers responded to the RFI in early 2023, which helped to shape the newly issued RFP.

The RFP outlines requirements to improve core elements of Long Distance service, including coach seating, private rooms, food service, enhanced accessibility, and route experience. Following vendor selection, critical steps of final design, development and production are expected to occur over the next several years. Fleet deliveries are projected to begin in the early 2030s.

While the press statement does not specifically state that the RFP calls for new bi-level cars, all signs are that Amtrak indeed plans to order such cars, at least for the western routes. The press release also did not define a date when responses to the RFP are expected to be returned to Amtrak.

Senate Rail Hearing (continued from page 1)

currently appear to have adequate internal resources to implement and manage such a major, multi-year, rail program and that additional funding for staffing should be considered now. Mr. Prophet also addressed the long-sought re-introduction of Hudson Valley food service, which would provide immediate passenger benefits.

In her testimony Assistant Commissioner Ho said “Let me begin by stating unequivocally that the Department of Transportation under the leadership of Governor Hochul understands the importance of reliable and efficient passenger rail service to New York State and remains committed to supporting and improving the passenger experience all across the state.” She went on to describe the numerous passenger-related infrastructure improvements which the State has completed in recent years and the initiatives currently underway including the vital replacement of the Livingston Avenue Bridge over the Hudson River.

In addition, she clearly articulated the multiple challenges of attempting to achieve speeds above 90mph on or along the current CSX right-of-way west of Schenectady, which lead in part to the ‘90B’ preferred option being selected. Questioning from the Senators primarily focused on how the overall plan could be accomplished in a shorter time frame and what is the timeline for significant projects to commence, especially west of Schenectady. Assistant Commissioner Ho stated that the recent \$500,000 federal corridor grant to New York State is being used to better refine the scope and planning for the program implementation and specific project advancement.



Take-aways from the hearing included:

- Unanimous support from the Senators for the planned improvements and additional services outlined in the ‘90B’ program.
- A call by Senator Kennedy for future study of higher-speed rail options connecting the greater Toronto region with Buffalo and New York City, perhaps along a new route through the southern tier. Senator Kennedy did clearly state however that any such a future ‘High Speed’ study process must not impede the implementation of the currently authorized proposed ‘90B’ program.
- NYSDOT was requested to provide frequent updates to the Transportation Committee on the progress being made to advance the overall program.

ESPA thanks Senator Kennedy for his leadership in convening the hearing and for focusing attention on the need to improve passenger rail service across the state.

The full written testimony EPSA submitted and that of Assistant Commissioner Ho are available on the ESPA website, along with a link to the YouTube video of the entire hearing.

New Federal Grant Opportunities Announced Tony Rudmann

The United States Department of Transportation has announced two competitive grant programs making almost \$2 billion available for a broad range of transportation improvements.

The first grant of \$1.5 billion is available through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE). This program enables a broad range of projects to be sponsored: road, rail, transit, and port improvements. RAISE is amongst the oldest of competitive grant programs with antecedents called TIGER and BUILD in the 2009-2020 period. Under its latest name, \$2.2 billion was awarded to 126 road, rail, transit and port projects in December 2022. Transit and passenger rail requests won more than \$425 million, roughly 19 percent of awards. This grant competition is popular and that round of funding generated requests for \$15 billion. The deadline to submit applications for this RAISE round is February 28, 2024, with awards to be announced no later than June 27, 2024.

Another announcement opened submissions for the Federal Transit Administration’s All Station Accessibility Program (ASAP) which aims to make it easier for people with disabilities and mobility needs to access rail transit systems. This is a new program which was signed into law in November 2021. Three decades after enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act, full accessibility to older transit facilities remains a challenge. According to the national transportation database, 981 of the 3,726 rail stations are not ADA accessible.

In December 2022, \$686 million was awarded to deal with some of the barriers at the nation’s oldest transit systems using funding from FFY 2022 and FFY 2023. New York’s MTA won \$252 million for subway stations in Brooklyn and the Bronx, and the Port Authority of NY-NJ was granted \$1.6 million for improvements at its four PATH rail stations in Manhattan. Available this year under the ASPA program is \$343 million with applications due by January 30, 2024.

Castleton-on-Hudson Seeks To Open Pedestrian Grade Crossing Benjamin Turon

The Village of Castleton-on-Hudson wants public access to a small waterfront park on the west side of the Amtrak tracks restored, and they are petitioning NYS DOT to reopen a long-closed grade crossing and perhaps lower train speeds from the current 110mph to 80mph.

NYS DOT closed the Scott Avenue grade crossing to Riverfront Park in 1994, with the promise to replace it with an underpass, which proved impractical due to flooding risk. Proposals for an overhead crossing with ramps or elevators were rejected by the village due to concerns over maintenance costs.

Following recommendations made by the non-profit environmental organization Scenic Hudson in their '2020 Hudson River Access Plan: Poughkeepsie to Rensselaer' study, the village wants a 'state-of-the-art' street and pedestrian crossing based on those found on the Surf Line in California, granting public beach access to the Pacific Ocean.



Village officials – perhaps misunderstanding the ALT 90B Preferred Alternative of the Final Empire Corridor Environmental Impact Study – are claiming that because the FEIS calls for a top speed of 90mph (west of Schenectady of course) that speeds would be actually dropped south of Albany from 110 to 90mph.

In fact, the FEIS's Service Development Plan calls for increasing speeds to 110 mph from the current 16 miles south Albany, to most of the way to Poughkeepsie. Overall, the plan is to get travel times down to 2h 15m for most trains making the current station stops New York-to-Albany, and 2 hours flat for non-stop express trains.

Reducing speeds through Castleton-on-Hudson would likely not increase safety, as seen by the sad number of people in vehicles, on bikes, or pedestrians killed by trains going 80-mph or less in America – including the new Brightline service between Miami and West Palm Beach, where there have been a great number of collisions.

Train speed is not the primary risk factor at a railroad crossing. The risk of an accident at a railroad crossing primarily increases with its use, and that risk is mitigated by the design of the crossing. A well-designed grade crossing reduces risk by giving timely visual and audio warning of an approaching train and then sealing off the tracks with movable barriers.

Yet even the best design grade crossing will still include the risk of an accident – with injury or death – which is why grade separation with an over or underpass is the ideal alternative to maximize safety. However, it is expensive and not always practical due to constraints of terrain and the built environment.

It's for this reason that there are already several dozen crossings in Upstate NY where trains run at speeds of 90-to-110mph – including two active crossings in Castleton, the Castleton Boat Club being only 800 feet south of the closed crossing.

And if ALT 90B from FEIS was fully built out, several dozen more 90mph crossings would be added from Amsterdam to Buffalo along the existing CSX mainline. So why is the risk unacceptable for Scott Avenue, but not for all the other existing or future high-speed grade crossings? There is also the bad precedent of local communities being able to slow down passenger trains, leading to significant increases in travel times, as 5 minutes here, and 5 minutes there, adds up.

And lastly, slowing down trains in Castleton would degrade to uselessness the current 110mph segment south of Rensselaer, given that the village is located about midway in the 16-mile segment – no sooner would a train accelerate to 110mph and it would then have to brake for 80 mph.

Conclusion: If NYS DOT and Amtrak deem a high-speed grade pedestrian crossing in Castleton as unacceptable, then the state should build a pedestrian ramp instead. Addressing the concerns of the village with the cost of maintaining the ramp, it could also be maintained by the state as part of the nearby Schodack Island State Park.

ESPA Forming A Charitable Foundation Steve Strauss

After years of discussing the idea, and after several recent meetings, the ESPA Board is finally acting on establishing a parallel charitable foundation. Last Fall, the ESPA Board voted to authorize its Executive Director to undertake this mission.

When ESPA was created in the 1980s, its founders incorporated our advocacy group as a 501(c)4 organization under the Internal Revenue Service tax code. This (c)4 not-for-profit structure has allowed ESPA to undertake more lobbying and political activities than most other state passenger rail groups established as 501(c)3 organizations. However, donor contributions to 501(c)4 groups are not tax-deductible. (Continued On Page 6 - ESPA Foundation)

New York State Ridership Stats October - September Year-End

Route	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	Route Definition
Empire Service	1,245,600 <small>103% of 2019 #</small>	1,019,200	613,200	655,000	1,214,200	1,150,500	New York to Albany-Rensselaer Trains <u>ONLY</u>
Maple Leaf	452,700 <small>116% of 2019 #</small>	385,000	245,100	231,100	389,800	366,700	New York - Albany - Syracuse - Buffalo - Niagara Falls - Toronto Trains
Adirondack	24,700 <small>n/a</small>	0	0	44,200	117,500	111,700	New York - Albany - Saratoga - Montreal Train
Ethan Allen Exp.	86,600 <small>172% of 2019 #</small>	63,400	12,500	23,300	50,500	49,700	New York - Albany - Saratoga - Rutland - Burlington Train
Lake Shore Lim.	351,000 <small>98% of 2019 #</small>	319,300	195,900	220,200	357,700	337,900	New York/Boston - Albany - Buffalo - Cleveland - Chicago Train

Data Source - Amtrak Monthly Performance Reports

Station Statistics - Passengers On & Off

Station	FY '23	FY '22	FY '19	% FY '23 vs FY '22	% FY '23 vs FY '19
Albany-Rensselaer - ALB	790,673	640,353	806,960	123.5	98.0
Amsterdam - AMS	12,231	11,900	11,183	102.8	109.4
Buffalo-Depew - BUF	102,050	96,049	107,780	106.2	94.7
Buffalo-Exchange - BFX	48,914	47,884	43,384	102.2	112.7
Croton-Harmon - CRT	49,146	40,834	46,403	120.4	105.9
Fort Edward - FED	7,588	6,096	9,365	124.5	81.0
Fort Ticonderoga - FTC	346	0	2,008	n/a	17.2
Hudson - HUD	245,691	208,302	237,268	117.9	103.5
New Rochelle - NRO	114,937	92,929	96,057	123.7	119.7
NY Moynihan Train Hall - NYP	10,249,956	8,008,700	10,811,323	128.0	94.8
Niagara Falls - NFL	33,930	31,689	34,965	107.1	97.0
Plattsburgh - PLB	2,010	0	13,386	n/a	15.0
Port Henry - POH	172	0	2,846	n/a	6.0
Port Kent - PRK	0	0	402	n/a	0.0
Poughkeepsie - POU	123,366	111,135	109,877	111.0	112.3
Rhinecliff - RHI	203,629	171,567	211,139	118.7	96.4
Rochester - ROC	130,121	119,797	132,434	108.6	98.3
Rome - ROM	9,367	8,496	6,924	110.3	135.3
Rouses Point - RSP	287	0	1,454	n/a	19.7
Saratoga Springs - SAR	31,368	22,710	41,611	138.1	75.4
Schenectady - SDY	57,456	50,041	62,180	114.8	92.4
Syracuse - SYR	138,686	124,000	131,515	111.8	105.5
Utica - UCA	65,867	61,180	63,968	107.7	103.0
Westport - WSP	790	0	4,733	n/a	16.7
Whitehall - WHL	273	0	1,893	n/a	14.4
Yonkers - YNY	40,045	34,717	32,109	115.3	124.7
TOTAL NYS	12,458,899	9,888,379	13,023,167	126.0	95.7
TOTAL WITHOUT NYP	2,208,943	1,879,679	2,211,844	117.5	99.9
TOTAL WEST OF ALBANY	598,622	551,036	594,333	108.6	100.7

Thanks To Our
Corporate Members For
Their Generous Support!



ESPA Foundation (continued from page 4)

As a small organization, ESPA has traditionally spent a significant portion of its budget on Albany representatives who assist the corporation in lobbying and educating members of the Legislature and other government officials about train service. This scenario would likely have raised concerns from the IRS had ESPA been a 501(c)3 organization.

By creating a parallel 501(c)3 organization, ESPA would be able to solicit contributions and support from foundations which generally only support other tax-exempt organizations. In addition, private sector businesses would be able to make contributions to the tax-exempt foundation, tentatively called the Empire State Passengers Foundation (ESPF) and deduct that cost. Of equal importance, individual supporters of better train service who are over the age of 72 and are required to make minimum distributions (RMDs) from their IRA and 401(k) retirement plans, would be able to transfer a portion of that distribution to ESPF tax-free. More on this later in 2024.

The Board believes that a parallel tax-exempt foundation would expand our activities of educational work and provide modest advocacy in extolling the economic and mobility aspects of better intercity passenger rail service. We need a bigger voice for passenger trains.

New York is a big state. An Empire State Passengers Foundation, alongside the Empire State Passengers Association, would help us achieve our goals of more trains having reliable, fast, and better service for all New Yorkers.



See New York and Save 15%

Reminder...The popular 'I Love New York' 15% Discount continues to be offered for travel to/from all New York State destinations on Empire Corridor trains & the Ethan Allen Express. The current promotional offer is valid through May 2024. Reservations must be made at least 5 days in advance of travel; black-out dates and other restrictions apply. The 15% discount is not available for travel on the Lake Shore Limited.

Visit Amtrak.com; click on 'Deals' at the top, then click on 'Deals & Promotions' and scroll down to the 'See NY & Save 15%' option to take advantage of this great offer.

Amtrak Share Fares make it easy to bring the whole crew by helping you save with each plus one. Share Fares provides a group discount of up to 60% off tickets for 8 passengers traveling together on the same reservation.

Passengers will receive the following discounts off the adult rail fare: Passenger One (1) - full price (or lowest available fare); Passenger Two (2) - full price (or lowest available fare); Passenger Three (3) will receive a 50% discount; Passenger Four (4) will receive a 70% discount; Passenger Five (5) will receive a 75% discount; Passenger Six (6) will receive an 85% discount; Passenger Seven (7) & Eight (8) will receive a 100% discount! Valid through September 30, 2023 - 2-day advance purchase required. Other terms & conditions apply.

Visit Amtrak.com; click on 'Deals' at the top, then click on 'Deals & Promotions' and scroll down to the 'Save on Group Travel with Share Fares' option to take advantage of this great offer.



Save on Group Travel with Share Fares
Up to 60% Off



ESPA Meetings

ESPA members and ALL other interested persons are welcome & encouraged to participate in ESPA Meetings!

Check 'Events' at www.esparail.org for the most current meeting information! Advance registration is required!

Upcoming 2024 ESPA Meetings

2024 Annual Meeting In-Person - Schenectady
Saturday, April 6

Working Group Meeting March 2nd Via Zoom
12:00n - 3:00pm

Dates, times & locations are subject to change!

ESPA Membership

- Introductory Membership (\$15.00 for first year)
- Regular Individual Membership (\$30.00 per year)
- Student, Senior, Fixed-Income Membership (\$20.00 per year)
- Family Membership (\$40.00 per year)
- Sustaining Membership (\$60.00 per year)
- Patron Membership (\$100.00 per year)
- Association/Non-Profit Org. (\$300.00 per year)
- Corporate Membership (\$500.00 per year)
- Lifetime Membership (\$500.00 One Time)

Join or Renew On-Line At www.esparail.org
or

Send A Check Made Payable To 'ESPA' To 'ESPA', P.O. Box 434, Syracuse, NY 13209



44nd Annual Meeting
of the
Empire State Passengers Association

and
Rail Passengers Association's Northeast Division

Saturday, April 6, 2024 **11:00am – 4:00pm**

DoubleTree Hotel 100 Nott Terrace Schenectady, NY

Five Blocks From The Amtrak Station – Free Parking

Invited Speakers & Presentations:

Representatives From Government, Amtrak And Allied Organizations

Check ESPA's Website (www.esparail.org) For The Latest Information On Confirmed Speakers, Presentations, Election Of ESPA Leadership And Full Meeting Agenda!

Full Registration Includes The Meeting, A Three Course Luncheon & Beverage Breaks

Full Early Bird Discount Registration - \$70.00 Per Person
(Registrations Must Be Processed/Post Marked By March 23rd)

Full Late Registration - \$80.00 Per Person
(ALL Registrations Processed/Post Marked After March 23rd And At The Door)

Meeting ONLY Registration (No Lunch or Beverages) - \$40.00 Per Person

Please complete and return this form with your check for the appropriate registration fee, to be received NO later than March 30, 2024. (NO cancellations after this date).

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

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

Bruce Becker - ESPA
8175 Old Post Road East
East Amherst, NY 14051

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone No: _____ **E-Mail:** _____

_____ I will be arriving in Schenectady on: Tr. # 280 Tr. #63 Other



Scan To Register By Credit Card

**More Information &
Registration By Credit Card
at www.esparail.org**



Cab Car Leads 5 Car Trainset



Both Photos - VIA Rail Canada

Coach (Economy) Class

As of early January VIA Rail Canada has received 10 (out of the 32 total on order) new Siemens trainsets for use in Ontario/Quebec corridor service. The 5-car trainsets offer 4 coach (economy) class cars and 1 Business Class car. A Charger locomotive supplies propulsion with a cab car providing bi-directional functionality. VIA only offers cart-based at-seat food & beverage service, thus there is no cafe car. The new trainsets are now in operation on select trains between Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa & Toronto. Visit www.viarail.ca for more information.

Amtrak's forthcoming 'Airo' trainsets are likely to be similar. Amtrak states that the first 'Airo' set is expected to be ready for testing by the end of 2024.

News In Brief...

Starting March 4th Amtrak is restoring the final Hudson Valley round trip which was curtailed during the Covid pandemic. Departing from Albany-Rensselaer at 5:10am weekdays, the added southbound train will arrive New York at 7:30am, in plenty of time for business appointments or connections to other NE Corridors trains. The added northbound train will depart New York at 10:45pm, arriving back to Albany-Rensselaer at 1:15am.

The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) has launched a new on-demand transit service between the Albany-Rensselaer Amtrak station and downtown Albany locations. The 'Flex+' vans will operate Monday through Friday from 6:00am to 9:00pm and each ride will cost \$3.00 per person. There are multiple drop-off & pick-up in locations in Albany's business district and around the State Capitol area. Rides can be booked rides up to 7 days in advance. You must download the 'Ride Pingo' app in order to request a ride and payment can be made with the 'Ride Pingo' app; CDTA's 'Navigator' app or with cash. Complete information at www.cdta.org.



On December 8, 2023 Governor Kathy Hochul signed a bill amending existing state railroad laws, which will require a minimum of two on-board crew members to operate the vast majority of freight trains in New York. The new regulations are set to take effect in early 2024. New York joins with ten other states which have now enacted laws addressing freight train crew size. ESPA has actively supported this vital legislation. While primarily focused on ensuring rail safety, two-person on-board freight crews will also help reduce delays to passenger trains. The rail industry has sought to replace traditional on-board conductor positions with ground-based crew members that would respond to train locations in motor vehicles as needed. This practice would significantly increase the time required to inspect freight trains which encounter difficulties in the field, thus negatively impacting passenger operations.



Rome Sentinel - John Clifford

Oneida County Tourism (OCT), the official destination marketing organization for Oneida County, NY, has moved its primary visitors Welcome Center to Utica's historic Union Station. The center is open seven days a week and is accessible for visitors arriving by train, car, or foot. To better serve the needs of visitors and the local community, the center will have a variety of local and statewide travel guides, brochures, and information to help people plan their Oneida County and Central New York travel experiences. Staff will be available daily to provide assistance and guidance.