Ethan Allen Express' Burlington Extension Starts  - Bruce Becker

Friday, July 29th marked the inaugural departure of the Ethan Allen Express from Burlington, VT, returning service to the state's largest city after a 69-year hiatus.

The one daily round trip departs from Burlington's Union Station at 10:10am, followed by stops at the new stations at Ferrisburgh-Vergennes and Middlebury. The train continues on to Rutland and Castleton, VT before heading into New York State for the trip to Saratoga, Albany and New York City, where it arrives at 5:45pm. The daily return trip departs New York at 2:20pm, arriving back in Burlington at 9:55pm. The train offers café car service and both coach & business class seating. In addition to the Ethan Allen Express, Amtrak offers two daily Thruway Bus connecting round trips between Albany-Rensselaer and Burlington.

Amtrak's CEO Stephen Gardner

From Remarks Made At The July 29, 2022 Inauguration Of The Extended Ethan Allen Express To Burlington, VT

"We need more trains, in more places, serving more people!"

Amir Bekker

Adirondack Railroad Reaches Tupper Lake

After a 41-year gap, passenger rail service returned to Tupper Lake, NY on September 13th when a special Adirondack Railroad train arrived from Thendera. Utilizing the recently rehabilitated state-owned rail corridor through the heart of the Adirondacks, the train marked a bittersweet realization that service beyond Tupper Lake onto Saranac Lake and Lake Placid will likely never return.

The special carried a number of elected representatives including Assemblyman William Magnarelli of Syracuse, chair of the Assembly's Transportation Committee. The New York State Department of Transportation was represented by Rail Division head Ray Hessinger.

(Continued On Page 2 - Tupper Lake)
Executive Director's Report:  

ESPA members and Amtrak riders in New York, Massachusetts and Vermont have additional services to celebrate and a victory in the campaign to bring additional Boston service to Albany-Rensselaer.

This summer, several ESPA members attended press conferences for the launch of the new Amtrak seasonal weekend Berkshire Flyer service (at Moynihan Station), and the extension of the Ethan Allen Express to Burlington (at Union Station). ESPA members Bruce Becker, Andrew Cabal, Carl Fowler, Tom Martinelli, Charles Poltenson, and Gary Prophet rode the first southbound train from Burlington and had the opportunity to speak with Amtrak President and CEO Stephen Gardner and NYS DOT Rail Division senior leadership.

Both new services were well received by riders; both have benefited from strong grassroots marketing efforts. In August, I spoke with the Berkshire Flyer’s western Massachusetts Advisory Committee on items we can all work on to reduce travel time (Hudson Valley Improvement projects) and to free up more seats for Pittsfield customers (service increases between Albany and NYC).

In July, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts publicly acknowledged the obvious: their proposed two additional East-West trains should terminate in Albany-Rensselaer, not Pittsfield. ESPA won the battle before we were even fully engaged. Thanks to ESPA officer Ben Turon for designing our campaign fact sheet highlighting Rensselaer’s many advantages over Pittsfield’s.

Out in western New York, ESPA is working with the Greater Buffalo – Niagara Regional Transportation Council on a planned CRISI grant application (see related article). This grant request is likely to propose studying a Cleveland – Toronto rail corridor to determine the condition of assets and what improvements are needed to introduce several additional passenger trains on the route. Special attention will need to be paid to the Niagara Falls – Buffalo segment which would have both additional Empire Corridor service and Toronto – Cleveland trains.

ESPA has created a 2022 Legislative Candidates Questionnaire and sent it to candidates in seven races across the state. Responses will be posted on the ESPA website, distributed to the press, and publicized where possible in the specific districts before the election. ESPA is also planning a second outreach session at the Rhinebeck Farmers' Market on October 2nd, following up on a very successful session in mid-summer.

This Autumn, ESPA will be pressing NYS DOT to expand its rail corridor nominations to the FRA to include the Cleveland – New York City and Cleveland – Toronto corridors. Look for Action Alerts on this topic.

Help us increase our advocacy voice by encouraging friends you know who support better passenger rail in New York to join ESPA! Make our advocacy voice louder!

Tupper Lake (Continued From Page 1)

The $20 million state-funded rehabilitation of the rail corridor from Big Moose to Tupper Lake was completed over the summer. Yet to be awarded is additional track work at Tupper Lake and the construction of a new maintenance facility to support the expanded service.

The Adirondack operated its first public round trip from Utica to Tupper Lake on October 16. The 216-mile run was scheduled to take 11 hours, including a 1 ½ hour layover at Tupper Lake. Regularly scheduled service north to Tupper Lake is planned for the 2023 season, offering a variety of excursions from Thendera and Utica.
Ethan Allen Express  (continued from page 1)
The pre-departure ceremony included remarks by U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, Vermont Governor Phil Scott, Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger and Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner. Over 150 invited guests then boarded the train for the short ride to the first stop at Ferrisburgh-Vergennes. Large crowds greeted the inaugural run at Middlebury and Rutland.

ESPA was well represented on the first trip with President Gary Prophet, Treasurer Andrew Cabal, Communications Director Bruce Becker and Board Director Tom Martinelli all on board the sold-out train.

Lead by CEO Stephen Gardner, a large contingent of Amtrak senior management also rode the train. Once underway, Mr. Gardner walked the entire train, engaging with anyone interesting in chatting.

LIRR Third Track Project Completed
The Long Island Rail Road’s 10-mile new third track from Floral Park to Hicksville has been completed.

New York State Governor Kathy Hochul was at the LIRR’s Westbury station on Monday, October 3rd to announce that the new Third Track, part of the $2.5 billion LIRR Main Line Expansion Project, was completed on schedule and $100 million below budget, nearly four years after breaking ground.

“The completion of the historic Third Track project connects commuters with a more resilient and flexible railroad with frequent service, modern stations, ADA accessibility and more travel opportunities for Long Islanders and visitors,” Hochul said.

The LIRR Expansion Projects includes refurbished stations in New Hyde Park, Merillon Avenue, Mineola, Carle Place and Westbury. It also includes the elimination of eight at-grade railroad crossings, upgrades at seven railroad bridges, parking expansions, installation of new sound attenuation barriers, and landscaping improvements.
FRA's New Corridor Identification and Development Program

Primary Vehicle for Funding $12 Billion in New and Existing Corridor Improvements

In May, the Federal Railroad Administration released the initial outline of the new Corridor Identification and Development program (CID). The CID will be the primary conduit for approximately $12 billion in (non-NEC) federal grants to eligible entities to initiate new passenger rail service or enhance existing passenger rail service in selected corridors.

All interested parties may submit proposed corridors which may be new, existing or former routes. This Autumn, the FRA will release more specific instructions on the process for formally nominating a corridor, including the required documentation to assist the FRA in selecting the first group of corridors for the program.

Corridors must be 750 miles or less in length; however, proposals to enhance existing long distance routes are also permitted. While anyone may submit expressions of interest for particular corridors, only “eligible entities” may submit formal corridor proposals later this year. Grant eligible entities include states, groups of states, Amtrak, regional passenger rail authorities, subdivisions of states and Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Because nearly all the selected CID program corridors will be (Section 209) State-supported train routes, the FRA has strongly implied that it will look to state endorsement of any proposed corridor as a major selection criteria in its review of the submissions.

New York State DOT’s initial expression of interest submission was rather conservative and included all the existing Amtrak routes in the state. The submission also “endorses” the MassDOT submission of the Boston to Albany rail corridor.

ESPA is working with interested parties in western New York for submission of one or more interstate or international corridor.

There will be additional opportunities beyond 2022 to submit corridor proposals to the FRA, and by February 1st of each year the FRA must issue a “project pipeline” report to Congress.

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 May 2023. 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; 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.

Get Carried Away on the Lake Shore Limited with fares within the state of Massachusetts as low as $9 and fares between Boston and select Upstate New York destinations starting at $13. That’s a savings of up to 50% off the base fare. An advanced purchase of at least 14 days is required. Trip must begin or end in the state of Massachusetts to receive this discount. Tickets cannot be modified or changed 24 hours after purchase.

Visit Amtrak.com; click on ‘Deals’ at the top, then click on ‘Deals & Promotions’ and scroll down to the ‘Lake Shore Limited Saver Fares’ option to take advantage of this great offer.
Boston- Montreal Train Proposal Resurfaces  - Tony Rudmann

Canadian businessmen have renewed a proposal originated several years ago to provide a passenger service between Boston and Montreal running from Boston through Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont into Canada. According to the Montreal Gazette and the Bangor Daily News, the privately-run train would provide a “relaxed” ride with dinner and a full night’s rest during the 14-hour journey.

A meeting with local and regional officials from both sides of the boarder was held in early September to outline the proposal. The proposal was said to appeal to those who don’t want the hassle of driving or can’t drive the 7-hour road journey between Boston and Montreal. A recent market study indicates from a sample of 4,000 people who travel between the two endpoints annually, about 1,000 would consider taking rail if it were an option.

In the U.S., the track needed for the proposed route is owned by the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad, CSX and the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority. Stops would include Gorham, New Hampshire as well as Bethel, Auburn, Portland and Old Orchard Beach, Maine before reaching Boston. In Canada, the service would run on Canadian Pacific with a stop in Sherbrooke, Quebec before arriving in Montreal.

The track on the Canadian side was said to need more than $100 million in upgrades and repairs. The New England corridor was said to be “in decent shape” but train speeds over a long stretch are now limited to 35 miles per hour. An unknown price tag would be needed to increase track speed. Media reports did not provide information on Canada – U.S. Customs/Immigration crossing requirements.

Two other Boston-Montreal routes are awaiting action. In New York, the existing Amtrak Adirondack route from NYC through Albany to Montreal has been suspended since March 2020. Passengers from Boston could connect to Montreal at Albany (with overnight stay). Vermont state government has expressed its desire to extend the exiting Amtrak Vermonter service beyond its current St. Albans terminal to Montreal. The Vermont service on this route had a connection to Boston at Springfield which ended more than a decade ago.

Amsterdam Amtrak Station Gets Bus Service  - Tony Rudmann

Bus service to the Amsterdam Amtrak station was restored on August 28th when the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) assumed service for the Mohawk Valley city. The community lost bus transportation in April 2018 when the prior service provider shut down. The restoration was made possible by State legislation expanding the CDTA service area to Montgomery County earlier this year.

CDTA service was inaugurated with four routes, two of which extend beyond the county to Schenectady and Albany. Three of the routes will operate daily with the route to Albany scheduled for Monday to Friday service. Amtrak trains 280, 284 and 64 stop at West Main Street station headed east toward Albany & NYC and westbound trains 63, 281 and 283 have daily visits to the station. Bus Route #602 operates from 6 AM to 9 PM weekdays and from 9 AM to 6 PM Saturday and Sunday, and has a designated “Amtrak Rail Station” stop. Full schedules are available on the CDTA website: www.cdtainfo.org

Amsterdam resident, Congressman Paul Tonko, said: “After a long, dedicated push to extend CDTA services to Montgomery County, I am thrilled to celebrate what will be a huge win for workers, students, seniors and small businesses.”

The Capital District Transportation Authority now provides bus service to all four of the Amtrak stations within its jurisdictions – Schenectady, Saratoga Springs, Albany-Rensselaer and Amsterdam.
New $1.4 Billion CRISI Grants Available -Steve Strauss

On September 1st, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced a new $1.4 billion grant application period under its Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) program. Awards for projects that modernize passenger rail and freight infrastructure must be submitted by December 1, 2022.

"We’re thrilled to announce the biggest round of funding ever to make both passenger and freight trains across America safer, faster and more reliable," said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg. "The increase in funds is a much-needed step to meet the heavy demand for rail funding from states and local communities." Last year's CRISI awards totaled $368 million.

Eligible applicants for funding include a state or group of states, a state political subdivision, a public agency or public authority and Amtrak. Class II or Class III freight railroads and their associations may compete for funds. Other rail carriers or rail equipment manufacturers may partner with other eligible applicants to seek project funding.

According to the FRA fact sheet, projects eligible for funding include capital projects for intercity passenger rail service. Included are: capital projects that reduce congestion and facilitate ridership growth; rail line relocation and improvements; any project necessary to enhance multimodal connections between rail service and other modes. Highway grade crossing improvement projects may also be funded.

"Projects funded by these CRISI grants will generate economic opportunities and improve the travel experience in communities across America, whether urban or rural, large or small," said FRA Administrator Amit Bose. With the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's massive boost to the CRISI program, the funding made available will help launch our country's new rail revolution."

The New York Susquehanna & Western Railway was awarded $2.9 million for track work in the Syracuse area from the FFY2021 awards. Neighboring Connecticut's Department of Transportation was awarded up to $13.8 million for its Enfield Station and track improvements. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation was awarded up to $1.7 million for Springfield area track configuration, signal and infrastructure improvements.

Thanks To Our 2022 Corporate Members For Their Generous Support!

Reminder...You can now renew your membership; join the Association or donate to ESPA (all with a credit/debit card) on-line, in addition to updating your membership information (mailing address; e-mail, phone number, etc.) anytime - Visit www.esparail.org!

If You Have Questions Or Need Assistance With Your Account, Simply Complete & Submit The "Contact Us" Form or send an e-mail to espamembershiphelp@gmail.com

ESPA Meetings
ESPA members and ALL other interested persons are welcome & encouraged to participate in ESPA Meetings!
Check ‘Events’ at www.esparail.org for the most current meeting information! Advance registration is required!

Upcoming 2022 ESPA Working Group Meetings
November 19 - 12:00n to 4:00pm - In Person Schenectady - Katie O'Byrnes

Dates, times & locations are subject to change!

ESPA Membership
- Introductory Membership ($15.00 for first year)
- Regular Individual Membership ($30.00 per year)
- Student, Senior, Fixed-Income Membership ($20.00 per year)
- Family Membership ($40.00 per year)
- Sustaining Membership ($60.00 per year)
- Patron Membership ($100.00 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 or Send A Check Made Payable To ‘ESPA’ To ‘ESPA’, P.O. Box 434, Syracuse, NY 13209
Saratoga’s Train-Oriented Development Project  - Benjamin Turon

One of the many touted benefits of modern intercity rail services is the fostering of urban development around rail stations – a long-distance passenger rail version of “transit orient development”. Now we have an example in Upstate NY with the planned ‘Saratoga Station Square’ project.

The Saratoga Station Square project of Prime Companies would see the development of 17 wooded acres south of Station Lane – the station’s long access road to West Avenue – into 334 apartments and 48 townhouses. The luxury complex will feature a private courtyard for residents with a saltwater swimming pool, putting greens, bocce courts, outdoor pizza ovens, fireplaces and televisions — amenities in line with other recent residential projects in the Spa City’s upscale housing market.

While the Saratoga rail station is likely not the primary driver of this development, the developer does tout its location adjacent to the station as being a major plus for future residents. “We will have people who take a train to New York a fair amount,” said Dean DeVito, a principal with Prime Companies to the Albany Times Union. “It will be perfect to live there. You can walk out of your house and onto the train.”

Station Square joins the now under construction 29-unit Station Lane project, a trio of three-story apartment buildings lining the north side of Station Lane. To the east of these apartments is another parcel fronting West Avenue where there are plans for a 50-unit apartment and retail complex. West Avenue a mile to the west of downtown has become the second (to Broadway) major commercial and multi-unit residential artery in Saratoga Springs, seeing several multi-story mixed-used buildings completed in the last decade.

Pre-COVID the Saratoga Springs Rail Station was the busiest New York station north of Schenectady for both the Adirondack and Ethan Allen with 41,611 passengers in FY2019, a 9% increase over the previous year. The “intermodal” station is also served by local CDTA transit buses and Greyhound/Trailways intercity coaches.

Saratoga Springs is not the only place in Upstate NY that is seeing passenger rail influenced development. Schenectady has seen many projects both big and small completed over the past two decades, with the (recently rebuilt) downtown rail station being cited along with Proctors Theatre as a magnet for residential, business, entertainment, and hospitality investment in the Electric City. And the newly rebuilt downtown Buffalo Exchange Street Station is a short walk from Canalside attractions, including several hotels, LECOM HarborCenter, Buffalo Naval Park, and the NFTA Metro Rail which connects to the rest of downtown, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Canisius College, Delaware Park and the University at Buffalo. The adjacent Seneca One Tower has been renovated to include over 200 apartments.

Encouraging more people to travel by intercity rail would reduce energy use and CO2 emissions. Rail stations served by fast and frequent trains would reinforce denser, mixed-use and pedestrian friendly development in urban cores, reducing reliance on automobiles by use of transit and walking, reducing energy and land use, while also improving the fiscal sustainability of these cities with increased economic activities.

When investing in passenger rail, one needs to not just consider the costs/benefits to travelers, but the broader economic, social, and environmental benefits, including sustainable walkable mix-use urban development around intercity rail stations.

Year-Round Weekend Niagara Falls - Toronto Service

After offering summer-season weekend rail service between Niagara Falls, Ont. & Toronto for many years, GO Transit has introduced two year-round weekend rounds trips, focused on bringing Toronto residents down the Niagara Peninsula to Ontario’s premier tourist attraction. One commuter-focused weekday round trip is also offered.

GO Transit is offering special weekend travel passes, currently priced at $10.00Can for one day or $15.00Can for both Saturday & Sunday. The passes provide for unlimited travel between all GO-served locations. Based on the current US - Canadian exchange rate, Americans can purchase these passes for as low as $7.50 per person.

GO Transit continues to expand rail service on several of its lines and hourly service is now available to Hamilton’s West Harbour Station.
New Café Car Menus

Amtrak introduced new Café Car menus in mid-August on Empire Corridor and Northeast Corridor trains.

In a press release Amtrak stated that in response to customer feedback, the new menu offers more high-quality and fresh items. Passengers will now see 30 percent more of these options with items such as new hot meals, snacks, salads, sandwiches, lite bites, a significant increase in vegan offerings, and new non-alcoholic beverages. In addition, many items were reduced in price.

Some of the new or reduced-price menu items passengers can expect to see onboard include:

- **Breakfast**: Bialy Egg Sandwich, Bacon & Cheese Egg Bites & Seasonal Fruit with Mango
- **Lunch & Dinner**: Smoked Turkey & Havarti Sandwich, Vegan Asian Noodle Bowl & Blue Corn Vegan Tamale
- **Snacks**: Fresh Vegetable Crudites, Beef Jerky & Pistachios
- **Beverages**: Pomegranate Juice and new hot & iced coffee selections

Amtrak has reduced the price for sandwiches and salads on Acela and Northeast Regional trains for savings between $.50 and $1.50. To further promote the new offerings to customers, Amtrak has also redesigned the layout of its menu onboard, which will be provided at each customer’s seat.