



Empire State Passengers Association

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ESPA Urges Amtrak To Add Capacity Over Upcoming Holiday Travel Period

*Numerous Trains Are Sold-Out Due To Limited Capacity!
Many Would Be Passengers Unable To Take
Advantage Of Rail Travel Option...*

The **Empire State Passengers Association** (ESPA) is very pleased that New York State and Amtrak have resolved their legal disagreements and that both organizations have now committed to making improvements to the intercity passenger rail system in New York.

But an immediate concern for potential passengers on Amtrak's "Empire Corridor", connecting New York City through Albany to Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo and Niagara Falls, are the number of trains that are already sold-out for the upcoming peak holiday travel season, thus eliminating Amtrak as an option for would be travelers.

Unfortunately, current Amtrak operating policies do not call for the addition of extra passenger cars to sold-out Empire Corridor trains during such peak travel periods. **This is a policy ESPA believes needs to be changed.**

One of the inherent benefits of passengers trains is the ability to readily add capacity (by adding cars) when demand warrants. ESPA is concerned that the current practice of assigning only five cars per train (regardless of the demand) greatly limits the ability of travelers to consider rail as an option. Examples of these limitations include that as of Thursday, December 13, every Amtrak train departing on December 21, 22, and 23 from New York City for Central and Western New York stops was already sold-out. Thus, passengers from New York City or other lower Hudson Valley locations are unable to reserve a seat on any train to any destination west of the Albany area on these days.

"People who want to take the train are being denied access to passenger rail service, due to the number of available seats being limited. Amtrak needs to find a way to increase seating capacity on Empire Corridor trains in order to maximize both its ridership and revenues." stated Bruce Becker, ESPA's President.

While Amtrak does expand capacity to meet demand over holiday periods on other rail corridors, this is not the case here in New York. Mr. Becker goes on to point out “We fully appreciate the constrained financial environment in which Amtrak is forced to operate, but the needs of the traveling public should be put first and Amtrak should do everything possible to assign additional cars to the trains running in New York State.”

Mr. Becker noted that it is common practice for Amtrak to rent additional passenger cars from commuter agencies such as New Jersey Transit during the Thanksgiving travel rush and in years past additional cars were often rented from both the MTA’s Metro-North Railroad and from Connecticut’s Shore Line East service for operation on New York State trains. “This is a solution that has worked before and must be investigated once again” stated Mr. Becker.

Amtrak operates 10 to 12 trains a day between Albany and New York City, with several continuing to on to serve locations west and north of Albany. In addition, the Lake Shore Limited operates between New York and Chicago, making several stops across the state.

ESPA urges Amtrak, the New York State Department of Transportation and the NYS Senate High Speed Rail Task Force to work together to find an immediate solution which will allow for increased capacity during such peak-travel demand periods. If New York State is to move forward with improved passenger rail transportation, this problem must be addressed so that passengers have access to the trains they wish to ride, when and where they need them.

The following is the list of sold out trains along the Empire Corridor, as of Thursday, December 13, 2007, listed by Amtrak train number:

Thursday, December 20: Train 63 northbound from New York Penn Station

Friday, December 21: Trains 63, 281, 285, 237, 293 northbound from Penn Station

Saturday, December 22: Trains 63, 71, 281, 233, 285, 291 northbound from Penn Station
Train 64 southbound to Penn Station

Sunday, December 23: Trains 63, 71, 281, 285, 291 northbound from Penn Station

Monday, December 24: Train 63 northbound from New York Penn Station

Wednesday, December 26: Train 63 northbound from New York Penn Station
Trains 280, 286, 68, 64 southbound to Penn Station

Thursday, December 27: Trains 286, 68, 64 southbound to Penn Station

Sunday, December 30: Train 64 southbound to Penn Station

(Even number trains travel towards New York City and odd numbered trains travel away from New York City to points across New York State.)