

Fact Checking this week's announcement that Metro North service between New York's Grand Central Terminal and Albany-Rensselaer will NOT be starting, as had been previously announced!

- The proposed Metro North service would have been ONE daily mid-morning northbound trip to Albany-Rensselaer, returning in the afternoon to Grand Central. It was never clearly defined but there would have been a very limited number of stops in Metro North territory, in addition to stops at Rhinecliff, Hudson and Albany.
- The train would have been staffed and operated by Metro North crews. This would have required the Metro North crews to be 'qualified' (i.e. trained) on the Amtrak-controlled route north of Poughkeepsie.
- The train would have simply reversed direction in Albany. No switching, servicing or other maintenance would have occurred at Albany.
- Only Metro North fares would have been accepted on the train and Metro North ticket machines would have presumably been installed at Rhinecliff, Hudson & Albany. The Grand Central to Albany fare was to be ~\$38 each way, but all other intermediate fare & ticketing details were never released.
- Under a long-term lease with CSX (which was originally brokered by New York State) Amtrak operates, dispatches and maintains the Hudson Valley line from just north of Poughkeepsie to Albany (and west to Schenectady). CSX retains the ownership of the real property. New York State reimburses Amtrak for the cost of maintaining and operating this leased line.
- According to the terms of the CSX/Amtrak lease, CSX had to provide permission for the Metro North train to use the leased line. CSX had apparently agreed to this.
- There are two separate groups of unions representing Amtrak and Metro North train operating employees. The contract terms, work rules and pay scales of the separate collective bargaining agreements are significantly different between Amtrak and Metro North.
- Per union work rules only Metro North employees can operate Metro North train equipment, so it was not possible for Amtrak employees to operate the Metro North train equipment at any time or location.
- It has been reported that Amtrak unionized employees were concerned that if Metro North employees were 'qualified' to operate north of Poughkeepsie it could have eventually led to the loss of Amtrak employee positions and to the potential degradation of their collective bargaining agreement terms.
- The potential for labor unrest may have influenced the decision-making process by Amtrak and New York State to not pursue the Metro North train operation option at this time.

Additional Background Information...

- New York State contracts with Amtrak for the operation of all New York State Amtrak trains (with the exception of the long-distance Lake Shore Limited, which is a designated ‘national network’ train). As such Amtrak is a vendor of the State of New York.
- New York State financially supports the train services provided by Amtrak. In general terms, this equates to the amount it costs Amtrak (per agreement) to provide the contracted train services minus the ticket & other revenues Amtrak collects from passengers who use the trains.
- Accordingly, the more ticket revenue Amtrak collects from passengers the lower the support expense is for the state.
- The current lowest advance purchase one-way Amtrak fare between New York & Albany is \$38.00. This increases, based upon demand & date of travel, to a capped peak fare of \$99.00.
- For the FY '27 state budget year starting April 1, 2026, the total amount of New York State's investment to provide the service is projected to be \$44,330,000. This amount includes both Amtrak's expenses for maintaining & operating the leased line and the net cost of providing the actual services. While the exact breakdown of these expenses are not publicly available, the bulk of this overall investment is for the maintenance & operation of the line.
- Per the agreement between the State and Amtrak, Amtrak provides all of the required locomotives and passenger cars. The passenger cars used on New York State trains (except for those used on the Lake Shore Limited) are 50 years old and many of the locomotives are at least 30 years old.
- Amtrak's overall equipment fleet is very constrained. The cars needed for the full resumption of New York State service was made possible, in part, due to a reduction in the number of trains being operated south of Washington, DC due to a multi-year bridge replacement project over the Potomac River.
- While Amtrak has committed to a limited amount of additional capacity for New York State trains, Amtrak is not able to provide enough cars/capacity to meet the peak demand on weekends & holiday periods. This lack of capacity leads to many sold-out trains during peak travel periods (regardless of the fares charged).
- New trainsets for use on the Northeast Corridor and other shorter-distance routes are currently being produced by Siemens Mobility, with first new trains expected to enter service later this year in the Pacific Northwest. New York State is expected to begin receiving these new trains starting in the early 2030's.