



Empire State Passengers Association

**Working For A Balanced
Public Transportation
Network For New Yorkers**
www.esparail.org

ESPA EXPRESS

*News From The
Empire State Passengers Association*

New Buffalo Exchange Street Station Opens - On Time & On Budget

Bruce Becker

The new Buffalo Exchange Street station opened on Sunday, November 8 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony lead by [Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochol](#), which heralded the way for the first passengers to use the new facility boarding train #64 for points east.

The new \$28 million station, completed on-time and on-budget, is located at the same location as the predecessor 1952-era building, but its position and scale provide a vastly more impressive appearance. The new building is twice as large and features a brightly sun-lit waiting room seating 40, complete ticketing facilities, a train-length high-level boarding platform, adjacent parking and a well-lit plaza walkway leading to Buffalo's Main Street, the NFTA's light rail line and the nearby Canalside and Harborcenter attractions. The station is open and staffed from 3:30am to 11:00pm daily (a major improvement over the previous limited weekday only hours).

In This Issue...

New Buffalo Exchange Street Station

'Amtrak Joe' Biden Elected President

Massachusetts East/West Rail Study

Virginia's Passenger Rail Authority

NYC Congestion Pricing Plan Delayed

NYS Awarded \$2M Federal Rail Grant

Adirondack Trail & Rail Construction

Thanks To Past ESPA Editor Bob Lenz

**On-Line Membership Join, Renewal &
Donation Portal New Available**

And More...



New Buffalo Exchange Street Station - More Photos On Page 10

Empire Corridor Poorly Placed to Benefit From A Biden Administration - Benjamin Turon

The great progress made by the Commonwealth of Virginia with its successful passenger rail program (see page 6) is in stark contrast with the Empire Corridor in New York State, where intercity rail planning has long stalled, as evidenced by a State Rail Plan years out-of-date and a corridor-wide Tier I environmental study that is many years overdue.

While the state over the past decade has done very well building new stations across Upstate New York (including the newly opened Buffalo Exchange Street Station) and in seeing through several major projects (including the Albany-Schenectady second track and the Albany-Rensselaer station's 4th platform track) funded by large ARRA/TIGER grants won during the early days of the Obama

Continued on page 7 - Empire Corridor Poorly Placed)

'Amtrak Joe' Biden Elected President

Bruce Becker

When long-time Amtrak-supporter Joe Biden is sworn in as the 46th President on January 20, 2021, the country will gain it's most passenger rail-friendly & knowledgeable leader in generations.

As a US Senator from Delaware, Joe rode Amtrak from his home in Wilmington to DC and back almost every working day, accumulating hundreds of thousands of rail miles. He was a fixture on his regular trains, beloved by passengers & crew alike for his approachable & friendly nature.

Joe has been an ardent advocate for Amtrak's national system and its network of long-distance trains, in addition to the Northeast Corridor. In 2010 he wrote in Amtrak's Arrive Magazine "Amtrak doesn't just carry us from one place to another—it makes things possible that otherwise wouldn't be. For 36 years, I was able to make most of those birthday parties, to get home to read bedtime stories, to cheer for my children at their soccer games. Simply put, Amtrak gave me—and countless other Americans—more time with my family."

During this years campaign Joe's vision statements included: '**Sparking the second great railroad revolution.** Biden will make sure that America has the cleanest, safest, and fastest rail system in the world — for both passengers and freight. His rail revolution will reduce pollution, connect workers to good union jobs, slash commute times, and spur investment in communities that will now be better linked to major metropolitan areas...In addition, Biden will work with Amtrak and private freight rail companies to further electrify the rail system, reducing diesel fuel emissions.'

As Amtrak struggles to emerge from the COVID pandemic and find its rightful place in the nation's transportation system, the next four years under Joe Biden's leadership are certain to be of pivotal importance. Let's all hope for the best from our friend 'Amtrak Joe'!



Joe Biden In A Viewliner Diner On His Recent Campaign Train

USA Today

Draft Report For East-West Rail Mass. Study Released - Benjamin Turon

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has released the Draft Report for the [East-West Passenger Rail Study](#), with a final report after public comments due for release on November 30th of this year. The study has focused on expanding intercity passenger rail service between Boston, Springfield, and Pittsfield.

The draft report has been roundly criticized by many supporters of the proposed East-West Rail service. The draft report concludes that ridership would be so low that the project wouldn't be eligible for federal funding due to a poor costs/benefits ratio, and that in fact the train service would increase air pollution over driving due to mostly empty trains.

The report is expected to conclude that more study is needed on the proposed passenger rail service. This would include a "white paper" on the governance, organization, and management of passenger rail, as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (ignoring the MBTA commuter rail service) is not in the business of running trains.

Overall, the Republican administration of Gov. Charlie Baker has been very cold towards the East-West rail proposal. MassDOT has been prodded by very broad and vocal support for rail service to Western Massachusetts from Boston, agreeing to undertake the study two years ago. Political and community leaders of Western Massachusetts have expressed numerous times of being shortchanged by the large infrastructure investments being made in the Boston region.

The Pioneer Valley running north and south through Springfield has actually seen big improvements in North-South rail service along the Connecticut River in recent years, but the only rail passenger service to Boston is the normally once-daily Lake Shore Limited to Chicago, as MBTA commuter service from Boston ends 54 miles east of Springfield at Worcester.

Recent rail improvements in western Massachusetts include the expansion of the Hartford Line's CTrail regional Amtrak service, the "Valley Flyer" pilot expanse of two daily round-trips to Greenfield, MA on the route of the Vermonter, and the \$90 million reconstruction of Springfield Union Station for Amtrak trains, intercity coaches, and transit buses. There is also the planned "Berkshire Flyer" pilot program to run a seasonal weekend service from New York City to Pittsfield by extending an existing NYC-Albany Amtrak train. (Continued on page 3 - East/West Study)

Passenger Rail News Briefs...

Amtrak Completes PTC Implementation - Amtrak has reported complete implementation of Passenger Train Control (PTC) - the train safety system mandated by federal law - ahead of the December 31, 2020 deadline. The system, prompted by a 2015 multi-death passenger train accident, had been delayed several times by complex technical and physical issues and several commuter lines not completing the work in time. Amtrak's plan included fully equipping all 550 owned engines, building 160 radio towers and training all employees who are required to support PTC operations.

Amtrak's accomplishment includes the installation of PTC on the Amtrak-controlled segments of the Empire Corridor; the Empire Connection in Manhattan and the long-term leased from CSX Hudson Line from Poughkeepsie to Hoffmans west of Schenectady.

The State's Comptroller's Open Book database indicates two NYDOT contracts with Amtrak for positive train control work. Contract DH35529 covering design and procurement with "to date" spending of \$7.1 million, and Contract DR35926 covering the implementation phase of PTC with "to date" spending of \$24.1 million.

Connecticut Rail Car Order Update - As reported in the Summer 2020 ESPA Express, the State of Connecticut issued an Request for Proposal (RFP) earlier this year to purchase 60 rail cars for the Hartford line, Shore Line East and New Haven line. The RFP closed on November 2nd and the State received two proposals from suppliers/manufacturers. The published schedule calls for an award in the first quarter of 2021. The RFP gives the State certain options for additional cab and trailer car orders. Not fully determined is how many cars will be for fleet replacement and how many, if any, for fleet expansion.

East-West Study (continued from page 2)

On a positive note the East-West Rail study does provide a wealth of information and data on the rail corridor along the MBTA/CSX mainline (former Boston & Albany) stretching from Boston through Springfield to Pittsfield, near the state line with New York State. The study presents three alternatives for further consideration. Alternative 3 involves restoring double-track along the entire length of the corridor, signaling and train control improvements, and constructing new stations at the cost of \$2.4 billion – with 8 daily round-trips of travel times equal or a little better than the New York Central's Beliner service of the early 1950s. Travel times between Boston-Springfield would be 1:50-2:05, and Boston-Pittsfield 3:05-3:20, with annual ridership estimated at 278,300 to 358,250.

Alternative 4 at a cost of \$3.9 billion would involve constructing a new dedicated passenger track within the existing CSX right-of-way along the existing mainline track between Worcester and Springfield, while Springfield-Pittsfield would be double-tracked as in Alt. 3. Travel times Boston-Springfield would be 1:40-1:55 with roundtrips increased to 10 daily trains. Annual ridership is estimated at 349,350 to 416,050.

Alternative 4/5 at a cost of \$4.6 billion would add to the dedicated passenger track several significant curve realignments and grade crossing eliminations. Travel times Boston-Springfield would be 1:40-1:55 with 10 daily roundtrips. Ridership is estimated at 391,200 to 469,000 annually.

The draft report also notes the numerous critiques and questions of the study by stakeholders, emphasizing the need for more detailed engagement with local businesses, Amtrak, CSX, and New York State. While the commissioning of further studies may be frustrating to rail supporters (Boston-Springfield-New Haven service was studied in detail in the Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative study and released in June 2016), it does keep the proposed East-West Rail proposal alive and moving along, allowing more information on and support for the project to be gathered.



MassDOT may want to consider the approach adopted by Virginia of adding one-at-a-time additional passenger train frequencies on routes already served by an existing Amtrak long-distance train, a strategy requiring a smaller upfront capital investment compared to building an entire new high-frequency corridor at once. For example, Virginia in 2012 increased service over the existing Washington - New Orleans Crescent route over Norfolk Southern freight tracks by extending an existing Boston-DC Northeast Regional to Lynchburg VA, which has since been extended west to Roanoke. With ridership and revenue above expectations and covering operating costs, Virginia is working on extending a second Northeast Regional frequency to Lynchburg.

An alternative could be working with Connecticut and Amtrak to tie Boston-Springfield improvements into the Northeast Corridor by fully double-tracking and electrifying the Amtrak/CSX/MBTA tracks between New Haven and Boston to create a "Inland Route" for both Boston-New Haven regional and Boston-NYC-DC intercity trains. (continued on page 10)

Rail Supporter - NYS Senator Joe Bruno Dead at 91

Benjamin Turon

Retired New York State Senator Joseph L. Bruno (R - Rensselaer) has died at age 91. The Senator was born in Glen Falls, New York during the Great Depression, served in the US Army during the Korean War, was elected to the New York State Senate in 1977, became the Republican majority leader in 1994, retiring from public office in 2008.

The Senator was a good friend of passenger rail – securing funding for the reconstruction of the Albany-Rensselaer Rail Station; convening the NYS Senate Task Force on High Speed Rail that, under the leadership of John C. Egan, released a very authoritative, detailed, and ambitious report in 2006; and getting a \$22 million NY State Budget rail appropriation which was used on several projects over a decade until recently exhausted.

Senator Bruno also supported reconstruction of the Albany International Airport and the 'Tech Valley' regional "knowledge economy" development program.

The NYS Senate HSR Task Force Study (2006) can be found online on NYSDOT's website under "Empire Corridor: Reports/Documents".



Joe Bruno & Bruce Becker circa 2000

Bruce Becker

Attention! You can now renew your membership; join the Association & donate to ESPA (all with a credit card) on-line, in addition to updating your membership information (address; e-mail, etc.) anytime!

To access your ESPA membership account please follow these steps:

- Go to www.esparail.org
- Select "Join" & Then "Renew/Donate"
- Click on "Contact Us" For Assistance With Your ESPA User Name & Password
- Complete The Contact Form With Your Name, E-Mail Address And Enter 'Yes - I Need Help' & Click "Send"
- The ESPA Membership Help Desk Will Respond (As Quickly As Possible) Via E-Mail With Your Membership Account User Name & A Temporary Password
- You Can Then Log-Into Your ESPA Membership Account By Selecting "Join" - "Renew/Donate" & "Access My Account - For Security Purposes Please Change Your Password To One Of Your Own Selection
- If You Forget Your Password In The Future You Will Be Able To Re-Set It Using Your E-Mail.

If You Have Questions Or Need Assistance With Your Account, Simply Complete & Submit The "Contact Us" Form!

ESPA Meetings

All ESPA members and other interested persons are welcome and encouraged to participate in ESPA Meetings! Please contact President Gary Prophet at theygp@aol.com for more information or if you would like to participate. Advance registration is required!

Working Group Meeting - Saturday, Jan. 9, 2021
12:00n - 3:00pm via Zoom Conference

2021 ESPA In-Person Annual Meeting & Lunch
Canceled Due To Public Health Concerns

2021 ESPA 'Virtual' Annual Meeting
Saturday, March 6, 2021
12:00pm - 3:00pm
Full Details In The Next ESPA Express

All dates, times & locations are subject to change!

Check 'Events' at www.esparail.org for the most current information

ESPA Membership

The Empire State Passengers Association is an all volunteer network of people working to improve intercity rail, mass transit and bus service across New York State.

- Introductory Membership (\$15.00 for first year)
- Renewal Regular Membership (\$30.00 per year)
- Renewal - 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

New York State Ridership Stats

Since Start Of COVID-19 Crisis

Route	February	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct. '19	Oct. '20	
Empire Service	89,700	40,200	3,200	6,700	14,800	23,500	29,300	31,800	110,700	37,800	34%
Maple Leaf	25,300	15,200	2,400	5,300	8,900	12,600	14,100	13,500	31,900	15,100	47%
Adirondack	4,100	3,200	0	0	0	0	0	0	11,300	0	
Ethan Allen Exp.	3,700	1,900	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,300	0	
Lake Shore Lim.	19,800	14,800	2,900	5,900	10,800	14,800	15,100	14,400	30,900	12,300	40%

Date Source - Amtrak Monthly Performance Reports

Local Voters Support More Public Transit - Tony Rudmann

While Washington seems reluctant to approve adequate support for public transportation, local voters continued passing ballot propositions favoring more public transit options.

According to the [American Public Transit Association \(APTA\)](#), voters faced 18 ballot measures at the November 3, 2020 election. As this article is being written, voters have approved 14, defeated 1 (in Portland, Oregon) and vote counts are continuing in the rest. The measures represented more than \$38 billion in funding were being considered by voters on November 3rd.

For passenger rail, the major Election Day victory came as voters in three California Bay Area counties approved a sales tax increase estimated to produce \$108 million annually for the next 30 years. The funds would provide the first dedicated revenue stream for Caltrain and fund electrification of the train line. Austin, Texas voters approved funding for several light rail lines, a connection to the regional airport and a downtown transit tunnel moving light rail operations below street level.

Among the areas supporting public transit improvements were: Denver, Colorado; Fairfax County, Virginia; and Seattle, Washington. "Voters throughout the country once again overwhelmingly said 'yes' to public transit ballot measures that will expand and improve public transit, spur economic development and job creation and connect communities and the people who live in them," said APTA President Paul P. Skoutelas. "Even during this pandemic and economic downturn, voters have spoken and pledged their vote where they know it's needed – public transportation."

Prior to the November 3rd, public transit has been on the ballot 34 times in 2020, and 32 of those measures have passed, according to Josh Cohen, Executive Director of the Center for Transportation Excellence. "Since the pandemic began, 100 percent have passed."

Washington Delays New York Congestion Pricing - Tony Rudmann

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) continues to delay the start of automobile congestion pricing below 60th Street in lower Manhattan, approved by the New York Legislature in April 2019.

Scheduled to start in 2021, the Empire State law sought to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution as well as generate millions of dollars for Metropolitan Transportation Authority subways, buses and commuter railroads.

While New York's congestion plan would be the first in the United States, such plans have proved successful in major cities such as London, Singapore, Milan and Stockholm. Los Angeles officials have expressed interest in a congestion pricing plan but have yet to take formal action.

After London started charging in 2007, it saw congestion fall 30% and pollution drop almost a quarter in the first year. Stockholm's system, begun in 2011, is said to have cut traffic by 20% and reduced traffic delays by as much as 50%.

It is not known how long federal officials will take to approve or reject a New York congestion plan.

Virginia Passenger Rail Authority

Benjamin Turon

On October 26, 2000, the Board of the new [Virginia Passenger Rail Authority \(VPR\)](#), met for the first time (virtually) to outline their role in the Commonwealth's grand program of building a modern higher speed passenger rail system, including rebuilding the Washington DC-Richmond mainline into a 90-mph triple track railway.

The Board includes 13 voting members, chaired by the Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, and 2 non-voting "ex-officio" members from Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express (VRE). The VPR board includes Charlottesville resident Wick Moorman, the former president and CEO of both Amtrak and Norfolk Southern.

The creation of a dedicated rail authority to complement the existing Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) was necessary to oversee the public ownership and management of rail right-of-way and infrastructure in Virginia. The authority has the power to build and maintain rail facilities, borrow money and issue bonds to finance rail facilities.

The Commonwealth in December 2019 reached agreement with the freight railroads to invest in rail infrastructure capacity as part of the \$3.7B landmark agreement – called Transforming Rail in Virginia (TRV) – that includes purchase of over 350 miles of railroad ROW and 225 miles of track, including the Washington DC-Richmond railroad mainline.

Virginia is working with freight railroad CSX to triple track the DC-Richmond mainline while raising Amtrak speeds, removing 30 minutes from the current over 2-hours travel time, while also increasing Amtrak frequency to 15 round-trips by extending existing Boston-NYC-DC Northeast Regional trains beyond their current Washington Union Station terminus.



A VRE Train Crossing The Potomac River

Long Bridge Project

VRE also will see significant benefits from this investment with expanded commuter service. This includes the building a new passenger dedicated span across the Potomac, paralleling the existing double-track Long Bridge that connects the District with Virginia and southeastern states. Nearly all planned expanded commuter and intercity service is dependent on this project that now has an FRA Record of Decision and is close to full funding for construction.

South of Richmond, the Commonwealth is working with North Carolina to convert the dormant S-Line railroad into a 110-mph passenger railway to Raleigh, part of a "Southeast Corridor" from Washington DC to Charlotte, NC. North Carolina recently received a \$47.6 million federal CRISI grant from the FRA for part of the S-Line purchase. Branching off from higher-speed corridor is Amtrak Northeast Regional service to Newport News and Norfolk. Expansion of Northeast Regional service is also planned to Charlottesville, Lynchburg, and Roanoke in southwestern Virginia on Norfolk-Southern track. The Commonwealth is also examining an east-west Virginia Beach-to-Blue Ridge Mountains service across the state on newly purchased freight tracks.

The impressive progress being made by the Commonwealth could not have happened without the state first addressing the managerial and funding issues of its intercity passenger rail program. In 1992, to better plan and manage the state's public transport and railroad efforts, legislation was passed to spin off the Virginia's Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) from the Virginia DOT as an independent agency reporting directly to the Commonwealth's Secretary of Transportation.

Most states support their Section 209 Amtrak corridor services with annual legislative appropriations. Virginia decided on a different path in 2011 becoming the first state to create a robust and sustainable dedicated funding source for intercity passenger rail with the Intercity Passenger Rail Operating and Capital Fund (IPROC) that received a dedicated stream of revenue, approximately \$55m annually, from a 40% share of a 0.125% increase in the general sales and use tax.

In 2020, the Virginia General Assembly established the Commonwealth Rail Fund, replacing IPROC, with 93% is dedicated to the new VPR, and the remaining to the existing DRPT. Projected funding from the Rail Fund to the Rail Authority in FY2021 is \$89.3 million. As with IPROC, this dedicated rail money will be pooled with additional funding from the state and local governments, the freight railroads, and the federal government. (Continued on page 8 - Virginia)

Empire Corridor Poorly Placed (Continued from Page 1)

Administration, there are no more projects from today forward ready for funding and construction in future.

The last 'State Rail Plan' was issued in 2009, despite federal guidelines requiring that it be updated and approved by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) every 4 years. Failure to update our Rail Plan puts the State at risk of being declared ineligible to receiving federal renewal and improvement funding. Other states have had no issues with keeping their Rail Plans updated for FRA approved.

The [Tier I 'Empire Corridor High Speed Rail'](#) environmental impact statement (EIS) was begun in 2010 with New York State DOT releasing its draft study (DEIS) in March 2014, with accompanying public hearings and comments. As of November 2020, final EIS approval by the FRA languishes as the study goes over the decade mark since it was started.

Encouragingly, Governor Andrew Cuomo last January announced the convening of a panel of experts to study, sort-out, and advise on 'High Speed Rail'. ESPA also understood that the NYSDOT was also making an effort to respond to FRA questions on the document. However, since then the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic seems to have side-tracked both these initiatives.

With former Vice-President "Amtrak Joe" Biden having defeated President Donald Trump in the 2020 election, with the Democrats maintaining control of the US House of Representatives, the state rail program finds itself in a very poor position to take advantage of any renewed federal largess to passenger rail. Mr. Biden is a long-time supporter of passenger rail – being a daily Amtrak commuter for decades – and his platform included a strong commitment to passenger rail and railway electrification.

If a Biden Administration supported infrastructure bill can pass in the likely Republican controlled US Senate (final control will likely depended on two senate runoff races in Georgia), a significant amount of federal funding could be made available for state-supported Amtrak corridors. However, given the current lack of FRA-approved planning for the Empire Corridor, little of that money is likely to be won for projects in upstate NY.

If New York State is to have a robust program for intercity rail, it is going to need to follow the example of other states – like Virginia, Washington (state), North Carolina, and California – in building a robust "Passenger Rail Division" within NYSDOT or a new separate authority/agency to provide proper oversight of contractual service quality requirements by Amtrak, while also undertaking the planning and management of major projects and multi-year operating/capital programs.

The state has done study after study over the past two decades on passenger rail. Worthy rail projects that would reduce travel times and increase reliability can be found in the 2005 Hudson Line Railroad Corridor Transportation Plan, the 2009 State Rail Plan, and the yet to be finalized Empire Corridor High Speed Rail EIS.

The draft Empire Corridor EIS in all its separate alternatives (90A, 90B, 110, and 125) presented different infrastructure investments west of Albany. All of the previous studies set forth a similar proposal to reduce travel times and increase frequency on the Hudson Line between New York City and Albany. First recommended in the 2005 Hudson Line study, these projects would increase Amtrak service to 16 daily hourly roundtrips while reducing travel time to 2 hours from the current 2 ½ hours.

The Livingston Ave Bridge (LAB) across the Hudson River between Albany and Rensselaer is in need of replacement. Also, there are potential new passenger station projects, most notably in Amsterdam.

Given the hard economic impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on New York State that has placed both the state and local governments under great fiscal stress, with the jobs of police, firefighters, school teachers, and highway workers on the chopping block, asking for the state to invest money and staff towards passenger rail planning may seem out-of-touch with the current harsh reality.

Yet some of our greatest infrastructure achievements in both New York State and the across the country were achieved during the depths of the Great Depression. Just as New Deal public works funding built a better future through projects such as the Triborough Bridge and LaGuardia Airport, we will need to do the same to "build back better" from the public health and economic crisis of this pandemic.

A modern intercity passenger rail system long-term could really boost the economic prospects of upstate New York in an environmentally sustainable way, accelerating growth of the "knowledge economy" while becoming a catalyst for redevelopment of urban downtowns in our post-industrial cities. Meeting the goals of the NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, mandating net zero-emission of CO2 by transportation by 2050, requires investing big in passenger rail.

The seed money necessary to boost staffing at NYSDOT to renew our State Rail Plan and finish the Empire Corridor EIS would be money very well spent on a bright future beyond the current darkness of disease and depression.

Adirondack Rail-Trail Construction Begins - Benjamin Turon

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) finally broke ground on the Adirondack Rail Trail at the start of November. Both the rail-trail and planned railroad upgrades are part of the 2020 Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan, which aims to bolster tourism and outdoor recreation along the 119-mile travel corridor.

For several years, the state government supporting recreational trail use has fought a continuous legal battle with supporters of rebuilding the former New York Central 'Adirondack Division' for rail use from Utica to Lake Placid. As part of a compromise plan the state decided to restore rail service from Utica to Tupper Lake while converting the railroad from Tupper Lake to Lake Placid to a recreational rail-trail. With legal options exhausted by opponents of the rail-trail plans, the state is free to start construction. The \$1.9 million project removes the existing railroad track between Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake for conversion to a shared-use recreational trail for cyclists, hikers, skiers, and snowmobilers.

A second \$19.1 million project will also begin rehabilitating 45 miles of tracks between Tupper Lake and Big Moose, north of Old Forge where current tourist excursion train service ends by the formerly named Adirondack Scenic Railroad – the not-for-profit Adirondack Railroad Preservation Society recently renamed its tourist rail operation the [Adirondack Railroad](#). This rail improvement program includes nearly \$13 million for a new rail station, wye, and locomotive maintenance facility in Tupper Lake.



The state also is helping fund a new maintenance facility near Utica Union Station, the Adirondack Railroad's southern terminus, awarding in 2014 a \$791,000 grant to railroad. The 4,800 square-foot building will measure 220 ft. long by 75 ft. wide, with two tracks, an inspection pit, and a repair room. In recent years, the railroad has repaired its rolling stock beneath a highway overpass near the station.

The loss of Adirondack Scenic's recently run Saranac Lake–Lake Placid tourist rail operation and potential full restoration of passenger service from Tupper Lake to Lake Placid, site of the 1932 and 1980 Winter Olympics, is a very hard blow for supporters – albeit the increase in rail service over a 107.4 mile route from Utica past Thendara (Old Forge) and Big Moose (current terminus) to Tupper Lake is a consolation prize.

Tupper Lake is a village home to over 3,600 year-round residents, also the home of The Wild Center, a large natural history museum. There is also Big Tupper, a shuttered ski center that has seen various redevelopment plans come and go over the last decade. The new rail-trail will also undoubtedly become a major tourist draw as well.

Tupper Lake village mayor Paul Maroun spoke to the Adirondack Daily Enterprise... “This has been the most heated issue in the Adirondack Park. I really thought, for the economics and dynamics of the North Country, it should have gone to Lake Placid. Once you tear up a rail, you’re not going to put it back.” However, continuing in the interview the mayor stated that he is still satisfied with the final result and its benefits to the village. “It was this or nothing, and it’s better than nothing. It’s been so long in the making. And for Tupper Lake, it’s really a win-win.”

Old Forge to the south is a popular summer vacation and winter sports destination, including a water theme park, lake boat cruises, and ski center. Utica has many attractions; its Union Station offers a connection between Adirondack Railroad trains and Amtrak trains: NYC-Niagara Falls-Toronto Empire Service/Maple Leaf and NYC-Boston-Chicago Lake Shore Limited.

Post COVID-19 pandemic it is hoped that the state and local governments will leverage full advantage of using passenger rail to bring visitors to less visited parts of the great Adirondack Park. This should include encouraging downstate residents to take their bikes and other sports equipment on the train to Utica, Old Forge, and Tupper Lake. Mayor Maroun recalled to the Daily Enterprise about riding the train in decades past: “It was a beautiful ride to Utica.”

Virginia (Continued from Page 6)

Virginia's state-sponsored Amtrak services over the past decade have experienced strong ridership growth, as service has grown from one to four routes, including six new daily round-trip trains. In 2019 state-wide yearly ridership exceeded 971,415, a 15% annual increase, that was far above the 2.4% increase among all other state-supported lines in the rest of the Amtrak system.

Political support for rail in Virginia is broad with extensive media coverage of planning and successes of the state's program. Clearly doing the hard work in creating a sustainable managerial, planning, and funding structure for investing in passenger rail has paid big dividends to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Alan S. Boyd - Amtrak President - Dead At 98

Benjamin Turon

Alan Stephenson Boyd (July 20, 1922 – October 18, 2020), president of Amtrak from 1978 to 1982, died at age 98 on October 18th at a retirement home in Seattle. Mr. Boyd was an American attorney and transportation executive who led several large corporations and serving the U.S. Government in various transportation-related positions.



Mr. Boyd was the first United States Secretary of Transportation, appointed by Lyndon Johnson. Additionally, he served in executive positions with the Civil Aeronautics Board and the U.S. Department of Commerce. He also championed passenger rail service, a focus that brought him to Amtrak in 1978.

At Amtrak, Mr. Boyd was credited with improving on-time performance, among other things, but was disappointed he couldn't secure a permanent or long-term source of federal funding for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, unlike highways and air travel. Mr. Boyd was also involved in an early, serious High-Speed Rail effort in America during the early 1980s.

The American High Speed Rail Corporation was to be spun-off from Amtrak to plan, fund, and build (with imported Japanese Bullet Train technology and techniques) a Shinkansen-style electrified high-speed rail service along the existing right-of-way of the Santa Fe Surf Line between LA Union Station, LAX airport, and San Diego Santa Fe Depot. This 'California Bullet' project failed in late 1984 due in part to NIMBY opposition from coastal residents and the failure to secure sufficient start-up money to complete environmental reviews and project planning. It was unfortunately the first in a long series of high-speed failures in the USA, starting a sad and frustrating pattern.

Mr. Boyd deserves credit for his long and fruitful career in public service and the private sector, acting on a vision for a balanced passenger transportation system, including airlines, highways, public transit, and modern high-speed railways, and the need for strong governmental support in the form of public money for transit and rail transportation.

NYDOT Wins \$2 Million Pre-Halloween Treat From FRA - Tony Rudmann

On October 29th, 2020, the Federal Railroad Administration awarded NYSDOT up to \$2 million for rehabilitation and safety improvements to Peekskill's Hudson Avenue grade crossing. The village crossing protects motorists as well as Amtrak, Metro North and freight trains.

The award was part of \$291 million disbursed to 11 projects in nine states through the Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair. The \$291 million awarded included \$198 million from federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020 and \$93 million from FFY 2019. The Partnership Program is intended to improve intercity passenger rail performance by funding projects to repair, replace or rehabilitate publically-owned or controlled railroad assets bringing them into a "state of good repair."

Three neighboring states won competitive grants in the pre-Halloween announcement. The Connecticut Department of Transportation was awarded up to \$79 million for the Walk River bridge replacement. In the same state, Amtrak won a grant for up to \$69 million for replacement of its Connecticut River bridge. In addition, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority was granted up to \$29 million for accessibility and improvements at the Worcester Union Station. Also, the New Jersey Transit will have up to \$18 million for improvements to the Trenton Transit Center Station.

Robert Lenz, our long-time editor of our 'ESPA Express' Newsletter, has decided to retire from this important position in ESPA. For over 30 years, he has assembled, edited, printed, and mailed our newsletter. Our great thanks to his many years of assistance performing this important function in our organization. In fact, my first exposure to ESPA was reading a newsletter that Robert had posted at the Buffalo-Depew Amtrak station. In addition to editing the newsletter, he also served as President of ESPA in the late 1990s. He continues to live in Clarence, NY, where he operates his Asa Ransom House B&B. As a member of ESPA, he continues to be most supportive of our organization & advocacy.

Bob...Thanks for all the years of assembling our Newsletter! Gary Prophet - President

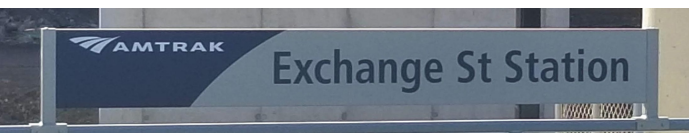
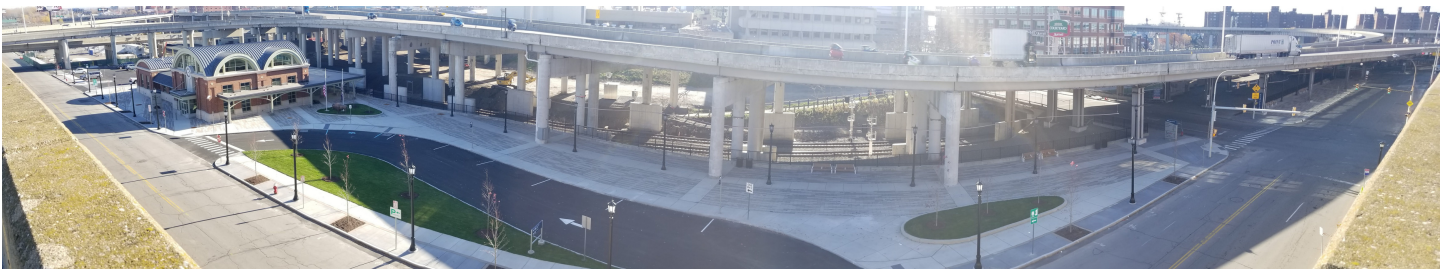


East-West Study (Continued from Page 3)

Albany-Rensselaer is Amtrak's ninth-busiest station, serving a metro region of over a million people, and providing connections to cities across New York state (and pre-COVID to Northern New York, Vermont, Montreal, and Toronto). Including it would considerably boost ridership and revenue compared to a train terminating at Pittsfield – greatly improving the cost-benefit ratio at little additional cost in additional infrastructure.

When a question about service to Albany during an October 22nd online public meeting was asked, the response was that the scope of the study was only for Boston-Pittsfield. In response to a question on tilt trains it was stated that they would save some additional time (about 7%) but CSX policy and specifications preclude using tilting systems on their tracks.

With all the questions, criticisms, and counterproposals that the East-West Rail study has generated, further more in-depth research and planning is warranted, and hopefully this study is not a dead end, but the end of the beginning in the process of bringing high quality passenger rail service to the Boston-Springfield-Albany corridor.



All - Bruce Becker

More Buffalo Exchange Street Station Photos
At www.esparail.org