



Empire State Passengers Association

**Working For A Balanced Public  
Transportation Network  
For All New Yorkers**  
[www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org)

# ESPA EXPRESS

*News From The  
Empire State Passengers Association*

## **ESPA's Advocacy Wins - Empire Corridor Service Cuts Averted** - Gary Prophet

As was covered in the last issue of the ESPA Express, Amtrak (with little advance notice) eliminated three roundtrips on the Empire Corridor effective November 11, 2024. ESPA's leadership was made aware of the planned reductions by an ESPA member, who had tried to reserve a train after November 11th and found that the train that they wanted was not operating.

By eliminating 3 of the previous 13 daily roundtrips between New York City & Albany, Amtrak effectively reduced service by 23% on this busy corridor. Amtrak eliminated the Albany departure at 5:05am (first Albany to NYC southbound train) and the last NYC to Albany northbound train that departs New York City at 10:45pm, on weekdays. Also, an afternoon train was eliminated in both directions between Albany and New York City.

The Maple Leaf (to Toronto) and Adirondack (to Montreal) trains were combined as one train between New York City and Albany, but operated on their pre-November 11th schedules west and north of Albany. This resulted in a 1' 55' minute layover at Albany for the northbound Adirondack passengers and a 1' 35' minute layover at Albany for the east/ southbound Maple Leaf passengers.

With no northbound departure from New York City between 7:15am & 10:20am and no southbound trains from Albany between 4:30pm and 7:40pm, same day trips from the City to Albany were much less convenient.

Upon learning of the impending reductions, ESPA issued a Press Release highlighting the loss of service. Many media outlets from across state carried the story. In addition (and importantly) many New York State political officials soon took notice. Rep. Elise Stefanik (NY-21 – R) gathered members of the NY Congressional delegation in opposing the reductions. NY Assembly Members Patricia Fahy, John McDonald & Caroline Woerner and State Senator Michele Hinchey joined with other members of the Legislature calling for action.

On November 22, Governor Kathy Hochul, Amtrak and the NYS Department of Transportation announced that starting December 2nd the Maple Leaf & Adirondack would return to their pre-November 11th schedules, operating separately between NYC and Albany (thus returning one daily roundtrip) and that an afternoon daily roundtrip would also be restored. (Continued On Page 4 - Advocacy Wins)

### *Also In This Issue...*

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Amtrak's Record Ridership In FY '24

Enhanced Dining On Lake Shore Limited

Join ESPA, Renew Your ESPA  
Membership Or Donate To Support  
ESPA On-Line At [www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org)

## **\$72M From Feds For Penn Station Upgrades**



Full Story On The ESPA Website at <https://bit.ly/41m18V8>

## Executive Director's Report: Steve Strauss

Wow! The second half of 2024 has been quite eventful, keeping your Officers and Executive Director busy. Grant announcements; meetings with our legislators; our summer Farmers' Market table; and, unexpectedly, severe Amtrak service cuts associated with the important East River Tunnels rehabilitation project.

In early October, our Facebook page followers alerted us to changes starting in November loaded into Amtrak's reservation system. Three Hudson Valley roundtrips disappeared! The Maple Leaf and Adirondack international trains combined with a long layover in Rensselaer for travellers beyond Albany (see our previous newsletter for details).

ESPA quickly mobilized, issuing a Press Release noting Amtrak's 23% Hudson Line reduction in frequency and the forced layovers. Press coverage was broad. Editorials appeared in the Albany Times Union and the NY Daily News. ESPA spoke with affected members of the Legislature after they had heard from us and their unhappy constituents. Our allies reached out to members of Congress. Reacting to the news, Governor Hochul publicly asked Amtrak to suspend the cuts and consider adopting mitigation actions put forth by ESPA and others. Amtrak quickly reversed course and cancelled most of the frequency cuts and the consolidation of our two international trains, until at least early March 2025.

Without ESPA's publicizing the cuts in a professional manner, Amtrak's actions might have gone unchallenged. New York Amtrak riders and communities would have borne a disproportionate share of the tunnel-related service cuts. ESPA continues to work with NYS DOT and Amtrak to ensure that any tunnel construction service plan includes longer consists for the remaining trains and no hour-long-plus layover additions in Albany-Rensselaer for Upstate New York travellers on international trains.

Other Executive Director activities included meeting with the Sierra Club to discuss commuter rail line electrification; joining Treasurer Kevin Jones at an ESPA table at the Hudson farmers' market; meeting with Assemblymembers Fahy and McDonald and State Senators Hinchey and Gonzalez to discuss passenger rail matters. In September, I met with Saratoga Springs community leaders to discuss bringing a summer weekend train to the Spa City, as the Berkshire Flyer to Pittsfield will not operate in 2025. I also initiated discussions with the Rhinebeck Chamber of Commerce about last-mile transit connections to the Rhinecliff station.

In August, the ESPA Board approved a modest dues increase; an updated ESPA "take-one" card is in the works. Membership renewals and new memberships have kept steady. Look for information on the 2025 Legislative Agenda and our 2025 Annual Meeting (Saturday, April 5 in Schenectady) in the next newsletter. (We plan to be back on track with four ESPA newsletters in 2025.)

Happy holidays and best wishes for a safe and enjoyable New Year!

*Steve*



## Empire State Passengers Foundation Update Steve Strauss

The Empire State Passengers Foundation held its organizing meeting in early September. The initial Directors of the Foundation elected Bruce Becker as the President of the Foundation, Andrew Cabal as the Treasurer and Steve Strauss as the Secretary. Lou Venech and Tom Martinelli were confirmed as Directors of the ESPF.

In November, the Foundation received a Tax ID number from the Internal Revenue Service allowing us to open a Foundation checking account. The Foundation's attorney has filed an application with the IRS for tax-exempt status. Once that is approved by the IRS, the Foundation will also make the necessary application to the NYS Charities Bureau in the Attorney General's Office.

ESPA's Board voted to set up this parallel foundation to enable us to apply for grants from other foundations and to solicit tax-deductible contributions from businesses and individuals who believe in the value of expanding intercity passenger rail service in New York and adjoining states and provinces. In addition, individuals who must make annual Required Minimum Distributions from their Individual Retirement Accounts or pensions may contribute a portion of these distributions to the Foundation tax-free.

As the Foundation obtains funds, it will begin to pay for educational and informational activities currently funded by ESPA such as the cost of the newsletter and other outreach activities like tables at farmers' markets and street fairs. This will allow the two organizations to slowly expand their advocacy work for better train service in New York. Original ESPA, funded by member dues and contributions that are not tax-deductible, may then expand its lobbying work with the State Legislature and local governments as well as create voter guides on rail matters.

**Contributions to the Empire State Passengers Foundation may be sent to ESPF, P.O. Box 434, Syracuse, NY 13209 after January 1, 2025.**

**Election Results Increase Uncertainty For Amtrak And Passenger Rail** - Steve Strauss

The results of the November 5th election have increased uncertainty with respect to future Amtrak funding levels as well as the level of federal assistance for intercity passenger rail capital projects. While Amtrak funding has made strides in becoming a bi-partisan appropriation, Trump's non-consecutive re-election, along with new Republican-control of the U.S. Senate, likely increases the number of anti-Amtrak voices in Washington.

With control of the House remaining about as close as before the election, it will continue to be hard to pass any large Amtrak operating funding reductions there. Nebraskans re-elected Amtrak-supporter Dan Bacon (R) and suburban New Yorkers sent Mike Lawler (R) back to Congress. They will be joined by two new Republican members from northeast Pennsylvania who are likely to be aligned with the pro-Amtrak caucus of GOP House members which includes New York members among others.

Analysts regard the large discretionary capital programs at the Federal Transit Administration and Federal Railroad Administration as at greater risk of being downsized in a Republican-controlled Congress. Republicans have favored the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program at the FRA over the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail program since freight railroad projects are eligible for CRISI funding but not for Federal-State funding.

Also noteworthy in New York: all three of our Republican members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (Williams, Molinaro and D'Esposito) lost their re-election campaigns. Given that there will be fewer Republican House members from New York in the next Congress, it is unlikely that New York will hold onto these three Committee seats. An additional New York Democrat may join Congressman Pat Ryan on the T&I.

Assuming the Senate approves President Trump's nomination of Congresswoman Elise Stefanik to be the US Ambassador to the United Nations, the Governor will set a date for a special election in the North Country's 21st Congressional District. It will be hard to find a stronger advocate on behalf of the Adirondack than her.

In the State Legislature, only a few incumbent members lost their re-election bids, albeit retirement and successful runs for other offices will bring some new faces to Albany. Democrats lost their super-majority in the State Senate, potentially giving Governor Hochul a bit more negotiating strength with the Legislature. We will know more about Legislative Committee assignments in January.

**City of Rensselaer Developing Mixed Use Project Adjacent to Amtrak Station** - Steve Strauss

The City of Rensselaer, in conjunction with Amtrak, CDTA and a private developer, is planning for a mixed-use development at the northwest corner of Herrick and East streets, adjacent to the Joseph L. Bruno Amtrak station. This mixed-use development would include 240 residential units, a grocery store, other retail stores, and over 1,000 parking spaces in-structure in Phase I of the plan. Phase II would include 300 residential units, a small amount of additional retail, and an additional 660 parking spaces.

The project would convert existing CDTA- and Amtrak-controlled surface parking to in-structure parking with housing and commercial space above. Preliminary planning takes advantage of an approximate 35-foot elevation change between the current surface parking located west of East Street and north of the Herrick Street bridge. The City of Rensselaer is seeking both state and federal assistance to further its planning efforts, including funding from programs to assist in bringing grocery stores to underserved areas.



City of Rensselaer

Concept View Of The Potential Project

**NYS Receives \$215M For New LAB Bridge** - Bruce Becker



NYS DOT

The US Department of Transportation has awarded the New York State Department of Transportation \$215,104,000 under the FY '23-'24 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Grant Program for the new Livingston Avenue Bridge across the Hudson River at Albany. This federal award represents 40% of the projected overall project with the State funding the other 60%. The award is the single largest amount provided to a single project in the history of the CRISI Grant Program.

The anticipated completion of the new double-track lift bridge is expected in the summer of 2028. The new structure will be constructed immediately to the south of the existing bridge. The current Livingston Avenue Bridge will remain in use until the new bridge is placed in service & it will then be removed.

### Advocacy Wins (Continued From Page 1)

This left only the first southbound trip and the last northbound not operating. In addition, the Governor stated that an additional coach would be added to several trains, to increase passenger capacity.

Governor Hochul stated, "These service restorations are a huge victory for passengers who depend on the Empire Service, and I thank Amtrak for working with us to ensure that we minimize to the fullest extent possible the schedule disruptions caused by the East River Tunnel Rehabilitation Project."

However, the December 2nd schedule is only effective only until March 25, 2025 and while Amtrak has committed to "evaluate the service plan, including additional capacity, to see if there are any new possibilities for making improvements, restoring service or modifying it based on future development" it is currently unclear what may occur after March 25th! ESPA will continue to closely monitor the situation and firmly advocate for the passengers of New York State.

Empire Corridor - Effective 12-2-24														
New York – Albany – Utica – Syracuse – Rochester – Buffalo – Niagara Falls														
Train Number		63	69	281	233	283	291	235	49	237	239	241	243	245
Frequency		Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	M-F	S&S
NY Penn - NYP	Dp	7:15a	8:35a	10:20a	11:20a	1:20p	2:19p	3:15p	3:40p	4:45p	5:47p	6:46p	8:55p	10:45p
Yonkers	Dp	7:43a	9:02a	-	11:44a	1:44p	2:42p	3:39p	-	-	-	7:08p	9:19p	-
Croton-Harmon	Dp	8:02a	9:22a	11:01a	12:03p	2:03p	3:00p	3:58p	4:23p	5:27p	6:32p	7:26p	9:38p	11:24p
Poughkeepsie	Dp	8:43a	10:06a	11:43a	12:45p	2:45p	3:42p	4:40p	5:07p	6:08p	7:22p	8:08p	10:20p	12:06p
Rhinecliff	Dp	8:58a	10:23a	12:00n	12:58p	2:58p	3:58p	4:57p	5:24p	6:20p	7:36p	8:23p	10:34p	12:22a
Hudson	Dp	9:20a	10:45a	12:25p	1:19p	3:20p	4:19p	5:17p	-	6:41p	7:57p	8:44p	10:55p	12:42a
Albany-Rensselaer	Ar	9:50a	11:13a	12:50p	1:51p	3:45p	4:49p	5:47p	6:20p	7:10p	8:28p	9:15p	11:25p	1:15a
	Dp	10:10a	11:40a	1:15p		4:10p	5:04p		7:05p					
Schenectady	Dp	10:34a	12:03p	1:39p		4:34p	5:28p		7:33p					
Saratoga Springs	Dp		12:28p				5:56p							
Fort Edward	Dp	↓	12:51p	↓		↓	6:17p		↓					
Amsterdam	Dp	10:52a	To	1:57p		4:52p	To		-					
Utica	Dp	11:50a	MTR	2:55p		5:50p	BUR		8:50p					
Rome	Dp	12:03p		3:11p		6:05p			-					
	Ar	12:57p		4:02p		6:59p			9:51p					
Syracuse	Dp	12:57p		4:02p		6:59p			10:05p					
Rochester	Dp	2:13p		5:28p		8:15p			11:29p					
Buffalo-Depew	Ar	3:19p		6:34p		9:21p			12:29a					
	Dp	3:19p		6:34p		9:21p			12:39a					
Buffalo-Exchange	Dp	3:32p		6:55p		9:42p			To					
Niagara Falls, NY	Ar	4:42p		7:35p		10:28p			CHI					
		To												
		TOR												

Empire Corridor - Effective 12-2-24													
Niagara Falls – Buffalo – Rochester – Syracuse – Utica – Albany – New York													
Train Number		232	234	236	280	240	238	284	290	48	244	64	68
Frequency		Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily
													From
													TOR
Niagara Falls, NY	Dp				3:52a			6:47a		From			11:50a
Buffalo-Exchange	Dp				4:28a			7:22a		CHI			12:25p
Buffalo-Depew	Ar				4:45a			7:39a		8:53a			12:36p
	Dp				4:45a			7:39a		9:05a			12:40p
Rochester	Dp				5:40a			8:34a		10:06a			1:34p
Syracuse	Ar				6:57a			9:49a		11:28a			2:44p
	Dp				7:06a			9:59a		11:42a			2:54p
Rome	Dp				7:45a			10:38a		-			3:36p
Utica	Dp				7:59a			10:52a	From	12:42p			3:53p
Amsterdam	Dp				9:01a			11:54a	BUR	-			4:55p
Fort Edward	Dp								1:00p				5:33p
Saratoga Springs	Dp				↓			↓	1:22p	↓		↓	6:02p
Schenectady	Dp				9:21a			12:17p	1:58p	2:21p			5:39p
	Ar				9:42a			12:39p	2:21p	2:53p			6:05p
Albany-Rensselaer	Dp	5:55a	6:50a	8:25a	10:05a	11:15a	11:40a	1:05p	2:48p	4:10p	4:30p	6:35p	7:40p
Hudson	Dp	6:15a	7:10a	8:45a	10:26a	11:35a	12:02p	1:26p	3:08p	-	4:50p	6:57p	8:01p
Rhinecliff	Dp	6:37a	7:34a	9:07a	10:49a	11:57a	12:24p	1:49p	3:29p	4:55p	5:12p	7:20p	8:23p
Poughkeepsie	Dp	-	7:51a	9:20a	11:10a	12:15p	12:40p	2:10p	3:48p	5:13p	5:30p	7:36p	8:40p
Croton-Harmon	Dp	7:31a	8:31a	9:59a	11:50a	12:54a	1:20p	2:50p	4:28p	5:53p	6:10p	8:17p	9:19p
Yonkers	Dp	-	8:55a	10:21p	-	1:16p	1:41p	3:11p	4:50p	-	-	8:37p	9:42p
NY Penn - NYP	Dp	8:15a	9:21a	10:50a	12:45p	1:45p	2:15p	3:45p	5:24p	6:42p	7:05p	9:16p	10:15p

## Amtrak Sets Ridership Record In FY 2024

Route	FY 2024	FY 2023	% Change
<b>NEC Spine</b>			
Acela	3,238,130	2,959,384	+9.4
Northeast Regional	10,814,407	9,165,715	+18.0
<b>NEC Total</b>	14,052,537	12,125,099	+15.9
<b>State-Supported</b>			
Northeast Routes	4,805,302	4,202,073	+14.4
Midwest & Cascades Routes	2,152,554	1,978,891	+8.8
Southern Routes	3,592,783	3,042,965	+18.1
California Routes	3,926,252	3,285,904	+19.5
<b>State-Supported Total</b>	14,486,891	12,509,833	+15.8
<b>Long Distance</b>			
Central Routes	1,855,098	1,743,092	+6.4
Southeast Routes	1,393,626	1,237,678	+12.6
Southwest Routes	1,023,563	963,618	+6.2
<b>Long Distance Total</b>	4,272,287	3,944,338	+8.3
<b>TOTAL ALL ROUTES</b>	32,811,715	28,579,270	+14.8

### NYS Route Definitions

**Empire Service**  
New York To Albany-Rensselaer Trains Only

**Maple Leaf**  
New York - Albany - Syracuse- Buffalo -  
Niagara Falls - Toronto Trains

**Adirondack**  
New York - Albany - Saratoga - Montreal Train

**Ethan Allen Express**  
New York - Albany - Saratoga -  
Rutland - Burlington Train

**Lake Shore Limited**  
New York/Boston - Albany - Buffalo -  
Cleveland - Chicago Train

## New York State Ridership Stats

Route	FY '24 Totals									Sep. '24 Customer OTP
	Sep '24	Sep '19	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	
<b>Empire Service</b>	112,700 <small>113% of 2019 #</small>	99,600	1,358,600 <small>112% of 2019 #</small>	1,245,600	1,019,200	613,200	655,000	1,214,200	1,150,500	93.1%
<b>Maple Leaf</b>	39,300 <small>132% of 2019 #</small>	29,900	506,600 <small>130% of 2019 #</small>	452,700	385,000	245,100	231,100	389,800	366,700	77.6%
<b>Adirondack</b>	5,300* <small>55% of 2019 #</small>	9,600	69,200 <small>59% of 2019 #</small>	24,700	0	0	44,200	117,500	111,700	72.2%
<b>Ethan Allen Exp.</b>	6,700 <small>182% of 2019 #</small>	3,700	89,000 <small>176% of 2019 #</small>	86,600	63,400	12,500	23,300	50,500	49,700	51.2%
<b>Lake Shore Lim.</b>	29,700 <small>104% of 2019 #</small>	28,600	398,400 <small>111% of 2019 #</small>	351,000	319,300	168,300	220,200	357,700	337,900	87.3%

\* Adirondack Resumed North Of Saratoga 9/9/24

Data Source - Amtrak Monthly Performance Reports

### Passenger Rail Should Be Part of State's Climate Agenda - Benjamin Turon

Modern passenger rail can carry large numbers of people longer, faster, and more efficiently than ever before. Properly funded and developed, energy-efficient rail networks can help cut fuel use by the transportation sector, while lowering carbon emissions.

New York State, with the passage of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act in 2019, took a bold step in becoming a leader in confronting the growing danger of global warming. The Climate Act mandates that the State moves to a net-zero emission economy by 2050 by eliminating most emissions of greenhouse gases – primarily CO2 – from the burning of fossil fuels.

Yet, while other states – California being the leader – are expanding their passenger rail services while also moving forward with planning studies and demonstration projects for zero emission trains, New York State has not. Rail transport seems to be an afterthought in the planning and recommendations of the state's Climate Action Council. This needs to change! Passenger rail is the most environmentally friendly mode of mass transportation, while also serving as a catalyst for building a more sustainable society. (Continued On Page 7 - Climate)

## News From Amtrak...

**Dining Car Service on the Lake Shore Limited** has recently been enhanced, with the 'Flex' Menu items now being plated by the service attendants in the kitchen and presented to patrons on Amtrak's regular hard plastic plates. In addition, coach passengers on the Lake Shore may now use the dining car (based upon availability of space) with the payment of the applicable menu supplement. And the popular 'Welcome Aboard' snacks & beverages are again being offered to sleeping car passengers on the Lake Shore Limited upon departure from Chicago.

**Amtrak's New York State-built NextGen Acela trainsets** are scheduled to enter service on the Northeast Corridor in the Spring of 2025 & will lead Amtrak's new era of rail with a modernized customer experience centered around comfort, tech forward features, safety and sustainability. Amtrak & Alstom has successfully conducted more than 900 test runs (clocking over 90,000 miles) on the Northeast Corridor and have now completed the required qualification testing.

**Thanks To Our Corporate Members For Their Generous Support!**



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 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](http://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. The more family, friends, loved ones you bring, the more you all save.

**Share Fares** provide a group discount of up to 60% off tickets for 8 passengers traveling together on the same reservation. Here's how the discount works: Passenger 1 – full price (or lowest available fare); Groups of 2 – full price (or lowest available fare); Groups of 3 – 15% off all tickets; Groups of 4 – 25% off all tickets; Groups of 5 – 37% off all tickets; Groups of 6 – 47% off all tickets; Groups of 7 – 54% off all tickets; Groups of 8 – 60% off all tickets. 2-day advance purchase required. Other terms & conditions apply.

Visit [Amtrak.com](http://Amtrak.com); click on 'Deals' at the top, then click on 'Deals & Promotions' and then 'Share Fares'



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](http://www.esparail.org) for the most current meeting information! Advance registration is required!

### Upcoming 2025 ESPA Meetings

#### **Working Group/Board Meeting**

Saturday, January 25 - Via Zoom - 12:00n - 3:00pm

#### 2025 ESPA Annual Meeting

Schenectady - Saturday, April 5, 2025

Full Details & Registration Available 1/1/2025

*Dates, times & locations are subject to change!*

## ESPA Membership

- Introductory Membership (\$20.00 for first year)
- Regular Individual Membership (\$35.00 per year)
- Student, Senior, Fixed-Income Membership (\$25.00 per year)
- Family Membership (\$45.00 per year)
- Sustaining Membership (\$65.00 per year)
- Patron Membership (\$120.00 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](http://www.esparail.org) or

Send A Check Made Payable To 'ESPA' To 'ESPA', P.O. Box 3012, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

## Climate (continued from page 5)

Passenger Rail encourages Sustainable Cities through walkable, higher density development and urban renewal through “Transit-Oriented Development” around stations, many of which along the Empire Corridor are in historic urban centers.

The Preferred Alternative 90B of the Empire Corridor Tier One EIS also will use existing railroad infrastructure and right-of-way; preserves farmland and wildlife habitat of forests and wetlands; and reduces carbon emissions during construction by avoiding excessive tree cutting and excavation of earth.

This is a major environmental benefit of the Empire Corridor’s “higher speed rail” plan of laying down third and fourth dedicated 90 MPH passenger tracks within and alongside the existing CSX right-of-way, with its surplus land due the reduction from four-track to the current double-track mainline during the 1950s.

And while not “true high-speed rail”, the plan would deliver service comparable in travel times, frequency, and reliability to that now enjoyed by Florida with the new Miami-Orlando ‘Brightline’ service – the new paradigm of what modern intercity rail can be in America. Brightline also offers a medium-term solution to reducing carbon-emissions from today’s diesel locomotives. Currently the passenger locomotives of Brightline Florida and California’s state-supported Amtrak services – the Surfliner, Capitol Corridor, and San Joaquin – are now fueled with renewable biodiesel derived from commercial kitchens.

Biodiesel significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions by over an estimated 60 percent; while also reducing other harmful emissions, including fine particulates and nitrogen oxides, leading to improved local air quality. Renewable Diesel combined with new Siemens Airo trainsets hauled by EPA Tier IV Siemens Charger locomotives – which reduce Particulate Matter (PM) by 95% and Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) by 89% compared to the EPA Tier 0 standard of older diesel locomotives – represents the most pragmatic step to dramatically reduce the air pollution and carbon emissions of Empire Corridor trains in the near future.

Long-term electrification with Overhead Catenary is a possible solution, the already mostly electrified commuter railroads, Metro-North and the LIRR, should be fully electrified by 2050. Yet electrification is not pragmatic in the near to medium-term for the Empire Corridor. The great cost and complexity of electrification makes this a long-term project. The freight railroads, including CSX, are also on record being stridently opposed to electrification of their rail lines. Therefore, any future electrification of the corridor may be partial, of just the Amtrak and Metro-North controlled Hudson Line.

Hydrogen Fuel Cells are the other possible long-term solution. “Green Hydrogen” produced from renewable energy – wind, solar, and hydro – would be zero-emission power. Hydrogen has better range and shorter refueling times than battery trains. Today there are several freight railroad H2 locomotive demonstrator projects underway, including a partnership between CPKC and CSX. Their hydrogen locomotives were converted from existing diesel locomotives using a hydrogen conversion kit developed by CPKC.

California (Caltrans, state DOT) has ordered six “ZEMU” FLIRT H2 trainsets at \$127 million from Stadler for regional passenger service in the Central Valley. Caltrans is looking at converting its existing state-owned diesel locomotives for its Amtrak corridor services to hydrogen fuel cells by the mid-2030s.

Amtrak, on April 16th, 2024, issued a Request for Information (RFI) to seek options to help transform the company’s rail fleet with zero-emissions (ZE) technology. While Amtrak doesn’t specify the ZE technology, a hybrid powertrain of hydrogen fuel cells and batteries is undoubtedly the solution that will be offered by Siemens, Alstom, Stadler, and other rail-equipment manufactures.



New York State needs to invest in passenger rail – both commuter and intercity – by expanding services and moving them to zero-emission motive power. How can New York State be a climate leader while ignoring the greenest form of mass transport?

**SAVE THE DATE**

**2025 ESPA Annual Meeting**  
**Schenectady - Saturday, April 5, 2025 - 11am to 4pm**  
**Full Details & Registration Available Starting 1/1/2025**



Amtrak Maple Leaf New York Penn Station Albany - Utica - Syracuse - Rochester - Buffalo - Niagara Falls - Toronto					
Maple Leaf	<b>Correct To December 2, 2024</b>				Maple Leaf
#63	SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE!				#64
Daily	Consult Amtrak For Current Schedules				Daily
Read Down		Notes		Read Up	
7:15a	Dp.	New York City Penn Station Moynihan Train Hall	S	Ar.	9:16p
7:43a	↓	Yonkers	NS	↑	8:37p
8:02a	↓	Croton-Harmon	NS	↑	8:17p
8:43a	↓	Poughkeepsie	NS	↑	7:36p
8:58a	↓	Rhinecliff	S	↑	7:20p
9:20a	↓	Hudson	S	↑	6:57p
9:50a	Ar.	Albany-Rensselaer	S	Dp.	6:35p
10:10a	Dp.	Schenectady	S	Ar.	6:05p
10:34a	↓	Amsterdam	NS	↑	5:39p
10:52a	↓	Utica	S	↑	4:55p
11:50a	↓	Rome	NS	↑	3:53p
12:03p	↓	Syracuse	S	↑	3:36p
12:57p	↓	Rochester	S	↑	2:54p
2:13p	↓	Buffalo - Depew	S	↑	1:34p
3:19p	↓	Buffalo - Exchange Street	S	↑	12:40p
3:32p	↓	Niagara Falls, NY	S	↑	12:25p
4:42p	Ar.	Niagara Falls, NY <i>US Inbound Inspection</i>	S	Dp.	11:50a
4:50p	Dp.	Niagara Falls, ON <i>Canadian Inbound Inspection</i>	NS	Ar.	10:44a
4:55p	Ar.	St. Catharines, ON	NS	Dp.	10:28a
5:45p	Dp.	Grimsby, ON	NS	Ar.	10:22a
6:08p	↓	Aldershot, ON	NS	↑	9:58a
6:27p	↓	Oakville, ON	NS	↑	9:38a
7:04p	↓	Toronto, ON	NS	↑	9:01a
7:19p	↓		NS	↑	8:45a
7:43p	Ar.		S	Dp.	8:20a

Amtrak Adirondack & Ethan Allen Express New York Penn Station - Albany - Schenectady - Saratoga Springs - Plattsburgh - Montreal & Rutland - Burlington					
Ethan Allen Express	Adirondack	<b>Correct To December 2, 2024</b>		Adirondack	Ethan Allen Express
#291	#69	SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE!		#68	#290
Daily	Daily	Consult Amtrak For Current Schedules		Daily	Daily
Read Down	Read Down			Read Up	Read Up
2:19p	7:15a	Dp.	New York City - Penn Sta. Moynihan Train Hall	Ar.	10:15p
2:42p	7:44a	↓	Yonkers	NS	9:42p
3:02p	8:03a	↓	Croton-Harmon	NS	9:21p
3:44p	8:45a	↓	Poughkeepsie	NS	8:40p
4:00p	9:00a	↓	Rhinecliff	S	8:25p
4:21p	9:21a	↓	Hudson	S	8:03p
4:49p	9:50a	Ar.	Albany-Rensselaer	S	7:40p
5:04p	11:450a	Dp.	Schenectady	S	7:00p
5:28p	12:08p	↓	Saratoga Springs	S	6:38p
5:56p	12:35p	↓	Fort Edward	NS	6:02p
6:17p	12:56p	↓	Castleton, VT	NS	5:33p
7:17p			Rutland, VT	NS	1:00p
7:56p			Middlebury, VT	NS	12:04p
8:45p			Ferrisburgh-Vergennes, VT	NS	11:45a
9:05p			Burlington, VT	NS	10:41a
Ar. 9:50p			Whitehall	NS	10:24a
	1:19p	↓	Ticonderoga	NS	Dp. 9:50a
	1:52p	↓	Port Henry	NS	5:07p
	2:14p	↓	Westport	NS	4:35p
	2:37p	↓	Plattsburgh	NS	4:11p
	4:02p	↓	Rouses Point	NS	3:46p
	4:35p	Ar.	Cantico, QC <i>Canadian Inbound Inspection</i>	NS	2:45p
	4:38p L	Dp.	St. Lambert, QC	NS	2:15p
			Montreal, QC	S	1:05p
	8:03p D	↓			
	8:16p	Ar.			

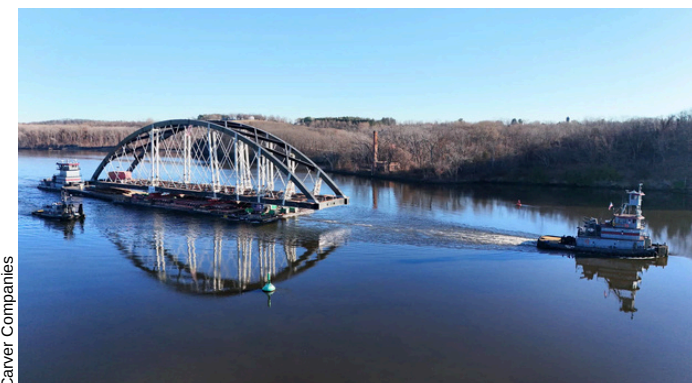
**News In Brief...**

**The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)** has unveiled new state-of-the-art 4,200-horsepower locomotives that will upgrade and replace Metro-North Railroad's existing fleet of locomotives used for trains serving Poughkeepsie, Southeast, Danbury and Waterbury. Known by the model number SC42-DM, the new locomotives will provide customers with more reliable service and will be friendlier to the environment.



MTA

The new locomotives will travel much farther under electric power than the current fleet of locomotives they will replace, the P32s. Those operate under electric power only in the four miles in the tunnel in and out of Grand Central Terminal, but the new locomotives are expected to operate in electric mode the entire 102 miles of Metro-North's third rail territory, which extends to Croton-Harmon, Southeast and Pelham. The new locomotives are rated Tier IV compliant, slashing airborne pollutants by more than 85% while they are operating in diesel mode.



Carver Companies

On November 21st, the first section of **Amtrak's new Portal North Bridge** began its journey from the Port of Coeymans (NY), traveling down the Hudson River! The massive steel section spans 400 feet long, 78 feet wide, and 86 feet high, weighing approximately 5 million pounds! This is one of three arches being built at the Port of Coeymans over the last year, to replace the Northeast Corridor's 114-year-old Portal Bridge that connects Newark, NJ to New York's Penn Station.

Once completed in 2027, the new bridge will greatly increase reliability for Amtrak & NJ Transit trains, as it will be high enough to allow marine traffic to pass underneath without opening.