

## WILL PRIVATIZATION SAVE THE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR?

By *Richard J. Arena*

The Northeast Corridor is an expensive piece of real estate, snaking along the coast from Boston to Washington, DC. While less than 2% of America's land mass, it is home to over 50 million residents and responsible for 20% of the nation's GDP. Every day over 2,000 trains from Amtrak, commuter rail agencies, and freight lines share the tracks, making it the world's busiest rail corridor. Plans have been proposed to upgrade the NEC to true high speed rail, but there is not enough funding even for maintenance. Is there a solution?

Perhaps. In the latest Surface

Transportation Bill, known as the FAST ("Fixing America's Surface Transportation") Act, the major changes were to reauthorize Amtrak and to split Amtrak into two separate financial accounts—the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and the National Network (NN). The purpose for this split was to keep the "profits" from NEC operations there, and not use them to subsidize losses on NN trains. Simple? Not quite.

First concern: Amtrak's NEC does not actually realize a profit. While the trains may make money on operations, often called "above-the-rail," the capital cost of maintaining

the NEC infrastructure is a millstone. If full annual maintenance and state-of-good-repair costs (estimated to be in excess of \$2 billion/year) were included in Amtrak's NEC profit and loss statement (which they cannot because they are capital), the net result would be an NEC loss in the billions.

Second concern: FAST does not differentiate between operating expenses and infrastructure costs. Clearly, a much preferred outcome would have been separating Amtrak into three financial accounts: NN, NEC Operations, and NEC Infrastructure.

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## IT'S TIME TO REGISTER!!!

By *Richard Rudolph, Ph.D. Chair, Rail Users' Network*

"Who's Looking Out for You? The State of Rail Advocacy in New England" conference is taking place Friday, April 29, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Boston Foundation, 75 Arlington St., 10th floor in Boston. Sponsored by the Rail Users' Network, this regional conference will examine current actions in New England regarding passenger rail/transit issues. The focus will also be on how transit/commuter rail riders can have a greater voice in planning new services, as well as

improving the quality and level of services currently provided.

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsor, the event is free and open to the public. People planning to attend, however, need to register in advance on the RUN website ([railusers.net](http://railusers.net)), for the conference room can only accommodate 75 people.

The day will begin with brief remarks from Richard Rudolph, RUN Chair; and Paul Grogan, President and CEO of the Boston Foundation (invited). Featured speakers include Frank DePaola, the General

Manager of the MBTA; Gerald Francis, General Manager, Keolis Commuter Rail Services; Stephanie Pollack, Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation; and Rina Cutler, Amtrak's Senior Director for Major Station Planning and Development.

Mr. Depaola will provide an update on MBTA services including the purchase of new cars for both the Red and Orange Lines, the latest plans for extending service on the Green Line to Somerville and Medford and proposed fare

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# RAIL COMMUTING BETWEEN VENTURA COUNTY AND SANTA BARBARA AN IMPENDING REALITY, THANKS TO STALWART ACTIVISTS AND OFFICIALS

By Dana Gabbard

Savvy rail advocates are far too familiar with the daunting complications to achieving rail improvements. This is a status report about one such effort that is making progress despite the hurdles often encountered in rail advocacy.

Sometimes, as in this case, the impetus behind a rail proposal is geographic. Santa Barbara, a picturesque coastal community north of Los Angeles, is hemmed in by mountains on one side and the Pacific Ocean on the other. As a result, the space available for housing is limited and often unaffordable. Many who work in Santa Barbara live to the south in Ventura County, which is about 30-40 miles away, and commute to their jobs on the 101 freeway, which is the only road connecting the two areas and understandably is highly congested during peak commute times.

The 101 corridor is paralleled by the rail right-of-way owned by the Union Pacific and used by two Amtrak routes, the intercity *Pacific Surfliner* (which operates five daily round trips between San Diego and Santa Barbara, with two extending to San Luis Obispo) and long-distance *Coast Starlight route* (which operates one daily round trip between Los Angeles and Seattle). Logically, interest arose among residents in the effected areas to seek a rail option for weekday commuting between Ventura County and Santa Barbara.

In the early part of the last decade, a planning effort was undertaken to address congestion along the corridor under the aegis of the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), a regional planning agency. 101 in Motion involved extensive outreach to stakeholders over more than two years. Through the efforts of advocates like

Dennis Story of Coastal Rail Now, the final recommendations approved by the SBCAG Board in October 2005 included commuter rail.

101 in Motion was the basis for the project list in Measure A, the Santa Barbara County transportation sales tax passed in 2008. It allocated \$25 million (over 30 years) for Commuter and Passenger Rail Planning and Service Improvements. The rail portion of the \$1-billion Measure A program is overseen by Scott Spaulding, Principal Transportation Planner at SBCAG.

Per the Measure A website, "Eligible expenditures are capital and operating costs including developing new schedules and service plans, obtaining environmental clearances, negotiating agreements, operating subsidies, rolling stock and related equipment, promotions and marketing, maintenance, connecting transit service, track improvements, station facilities, train and grade crossing controls." Initial efforts have focused on adjusting the *Surfliner's* schedule to make it convenient for the use of commuters between Ventura County and Santa Barbara and other communities in Santa Barbara County (including Goleta and Carpinteria) with hopes of eventually augmenting this at a later time with dedicated commuter train service.

A change in the *Surfliner* schedule involves cooperation from Metrolink, whose commuter service in Orange, Los Angeles, and Ventura Counties uses the same rail right of way as the *Surfliner*, and right of way owner Union Pacific, which operates freight service throughout California and the western United States. Slots in the busy coastal rail corridor served by both Amtrak, Metrolink, the Coaster (in San Diego County), and freight railroads are at a premium. Negotiations are underway among the key entities to work out a plan

to make the schedule change a reality (Union Pacific, Metrolink, Amtrak, the California Dept. of Transportation, the Ventura County Transportation Commission, and SBCAG). The joint powers authority that previously just advocated for better service but now also directly manages the *Pacific Surfliner*, the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor (LOSSAN) Agency, is a central party in these talks.

An extensive and growing list of stakeholder organizations and elected officials are providing leadership to the effort. Dennis Story has for years tirelessly worked to build this coalition along with putting on an annual event tied to National Train Day with a demonstration round-trip train ride between Santa Barbara and Carpinteria along with a press conference attended by key elected officials supporting the proposal.

The stakeholders include:

- Rail Passengers Association of California & Nevada (RailPAC)
- Coalition for Sustainable Transportation (COAST)
- Alliance for Sustainable and Equitable Regional Transportation (ASERT)
- Coastal Rail Now (CRN)

The officials include:

- State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, chair of the Senate Select Committee on Passenger Rail
- State Assemblymember Das Williams
- First District Supervisor Salud Carbajal who also is a LOSSAN Board member
- Santa Barbara Mayor Helene Schneider
- Santa Barbara Councilman Gregg Hart
- Goleta Councilmembers Paula Perotte and Michael Bennet

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# MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO PROPOSES BROOKLYN-QUEENS LIGHT RAIL

By *Andrew Albert*

In his recent State of the City address, Mayor de Blasio proposed a 16-mile-long light rail line, running along the East River waterfront (or close by) from Astoria in Northwestern Queens to the Sunset Park area of Brooklyn, at a proposed cost of \$2.5 billion. The line would connect the neighborhoods of Astoria, Ravenswood, Long Island City, Greenpoint, Williamsburg, DUMBO, Downtown Brooklyn, Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, Red Hook, Gowanus, and Sunset Park. Construction could start in 2019, and would be completed by 2024.

Once completed, the BQX streetcar could have a weekday usage of as high as 50,000 riders. The increased value along the waterfront as a result of the light rail line could be used to finance construction, as increased real-estate values could help pay the expectedly high cost of building the line in very densely populated areas

The Mayor extolled the virtues of “one New York,” and how some low-income communities don’t have the transportation opportunities of more well-to-do neighborhoods. It is the Mayor’s boldest transportation initiative, but one that definitely deserves some important scrutiny.

First of all, the proposed light rail line would run much of the way paralleling existing subway lines, although not for the entire route. Another hitch is it is unknown at this point who would run the service. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority, New York’s transit agency, would not be expected to take on another money-losing route without additional city subsidies. And if the MTA doesn’t end up running the service, that would mean no free-transfer to existing transit lines, again, unless the City were to subsidize it.

Another possible wrinkle would be the additional development the Light Rail line would bring to areas already extremely densely populated. While it

would bring transit service to some hard to reach public housing developments, it isn’t that far to existing subway stations, and of course, many bus lines already make the trip. Anti-development groups are already blasting the proposal, as another giveaway to developers, who will raise rents, and drive them out of their neighborhoods.

Transportation advocates are saying that the idea should be studied further, and talks with the MTA should begin. Others are saying that the Light Rail line will be very slow, as it would not be able to get around obstructions, while buses can make detours to avoid congestion. Of course, a ride on a Light Rail vehicle is more desirable to many folks than a ride on a bus. While it is likely that a small number of people would ride from end point to end point, many would utilize the rail line to connect with subways, but whether there would be transfer privileges remains an unknown.

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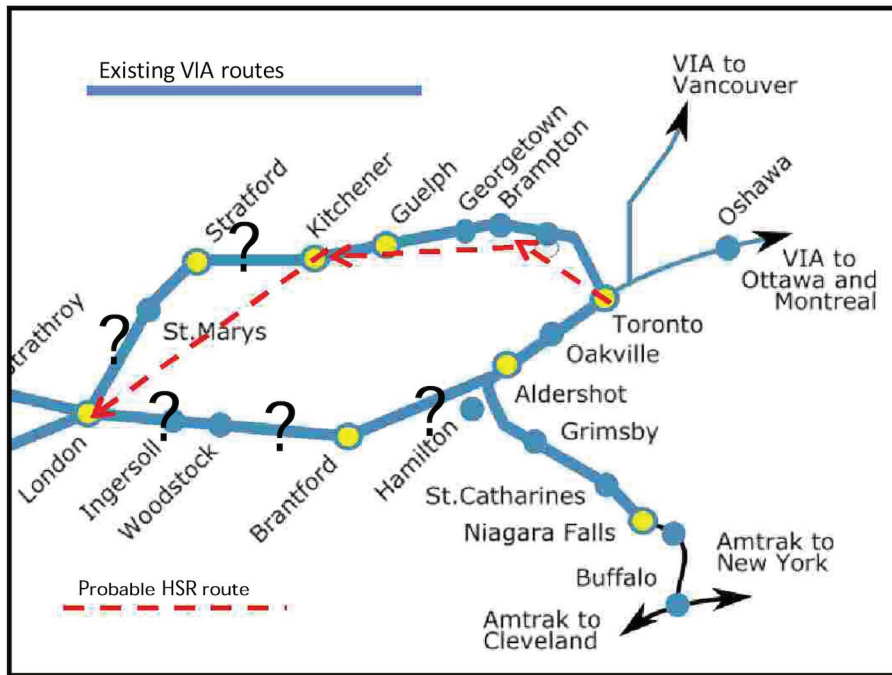
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# CAN VIA RAIL MEET CANADIANS' MOBILITY NEEDS?

## Potential effect of HSR in S.W. Ontario

### Service duplication or.....



The question marks show existing VIA Rail service routes that could be under threat from the Province of Ontario's HSR plans. The general consensus of communities with existing VIA services is that more frequency, newer equipment, and reduced journey times are immediate priorities. It's more affordable and could be implemented quickly.

By Ken Westcar

Since the Canadian federal election in October 2015, there's been little on the topic of national passenger rail services from the halls of power in Ottawa. Meanwhile VIA Rail seems to have gone remarkably quiet other than for trumpeting modest ridership growth over the holiday season. Good news, in a way, but lack of really innovative marketing, modern equipment and service frequencies likely capped their potential when more people are looking towards passenger trains to solve their mobility needs.

Verbal commitments on increased train frequencies in South Western Ontario have, so far, gone unfulfilled as it seems VIA

forgot to ask CN if they would permit more passenger traffic. It will be interesting to see if it results in outright refusal or whether CN can use the extra business to offset declining freight volumes. CN shareholder value, rather than the public interest, will likely be a key factor.

VIA has also acknowledged the demand for day trains between Campbellton and Moncton in the Province of New Brunswick to cover those days when the iconic *Ocean* Montreal-to-Halifax service does not run. People living in and around this corridor are experiencing mobility hardship, especially when the automobile and scant bus services are not options. It's rumored that VIA is

looking at operable Budd diesel rail cars for this service but it's all speculation until the wheels hit the rails with sustainable federal funding. The Budds are also getting very long in the tooth and, therefore, only an interim solution, at best.

Western Canada offers little in the way of reportable passenger rail developments. The concept of a fast passenger rail service between Calgary and Edmonton will likely fade to black unless the federal government pays for it. Provincial revenues from the oil sands and gas fields might just meet the cost of fixing potholes in roads unless there's an imminent recovery in petroleum prices and royalties. With Alberta's short- to medium-term economic prospects looking dim, it's unlikely that private capital would be available for any passenger rail developments anytime soon.

In contrast, the *Rocky Mountaineer* tourist operation seems to be going from strength to strength as the legendary scenery and cheap Canadian dollar attracts a global customer base. New itineraries and the addition of a *Silver Leaf* service keep the product fresh and some of the new television advertisements are excellent.

The Province of Ontario's plan for a totally new high-speed, all electric passenger rail service (HSR) between Toronto, London, and Windsor is resulting in more community head-scratching along the most likely route. Yet to be answered is whether it will kill existing VIA services between the same cities and bypass some passenger markets altogether. The Province has hired a previous federal transport minister, David Collenette, to study the project business case and there's hope he will instill a good measure of sobriety into a factually-thin announcement by a previous Ontario transportation minister.

Wardens and mayors in South Western Ontario are about to crank up the heat on both the provincial and federal governments on passenger rail services.

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## MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO PROPOSES BROOKLYN-QUEENS LIGHT RAIL

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Certainly, the Mayor deserves credit for an innovative idea for bringing mobility to underserved areas of the city, but in the proposed route for the line, those areas are in the distinct minority. Many of the neighborhoods along the proposed rail line—such as Downtown Brooklyn, Brooklyn Heights, Long Island City, and others—are well-served by existing subway lines, not to mention tons of bus lines.

Is the proposed Light Rail line worth the investment? Will it bring over-development to areas already burdened? Will it pay for itself, or will the advantages of more transit opportunities offset any potential costs to the City? Will the City or State offset the additional losses to the MTA, should they be chosen to run/maintain the service? Without additional subsidies, would the MTA be forced to curtail some existing services in favor of the new Light Rail line? Would the new



*A rendering of the proposed Brooklyn-Queens light rail line.*

Light Rail line sow the seeds of other new Light Rail lines in other areas of the City that need mass transit?

These are questions that must be answered, with discussions taking place between all the parties: the development community, the State, the City, the MTA, and local elected officials. Every aspect of the proposed

operation and routing must be discussed thoroughly, and a viable financing and operational budget must be worked out. A new Light Rail line between Brooklyn & Queens is an exciting prospect—but it must work for everyone involved.

*Andrew Albert is Vice-Chairman of RUN, the Chair of the NYC Transit Riders Council, and Riders' Representative on the MTA Board.*

## RAIL COMMUTING BETWEEN VENTURA COUNTY AND SANTA BARBARA AN IMPENDING REALITY

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Regarding the project and its status, Supervisor Carbajal recently made the following statements:

“Creating a rail option for commuters traveling from Ventura to their jobs in Goleta and Santa Barbara is critical to our long term plan to reduce congestion on the 101 freeway.”

“We’ve been working for a long time to establish peak hour rail service between Ventura and Santa Barbara counties—with regional control of the Pacific Surfliner service, we should be able to push this across the goal line.”

Despite setbacks, skepticism expressed by some and institutional challenges, the effort has been slowly making progress toward the day in the hopefully not too distant future when a rail option will be not simply a dream but a reality. Kudos to Story and the other activists whose vision and passion has been the foundation to the progress of the effort to date and the eventual success. Their tenacity deserves high praise. Bravo!

My thanks to Dennis Story of Coastal Rail Now, Scott Spaulding of the Santa Barbara County

Association of Governments, Scott Johnson of Metrolink, Lisa Valencia/Eric Friedman of the office of Santa Barbara County Supervisor Salud Carbajal, Paul Dyson of the Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada and Jennifer L Bergener of the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor Agency for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this piece.

*Dana Gabbard is a RUN Board member and executive secretary of Southern California Transit Advocates.*

## ENHANCING THE HOOSIER STATE SERVICE

By P. J. Strebby

Members of passenger rail advocacy groups seem to have to approach their local issues at the basic grass roots level on each occasion, reinventing the path to either improving existing service levels or instituting new services. The Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) was formed to bring advocates affiliated with several groups together in order to create a more effective voice with which to engage with both the General Assembly and Department of Transportation (INDOT).

Let us be very clear about why this is necessary. IPRA does not advocate for improved passenger rail service either out of a sense of nostalgia for the old days or for an antipathy to the automobile. Cutting edge, 21st Century, passenger rail systems are vital components driving the economic development of modern societies. Observation of the present day, real world of the 21st Century demonstrates that societies enjoying the benefits of cutting edge passenger rail systems see a level of economic development that is both greatly enhanced, as well as environmentally sustainable. And they become the kind of places in which the millennial generation wants to live and work. They are our path into the future.

In this regard, there are three elements that are key to Indiana's future. They are the *Hoosier State* corridor from Chicago thru Indianapolis to Cincinnati, the northern corridor from Chicago thru Fort Wayne and on into Ohio, and well developed commuter rail systems serving the state's major metropolitan areas. Let's take a closer look at one of them, the *Hoosier State* corridor.

In the March 2016 edition, *Trains Magazine* offered its readers a detailed look at what it took to energize a service that was threatened with discontinuance in 2013. Bob Johnson's article, titled, "*Hoosier State* Reflects a New Approach," spoke to the

"advantages and challenges when a private operator replaces Amtrak."

Iowa Pacific (the "private operator") concentrates on marketing the Chicago-to-Indianapolis service to business people, college students, and tourists. Meanwhile, passenger rail advocates recognize the need to further raise awareness of the service and also build ridership through major changes to the four-day-a-week service.

### Schedule and Frequency

- Separate Schedules for *Hoosier State* and *Cardinal*. Think about the two trains as separate operations, running the *Hoosier State* at a later time. If Indianapolis passengers were to board a *Hoosier State* departing the Circle City at 7 a.m., instead of 6 a.m., and arrive in Chicago at 10:30 a.m., it would be a much more desirable travel option. In this scenario, a late *Cardinal* (originating in New York City) would not affect the *Hoosier State* departure. Ridership would likely receive a boost, as better planning of schedules around on-time departures would be possible.
- Additional Trains (Frequencies). In order for the corridor to be economically viable, there really must be eastbound departures from Chicago both in the morning as well as the evening, as well as westbound departures from Indianapolis in both morning and evening. Business travelers, college students, and tourists would benefit from a morning departure east bound out of Chicago, as they would arrive at their downstate Indiana destinations with the better part of the day for their activities. Passengers could return North in the evening or catch the next day's morning train west bound. Face-to-face business transactions would then be possible. Students could live away from their campus and still participate in academic life. Pleasure travelers could more easily take in events, with an overnight stay

when necessary. Local revenues would be enhanced with an increase in the proceeds of local sales, hotel, and restaurant taxes.

- More Beech Grove Equipment Runs. Amtrak could be encouraged to increase Beech Grove equipment runs, adding coach service to help pay the way. Two daily trains even five days a week could potentially triple the ridership between Chicago and Indianapolis.

### Engineering Improvements

The current top speed of 59 mph could be brought back up to 79 mph (as it once was). This one improvement could shave 20 minutes off the schedule. The following engineering work would have to be done. Each requires funding, but the payoff would be greatly enhanced operation of both passenger and freight operations on the current route, and provide for a less congested and conflicted route on the final approach into Chicago.

- Implementation of CTC between Ames junction (immediately south of Crawfordsville station) and Munster (immediately north of Dyer station) would save 10-15 minutes by no longer having the crews stop the trains at both locations to copy track authority.
- Implementation of signaling on the Crawfordsville branch between CP Clermont and Ames junction would allow speed to be brought back up to 79 mph, for another 10-minute savings.
- Reinstalling the track that Conrail removed decades ago between Munster and CP 509 (because Amtrak was the sole user) would cut another 30 minutes from the current schedule. This new routing (former Conrail) would involve negotiating with Norfolk Southern for access onto their property at CP 509 near the Illinois/Indiana state line at Hammond, as well as

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## ENHANCING THE HOOSIER STATE SERVICE

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with the communities, governmental agencies, and property owners along the former route. But the payoff would be well worth the effort.

In short, with the necessary engineering, a four-hour schedule between Indianapolis and Chicago is attainable.

### Extension to Cincinnati

- Extend the *Hoosier State* corridor to serve Cincinnati and the communities of southeast Indiana. Indianapolis should be envisioned as the hub of a potential Indiana network connecting Chicago, Cincinnati, Louisville (and on to Nashville?), and St. Louis. Offering a daily, 79-mph *Hoosier State* service 100 miles southeast to Cincinnati via tracks now used only by the nocturnal Amtrak Cardinal, with stops at Indianapolis International Airport, Connersville, Oxford, Hamilton and downtown Cincinnati (Union Terminal), would benefit Indiana communities currently grossly underserved by transportation facilities.

Midwest Regional Rail Initiative studies show that the Chicago-Indianapolis-Cincinnati corridor would be the second-most cost-effective Midwest route in terms of ridership/revenues vs. operating costs (trailing only Chicago-Milwaukee-Twin Cities corridor). Investment in this corridor to provide multiple daily trains at between 79 and 110 mph could produce significant economic benefits, including more than 2,000 jobs at Indianapolis, 700 jobs at Lafayette, and nearly 3,000 jobs at Cincinnati, while increasing property values near stations by an average of more \$300 million.

An Indianapolis International Airport station would provide rail access to an airport with domestic airfares at the national average, compared to Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky which has the nation's second-highest domestic airfares (trailing only Anchorage, AK); Southeast Indiana has few travel

options to Amtrak, which passes through there in the middle of the night, three times per week. The Cincinnati-Hamilton-Dayton area has three million people, many of whom travel to Indianapolis and Chicago for business or pleasure.

Enrollment at the University of Cincinnati, Miami University, Xavier University, University of Dayton and

***Indianapolis should be envisioned as the hub of a potential Indiana network connecting Chicago, Cincinnati, Louisville (and on to Nashville?), and St. Louis.***

others is nearly 100,000. Many students come from Indiana, Chicago and other Midwest cities.

### Funding

Funding is always a question. Passenger rail, as any modern form of transportation (or other public infrastructure) requires public investment. This is true for both roads and air transport, as well. The funds to build and maintain roads are no longer entirely funded by the motor vehicle fuel tax. About half comes from the general fund of the state. Almost \$100 million in federal grants were received for the expansion of the Indianapolis International Airport.

While it can be argued that more Hoosiers fly or drive than take trains, it must be admitted that they do so, in part, because there are virtually no trains available in Indiana. It is very difficult to choose a mode of transportation which does not exist! Adequate public investment to provide the state with cutting edge passenger rail is not only necessary, but is

also well within the capacity of the state to provide.

Re-establishing Indianapolis as a crossroads of rail transportation in the Midwest results in strong economic gains for the entire region. Connecting major Midwestern cities with modern passenger rail enables the formation of a coherent central manufacturing region supplied with a mobile and capable workforce. Indianapolis Union Station could once again be the focal point for redevelopment and economic growth in Indianapolis.

In addition to its own investment, Indiana must be positioned to apply for federal monies at such time as they become available. This requires, at the very least, a master plan for modern passenger rail to be in place at the state level.

### Next Steps

The Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance would suggest that the next step in providing a modern, cutting edge passenger rail system for Indiana is for INDOT to reach out to Amtrak, Iowa Pacific and the CSX railroad, and request estimates of the capital costs and contractual arrangements that would be necessary for a daily *Hoosier State* service, on a different schedule from the Cardinal, with both morning and evening departures from both Chicago and Indianapolis. Once those costs have been determined, the next step would be to work with both INDOT and appropriate parties in the General Assembly to secure the necessary appropriations and authorizations.

**Author's note:** I want to acknowledge those who assisted with the article's preparation by providing material or editing: Steve Coxhead, President, IPRA; Don Yehle, Editor, IPRA newsletter; and Ken Prendergast, OARP (All Aboard Ohio) Executive Director.

*P. J. Strey is a board member of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, based in Peru, IN.*

## WILL PRIVATIZATION SAVE THE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR?

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Congress has been looking for a way to incent the private sector to inject funds into Amtrak's NEC and Chicago infrastructures. American Intercity Rail Network for the 21st Century (AIRNet-21) is a potential Congressional solution to achieve this goal. AIRNet-21 does what the FAST Act doesn't: spin off the NEC and Midwest Amtrak-owned infrastructures into a federally owned entity—the National Railroad Infrastructure Corp. (NRIC).

The NRIC would be managed by a private sector Infrastructure Management Organization (IMO) under a 50-year revocable lease, with funding coming from its own capital as well as a guaranteed RRIF loan. Under the proposed agreement, the IMO wouldn't be permitted to run its own trains and would be mandated to offer fair access to all. All rail carriers would be required to pay access fees, and while existing schedules would be protected, there would be opportunities for operators, both existing and new, to pursue new services, city pairs, and fare options. The IMO would be competitively selected and regulated by the

Surface Transportation Board, and subject to FRA safety oversight.

An important part of the concession is the requirement that the IMO invest at least \$1.2 billion yearly in infrastructure improvements which would target problem areas and chokepoints. Thus, AIRNet-21 effectively creates the NEC Infrastructure Trust Fund about which we have all often spoken.

Under AIRNet-21, the objective is to shift travel from highway to rail, thereby making AIRNet-21 a revenue play. The strategy is sound, as the marginal costs of adding an additional train to a schedule pales by comparison to the fixed costs of maintaining the infrastructure. It is envisioned that increased frequency, better on-time performance, new city-pairs, and additional off-peak and reverse commute options will drive more commuters to the service.

Amtrak's problem today is its utilization of the NEC "profit." For an analogy, recall the movie *The Producers*. That storyline was how two corrupt producers oversold investment in a horrible show, fully expecting the production to close with a loss, thereby eliminating the need to pay off investors.

Unfortunately for them, the show was a hit and when the investors come looking for their share of the profits, it was long gone.

Similarly, the NEC profit is pledged to too many stakeholders:

1. Amtrak has proposed that it will buy new rolling stock with a RRIF loan secured by the NEC profit.
2. The NEC profit has been pledged to bring the NEC back to a state of good repair.
3. Even though the NN is split off, there is still an expectation that the NEC profit will support the network in the future.
4. And lastly, let's not forget Gateway—that \$23-billion project is also looking for funding and casting a greedy eye on the NEC profit.

The NEC "profit," averaging several hundred million dollars per year, is clearly not up to this task.

The bottom line is that AIRNet-21 can be an important part of the solution. Its statutory mandate to invest more than \$70 billion over 50 years toward infrastructure is a significant step in the quest to bring true high speed rail service to the NEC.

*Richard J. Arena is President, Association for Public Transportation.*

## CAN VIA RAIL MEET CANADIANS' MOBILITY NEEDS?

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When invited, Transport Action Ontario (TAO) and South West Ontario Transportation Alliance (SWOTA) are acting on a pro-bono basis as advisors by emphasizing the need for steady, incremental VIA improvements based on the recently released "VIA 1-4-10" plan. As a result it's very likely that affected municipalities will seriously question the province's logic for a very expensive and distant HSR plan when they understand how faster and more frequent VIA services on existing CN

rights of way could be achieved quickly and, potentially, at a fraction of the cost.

TAO and SWOTA are also emphasizing the need for rural bus connections to local transit and VIA services. This resonates with wardens and mayors who are dealing with car-free mobility demands of seniors and youth in their communities. If the result is a combination of improved local mobility plus increased VIA ridership, through better rail station accessibility, it will be a win-win.

From a personal standpoint it's very

gratifying that passenger rail advocacy, particularly in Ontario, goes from strength to strength. After trying the "fly or drive" mobility model for the last half-century or so, it's becoming increasingly apparent that it no longer meets all the needs of modern Canadian society. Greater balance in transportation is required in pursuit of economic and social sustainability and climate goals. Steel wheel on steel rail has a major restorative part to play and more people than ever are coming on-board.

*Ken Westcar is a board member of Transport Action Ontario and a RUN Board member.*



# RUN ISSUES STATEMENTS ON NEC, AMTRAK'S ON-TIME PERFORMANCE

## *Rail Users Network Response to the Surface Transportation Board Regarding Amtrak On-Time Performance:*

STB Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in Docket EP-728 and its companion Public Policy Statement (PPS) in Docket EP-726 on Dec. 28, 2015.

*The following was adopted by the Rail Users' Network Board of Directors at its meeting held in New York, Feb. 6, 2016. Richard Rudolph, Ph.D., Chair, Rail Users' Network.*

There are many ways to measure on-time performance. Typically for the airlines, a flight is considered on-time if it arrives at its destination within 15 minutes of schedule and commuter trains are considered on-time if a train arrives at its final station within five minutes of schedule. Today, for intercity rail, on-time is a mixture of 10 minutes, 20 minutes, or 30 minutes within schedule, depending on the length of the route, and is measured only at the scheduled arrival time at a train's final station. With some intercity routes lasting two hours and others lasting two or three days, there is much variety in the traveling distance of trains in the United States. In addition, the current practice of adding 45-90 minutes of extra time at the end of a long train route (between the final two stations) can result in a train that is operating well over an hour late at most stations, to then be on time at its final station, if it arrives at the final station within 30 minutes of schedule. Here are several options to the current on-time measurements, which we believe the STB needs to consider before adopting its Proposed Rulemaking in Docket EP-728.

**A.** Change to a flat 15 minutes within schedule for an intercity train to be considered on-time, which matches the current on-time for airlines. A flight from NY to Boston and NY to LA both have the same 15 minute tolerance, so trains should

also have the same 15 minutes, regardless if a three-hour trip or a two-day trip. With the practice of extra padding at the end of a long distance train, then also permitting a 30-minute tolerance is not necessary.

The train would continue to be measured on-time at its final scheduled station. Since commuter trains are often a different type of operation than intercity rail, and usually are only traveling less than 90 miles, the five minutes for commuter trains would remain at five minutes as they are measured today.

**B.** Since an intercity train stops at multiple stations, often including major cities, along the way, measure one or two or three of the major intermediate station stops, where a lot of passengers get off the train and include those in the on-time statistics, as well as the final station. For example, on the route from Chicago to Emeryville, measure whether the train is within 15 minutes of scheduled arrival at Denver, Salt Lake City, Reno, and Emeryville. On the train from NY to Chicago, measure Cleveland and Chicago. This shows a more realistic percentage of on-time for passengers on a given train route, than when only measuring the final station stop.

**C.** Use a passenger weighted average for on-time percentage, by measuring the number of passengers getting off the train at each stop and whether the train is on time at the station. For example, on a train from NY to Albany, if 30 passengers get off at Rhinecliff, 40 passengers get off at Hudson, and 50 passenger get off at Albany and the train is on-time at Hudson and Albany, but late at Rhinecliff, then the on-time percentage would be 90/120 (40 Hudson passengers on-time plus 50 Albany passenger on-time, out of a total of 120 passengers), which is 75% for that particular train, for the passenger weighed on-time. In other words, 75% of passengers on-board that train arrived their specific final station

on time. Obviously this option is more complicated, but exact station arrival times and passengers at each specific train are tracked today, so the information is available to perform this calculation.

## **RAIL USERS' NETWORK STATEMENT REGARDING NEC FUTURE PROCESS 2-16-16:**

The Rail Users' Network (RUN) is a not-for-profit organization that advocates for Amtrak, commuter rail and rail transit riders in the United States and Canada. Our membership consists of rail advocacy organizations, transit advisory committees, and concerned rail and transit riders. Through our conferences, the RUN Newsletter and other activities, we promote "best practices" for advocates, managers and planners.

We are deeply concerned about the current state of repair of the entire NEC. While we understand the future capacity needs of the NEC, we also understand that it is not only used for Amtrak trains that stay within its boundaries, but also for trains that travel as far as Chicago, Miami and New Orleans. We also understand that it is used by hundreds of thousands of daily commuters on New Jersey Transit, SEPTA, MARC, Metro-North and other systems. The number of riders on these systems greatly exceeds the number of Amtrak riders in the NEC, and it is vital to all riders that the NEC and connecting lines be brought to a state of good repair before grandiose projects are built.

Today's NEC is plagued by a number of difficulties that are approaching, or have reached, crisis level. New York's Penn Station and the trains that go there from New Jersey are constantly beset by power outages, congestion, and inefficient operation. The existing North River Tunnels were damaged by Hurricane Sandy, with no plan to build additional tunnel capacity except Gateway.

*(Continued on page 12)*

## IT'S TIME TO REGISTER!

*(Continued from page 1)*

increases. Mr. Francis will talk about Keolis' role in providing commuter rail service in the greater Boston area, the efforts underway to improve it, and how the company is reaching out to customers to listen to their comments, complaints and advice.

Stephanie Pollack, Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation (invited) will talk about the work that needs to be done to create a mobility system that responds to the imperatives of our times: a system that is less carbon-based, more transit-oriented, and focused on social equity. Rina Cutler, Amtrak Senior Director, Major Station Planning and Development—NEC Infrastructure and Investment Development will focus her remarks on plans for upgrading South Station, as well as the work that is currently being done to upgrade passenger rail stations along the New Haven-to-Springfield line, as well as other initiatives to improve the passengers' experience on the NEC.

During lunch, participants will be afforded a prime opportunity to share information and experiences regarding their efforts and those of their organizations to promote and improve passenger rail and rail transit in their local areas. Our luncheon speaker is Maggie Super Church, whose expertise spans multiple fields, including urban planning and design, community development, real estate finance, and non-profit management. She is working with the Conservation Law Foundation and Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation to promote TOD, equity and good health in the greater Boston area.

The afternoon session will feature three different panels. The first will focus on the status of passenger rail / transit rail advocacy and plans for expanding passenger rail in New England. RUN Chair Richard Rudolph, Ph.D., will moderate.

Panelists include Timothy Brennan, Executive Director, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Stephen Smith, former Executive Director of the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development Commission, Michael Izbicki, Executive Director, New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority, and Jack Sutton, former President and Board Member, Maine Rail Group.

The second panel will explore the current state of advocacy in the Greater Boston area, who the major players are, the impact they are having on the MBTA and transit service, and what can be done to insure greater rider representation to improve and expand service. Andrew Albert, RUN's Vice Chair who is also Chairman, New York City Transit Riders Council will moderate. Panelist include Mela Bush-Miles, Lead Community Organizer, Greater 4 Corners Action Coalition; Kristina Egan, Director, Transportation for Massachusetts; Lee Matsueda, Political Director, Alternatives for Community & Environment; and Ellin Reisner, Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership.

The final panel, "The Great Missed Opportunity—The North/South Rail Link" will examine why the "Big Dig" was a highway-only project, which did not include a rail link between North and South Stations. David Peter Alan, Esq., RUN Board member and Chairman, Lackawanna Coalition, will moderate. Panelists will present a case study on efforts underway today to correct it. Panelists include former Governor Michael Dukakis; Brad Bellows, a Cambridge architect; and Robert O'Brien, a former chair of the North-South Rail Link Citizen Advisory Committee.

Conference attendees are also invited to join us on Saturday, April 30 for an optional inspection tour of Boston's major transit facilities, and the variety of transportation modes that Bostonians and people from

the surrounding area use to get around the city. The tour will start at 9:00 at South Station, where architect Brad Bellows will explain the ongoing efforts to improve station capacity and development in the station area. Then we will take the train to Fairmount, on the line that RUN Board member Pamela "Mela" Bush-Miles is pushing to have changed from "commuter rail" into the Indigo Line. We will also ride historic and modern trolley cars, subways and buses. We will visit North Station, see the transit-oriented development at the new Assembly Square Station, and see some historic sites that are accessible by transit. We plan to end our tour with dinner at the historic Durgin Park restaurant in the Quincy Market, which has been serving traditional Yankee food since 1827. If you plan to leave town before the tour ends, let us know, and we will advise you when it is time for you to head back to the station.

If you plan to attend the conference and take the tour, we suggest that you purchase a seven-day "T" pass for \$19.00. A single-day pass costs \$12.00, so the extra \$7.00 allows you to ride the "T" for your entire time in the Boston area. These passes are not available everywhere on the system, so we recommend that you buy one as soon as you arrive if you are coming by rail at South Station.

Who should attend: rail advocates, transit/commuter and long-distance rail users, planners, environmentalists, civic, business, and non-profit leaders, real estate developers and others who are interested in transit oriented development and passenger rail issues. The event is free and open to all, and it includes a continental breakfast, lunch and afternoon refreshments, so be sure to register early as space is limited and we need to know how many are attending. The deadline for registering is April 22. Please be sure to register on RUN's website ([railusers.net](http://railusers.net)) or send your name, address, affiliation, phone number and email address to RUN, Box 8015, Portland, ME

# RUN TO BOSTON!

*By David Peter Alan*

That is what many of us will be doing for this year's RUN Conference on Friday, April 29. We will also feature a tour of transit and transit facilities in the Boston area on Saturday, April 30, and we hope you will come for the conference and stay for the tour. There is a lot to see and do. So, if you can schedule some extra time for your visit, we suggest that you plan to spend that time in the Boston area and get the flavor of the city. There is plenty of transit, so you can get around relatively easily. You can learn more from the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors' Bureau. Their website is [www.bostonusa.com](http://www.bostonusa.com) and their phone number is (888) SEE-BOSTON, numerically (888) 733-2678.

It's also easy to get to Boston by train. Amtrak runs frequent daily service from New York, Washington, DC and other points on the Northeast Corridor (NEC) line. We suggest that you sit on the right side of the train going to Boston, so you can watch the Connecticut Shore Line go by. Trains arrive at South Station, where you can connect with the MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority) Red Line subway. If you need to use the Orange Line subway instead, you can get off the Amtrak train at Back Bay Station. If you plan to "RUN to Boston" from upstate New York or points west, Amtrak's *Lake Shore Limited*



*South Station, Boston. (Photo by Eric Allix Rogers)*

from Chicago will drop you in Boston in the evening.

Once you get there, you will be greeted by a wide variety of transit operated by the MBTA; known as the "T" by locals. The website for the "T" is [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com), and the phone number is (617) 222-3200. Boston has one of four legacy subway systems in the nation, with three separate lines, designated Red, Orange and Blue. They all go to Downtown Boston, but they do not all connect at a central point. The "Green Line" is not a line, but a collection of four light-rail lines that share a common underground route downtown.

The longest is an interurban-style line to Riverside. The other lines run along major streets west of downtown: Huntington Avenue, Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Street. Those lines operated with traditional streetcars in the past, and it is still possible to ride PCC (Presidents' Conference Committee) streetcars from the 1930s. They run on a single line, from Mattapan to Ashmont in Dorchester, where they connect with the Red Line to Harvard Square in Cambridge and points north. The continued operation of the PCC cars is now under threat, so we suggest that you make sure to ride them during your visit.

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If you would prefer to receive the RUN Newsletter electronically, please let us know by e-mailing [rrudolph1022@gmail.com](mailto:rrudolph1022@gmail.com)

## AMTRAK'S FLORIDA SERVICE: COST-CUTTING TAKES ITS TOLL

By Gary Prophet

Amtrak is continuing to reduce costs, regardless of impact on revenue. The removal of the diner from the *Silver Star*, along with reducing the train from four coaches to just three coaches, will continue to discourage ridership from the Northeast to Florida.

The stocking of the café cars and diners appears to continue to get worse and worse, with more and more food items out of stock during the trip, sometimes within the first hour of a train's 26-hour journey. While this practice may save waste or reduce items that must be thrown away at the end of a train's journey if they are expired, the continued practice of running out of more than half of the items in café and lounge cars has a huge negative impact on café and diner revenue and on the experience of the customer.

Amtrak effectively killed the Northeast-to-Florida market in the 1990s when sleeper space and coach space were severely reduced from 15- to 18-car trains to nine cars, which was usually a baggage, four coaches, lounge, diner, and two sleepers. In the 1990s, both the *Silver Star* and *Silver Meteor* split, with part of each train

serving both Orlando and Tampa and also part to Miami. Clearly, they should split again, as the Tampa ridership plunged after the "standard train consist" idea was implemented and "costs reduced" by closing the maintenance facility at Tampa. Then, years later, when the schedules of the south bound trains were moved to nearly identical schedules in Florida, more passengers were lost.

Before that time, a very convenient Silver Meteor departed New York at 7:10 p.m., arriving the next late afternoon in Orlando and late evening in southern Florida. Now, one must leave four hours earlier, effectively killing part of the day of departure and the entire following day, as far as a workday goes.

I have never taken a southbound train to Florida after this schedule change was made. When Amtrak provided a train from New York after the rush hour (*Silver Meteor*), I took it twice a year. Once this change was made, few passengers would travel from the Northeast to Florida on the *Silver Star*, as it was pointless, as the *Star* would provide arrival times in Florida similar to the *Silver Meteor*, but a late morning departure from New York. So, as fewer and fewer long-distance passengers

were on the *Silver Star*, the need for a diner became less and less. In fact, according to 2014 statistics, the most popular four-city pairs for travel on the *Silver Star* are as follows: Tampa to/from West Palm Beach (192 miles), Tampa to/from Miami (257 miles), Orlando to/from Tampa (99 miles), and Fort Lauderdale to/from Tampa (235 miles). The top two-city pairs for the *Silver Meteor* are NY to/from Orlando and Washington to/from Orlando.

The *Silver Meteor* needs to return to a 7:10 p.m. New York departure, so that the trains do not service Florida southbound at nearly identical times. Also, the cruise industry is large in southern Florida, resulting in a lot of travel to Florida from the Northeast and Middle Atlantic states. Despite this, both northbound trains from southern Florida leave too early in the morning for cruise passengers to get off a cruise ship between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. and be able to be certain to make a train to the north. The intercity Florida market needs to be carefully reviewed, as simply reducing the size of trains over the past 20 years has not worked, with any cost savings more than offset by decreasing revenue and fewer passengers.

Gary Prophet is RUN Treasurer and Vice President, Empire State Passengers Association.

## RUN BOARD STATEMENTS ON NEC, AMTRAK PERFORMANCE

(Continued from page 9)

At least one more tunnel, if not two, must be built as soon as possible. The antiquated and non-standard power and signal systems in use there have no place on a modern railroad. Portal Bridge in nearby New Jersey is an unreliable choke point, but Gateway pushes for two new spans, when one will be sufficient. Further south, the 1873-vintage Baltimore Tunnel is a choke point and a security hazard. Further north, Metro-North track in

Connecticut is not up to the appropriate standard for track on such a heavily-used line as the NEC. In Massachusetts, the MBTA has filed an action to have the PRIIA §212 declared illegal.

Before any grand plan is implemented, it is necessary to fix the existing problems on the NEC: tunnels to New York Penn Station, Portal Bridge, the Baltimore Tunnel, track improvements on the Metro-North-owned portion of the line, and equitable financial arrangements for

"commuter" railroads which operate on the NEC. We are also concerned about the planning frontier of 2040. According to Amtrak, the existing North River Tunnels must be taken out of service for repairs no later than 2034. The Gateway project calls for new tunnels, with no promise earlier than 2030. This is an unreasonable risk to the mobility of the region. We call for the entire NEC to be upgraded to a state of good repair that is appropriate for a modern passenger railroad, before any further plans are made. FIX IT FIRST!



## RUN TO BOSTON!

*(Continued from page 11)*

There is some interesting non-rail transit, too. The “T” is one of only five systems in the United States (and one in Canada) that runs “trolley buses,” also known as “trackless trolleys.” These buses are powered by overhead electric wires, but run on rubber tires, like conventional diesel buses. They are quieter and ride more smoothly, though. They run north from Harvard Square. There are also ferries that take commuters to their homes on the other side of Boston Harbor from Downtown.

The Boston area also contains one of the four legacy commuter rail systems in the country. A number of lines radiate out from Boston (which many Bostonians still consider the “Hub of the Universe”), either from South Station, or from North Station on former Boston & Maine Railroad lines. The system can take you to a number of interesting and historic cities and towns, any of which provide an enjoyable day trip. Southside trains can take you to Providence, the capital of Rhode Island, Worcester, the principal city of Central Massachusetts, and other now-suburban towns which feature quaint shops and old-fashioned town squares. Northside trains from North Station can take you to historic towns like Concord, where the American Revolution began, and Salem, site of the infamous Salem Witch Trials of 1692 and the first demonstration of the telephone, nearly two centuries later. There is also a line that goes to scenic maritime towns like Newburyport, Gloucester and Rockport, and another that goes to Lowell, which celebrates its industrial history with museums and a heritage streetcar line operated by the National Park Service. *Downeaster* trains leave from North Station, too. They go to Portland and Brunswick, other places in Maine, and three towns in New Hampshire.

Boston and its neighboring towns are great places for walking, and are full of historic neighborhoods. If you want to explore

history, check out the Freedom Trail, a walking tour that connects sites where the American Revolution began in 1775. You can learn about early Boston history at the Old State House Museum. Old North Church, where Paul Revere hung lanterns to warn of the impending British invasion in 1775, is still standing in the city’s North End. Today the area is an Italian neighborhood, with plenty of good restaurants. For seafood, check out the Union Oyster House, which has been in operation since 1826. You can get to the North End on the Orange Line subway or on a Green Line car.

Faneuil Hall at the Quincy Market is another historic site worth visiting. The Sons of Liberty met there to protest against the British, and the market is active again today, like it was many years ago. Durgin Park, on the second floor of the Quincy Market, has been serving traditional Yankee food since 1827. This writer recommends Yankee pot roast, and Indian pudding with vanilla ice cream for dessert. There is also a museum dedicated to the Boston Tea Party in 1773, a protest against British taxation. You can walk to the harbor or take a bus from South Station, served by the Red Line subway.

There are other world-famous museums in Boston, too. For art lovers, there are the Museum of Fine Arts (take the Green Line “E” car on Huntington Avenue) and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (two blocks from the Museum of Fine Arts). The Museum of Science is equally famous (take the Green Line to Science Park Station). Many of the area’s colleges have museums, too.

Other interesting Boston neighborhoods are worth visiting, especially if the weather is good enough for an extended walk. The Back Bay was built on landfill from Boston Harbor in the 1840s and 50s and is packed with now-historic town houses (take the Green Line to Arlington Street or Copley Square). The Boston Public Library and Trinity Church, designed by famous architect H.H.

Richardson, are also located at Copley Square. Beacon Hill, the location of the Massachusetts State House and many historic homes, is also within walking distance of downtown. South of Back Bay, the South End is being revitalized (take the Orange Line to Back Bay Station and walk south). For an experience that does not feel like traditional Boston, take the Blue Line to Revere Beach and explore the historic beach town. The right-of-way for the Blue Line was once an interurban line to Lynn.

Boston was not much of a “food town” during this writer’s undergraduate days at MIT in the late 1960s, but it is now! There is a wide variety of ethnic restaurants that reflects the city’s diversity. Chinatown is located within walking distance of South Station. You can still find traditional New England food like Yankee pot roast, broiled scrod (Boston’s name for codfish) and fish chowder (which is always made with milk, as is New England clam chowder, which has a thicker base). The traditional Saturday supper is “beans and franks” served with thick slices of chewy brown bread. There are also “local” desserts, like Indian pudding, made with corn meal and molasses and topped with vanilla ice cream. “Boston cream pie” is actually a cake; white cake with chocolate frosting and whipped cream or custard between the layers. If you spot a local bakery, grab a raspberry turnover, a lemon square, or a fig square; the inspiration for Nabisco’s “Fig Newton”; named by Nabisco’s predecessor company for the nearby town of Newton. If you wish to visit Newton, the Green Line “Riverside” car goes there.

So RUN to Boston with us at the end of April! You will have an enjoyable and educational experience at the conference, as well as a chance to ride Boston’s interesting and multi-modal transit system. If you can, plan to spend some extra time there, because there is a lot to see and do.

*David Peter Alan is a RUN Board Member and Chair of the Lackawanna Coaliton in Millburn, NJ.*

## LIGHT RAIL AND STREETCARS DOMINATE NEW RAIL STARTS IN 2015



A new subway station opened on Manhattan's Far West Side in September. The extension of the #7 subway line marked the first expansion of New York City's subway system in more than 25 years. (Photo: Metropolitan Transportation Authority)

By **David Peter Alan**

There were a number of extensions of rail transit last year, and most were new segments of light rail or streetcar lines. The Southwest, from Texas to California, dominated the "New Starts" map, but New York City and Charlotte, NC were also represented. So was Toronto, in Canada.

The New York City system expanded for the first time since 1989 on Sept. 13, when the Hudson Yards Station on the #7 Flushing Line opened for service. The entrance to the station is located on West 34th Street, between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, near the Long Island Rail Road's West Side Yards and about a 10-minute walk from Penn Station. The line was extended 1.5 miles to the new station from the former terminus at Times Square. The new station will serve new residential and

commercial development that has been planned for the area. Transit managers hope to open the next expansion, the first segment of the long-awaited Second Avenue Subway, late this year.

Charlotte, NC has a new streetcar. It is called the Gold Line, and it connects with the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) Lynx Blue Line light rail in Uptown (the local term for "downtown") Charlotte. It runs 1.5 miles, mostly on East Trade Street, to Presbyterian Hospital. There are plans to expand the six-stop line in the future. For the moment, it is running with heritage-style cars manufactured by the Gomaco Trolley Company that previously ran on a heritage streetcar line that no longer operates. The first run took place on Tuesday, July 14.

Dallas has a new streetcar, too. The Downtown-Oak Cliff streetcar runs from behind Union Station to North

Oak Cliff, over the Houston Street viaduct. Service on the 1.6-mile route began on April 13. Union Station is the hub for Amtrak's Texas Eagle, Trinity Railway Express (TRE) trains to Fort Worth, and the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) light rail system. The line runs with modern streetcars made by the Brookville Equipment Co. The center section of the car has no seats; it is designed to accommodate bicycles and standees. The schedule is limited, and the ride takes about seven minutes from end to end. Much of the funding for the line came from a federal "stimulus" grant in 2010, and further expansion is planned.

Vintage streetcars in Dallas now run on a longer line, too. The McKinney Avenue Transit Authority, a quasi-museum operation that runs a full-service schedule

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## LIGHT RAIL, STREETCARS DOMINATE NEW STARTS IN 2015

*(Continued from page 14)*

with vintage cars, expanded its line on June 5 along St. Paul and Olive Streets downtown. The extension, 0.65 miles long, runs beyond the former terminal at Ross Avenue and forms a loop for the cars, improving their connections with DART lines. The line is officially known as the "M-Line Streetcar," but it is normally called the "McKinney Avenue Trolley" locally. Funding for the expansion came from city-issued bonds, a federal grant and DART.

Last year was a big year for Metro Rail, Houston's light rail system. After the northern extension of the Red Line opened late in 2013, two new lines opened on May 23, 2015. The 10.6-mile Purple Line intersects the Red Line downtown, and runs to the southeast, and the 3.3-mile Green Line branches off from it. The Green Line will be expanded two more stops later; that segment is scheduled to open in 2017. The two new lines cost \$1.3 billion to build, about one third of which came from federal sources.

Valley Metro Rail in the Phoenix, AZ area also expanded last year. The line was extended eastward in Mesa for 3.1 miles, running in the median of Main Street and adding four stations. Service began on Saturday, August 22. The next extension is planned for later this year, at the other end of the line.

Light rail has been expanding in California in recent years, and last year's expansion took place in Sacramento. Sacramento Regional Transit ("SacRT") extended its Blue Line from its former terminal at Meadowview Road, southeast to Consumnes River College, adding three new stations. The 4.3-mile extension opened for service on August 24. A line to West Sacramento should come next.

There was also one new start in Canada. It was the Union Pearson Express from Toronto Union Station to the Lester B. Pearson Airport, as the name implies. It is known locally as the "UPEXpress" and bears no resemblance to the Union Pacific in the United States. The trains are operated by Metrolinx, which also operates GO Transit commuter trains in the Toronto Area. The airport service began on June 6, and it operates with diesel multiple unit (DMU) equipment made by Nippon Sharyo. The line runs 23.3 km (14.6 miles), mostly along the existing GO Transit line to Georgetown and Kitchener. The UPEXpress stops at the Bloor and Weston stations on the Kitchener Line, and then goes onto a newly-built short branch to the airport. The fares are high. The "standard" fare is \$27.50 Cdn. (about \$20 U.S.) each way, with small discounts for seniors and round-trip travel. Fares paid with a "Presto" stored-value card are also lower. Low ridership was reported during the

first several months of operation. Airport employees get the lowest fares: \$10.00 Cdn. each way when purchased online.

There is another new start worth mentioning: the one that did not happen. The F Street-Benning Road streetcar in Washington, DC was supposed to open for service at the end of 2014. Non-revenue testing began in November of that year and is still ongoing. At this writing, service is scheduled to begin on Feb. 20 of this year. Washingtonians are frustrated with the slow progress of the line toward actual service, and they hope that the streetcars will stop running empty and stop to pick them up and give them a ride.

Other projects have been delayed, but there are a number of new starts and expansions projected for later in 2016. Two new lines have already opened for service in Seattle. There are three planned for Los Angeles: one on Metrolink and the other two on Metro's light rail lines. There are new streetcar lines under construction in Kansas City, Cincinnati and New Orleans. Denver's FasTracks system is also under construction, and expansion is expected soon. It should be an exciting year for local rail transit, and RUN will be on hand to ride it and tell you about it.

*David Peter Alan is a RUN Board Member and Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition in Millburn, NJ.*

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**Please remit immediately to continue receiving the RUN newsletter!**

## PLEASE BECOME A MEMBER OF RUN...

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Rail Users' Network Newsletter is published quarterly by the Rail Users' Network, a 501 (c) (3), nonprofit corporation.

We welcome your thoughts and comments about our newsletter. Please write to us: RUN, P.O. Box 8015, Portland, ME 04104

As a grassroots organization, we depend upon your contributions to allow us to pursue our important work. Please donate to help us grow.

We invite you to become a member of the Rail Users' Network, which represents rail passengers' interests in North America. RUN is based on the successful British model, which has been serving passengers since 1948. RUN networks passengers, their advocacy organizations, and their advisory councils. RUN is working to help secure an interconnected system of rail services that passengers will use with pride. RUN forms a strong, unified voice for intercity, regional/commuter, and transit rail passenger interests. By joining together, sharing information, best practices, and resources through networking, passengers will have a better chance of a vocal and meaningful seat at the decision making table.

RUN members enjoy newsletters, international conferences, regional rail forums, and other meetings to share information while working to improve and expand rail passenger service.

Membership is open to passengers, official advisory councils, advocacy groups, public agencies, tourist and convention bureaus, carriers and other profit-making organizations.

We hope you will join — vital decisions and legislation affecting the North American rail transportation system are being made daily. Don't be left behind at the station!

Please register me/us as a member of RUN today

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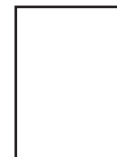
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