

# The ESPA EXPRESS

NEWS FROM THE EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

<http://www.esparail.org>



## WORKING FOR A MORE BALANCED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

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### ESPA Endorses “Ninety Now”

At the May 21<sup>st</sup> ESPA Working Group Meeting, ESPA Officers and Coordinators formally adopted a statement which urges New York State to accept CSX’s stated requirement that the maximum authorized speed for passenger trains operating on CSX’s mainline right-of-way west of Hoffmans across upstate be capped at 90 mph for the near-term future.

This policy position was adopted after carefully reviewing numerous factors, including safety considerations, and in particular, the fact that CSX has yet to agree to a necessary ‘service outcome agreement’, which would allow for the construction of the vital Albany to Schenectady second main track as well as other projects to proceed.

The statement firmly endorses the need for a new, publicly-funded third main track, fully integrated with the current two main tracks and with a top speed of 90mph along the majority of the route. This third track would provide the necessary additional capacity to accommodate the anticipated future increases in both freight and passenger traffic and would also allow improved flexibility during the track maintenance season and in cases of mechanical problems.

While fully recognizing that the long-term vision of service at 110 mph or higher must remain a goal for the future, those in attendance noted that ESPA’s support for ‘Ninety Now...’ was in line with the organization’s long-held position that realistic and achievable incremental improvements, which provide direct, tangible benefits to the state’s rail travelers, are of the most immediate importance and value.

The statement also urges CSX to collaboratively forge a positive working partnership with NYSDOT; one which would foster an environment where the currently planned and future improvements could be advanced in a timely and mutually beneficial manner when funding is made available.

*Bruce B. Becker*

### New York Receives \$354 Mil. in New High Speed Grants

On Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood announced the award of the roughly \$2.0 billion in HSR funds rejected by Florida. New York State was a big winner, gaining over 17% of the total funds available (a total of \$345.4 million). The newly funded projects are: \* \$35.4 million for the construction of the long-sought fourth platform track at the Rensselaer station (including lengthening the current two platforms and the reconfiguration of the track and signal system at the station)

*(Cont’d on page 5)*

### NARP Presents Golden Spike Award to Congresswomen Louise Slaughter

Representative Louise Slaughter (D, NY-28) received the National Association of Railroad Passengers’ **Golden Spike Award** at a Capitol Hill reception on Tuesday, May 3. NARP presents the Golden Spike Awards to honor individuals, usually public officials, for their support of a fully developed passenger train network and leadership in promoting rail development.



*(Left to Right - Robert Stewart, NARP Chairman; Ross Capon, NARP President; Representative Slaughter; Bruce Becker, ESPA President/NARP Board Member) Photo courtesy of NARP*

In making the presentation, NARP President and CEO Ross B. Capon said, “Through her leadership over many years, and this year in founding the Bi-Cameral High Speed and Intercity Rail Caucus, Congresswoman Slaughter has shown the steadfast political courage it will take to create a modern passenger rail system, bringing the many benefits of trains to Americans across the nation.” The Caucus, which she co-chairs, is made up of Senate and House high-speed rail advocates from across the country.

In his remarks during the ceremony, ESPA President Bruce Becker commended Slaughter for her tireless work to bring higher-speed rail to New York’s Empire Corridor and he noted that she recognizes that by connecting Upstate New York to the Northeast Corridor and to Canada, New York State will be positioned to take advantage of one of the largest trade corridors in the world. Becker also highlighted Slaughter’s efforts to organize her colleagues into the Upstate Congressional Caucus to advocate in one voice for increased federal funding for higher-speed rail.

*Bruce B. Becker*

## The View from the Cab

For New York State rail advocates, the current number one question is: **“When will we see a ‘Service Outcome Agreement’ signed with CSX?”**

So, what are ‘Service Outcome Agreements’ anyway? They are among the final agreements which must be approved by all the involved parties (including the FRA) and be in place before the government will actually release (or obligate) funds for a project. In general terms, the ‘Service Outcome Agreement’, among other things, outlines the responsibility of the host freight railroad to provide an agreed upon number of slots (now and in the future) for passenger trains on their lines and they also define the expected on time performance of the trains to be operated, all in return for public investment in their private infrastructure.

Which brings us to the CSX question. As noted in this issue, CSX CEO Mike Ward recently stated his opposition to the entire Obama HSR initiative and in particular referenced the difficulties in New York State, where the public mantra of a ‘dedicated 110 mph third track’ on the CSX right-of-way has been voiced by many elected officials over the past two years. But we need to remember that CSX has already agreed to operate at speeds of up to 90mph.

Clearly, we, as advocates, have to recognize and accept that CSX is a private company, whose sole function is to make money for their shareholders by operating freight trains. In my opinion, those who think that CSX should be willing to compromise their ability to do just this, on their own private property, are gravely mistaken. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t think that CSX is the best run railroad in the country, but they do have the right to operate as they see fit.

So, it’s time to accept that CSX has a legal right to cap top speeds on their main freight route across the state at 90mph. Is this bad? No, as indeed with the right public investment, Empire Corridor trains operating at 90mph, on a line with adequate capacity to handle both freight volumes and maintenance needs, when coupled with a clearly defined OTP expectation of CSX would be significantly better than what we have today and would clearly benefit current and future passengers. So, I urge you to join me in supporting the new ESPA position of ‘**Ninety Now...**’ The alternative I’m afraid is likely to be ‘**110mph Never!**’ Let’s all hope that if everyone can embrace ‘**Ninety Now...**’ we will see a signed ‘service outcome agreement’ in the near future.

As discussed in this issue, it is vital for ESPA members that live in the districts of newly-elected members of Congress to make their voices heard in support of Amtrak and passenger rail. I was told repeatedly during my ‘Day on the Hill’, “Please have your folks attend our District open house meetings and speak up for Amtrak; we need to hear that there is support for passenger rail in New York State”. And clearly, if you are represented by Ann Marie Buerkle in Central New York be prepared for a ‘cool’ reception. But we can’t let negativity and ‘tea partiers’ overcome the fact that New Yorkers support rail and are increasingly turning to Amtrak as a preferred travel option.

As always, never hesitate to let me know how I’m doing or to offer suggestions on what I could do better...

*Bruce B. Becker, President*

## ESPA Visits Capitol Hill

In conjunction with NARP’s traditional springtime ‘Day on the Hill’, ESPA (and NARP) members (left to right in picture) Richard Kulla, Andrew Cabal, Bruce Becker, Anthony Rudmann, George Haikalas, Lynn Salatti and Steve Salatti visited the offices of over a dozen New York State members of Congress on Tuesday, May 3.



The ‘Day on the Hill’ is a highlight of the Spring NARP meeting and was particularly critical this year, as there are a number of newly-elected members of the House from New York State who needed to be informed of the importance of passenger rail service for the travelers of our state.

In spite of a very busy day on the floor of both chambers, the NYS advocacy delegation was able to visit with the staffs of Republicans Nan Hayworth (NY-19); Chris Gibson (NY-20); Richard Hanna (NY-24); Ann Marie Buerkle (NY-25) and Tom Reed (NY-29).

All of the visits were favorable (with the exception of the stop at Rep. Buerkle’s office). Of particular note was the positive discussion held with Tom Reed’s transportation staff person, who noted that Mr. Reed is fully supportive of making reasonable incremental improvements along the Empire Corridor, which mirrors ESPA’s position. Mr. Reed however is **NOT** in favor of the huge capital investment which would be needed for true high-speed rail, unless objective studies indicate that such a system would greatly benefit the public and be financially feasible/sustainable. The staff person noted that Mr. Reed is very much aware of the employment in his district provided by rail car manufacturers Alstom and CAF (currently building 130 long distance cars for Amtrak).

Unfortunately, the visit with the transportation staff person for Ann Marie Buerkle was a disappointment. As articulated by the staffer, Rep. Buerkle sees little or no value in the Amtrak service provided in her district at Syracuse and would very willingly vote to curtail all operating support for Amtrak as a means to reduce the federal deficit. He stated that unless Amtrak at least breaks even, it should be eliminated. Amazingly during our rather heated discussion, the staffer argued that the Air Traffic Control system is not funded (i.e. subsidized) by the federal government, but rather fully paid for by the airlines (which is absolutely incorrect). The only ray of hope was that the staffer did say that in very limited cases, there may be a role for federal capital investment in rail infrastructure which would benefit the movement of freight and thus indirectly passengers.

While those in our group had never before encountered such open hostility towards Amtrak and passenger rail, it was nevertheless an interesting and valuable insight into the thinking of the newly-elected far right wing ‘Tea Party’ supported members of Congress.

Article & Picture by Bruce B. Becker

## LaHood Announces New Federal Passenger Rail Grants

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced the award of \$2 billion in passenger rail improvement grants on May 19<sup>th</sup>. New York State projects won \$354.4 million in funding which is detailed in a separate article in this issue of the *ESPA Express*.

The new grants represent reallocation of monies rejected by Florida Governor Rick Scott. The awards were made after review of applications from 26 states, the District of Columbia and Amtrak, which totaled \$10 billion. The \$2 billion available funded 22 projects in 15 states and to Amtrak directly.

The Northeast Corridor won \$759 million to upgrade some of its most heavily used sections of track. Included are improvements that will raise the top speed from 135 mph to 160 mph on a track section in New Jersey. The current Corridor top speed is 150 mph on a track section in Rhode Island.

Midwest rail passengers will benefit from \$404 million in projects including segments of 110 mph track between Detroit and Chicago as well as upgrades to the Chicago to St. Louis corridor.

New locomotives and passenger cars will be built with grants totaling \$336 million. In the Midwest, 48 high-performance rail cars and 7 quick-acceleration locomotives will be purchased for \$268 million. California passengers will see 15 high-performance cars and 4 quick acceleration locomotives brought into service with a \$68 million grant.

In Connecticut, a \$30 million grant will complete double tracking segments between New Haven and Springfield. This project will improve service to Vermont as well as in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Maine and Massachusetts will see better service on the Downeaster corridor with a \$20 million grant to construct a second track in a 10 mile segment between Wilmington and Andover, Massachusetts.

*Anthony Rudmann*

## Ballston Spa Second Track Project Funded

In a significant step forward, U.S Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood announced on April 7<sup>th</sup> that \$3.3 million in ARRA funds had been obligated to New York State, allowing the construction of two miles of second main track on the Canadian Pacific line near Ballston Spa to now proceed.

The obligation of these federal funds, to be matched with \$3.5 million in funds from NYSDOT, was made possible after the Canadian Pacific signed a 'service outcome agreement' with the state and the Federal Railroad Administration. CP Rail was immediately prepared to start work on the project, which is reportedly now underway.

This new track segment will relieve significant freight congestion frequently experienced by the *Adirondack* and *Ethan Allen Express* when traveling through the area of CP's Saratoga Yard, located near the Saratoga station.

In addition, this improvement should help pave the way for the future expansion of through Saratoga to New York train service.

This is the first track improvement related project to actually receive obligated funds.

There is **NO** new news to report regarding the ongoing negotiations to finalize the agreements for the Albany to Schenectady second track among all the involved parties (CSX, Amtrak, CP, NYSDOT, FRA). NYSDOT's public statement continues to be that the start of work is planned in 2011.

The New York State project status summary, included in the last *ESPA Express*, is now available on the ESPA web site

and will be updated as projects advance through the obligation process.

*Bruce B. Becker*

## CSX's CEO Michael Ward Rejects HSR

CSX's CEO, President and Chairman Michael Ward on April 6, 2011 publicly stated that he "can't be part of" President Obama's high speed rail initiatives.

Ward told Bloomberg News that high-speed passenger rail service won't make enough money and that freight rail systems can't operate heavy, profitable trains on the same tracks as passenger trains moving as fast as 110 mph. "I'm a corporation. I exist to make money, OK?" Ward said. "You can't make money hauling passengers, so why would I want to do that? That wouldn't be fair to my shareholders."

Ward's comments came as CSX reportedly continues to negotiate a 'service outcome agreement' with NYSDOT that is acceptable to the Federal Railroad Administration. CSX has repeatedly protested New York State's announced plans to operate passenger trains at 110mph between Hoffmans (west of Albany) and Buffalo, making use of at least a portion of the current ex-New York Central/CSX right-of-way for a new 'dedicated' high-speed passenger track. CSX has stated that they are willing to operate passenger trains at speeds of up to 90mph on the route, provided that the additional expense for the associated track and signal system improvements and maintenance is borne by the state or another party.

*Bruce B. Becker*

## 18 Months of Ridership Gains in NYS

April 2011 marked the 18th consecutive month of year-over-year ridership gains on the trains that serve New York State.

The *Ethan Allen Express* led the list in April, with ridership up 14.9%, followed by the West of Albany trains, which were up 13.9%. The *Adirondack's* ridership was up 12.0% and Hudson Valley trains were up 6.9%. Overall state-wide ridership (a total of 140,183 passengers in April 2011) was up 9.2% over April 2010. Overall revenues were \$6,093,366 for the month, up 11.3% from the prior year. The long-distance *Lake Shore Limited's* ridership was up a robust 15.3% over April 2010.

FY '11 year-to-date (October 2010 through April 2011) statistics show the West of Albany trains are up 13.8%; the *Adirondack* is up 9.1%; Hudson Valley trains are up 5.9% and the *Ethan Allen Express* is up 0.1% Total revenue for the period was \$40,126,184, up 6.4%. The *Lake Shore's* ridership is up 11.4% for the year, with revenues of \$16.2m

Overall New York State on time performance rebounded marginally in March 2011, coming in at 84.7%, down a modest 4.4% from March 2010.

By route segment, the results varied:

- Hudson Valley trains attained an excellent 92.8% OTP (down 7.8% from March 2010)
- West of Albany trains were 79.8% on time (down 8.9%)
- The *Maple Leaf* was 74.2% on time (down 4.8%)
- The *Adirondack* was 69.4% on time (down 14.5%)
- The *Ethan Allen* came in at 67.7% (down 11.3%).
- The *Lake Shore* attained only 62.0% OTP (down a significant 25.0% from March 2010)

*Bruce B. Becker*

## House 2012 Budget Would Kill H.S.R.

On April 14<sup>th</sup> the House of Representatives approved a Budget Resolution for Federal Fiscal Year 2012 which recommended elimination of funds for high-speed rail. In addition to recommending elimination of intercity passenger rail improvements, the bill seeks termination of the transit New Starts and Small Starts program that encourages commuter rail, light rail and bus improvements.

Also, the resolution recommended a new fee levied against private-sector passenger and rail freight companies to compensate the Federal Railroad Administration for government –provided safety services.

The Budget Resolution is designed to establish broad spending guidelines for the new fiscal year which runs from October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012. Actual policy decisions will be determined by the House committees of jurisdiction such as Transportation and Appropriations.

The Budget Resolution (HR 34) was sent to the Senate on May 2 where its' future is uncertain. *Anthony Rudmann*

## News in Brief

- **NYS High Speed Rail Planning Board Remains In Limbo...**To date, there has been **NO** public information released concerning the High Speed Rail Planning Board, which was created by then Governor Paterson and the state legislature in mid-2010. ESPA continues to monitor this matter closely.
- **Congratulations to past ESPA President Frank Barry**, who recently was awarded the Fred A. and Jane R. Stindt Photography Award for Lifetime Achievement in Railroad Photography. Frank's extensive collection of work focuses on the last days of North American steam operations and he has gained international acclaim in recent years.
- **ESPA Logo Clothing NOW Available...**  
You can now order a full range of Lands End clothing items with a full-color embroidered ESPA logo, via a direct link on the ESPA website to the exclusive ESPA Lands End storefront. This is your opportunity to wear the ESPA Logo proudly and to garner interest in our cause.

All items featured on the storefront are available for direct individual order and payment, in whatever size and color you may select. Having the ESPA logo added to your item is **ONLY** an additional \$5.95 per item!

## LIRR Studies "Scoot" Service Including Diesel Multiple Units

The MTA/LIRR is exploring use of diesel multiple units (DMUs) for low ridership branches, some beyond the usual NYC commuter range. These East End services are now operated with DM-30 diesels and C-3 bi-level coaches and include Speonk-Montauk and Ronkonkoma-Greenport. Other candidates are Mineola-Oyster Bay and Valley Stream-West Hempstead.

The LIRR is evaluating improving Oyster Bay Branch service frequency by separating Oyster Bay Branch service from the Main Line. Shuttle service would serve the Oyster Bay Branch to Mineola, requiring a transfer to Main Line trains, and eliminating through service. Equipment options are still under review. Platform and track reconfiguration could enable a 20 minute peak frequency. This concept would also free up Main Line capacity to operate more through electric trains, but end thru service from Oyster Bay. The current schedule shows 18 inbound trains per weekday, with only one thru train to NYP with most changing at Jamaica.

Also considered for "Scoot"- type service is Jamaica-Atlantic terminal, dubbed the *Cross-Borough Scoot*, and operated with the M-3/7 EMU fleet in six-car trains that would improve train frequencies, especially off-peak. This concept would end thru service from Long Island to Brooklyn, requiring all Brooklyn passengers to change at Jamaica. Planned construction of a new platform for the service indicates this will be an "up-and-over" transfer. Underlying this service change is the need for platform capacity at Jamaica for East Side Access trains to GCT.

These service changes are covered in the MTA/LIRR 2010-2014 Capital Plan which could fund purchases of a new DMU fleet. LIRR will evaluate opportunities for DMU equipment to support selected "Scoot-type" service, to address customer requests for more frequent service in non-electrified territory. If DMU Scoot service is proven cost effective, \$81M is included in the plan for equipment purchase later in the capital program.

The term "Scoot" on the LIRR has its origin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the Amagansett-Greenport daily round-trip that operated until 1931 via the now long-gone Manorville-Eastport connection. The name was also later applied to RDC operations on the Montauk line in the 1950-60s. *John Raha*

## Amtrak Seeks ESPA's Input

Amtrak's new Empire District Customer Service Quality Supervisor Jay Green wants to hear of your New York State Amtrak travel experiences. Whether everything was great or if there was room for improvement, Jay welcomes our input, as the entire Empire Corridor team strives to provide the best service possible. Please send your written trip reports and comments, including specific dates, train numbers, stations and employee names as appropriate to Jay at: Jay Green, Customer Service Quality Supervisor, Amtrak, 525 East Street, Rensselaer, NY 12144 [jay.green@amtrak.com](mailto:jay.green@amtrak.com) Please also send a copy to Bruce Becker, so we can track trip experiences and follow up as necessary. Thanks for your help.



## ESPA Sponsors National Train Day Events

In honor of Amtrak's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, on Saturday, May 7 ESPA sponsored 2011 National Train Day events at the Buffalo-Depew and Rochester Amtrak stations, in addition to participating in the Amtrak-organized event at the Albany-Rensselaer station.

In Buffalo and Rochester, ESPA distributed a variety of Amtrak-travel related information; ESPA and NARP literature and loads of Amtrak coloring books and engineer hats to the many youngsters who joined their parents in both locations. Refreshments were also served to all, including those waiting for trains to and from points across the state. In Rensselaer, ESPA volunteers Tony Rudmann and Benjamin Turon handed out Association information, in addition to answering many questions about the state's higher-speed rail plans.



NTD Display at Rochester

Photo by Bruce Becker

The Rochester event garnered ESPA both prominent mention in the local paper and positive coverage on the local cable news station.

On National Train Day in Washington, DC, Amtrak unveiled their special 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Historical Train, which will be touring the country during the coming year. The train's three converted baggage cars contain a treasure-trove from Amtrak's 40-year history, including several interactive presentations which should be very popular with kids (especially the display of former locomotive whistles with buttons to push for audios of each).

While still tentative, current plans call for the train to make a public, two-day weekend stop at Albany-Rensselaer in late summer. Watch the ESPA web site for more information and details...

*Bruce B. Becker*



## Historic Westport Station Depot Theatre's 2011 Summer Season

The restored 1876 Westport station offers world-class professional theatre.

The 2011 season features Riffin' &

Tappin' July 1-17, Living Together July 22–August 6, Wicked City August 12–21, Fully Committed August 26–September 4, and The Cabbage Patch September 9–18.

Amtrak's *Adirondack* serves the station/theatre daily.

Show details - [www.depottheatre.org](http://www.depottheatre.org) Depot Theatre PO Box 414, Westport NY. 12993. 518-962-4449

## New York Receives *(Cont'd from page 1)*

- \$ 4.1 million, representing the remaining funds necessary for the construction of a new station at Schenectady.
- \$18.6 million for the completion of the final 48 miles of signal improvements (i.e. burying the signal code cable) between Poughkeepsie and Rensselaer.
- \$1.4 million for the completion of preliminary engineering and environmental analysis for a new Intermodal Station in Rochester.
- \$295 million to build a new conflict-free route for Amtrak trains at Harold Interlocking, greatly reducing delays due to interaction with Long Island Railroad trains.

NYS DOT had applied for 3 additional grants (totaling \$163.6 million) on April 4, which were not funded in this round:

- \$49.8 million to fund the design of phase 2 of the Moynihan Station Project
- \$112 million for a new high-capacity signal system between Croton-Harmon and Poughkeepsie on Metro North
- \$1.75 million for the preliminary engineering and environmental analysis for a new Maintenance Base at Niagara Falls.

The short window of time between the application deadline and announcement of the awards surprised many. The projects NYS was awarded had all been submitted for consideration in previous rounds of grants, which apparently helped speed-up the process.

With the Rensselaer station work now funded, the second track between Albany-Schenectady poised to be started shortly and a new station at Schenectady now fully funded, the Empire Corridor in the Capital Region should no longer be a point of delay for passengers traveling across the state.

*Bruce B. Becker*

## Open Seat on NARP Council Representing NY ... Candidates Sought

As a reminder, there is currently a vacant seat for New York on the National Association of Railroad Passengers Council of Representatives. A search is now on for candidates interested in being appointed to this seat.

Requirements to be considered for the seat are:

- You must be a member in good standing of NARP for at least one year.
- You must be willing to attend, at your own expense, at least two out of four Council meetings held during a two-year period. Spring Council meetings are held in Washington, DC in late April or early May, and Fall Council meetings are held at other locations across the country in October.

The individual appointed to this seat will stand for re-election in the Council elections to be held in the spring of 2012, in conjunction with that year's Spring Council Meeting.

All interested and qualified candidates are encouraged to contact Bruce Becker, NARP Northeast Division Leader to learn more about the position, the responsibilities it entails and the satisfaction possible in knowing you are making a difference on a national basis. Bruce can be reached at 716-880-7291 or via e-mail at [bbecker@esparail.org](mailto:bbecker@esparail.org).

*Bruce B. Becker*

## **Adirondack Trunk: Great Doings in the North Woods**

A preliminary agreement has been reached between the Town of Corinth, Warren County, and the Iowa Pacific for operation of the former Adirondack Branch of the D&H. It is expected that commercial rail operations will begin on the 1st of July.

The new service will be called the Saratoga & North Creek Railroad. The Iowa Pacific is a holding company that operates several short line railroads in the US and Great Britain. It hauls freight and runs tourist trains, giving it a strong experience base compared to the locally owned Upper Hudson River Railroad which had previously held the franchise.

The pact between the two governments which own the tracks and the private company which will operate the railway, calls for the line to become largely self-sufficient in operations, maintenance, and taxes with only major infrastructure repairs being the responsibility of the track owners.

As part of the agreement the Iowa Pacific guarantees the county a minimum of 100 tourist trains annually, including 50 dining trains, 30 ski trains, one "Polar Express" and one "Thomas the Tank Engine" event. The former operator ran less than 50 trains last year.

Even more astounding, according to the newspaper *Saratogian* the railroad plans to operate a daily passenger service, with one early morning train from North Creek to Saratoga Springs and an early evening train back to North Creek. The idea is to allow people along the line to make connections to Amtrak trains, particularly for trips to and from New York City.

Between July and mid-October there will also be a midday round trip excursion from Saratoga to North Creek, with several station stops along the way. Both the shuttle and excursion are scheduled to take little more than two hours to make the sixty mile trip.

The railroad is assembling locomotives and rolling stock for the new enterprise including vintage dome cars and ancient EMD BL2 diesel-electric road-switchers from the late forties. The engines will sport a blue, grey, and yellow D&H inspired paint scheme.

This remarkable renaissance begins to make economic sense once you consider the ongoing real estate development of vacation homes around the Gore Mountain Ski Resort in North Creek, including the \$250 million Ski Bowl Village project. When fully built out, the project will include 153 units at the asking price of \$450,000 to \$750,000, as well as a hotel, golf course, and equestrian center.

The resort community will be adjacent to the Village of North Creek and will give residents "ski-in, ski-out" access to the 94 trails and 14 lifts of the Ski Bowl and Gore Mountain. The recently opened Interconnect Hudson Chairlift already connects the historic business district of North Creek with Gore Mountain.

Today some 250,000 skiers and snowboarders patronize Gore with its 2,537 vertical drop. The much smaller Ski Bowl first opened in 1934 and was the destination of the short lived but long remembered ski trains of the pre-war years.

The southern terminus is of course the famous resort city of Saratoga Springs, whose high season is the August racing of the thoroughbreds at the historic Saratoga Race Course. It is however now a year round destination with an expanded convention center and casino gambling at the Saratoga Gaming and Raceway.

Given the millions of people in metropolitan New York City and the growth of the Capital District, which with its "Tech Valley Initiative" could eventually rival Austin, Texas in high technology industries, the various pieces of the puzzle of Iowa Pacific's bet on the North Creek line began to fit together.

After the failure of Denver's famed Ski Train service to the slopes of the Rockies (due to an insurance disagreement with Amtrak) they are trying to succeed here with an even larger scheme. The Iowa Pacific is betting that the type of rail oriented alpine/ski vacation long known in Europe and Japan will succeed in the American Northeast.

Given the rising cost and inconvenience of air and road travel, as well as a Northeastern public far more familiar with passenger rail transport, this venture is an investment that could pay off very handsomely in the coming decades.

Freight service is also planned, including timber products, garnet from the Barton Mine, and industrial service to the former International Paper Plant in Corinth. The line is banned from carrying hazardous and toxic cargos, although the original contract was found to technically prohibit even the diesel fuel of the locomotives!

There is speculation in the Glen Falls *Post-Star* and online that this could be the first step to reopening the titanium mine at Tahawus. The rising demand for this metal as well as rare earths also found at the site has created a global scramble to open new sources of these vital substances. They are vital to the manufacturing of computers, batteries, machinery, and structural components for various products from the Nintendo Wii to USN Tomahawk Missiles.

Today China dominates production of both, due in part to lax labor and environmental standards. However increasing restrictions on exports and the recent embargo on Japan has led various parties including Japanese manufacturers and the Pentagon to seek alternative supplies from secure and reliable sites, including closed mines in the US.

The railway's extension from North Creek to Tahawus at the foot of the High Peaks was built during WW2 to transport titanium for the war effort. The mine was shuttered in the late 1980s and with it the economic viability of the branch line.

The original section was built in the 1870s to transport tourists to the rustic lodges and grand hotels of the Adirondack Mountains. In the days before trucks and paved roads it also carried forest and agricultural products, providing affordable transport to the small towns along the route.

It seems that today history could be repeating itself, with the Adirondacks once again becoming a world class tourist destination and a vital contributor of raw materials to the industrial economy, connected to the outside world by steel rails through the north woods.

*Benjamin Turon*

## **More Amtrak Trains to get Free WI-FI in 2011**

New York City tunnel and platform WI-FI connectivity has improved following its well-received introduction on high-speed *Acela Express* trains between Boston and Washington, D.C., and last month's addition of AmtrakConnect® on Amtrak *Cascades* trains in the Pacific Northwest. Amtrak has set the stage for further expansion of its popular on-board free Wi-Fi service in 2011.

Amtrak plans to install AmtrakConnect on Northeast Corridor services and on more West Coast trains by the end of this year.

A complete list of Amtrak trains and stations with Wi-Fi service is available on [Amtrak.com](http://Amtrak.com). **About Amtrak®**

## Operation Lifesaver – Distracted Driving Kills Drivers and Pedestrians

Distraction is not only a rising safety concern for drivers, but it also contributes to pedestrian deaths and injuries around train tracks, according to Operation Lifesaver, Inc., (OLI, [www.oli.org](http://www.oli.org)), the national, nonprofit railroad safety education organization. OLI President Helen M. Sramek noted that nine out of 10 train-related deaths result from collisions between vehicles and trains or pedestrians and trains. “The explosive growth of cell phones, portable music players and web-enabled devices mean that people have more distractions today than ever before, whether in cars or on foot,” said Sramek, who is attending U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood’s second distraction summit in Washington September 21. “OLI has increased its pedestrian safety education efforts with our common sense campaign ([www.commonsenseuseit.com](http://www.commonsenseuseit.com)) and public service announcements warning against distraction by both drivers and pedestrians around train tracks,” she added.

Sramek offered five safety tips so that distraction won’t lead to disaster:

1. Turn off your cell phone or MP3 player or put it away when approaching a railroad or light rail crossing on foot or in a vehicle. Trains are quieter than you think and go faster than they appear.
2. Avoid multiple distractions while driving - multitasking can have deadly consequences at highway-rail intersections, too. Watch for advance warning signs and look for oncoming trains approaching from either direction.
3. Don’t let your car get trapped. Only proceed through a railroad crossing if there is enough room for your vehicle to clear the tracks completely on the other side. Remember that Because of their size, trains can take up to a mile or more to stop.
4. Stay off the tracks. Trestles and train tunnels have just enough room for a train; using train tracks as a shortcut or walking path could seriously injure or kill you.
5. Around train tracks, stay focused to stay alive!

### About Operation Lifesaver

Operation Lifesaver’s mission is to end collisions, deaths and injuries at highway-rail grade crossings and along railroad rights of way. A national network of volunteers provides free presentations on rail safety. For more information or to request a free safety presentation, visit [www.oli.org](http://www.oli.org). (Operation Lifesaver news release)

### Request a Free Presentation

Contact your state coordinator to schedule a free highway-rail safety presentation. Certified Operation Lifesaver Presenters may be available to speak in school classrooms, with scouting and community service groups, to driver education students and for company safety programs.

### Become a Presenter

Join the many dedicated volunteers across the country who are trained to deliver our rail safety messages. For information, click on [become an Operation Lifesaver Presenter](#), call us at 1-800-537-6224 or contact your OL state coordinator.

## Receive the *ESPA Express* earlier and help us go ‘Green’!

For members providing their e-mail address, the ESPA Newsletter will be-mailed at the same time it is forwarded to the printer enabling you to receive the newsletter one to two weeks earlier than by mail. The postage savings can be used for passenger rail advocacy. E-mail address submitted will only be used by ESPA. Send e-mail address to [www.rwlentz@aol.com](mailto:www.rwlentz@aol.com)  
Thank You! Robert Lenz, Editor

## Empire Corridor Travel Tips & Discounts

- Check out the ESPA Web Site ([www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org)) for the complete details of the 2011 ‘New York by Rail Magazine’ Amtrak discount program...
- All Empire Corridor trains require reservations. While advance reservations are encouraged, last minute passengers will always be accommodated if space is available on a particular train. Booking as early as possible will provide the best possible fare. Amtrak accepts reservations up to 11 months in advance of your travel date! Travel during off-peak periods (mid-week, early morning or late evening) will generally be the least expensive.
- AAA and NARP members receive 10% off most regular fares, with a three day advance purchase requirement. Senior citizens, veterans and many students can receive a 15% discount off most fares.
- Visit [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com) and select ‘Hot Deals’ for the latest discount program information. Select Empire Corridor trains are now being featured as part of Amtrak’s ‘Weekly Specials’, offered for sale every Tuesday through Friday.
- Join the Amtrak Guest Rewards program and earn points towards free travel and more.

## Senator works to have ‘Adirondack’ passengers screened at Montreal

U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said he’s pushing to have U.S.-bound Adirondack passengers screened in Montreal instead of at the border, the Glens Falls Post-Star (N.Y.) has reported. Schumer said he wants the plan to go into place by the end of this year.

The move aims to reduce train delays at the U.S. border checkpoint at Rouses Point, N.Y. Business leaders in the region have pushed for the change, saying the train would be more attractive to passengers without an extended stop at the border.

“Businesses along the route from the North Country down through Albany and into New York City have noted that the additional screening checkpoint creates avoidable delays, and disincentive for Canadian business travelers to visit destinations throughout New York,” Schumer said. Trains Magazine

## There’s Always a Reason to Ride Amtrak

Niagara Falls	<a href="http://www.niagara-usa.com">www.niagara-usa.com</a>
Buffalo	<a href="http://www.buffalocvb.org">www.buffalocvb.org</a>
Rochester	<a href="http://www.visitrochester.com">www.visitrochester.com</a>
Syracuse	<a href="http://www.visitSyracuse.org">www.visitSyracuse.org</a>
Utica	<a href="http://www.oneidacountycvb.com">www.oneidacountycvb.com</a>
Albany	<a href="http://www.Albany.org">www.Albany.org</a>
New York City	<a href="http://www.nycvisit.com">www.nycvisit.com</a>
Montreal	<a href="http://www.tourisme-montreal.org">www.tourisme-montreal.org</a>

## 2011 ESPA Working Group Meeting Dates

If you would like to become more active in ESPA, these 'working group' meetings are the perfect opportunity to learn more about the Association and how YOU can make a difference! ALL ESPA members (and other interested persons) are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact President Bruce Becker, 716-741-6384 or [bbecker@esparail.org](mailto:bbecker@esparail.org), for more information or if you are planning to attend a meeting. Advance registration is required!

Saturday, June 25, 2011	Schenectady – Backstage Pub 12:00n - 4:00pm
Saturday, August 20, 2011	Utica – Location and times to be announced
Saturday, October 1, 2011	Schenectady – Backstage Pub 12:00n - 4:00pm
Saturday, November 19, 2011	Schenectady – Backstage Pub 12:00n - 4:00pm
Saturday, January 21, 2012	Schenectady – Backstage Pub 12:00n - 4:00pm
Saturday, March 10, 2012	<b>2012 Annual Membership Meeting</b> - Schenectady

Check [www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org), for the most current information on meeting times and venues...**ALL dates, locations and times are subject to change...**

## ESPA/NARP Member

If you are a member of both ESPA and NARP you can save \$5 when renewing your ESPA membership.  
(Renew for \$19 instead of the regular \$24).

## ESPA MEMBERSHIP NEW OR RENEWAL

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

- Introductory membership (\$10.00 for one year)
- Renewal membership (\$24.00 per year)
- Renewal - Student or Senior Citizen (\$12.50 per year)
- Family membership (\$30.00)
- Sustaining membership (\$50.00)
- Patron membership (\$75.00)
- Corporate membership (\$100.00)
- Lifetime membership (\$300.00)

Please make checks/money orders payable to ESPA and mail to ESPA c/o Andrew Cabal, P.O. Box 434, Syracuse, NY 13209.

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel: 716-759-2315. e-mail: [RWLenz@aol.com](mailto:RWLenz@aol.com). Deadline for material for July/August issue is August 29, 2011. Material may be reproduced if credit is given ESPA and to the writer.

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## New York State Passenger Rail Project Summary – Revised To 5-20-11

<u>Project</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>	<u>Funding Source</u>	<u>Project Status</u>
Final Design/Construction Of <b>New Second Main Track Between Albany and Schenectady</b>	\$91.0m Awarded & Total Cost	ARRA Grant 100% Federal	Funds <b><u>NOT</u></b> Yet Obligated and Released By FRA - Awaiting Finalization of All Required Agreements Engineering and Design Work IS Progressing
Final Design/Construction Of <b>New Second Main Track Between Ballston Spa and Saratoga</b>	\$3.3m Awarded & Total Cost	ARRA Grant 100% Federal	<b>Funds Obligated and Released By FRA Construction Is Underway \$3.5m State Match</b>
Preliminary Design/Engineering Of <b>New 11 Miles of New High-Speed Track Between Rochester &amp; Buffalo</b>	\$58.0m Awarded & Total Cost	ARRA Grant 100% Federal	Funds <b><u>NOT</u></b> Yet Obligated and Released By FRA Awaiting Finalization of All Required Agreements
Final Design/Construction Of <b>Hudson Valley Grade Crossing Improvements Between Poughkeepsie and Rensselaer</b>	\$2.5m Awarded & Total Cost	ARRA Grant 100% Federal	Funds <b><u>NOT</u></b> Yet Obligated and Released By FRA Awaiting Finalization of All Required Agreements
Final Design/Construction Of <b>Station Improvements At Buffalo-Depew</b>	\$772,000 Awarded & Total Cost	ARRA Grant 100% Federal	<b>Funds Obligated and Released By FRA Construction Reportedly Postponed Until 2012</b>
Final Design/Construction Of <b>Station Improvements At Rochester (see note at right)</b>	\$1.5m Awarded & Total Cost	ARRA Grant 100% Federal	<b>Funds Obligated and Released By FRA</b> Funds Re-Allocated From Near-Term Improvements At Current Building To Planning And Design For New Station Building At Existing Site
<b>Overall Corridor Planning</b>	\$1.0m Awarded & Total Cost	ARRA Grant 100% Federal	<b>Funds Obligated and Released By FRA</b> Environmental Impact Study Underway
Final Design/Construction Of <b>Moynihan Station Phase One</b>	\$83.0m Awarded & Total Cost	TIGER One Grant 100% Federal	<b>Funds Obligated and Released</b> Work Underway
Final Design/Construction Of <b>New Niagara Falls Station</b>	\$16.5m Awarded & Total Cost	TIGER Two Grant 100% Federal	<b>Project Fully Funded</b> Phased Construction Work Underway
Final Design/Construction Of <b>Syracuse Area Track Improvements</b>	\$18.6m Awarded Total Cost \$23.2M	FY '10 HSR Grant 80% Fed/20% State	Funds <b><u>NOT</u></b> Yet Obligated and Released By FRA Awaiting Finalization of All Required Agreements  Status of Required State Matching Funds Unknown

<u>Project</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>	<u>Funding Source</u>	<u>Project Status</u>
Final Design/Construction Of <b>Phase One Of Hudson Valley Signal System Improvements (~19 miles)</b>	\$8.0m Awarded Total Cost \$10.0m	FY '10 HSR Grant 80% Fed/20% State	Funds <b>NOT</b> Yet Obligated and Released By FRA Awaiting Finalization of All Required Agreements Status of Required State Matching Funds Unknown
Preliminary Design/Engineering Of <b>Replacement of Livingston Avenue Bridge Over Hudson River At Albany</b>	\$2.0m Awarded Total Cost \$4.0m	FY '10 HSR Grant 80% Fed/20% State	Funds <b>NOT</b> Yet Obligated and Released By FRA Awaiting Finalization of All Required Agreements Status of Required State Matching Funds Unknown
Preliminary Design/Engineering Of <b>New Niagara Falls Maintenance Base</b>	\$2.5m Awarded Total Cost TBD	State Funds	Unknown – Awarded Funds Are <b>NOT</b> A Planned Expenditure In FY '11 State Budget
Final Design/Construction Of <b>New Schenectady Station</b>	\$4.2m Awarded	State Transportation Bond Act Funds	Project <b>NOT</b> Fully Funded – No Work Expected Until All Project Funds Are Secured.  Awarded Funds Are <b>NOT</b> A Planned Expenditure In FY '11 State Budget
<b>Projects Not Yet Defined</b>	\$7.3m Awarded	Re-Allocated ARRA Funds From Other States - 100% Federal	Unknown - Funds <b>NOT</b> Released
Final Design/Construction Of <b>Rensselaer Station Fourth Platform Track and Related Improvements</b>	\$35.4m Awarded	Re-Allocated ARRA Funds From Florida - 100% Federal	Funds <b>NOT</b> Yet Obligated and Released By FRA Awaiting Finalization of All Required Agreements
Final Design/Construction Of <b>Hudson Valley Signal System Improvements Between Poughkeepsie &amp; Rensselaer (Remaining 48 miles)</b>	\$18.6m Awarded	Re-Allocated ARRA Funds From Florida - 100% Federal	Funds <b>NOT</b> Yet Obligated and Released By FRA Awaiting Finalization of All Required Agreements
Final Design/Construction Of <b>New Schenectady Station</b>	\$4.1m Awarded	Re-Allocated ARRA Funds From Florida - 100% Federal	<b>Project Now FULLY Funded</b> Funds <b>NOT</b> Yet Obligated and Released By FRA Awaiting Finalization of All Required Agreements
Preliminary Design/Engineering Of <b>Rochester Intermodal Station</b>	\$1.4m Awarded	Re-Allocated ARRA Funds From Florida - 100% Federal	Funds <b>NOT</b> Yet Obligated and Released By FRA Awaiting Finalization of All Required Agreements

<u>Project</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>	<u>Funding Source</u>	<u>Project Status</u>
Final Design/Construction Of <b>New conflict-free route for Amtrak trains at Harold Interlocking</b>	\$295m Awarded	Re-Allocated ARRA Funds From Florida - 100% Federal	Funds <b>NOT</b> Yet Obligated and Released By FRA Awaiting Finalization of All Required Agreements

**Other Critical NYS Projects NOT Currently Funded**

<u>Project</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
Final Design/Construction Of <b>Mohawk Valley Track Improvements</b>	\$7.31m
Final Design/Construction Of <b>Adirondack Track Improvements</b>	\$5.89m
Preliminary Design/Engineering Of <b>Poughkeepsie Yard and Track Improvements</b>	\$4.30m