

Brief NYS Turboliner History:

- **1975:** Amtrak orders seven 'RTL' Turboliner trainsets (to be manufactured by California-based Rohr Industries) to be modeled after the 'RTG' Turboliners Amtrak obtained from the French National Railways in the early 1970's.

Designated solely for use in New York State, the seven sets were equipped with small DC motors and third rail shoes for operation into Grand Central Station (and later Penn Station). The trainsets were delivered and placed into service on the Empire Corridor in 1976 - 1977.

- **1976 – 1978:** New York State and Amtrak jointly fund track work in the Capital Region to allow the new 'RTL' Turbos to be operated at speeds of up to 110mph. In addition, the Rensselaer Maintenance Facility is constructed to handle upkeep of the 7 new NYS Turboliners.
- **Mid 1980's:** Amtrak rebuilds three of the original French-built 'RTG' Turbos, (which were removed from mid-west corridor service in 1981) to mirror the RTL models and places them in Empire Corridor service. These three sets remain in NYS service into 1994, when a series of fires (including one at Penn Station) prompts Amtrak to retire them.
- **Late 1980's:** Amtrak experiments with running six-car trainsets (by taking cars out of other sets) in an attempt to increase train capacity. Practice ends after a fire is linked to an overheated turbine on a six-car train.
- **Early through Mid-1990's:** Amtrak slowly removes 'RTL' Turbos from service, due to additional engine fires, other mechanical problems, constraining fixed-consists and overall high cost of operations.
- **1995:** One of the seven 'RTL' sets is re-built by Amerail in Hornell, NY, with higher-powered turbines and electronic digital control units replacing the original relay style turbine controls. Designated as a 'RTL II', the interior was also renovated and the exterior paint scheme changed. This lone 'RTL-II' continues in revenue service into 2002, though at the end it was usually towed by a dual-powered diesel locomotive.

The other six 'RTL' sets were originally to have been similarly re-built into 'RTL-IIs', but the project never gets off the ground.
- **August 7, 1997:** State Announces That Super Steel Schenectady Will Rebuild Two Out-Of-Service 'RTL' Trainsets For 125mph Service At A New Facility To Be Built In The Scotia (NY) Industrial Park.
- **February 1998:** Contract Awarded To Super Steel For Rebuilding Of First Two Sets, To Be Designated As 'RTL-III's'. First Trainset Then Expected To Enter Service In Early 1999

- **September 1998:** Rebuilding Program Expanded To Include Remaining Five 'RTL I & II' Trainsets Under A \$74 Million Contract; These Five Sets Then Expected To Enter Service in 2002
- **August 2000:** First Partially Re-Built Trainset Is Unveiled At A Press Event Held At Super Steel Plant, Wearing An 'Acela-Inspired' Paint Scheme (Over A Year Behind The Original Schedule)
- **During 2001:** Amtrak Requires Cab Control Desk Re-Design And Other Modifications
- **November 2001:** Engineering Setbacks, Layoffs And Financial Strains At Super Steel Cause Further Delays.
- **March 2002:** Parts problems and engineering snags extend delays completing first two trains at Super Steel.
- **August 2002:** First fully rebuilt Turboliner delivered to Amtrak's Rensselaer shop, passes first test run, according to NYS Department of Transportation. (Over three years behind original schedule)
- **November 2002:** NYSDOT declares first train ready for service, Amtrak seeks more modifications. NYSDOT Commissioner Joseph Boardman accuses Amtrak of dragging its feet.
- **December 2002:** Second rebuilt Turboliner delivered to Amtrak.
- **January 2003:** Amtrak says more testing and training is needed. Amtrak also states that adequate parts inventories and operation manuals have not been provided.
- **February 15, 2003:** First Re-Built 'RTL-III' Trainset Achieves 125mph On 'Secret' Overnight Test Run Between Rensselaer and Hudson
- **Mid-April 2003:** First 'RTL-III' Trainset Enters Revenue Service (Four Years Late!)
- **June 2003:** State Comptroller's audit slams DOT for project delays and cost overruns.
- **Summer 2003:** Second 'RTL-III' Trainset is delivered to Amtrak and after testing, enters revenue service.

As only one daily Albany – New York Penn Station round trip is routinely operated with Turboliners, no more than one trainset is usually in revenue service on any given day.

- **Late Fall 2003:** Third 'RTL-III' Trainset is delivered to Amtrak. This set is never accepted by Amtrak and does not see revenue service.
- **December 2003:** Amtrak, now with three 'RTL-III' Turboliners in their procession, acknowledges it lacks funding and wants to withdraw from the original deal with the

state, which called for Amtrak to fund \$140 million in track work (which has never been started), in exchange for the state funding the 'RTL-III' project.

- **June 2004:** Amtrak removes Trainsets #1 & #2 from revenue service, citing poor air conditioning; insufficient seating capacity and high fuel/operating costs. Sets #1, 2 & 3 sit at Rensselaer shops over summer.
- **Summer 2004:** NYSDOT asks Super Steel to stop work on remaining three sets in progress. Set #7 (the RTL-II) was never started.
- **August 2004:** NYSDOT sues Amtrak, saying railroad failed to live up to its contractual commitments.
- **September 2004:** Amtrak moves the three completed 'RTL-III' Trainsets in their procession to their Bear, Delaware Shops.

NYSDOT Commissioner Joe Boardman accuses Amtrak of "Stealing My Trains". (After leaving NYSDOT, Boardman becomes FRA Administrator under the Bush Administration and subsequently in November 2008, Boardman becomes President of Amtrak, thus "thus getting his trains back?")

- **May 2005:** NYSDOT agrees to pay Super Steel \$5.5 million to end the Turboliner rebuilding project. This amount is in addition to the ~\$64.8 million already paid to Supersteel for the work performed on a total of six trainsets. (Three sets completed and in Amtrak's procession; three more sets in various stages of the rebuilding process at the Supersteel facility).

Sets #4, 5, 6 & 7 are moved to a siding outside of former Supersteel facility. Unused parts are stored in adjacent warehouse. New York State assumes cost of storing remaining four trainsets and associated parts.

- **December 2007:** DOT and Amtrak settle lawsuit. Amtrak agrees to pay state \$20 million in damages. Both the state and Amtrak agree to commit \$10 million each in future track improvements and share the proceeds of any future sale of the trainsets.
- **April 2009:** Supersteel Schenectady goes out of business.
- **2009 & 2010:** Amtrak seeks buyers for trainsets; apparently no takers are found.
- **May 31, 2012:** New York State, citing \$150,000 annual cost to store the 4 remaining trainsets and parts, announces plan to sell everything off; likely for scrap.
- **December 2012:** Auction of the 4 trainsets and parts gross \$420,000. 8 power cars go for scrap at \$16,000 each and the 8 coaches and 4 café cars bring \$7,000 each for scrap.

From September-October 1997 ESPA Express:

Super Steel to Rebuild Turbos

On August 7, Governor Pataki announced the Department of Transportation's decision to award Super Steel of Schenectady the contract to rebuild two turboliner trainsets for 125MPH service. This will allow the company to add 35 workers, increasing its total work force by one third. The first rebuilt train is due one year from now, but many details, including whether one of the trains to be rebuilt will be the turboliner already in service or one of those still in storage, have yet to be finalized.

The rebuilt trains will have new turbo power units, heating, air conditioning, seats and outlets for computers. The project will be financed by \$10 million from New York State and \$10 million from the federal government. Work is still underway to acquire funding for the remaining trainsets. The U.S. Senate's 1998 transportation budget includes \$5 million for New York's existing turboliner program plus \$4.5 million to develop new turbine electric technology. While these amounts are not earmarked for New York in the House appropriation, there is potential support there since the program will involve research by the University of Texas—and that state is well represented in the House leadership. *- Frank Barry*

Perhaps The Outcome Could Have Been Different?

From November – December 1997 ESPA Express:

Lawsuit Delays Turbo Rehab

Transportation and Transit Associates, the lone unsuccessful bidder for New York State's turboliner rebuilding project, has sued the State for awarding the contract to Super Steel. T&TA claims it has more experience than Super Steel, having rehabilitated 9 trains in 13 years. T&TA is based in Georgia, but claims to have plants in Hornell and Kanona in New York. DOT says both its own staff and Amtrak agreed that Super Steel had the superior proposal.