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## **PASSENGER RAIL ADVOCATES CALL FOR SWIFT RETURN OF AMTRAK INTERNATIONAL SERVICE**

New York's Empire State Passengers Association and the Vermont Rail Action Network today jointly called for the swift restoration of Amtrak's Adirondack train to Montreal along with Amtrak's Maple Leaf train to Toronto with the November 8<sup>th</sup> reopening of the U.S.–Canadian border for vaccinated travelers.

Both trains ceased operating in March of 2020 as a result of the CoVid-related closure of the international border. Amtrak resumed operation of the Maple Leaf between New York City and Niagara Falls in July, but the Adirondack service remains fully suspended.

"While we realize there is a certain lead time required and a checklist of preparatory actions that Amtrak must take before trains can start running again, ESPA calls upon Amtrak, its host railroads and New York State to move swiftly to restore these important international travel options," said ESPA President Gary Prophet.

"Vermonters - and New Yorkers in the north country - have been missing the Adirondack since it stopped in March 2020. We appreciate the work Amtrak has done to get through the CoVid challenges. Rail patrons are eager for the train to return. We want to ensure everyone knows this train is a critical part of the north country economy and life," said VRAN Executive Director Christopher Parker.

Several parties involved in the restart planning have given ESPA assurances that everything is moving forward towards the resumption of full service on both routes, however, ESPA and VRAN want to ensure that all the parties keep the plans on track. Steve Strauss, ESPA's Executive Director, pointed out that, "Amtrak requires the cooperation of VIA (the Canadian passenger train operator), the Canadian National Railroad, the Canadian Pacific railroad and New York State, which funds the net operating cost of both trains, to initiate the restart. In addition, we need the cooperation of both countries' border protection agencies in streamlining the necessary security checks at the border."

Amtrak also provides one daily international train between Washington State and British Columbia as part of its Cascades service in the Northwest. This service also remains suspended pending reopening of the border and other preparatory actions.

Amtrak service to Saratoga Springs, NY and Rutland, VT resumed in mid-July with the restart of the Ethan Allen Express. Neither city had had passenger train service for over a year. Ethan Allen ridership in August of this year was 98 percent of August, 2019 levels due in part to the unavailability of other pre-CoVid trains in the Hudson Valley and to Schenectady and Saratoga Springs.

#### About ESPA

The Empire State Passengers Association is a statewide intercity passenger rail advocacy organization with an associated interest in local transit. ESPA advocates for faster, more frequent and more reliable Amtrak service across New York state and adjoining states.

#### About VRAN

The Vermont Rail Action Network works to educate and engage its members, the public and Vermont public officials on the value of improved freight and passenger rail service. It works to coordinate business and individual interest in better train service in the Green Mountain state.

#### About State-Supported Trains

Under Section 209 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, states are responsible for the capital and operating cost of Amtrak routes in their states which are 750 miles in length or shorter. The net cost of the Adirondack and Maple Leaf trains, after subtracting fare revenue, is provided by the NYS Department of Transportation. Similarly, The Vermont Agency for Transportation funds its share of the Ethan Allen and Vermonter trains in the state. (The cost of Northeast Corridor train service is funded under a separate set of PRIIA rules.)