

## INDIVIDUAL HIGHLIGHTS

- A Wild Ride On NJ Transit p. 2
- When Will IL's Routes Open? p. 3
- Florida's SunRail Begins Operating p. 4
- Schedule Changes for Empire Builder p. 4
- Conference Attendees Sample Transit p. 6
- From the SW Chief Front p. 12
- The SLR Initiative In Maine p. 14
- A Not-Very-Modest Proposal p. 15

## RUN's 2014 CONFERENCE IN PHILADELPHIA—AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS!

*By Richard Rudolph  
Chair, Rail Users' Network*

By all accounts, this year's Rail Users' Network Conference, co-sponsored with SEPTA's (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority) Citizens' Advisory Committee was an outstanding success. Much of the credit should be given to members of the joint RUN/SEPTA CAC conference planning committee and staff members of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Philadelphia area which includes South Jersey. While a number of rail advocates from across the nation attended, the overwhelming majority came from the Delaware Valley area and included planners, real estate developers, city

and government officials, and members of the public who are interested in transit related issues. In all, more than 100 people attended this year's conference, which focused on how "Passenger Rail and Rail Transit Improves the Economic Vitality of Cities."

The conference began with a "welcoming reception" Thursday evening, May 1 at the office of Urban Engineers, a consulting firm "which brings award winning projects to successful completion, whether it is in the Transportation, Facilities or Construction Service areas." Conference participants attending this event not only had an opportunity to meet and socialize, but also met with a special guest, Thomas Jefferson. He was portrayed by actor Steven Edenbo, who

gave Jefferson's views on a variety of subjects, including transportation issues.

The daylong Friday conference began with RUN's Chair, Richard Rudolph, providing opening remarks. He noted that transit and commuter rail ridership is increasing all across the nation largely due to millennials and seniors seeking alternatives to driving cars. Elsewhere in the world, rail transit, commuter rail, and intercity passenger rail is viewed as a government obligation to insure mobility for all. Given the opportunity, he believes, citizens in the U.S. will support the expansion of passenger rail with their tax dollars and with their ridership. SEPTA CAC Chair Maurice Baynard also gave welcoming remarks, thanking  
*(Continued on page 6)*

## NYC's VAST TRANSIT SYSTEM ABOUT TO GROW BIGGER

*By Andrew Albert*

New York's enviable transit system is about to get a bit bigger. Thanks to the MTA's Capital Program, including federal, state and—in one particular project—city funding, there will be some additions beginning in the Summer, with more to come in the fall. The Fulton Transit Center—which will link 11 subway lines, and incorporate a glass enclosure, allowing natural light to penetrate down below the surface—is set to

open sometime in June. Already the largest transfer point in Lower Manhattan, the Fulton Center will draw together the 1, 2,3,4,5,A,C,E,R,J,Z subway lines, and provide easier connections between these lines. Eventually, it will also connect to the 2nd Avenue subway, providing an all-weather underground route between Greenwich Street and Water Street.

Currently, Fulton Street station combines many of these lines already, but the trip from the

4,5 lines to the 2,3 lines requires many sets of stairways and ramps. The Fulton Transit Center will tie most lines together along a straight path, with the exception of the J,Z lines, whose unique location will still require the use of stairs. There will also be a shopping mall in the center, as well as offices, making it a destination in itself. The Fulton Transit Center is convenient to many downtown points of interest, including Ground Zero,  
*(Continued on page 13)*

# A WILD RIDE AT NJ TRANSIT FOR RIDERS AND THEIR ADVOCATES

By *David Peter Alan*

Last winter could not have been worse for the managers and riders at New Jersey Transit (NJT). Service had just gotten back to normal after a year of disruption from damage caused by Hurricane Sandy in October, 2012. Then came one of the worst winters in history, with service disruptions on NJT's rail lines in North and Central Jersey occurring with alarming frequency. On top of that, NJT performed very poorly on February 2 at Super Bowl XLVIII, the game billed as the "Mass Transit Super Bowl." Even three hours after the game ended, the Meadowlands Stadium had not yet been cleared, causing disgruntled fans to chant "Jersey Sucks" as reporters from publications as diverse as the New York Post and the Sporting News spread the word of NJT's defeat. It seemed that NJT took as bad a beating after the game as the Seattle Seahawks dished out to the Denver Broncos on the field.

So the advocacy community and many riders were hoping for improvement when Veronique "Ronnie" Hakim took over the post of Executive Director at NJT, replacing Jim Weinstein, who had taken much of the blame for losing nearly 400 pieces of rolling stock to flooding during Hurricane Sandy, as well as for the agency's poor performance getting fans out of the stadium after the Big Game.

Hakim was hand-picked for the job by Transportation Commissioner James S. Simpson. By law, the Commissioner of Transportation in New Jersey is also the Chair of the NJT Board of Directors. Simpson and Hakim had worked together at New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) during the 1990s. When Gov. Chris Christie took office in 2010, he appointed Simpson to head NJDOT, and Simpson picked Hakim to be Executive Director of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority. Hakim is an experienced transportation manager and has a legal

background, so advocates expected her to lead the agency toward better performance, with Simpson's help. Simpson and Weinstein had squabbled publicly, and advocates believed that a harmonious relationship between the Commissioner and the Executive Director would bring about some much-needed improvement.

Hakim's tenure started with a burst of activity. During her first weekday on the job, Monday, March 3, Simpson fired rail chief Kevin O'Connor and bus chief Joyce Gallagher. On the same day, trains ran into and out of Penn Station, New York on the Raritan Valley Line (RVL) for the first time. This marked the first "one-seat-ride" service on that line. The Raritan Valley Rail Coalition and other advocates had pushed for such service for years, with the objective that RVL riders would no longer be required to endure an inconvenient transfer at Newark. So far, only mid-day trains run through to New York, but NJT has promised that evening trains, running after peak-commuting hours, will offer a one-seat-ride later this year. Advocates on the line and elsewhere are still pushing for the extension of one-seat-ride service to week-ends and toward their primary objective: peak-commuting hours.

Later that month, at the March meeting of the Board of Directors, Simpson made a statement about the changes he wanted to see at NJT. They included the restoration of "off-peak" rail fares, better use of Hoboken Terminal to ease capacity constraints at New York Penn Station, and improved service and fleet planning. It was an extraordinary event. Before Simpson, no Commissioner had even asked questions at a Board meeting. Simpson not only asked questions, but he delivered a 24-minute statement about his plans for NJT. He also referred to the advocacy organizations and their members as "important stakeholders"; an unprecedented level of positive recognition. Unlike other NJDOT

Commissioners, Simpson was familiar with transit; he had been Administrator of the FTA in the Bush Administration until 2009. So it appeared that better times were coming to NJT, both for the riders and the people who advocate on their behalf.

That has not happened yet. At this writing, three months later, advocates and riders remain in suspense, wondering what will happen to their transit in the future.

As Hakim began her job at NJT, Simpson ordered some minor changes in Board practices. He said that the Board would hold two evening meetings this year; in May and September, in response to a request by Donald Winship, Communications Director of the Lackawanna Coalition. He also announced a three-month pilot program for opening meetings of the Board's Customer Service and Administrative Committees to the public. Those three monthly meetings have already taken place, and the future of the initiative will be decided in June. Simpson said that, if the experiment went well, all Board committee meetings would be opened to the public. There were no administrative problems with the new practice, so advocates expect it to become permanent. However, members of the public may only observe and make two-minute statements before any agenda items are introduced and discussed. They may not ask questions or participate in discussions in any way.

For her own part, Hakim said that she would ride the system extensively during her first month on the job, and that she would talk with employees and other stakeholders, including the advocates. It appears that she has kept that promise. She met with representatives of the Lackawanna Coalition and the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP) in March, and has scheduled another meeting in June.

*(Continued on page 5)*

## WHEN WILL THE NEW IL ROUTES REALLY OPEN?

By F.K. Plous

State-supported passenger trains go way back in Illinois. It was 1972 when the Chicago-Quincy *Illinois Zephyr* became the second Amtrak train to receive state sponsorship under Amtrak's 403(b) program.

Within a short time daily round trips to St. Louis and Carbondale were added, giving the Illinois passenger-train "network" the same spindly, jellyfish-like look it has today: a big hub at the northeast end in Chicago, with three long, thin tentacles trailing south and west.

The longest tentacle, plunging deep into Southern Illinois on the former Illinois Central main line to New Orleans, ends 309 miles south of Chicago in Carbondale on the boundary between the prairies to the north and the Ozark foothills to the south. Southern Illinois University, the state's second biggest, is a major source of passengers.

Lying 30 miles to the west is the 284-mile line connecting Chicago with St. Louis via the state capital at Springfield. This is the former Chicago & Alton that became part of the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio. It's now called the Lincoln Service corridor.

On the northwest, the BNSF's former Burlington main lines connect Chicago with Galesburg, Macomb and Quincy, a 258-mile route highly valued by students at Galesburg's Knox College and Macomb's Western Illinois University.

***The pact to double frequencies: I'll support your trains today—you support mine tomorrow.*** In 2006, Illinois took the extraordinary step of doubling the frequencies on each of these routes. The Chicago-Quincy and Chicago-Carbondale routes went from one to two round trips a day, while the St. Louis route went from two to four. Within a few years, ridership doubled.

But even as legislators and advocates congratulated themselves on the successful ramp-up of new frequencies, a political deal forced them to keep forging ahead on another and much more difficult front: In exchange for their support of doubling service on the three existing lines, legislators from the unserved northwest part of the state exacted a promise from their colleagues that the General Assembly later would fund two new routes, one connecting Chicago with the Quad Cities and another connecting Chicago with Rockford, Galena and Freeport.

This would not be easy. Neither route had enjoyed passenger service in more than 30 years.

In fact, the Quad Cities "route" didn't even exist. In the grand old days of privately operated passenger-train service, the Quad Cities of Moline, East Moline and Rock Island, IL, along with Davenport, IA on the west bank of the Mississippi, had received their passenger service from the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad—the "Rock Island Line."

But following the Rock Island liquidation in 1980, that line had been cascaded down to three owners: Chicago's Metra commuter rail agency owned it from downtown Chicago to Joliet, CSX owned the 20 miles from Joliet to Morris, and a new short line called the Iowa Interstate owned the track from Morris to the Quad Cities and thence to Council Bluffs. Everything west of Joliet had been single-tracked, and the Automatic Block Signals (ABS) had been removed, so that fixing up the entire route for a proposed two daily passenger trains would have been too expensive.

*(Continued on page 11)*

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

Current board members include:

| Name                             | Location         | Affiliation   |
|----------------------------------|------------------|---|
| Richard Rudolph, Chair           | Steep Falls, ME  | NARP / TrainRiders Northeast, Maine Rail Group      |
| Andrew Albert, Vice-Chair        | New York, NY     | New York City Transit Riders Council                |
| Chuck Bode, Membership Secretary | Philadelphia, PA | Tri-State Citizens' Council on Transportation       |
| Gary Prophet, Treasurer          | Ossining, NY     | Vice President, Empire State Passengers Association |
| David Peter Alan, Esq.           | South Orange, NJ | Lackawanna Coalition                                |
| Steve Albro                      | Cleveland, OH    | Cleveland RTA Citzien Advisory Board                |
| Pamela Bush                      | Boston, MA       | T-Riders Oversight Committee (MBTA)                 |
| John (Jack) Corbett, Esq.        | Washington, DC   | MetroRiders.org                                     |
| James E. Coston, Esq.            | Chicago, IL      | Corridor Capital LLC                                |
| Bill Engel                       | Clinton, OH      | Ohio Rail Tourism Association                       |
| Dana Gabbard                     | Los Angeles, CA  | Southern California Transit Advocates               |
| Robbyn Gayer                     | Norfolk, VA      | Hampton Roads for Rail                              |
| Steve Hastalis                   | Chicago, IL      | National Federation for the Blind                   |
| J.W. Madison                     | Albuquerque, NM  | Rails Inc.  |

Please send comments, letters to editor or articles for possible publications to the Rail Users' Network at: RUN; 55 River Road, Steep Falls, ME 04085 or email to [rrudolph@fairpoint.net](mailto:rrudolph@fairpoint.net)

Layout/design editor: Paul Bubny

## FLORIDA'S SUNRAIL BEGINS OPERATING



A SunRail train

By Bill Engel

On May 1, 2014, SunRail, the new commuter rail service in the Orlando, FL area began operating! For an introductory period which was scheduled to end May 16, fares were not collected. Fare collection was to start on May 19.

This start-up service runs between DeBary, just north of Sanford, to Sand Lake Road located just south of the Orlando Amtrak station. Intermediate stops, listed from north to south, are Sanford, Lake Mary, Longwood, Altamonte Springs, Maitland, Winter

Park, FL Hospital Health Village, LYNX Central Station, Church Street, and Orlando Health/Amtrak.

The equipment is Bombardier built bi-level cars familiar to most rail advocates that are in use on Tri-Rail in the West Palm Beach to Miami service and elsewhere. They are operated in locomotive-hauled, push-pull-style trains. Initial schedules provide for seven morning southbound trains from DeBary to Sand Lake Road, two mid-day trains and seven evening trains. An eighth morning train originates in Sanford. The first train leaves DeBary at 5:30 a.m. The running

time to Sand Lake Road is one hour and three minutes. Six morning trains run northbound from Sand Lake Road to DeBary, with the first departing at 6:15 a.m. A seventh, the last one of the morning, runs only as far as Sanford. There are two mid-day trains and eight evening trains northbound. Running time is the same as southbound.

At start-up, the service is weekday only. A prominent note on the schedules page of the website makes it clear that "Sun-Rail trains do not run on federal holidays."

Fare collection for multi-trip passengers is by a pre-paid card. The passenger "taps" the card on the validating machine at the boarding station, and "taps" again at the destination.

Phase two of SunRail is planned to extend service north to Deland and south to Kissimmee. It will be a year or more before that expansion takes place.

This will be an interesting start-up to watch. Traffic on I-4, which parallels this route, can reportedly be a real headache. For more information, visit [www.sunrail.com](http://www.sunrail.com).

*Bill Engel is a RUN Board Member based in*

## SCHEDULE CHANGES FOR THE EMPIRE BUILDER

By Bill Engel

In late March, Amtrak announced a significant schedule change effective April 15 for trains #7 & 27 and #8 & #28, the *Empire Builder*. Eastbound train #8 now leaves Seattle three hours earlier at 1:40 p.m. PT instead of 4:40 p.m. Arrival in Chicago does not change.

Westbound #7 leaves Chicago at the same time, but has a later Seattle arrival. Intermediate times at stations west of the Twin Cities were adjusted accordingly, as were arrival/departure times at Portland for

trains #27 & #28. The announced purpose of this change was to help the *Empire Builder* operate in a more timely way.

Then in May, Amtrak moved the Twin Cities stop of the train out of Midway Station into a redeveloped St. Paul Union Depot. It appears Minneapolis patrons will now have to travel to St. Paul to board the train. Midway Station was closed.

A second announcement in May was that for a lengthy period this summer train #7 & #27 will detour between Fargo, ND and Minot, ND, missing the stops at Grand Forks, Devils Lake and Rugby.

These places will be served by bus, with westbound passengers from the east detraining at Fargo. Passengers traveling west from the three stops will take a bus to Minot, where they will join the train. The eastbound train will not detour.

The stated purpose of the detour is to allow BNSF to do maintenance to improve the track. With increased train traffic in North Dakota, due to oil moving from the Baaken oil field, the maintenance must be needed.

*Bill Engel is a RUN Board Member based in Clinton, OH.*

## A WILD RIDE ON NJ TRANSIT

*(Continued from page 2)*

Simpson and Hakim honored the Lackawanna Coalition at the Board meeting on May 15. The Coalition was founded in 1979, in response to the crisis caused by the deterioration of the state's transit system at the time. New Jersey Transit itself was also founded later that year. It seemed like a new day had begun for the advocates; a radical departure from the adversarial climate that had prevailed through several administrations in Trenton and at NJT.

Then the bombshell hit. Three days before the meeting, reporter Karen Rouse broke the story in the Bergen Record and the paper's website, [www.northjersey.com](http://www.northjersey.com), that Simpson would be leaving his post on June 6. The advocates, as well as NJT managers, were shocked. They had expected the Simpson-Hakim team to lead NJT into a new era, but it was not to be. Simpson called some of the leaders of the Lackawanna Coalition and NJ-ARP, including this writer, to a private meeting immediately before the Board meeting. He said that he was leaving his position voluntarily to return to his trucking business, but some observers believe that Gov. Christie may have forced him out. Simpson did not reveal any substantive surprises at that meeting; the surprise was that he called the advocates to meet with him, and that he spoke so candidly. No commissioner in NJT's history had done that before.

The Board meeting was "amazing," according to a senior NJT manager who was there. Because the meeting was held at 6:00, a number of commuters joined the advocates in making statements. There were only two routine items on the official agenda, but there were three awards

presented. The first honoree was the Lackawanna Coalition, for 35 years of service to the riding public. The second went to Luis Trujillo, a ticket agent at the George Washington Bridge Bus Station, for 55 years of service to NJT and its predecessors. The third honoree was Simpson himself.

Simpson displayed his characteristic enthusiasm at the meeting, but not everybody was equally hopeful about the future of NJT and the initiatives that Simpson had suggested in March. Hakim is now in her fourth month on the job, and she no longer has Simpson to back her up. Advocates and other observers had hoped that Simpson and Hakim would work as a team, but that will not happen. Nobody knows who the new commissioner will be, or even if that person will be familiar with transit. The former heads of the bus and rail divisions have been fired, and the agency is still searching for replacements. So Hakim will have plenty of challenges on the job. Simpson declared his faith in her ability to lead NJT through the times ahead, but nobody seems to doubt that her ability to do so will soon be tested.

During his tenure of slightly more than four years as Commissioner, Simpson left his mark on NJT, at least in terms of style. He was animated, enthusiastic, and almost always interesting. He provided a contrast to the dull Board meetings conducted by his predecessors.

Despite his enthusiasm, Simpson did not accomplish much. He had complained publicly that he could not get things done, due to lack of cooperation by management, especially Weinstein. With Weinstein and two of his subordinates gone from the scene, it appeared that Simpson and Hakim

were poised to implement significant reforms at NJT. It is now unclear, and perhaps even doubtful, that such reforms will actually be implemented.

It seemed at the time that Simpson's true potential would soon be realized, but that was not to be. It is Simpson's potential, and not the realization of that potential, that is now his legacy. Nobody will ever know what he and Hakim could have accomplished together. Now she is on her own, and it seems that everyone wishes her well. It is now up to her to implement the policies that Simpson suggested two months ago, if she can do it. If she succeeds, she will earn the credit for actually improving NJT's performance.

There is one aspect of the legacy that Simpson left, essentially as his last act as Chair of the NJT Board. That was the recognition of citizen-advocates as valuable stakeholders. Previously, most transit managers and Board members everywhere reserved that description only for developers, government agencies and other organizations whose participation was measured only by money or political power. Jim Simpson said that the people who represent the riders are stakeholders, too. The legitimacy and credibility he bestowed on the Lackawanna Coalition will not reverberate immediately in the halls of transit power, but an outgoing Commissioner (both for leaving office, and in terms of personality) took the rare and important step of recognizing the legitimacy of citizen-advocates on the transit scene. Will the Board members and managers who are still at NJT live up to the promise that Simpson appeared to give? Time will tell.

*David Peter Alan is Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition and a member of the RUN Board.*

## RUN'S PHILADELPHIA CONFERENCE: AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS



*Keynote speaker Dena Belzer*

*(Continued from page 1)*

DVRPC for their help and praised the role of citizen advocacy in fostering improvements, saying: "Citizens can make all the difference in the world." In addition, DVRPC Executive Director Barry Seymour welcomed conference attendees. He outlined his organization's activities and said: "We are expanding the role transit can play in developing a physical form for our region."

The first featured speaker of the day, Byron Comati, Director of Strategic Planning at SEPTA, outlined and described the transit agency's new capital improvement plan, which has been drawn up since the state approved a new comprehensive transportation funding bill. It doubles SEPTA's Annual Capital Budget by 2018. This infusion of additional capital will enable SEPTA to move forward with "State of Good Repair Projects" to improve safety and reliability and eliminates the need to reduce service.

Additional capital funding from the legislature will also enable SEPTA to begin planning for two new rail projects. The regional rail line to Media and Elwyn will be extended to Wawa. The Norristown High-Speed Line which utilizes streetcars powered by third rail would have a new branch to the King of Prussia Mall.

The second featured speaker, Drew Galloway, Amtrak's Chief of NEC Planning and Performance, focused his remarks on Amtrak's \$60-million restoration project to repair 30th Street Station's limestone, clean its facade and waterproof the exterior. Although combined annual ridership now exceeds eight million boardings on Amtrak, SEPTA and New Jersey Transit, the plan is on hold as Congress has not authorized the money and there is no indication when it will. Meanwhile, Amtrak is also creating a new master plan for developing the station and its environs. It will likely include proposals for building over the sprawling Penn Coach Yards that stretch north of the

station. Amtrak is also working with Drexel University and Brandywine Realty Trust to redevelop the station and its University City neighborhood. The proposals are expected to be unveiled within the next two months and will include a plan to provide better access for buses, cars, bicyclists and pedestrians.

The keynote speaker, Dena Belzer, founder and CEO of Strategic Economics of Berkeley, CA, has spent much of her career analyzing and promoting transit-oriented development (TOD). She pointed out that "transit is a market-accelerator, not a market-maker" and cautioned that it only works well under the right conditions. It needs to be frequent, connected to major employment destinations, clean and comfortable and transit stops/stations need to be accessible by biking or walking. Done right, TOD generates ridership for transit systems, saves money for households and local governments, improves health outcomes, creates economic development and makes money for property owners. She also outlined several trends which are having an impact on TOD: Changing demographics provide a greater demand for TOD locations, for there are now 76 million baby boomers, 75-80 million millennials and almost half of all householders are single—many of these people are looking for housing/transportation alternatives.

The primary focus of TOD development is still focused on existing downtowns/urban business districts. Streetcars and buses are also enjoying a comeback and bike facilities are proliferating. MPOs and Transit Agencies are investing in TOD and prioritizing those investments and there is a new interest in Equitable TOD. On this last point, Ms. Belzer has been a key member of a team responsible for creating the Transit Oriented Affordable Housing Fund in the Bay area. This was

*(Continued on page 7)*

## RUN'S PHILADELPHIA CONFERENCE SUCCESS

*(Continued from page 6)*

the first regional structured fund started by a metropolitan planning organization that is dedicated to providing affordable housing opportunities near transit, in the U.S. A \$50-million loan fund has been set up with an initial \$10 million from the local MPO. The mission is to provide funding for early property acquisition for affordable housing and other services near transit.

Participants attending the conference also heard from rail activists and planners who are working at the ground level to reach out to youth, promote TOD at the local level, extend the reach of rail transit and promote best practices for rail advocacy.

The first panel of the day provided participants an opportunity to learn how to reach out to youth. Phil Dawson, who is the Vice Chair of SEPTA CAC and who moderated the panel, talked about his former role as Chair of SEPTA's Youth Advisory Committee which was founded in 2009, and is unique among transit advisory committees. Dawson said that one of the accomplishments of the YAC was pushing SEPTA and local colleges and universities to partner in providing student discounts on transit. Jeff Kessler, current Executive Chair of the YAC and Andy Sharpe, former Communications Director for the Delaware Valley Association of Railroad Passengers (DVARP), both commented on the importance of social media in communicating with young transit riders or potential transit riders. Kathleen Grady, Director of Sustainability for Temple University, talked about how she reassures students at Temple that it is safe to use transit, and commented that her outreach campaigns for each new class starts when the entering students first appear on campus with their parents.

During the lunch break, Michael Weinman, Managing Director of PTSI Transportation, presented this year's RUN's Lifetime Achievement Awards to two former Amtrak employees, now retired: David Nogar and Brian Rosenwald. Nogar has a long and varied career in the transit industry, first working at New Jersey Transit, then at the Maryland Mass Transit Administration as Director of MARC Train Service before being hired at Amtrak. He has held numerous positions at Amtrak including serving as General Manager, Peninsula Corridor Service, Senior Director of Service Delivery and as Superintendent, NEC Service Operations at Amtrak. He is most remembered by rail advocates for creating the former *Twilight Shoreliner*, one of Amtrak's premier trains, which ran on an overnight schedule providing dining and outstanding sleeping car service between Boston and Washington, DC. Nogar is currently Program Manager, East Side Access—Operations Readiness at the URS Corporation in New York City.

Rosenwald had spent most of his career with Amtrak, retiring after 39 years of service, due to the latest reorganization of Amtrak's management. His last position at Amtrak was Chief, Product Lines. He is held in very high esteem by rail advocates for his pro-customer stance at Amtrak. His huge success in developing the Pacific Parlour Car and other enhancements for the *Coast Starlight* in the mid-1990s is legendary, and he has improved the customer service experience on other long distance trains including the *Empire Builder* and the *California Zephyr*. Rosenwald spoke briefly at the conference reflecting on his career. He said he attempted to “fix Amtrak, one day at a time” and had to assure his supervisors that he was not a rail fan. He remarked that at Amtrak, “If

you're identified as liking the product, you are in a lot of trouble.” Rosenwald plans to open a wine shop in his home town of Chicago, while staying active in passenger railroading as a consultant.

Henry Davis, Chief Officer for Customer Service at SEPTA, also presented an award to bus driver Curtis Perrin, who drives a bus that connects with SEPTA rail transit. Davis referred to him as “a true SEPTA shining star.”

At the close of the luncheon session, a staffer from City Hall read a proclamation issued by the Philadelphia City Council commending RUN for holding the conference.

The second panel of the day, which was moderated by RUN's Chair Richard Rudolph, focused on Transit-Oriented Development and the Local Economy. The first presenter, Vivian Baker, Director, Transit-Friendly Land Use and Development at New Jersey Transit (NJT), explained how New Jersey's Transit Village program works to strengthen the links between transportation and land use. It promotes more environmentally and economically sustainable patterns of living and working in the state and forges partnerships in support of NJT's larger mission of providing safe, reliable, convenient and cost effective transit service. Successful TOD, she said, requires active collaboration among elected officials, transit planners, housing department professionals, private developers, philanthropic leaders, community development financial institutions, and community advocates, as well as residents.

The second panelist, Andrew Svekla, Senior Planner at DVRPC's Office of Smart Growth, talked about why TOD matters at the local level and described

*(Continued on page 9)*

# RUN CONFERENCE ATTENDEES SAMPLE PHILADELPHIA TRANSIT

By *David Peter Alan*

By all accounts, the RUN conference held at the beginning of May in Philadelphia was one of the organization's most successful events yet. It was held in cooperation with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority (SEPTA) Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), who hosted the conference and got the word out to the planning community.

The pre-conference reception on Thursday evening provided an opportunity for attendees to gather informally, as well as an opportunity to hear Thomas Jefferson's views on transportation, as portrayed by actor Steven Edenbo. The conference on Friday featured a number of presenters who made the case for strong rail transit as a driving force behind the transit-oriented development (TOD) that helps keep neighborhoods and communities liveable and economically viable.

Those two events did not comprise the complete experience. On Saturday, May 3, a group of rail advocates who had attended the conference stayed in town for a tour of the region's transit, including many of the lines that had been discussed the previous day. The tour leader was Thomas R. Hickey, a native Philadelphian who became interested in transit during his student days at Villanova University, when he commuted by trolley car. They still use that term in the city, although the line that Hickey used was actually an interurban line powered by a third rail, and the term "trolley car" was never applied directly to it. Hickey is currently Chief Development Officer at Virginia Railway Express (VRE), the agency that runs commuter trains between Washington, D.C. and northern Virginia. He is also Chair of the APTA (American Public Transportation Association) Streetcar Committee. His transit career has taken

him around the nation and overseas, and he leads the multi-modal transit tours at APTA rail conferences around the United States and Canada.

Hickey led the RUN tour in the same style as his APTA tours, taking the participants on the various rail transit lines in the area, and explaining the technical and historical features of each one. The Philadelphia area boasts a wide variety of transit. The SEPTA system includes commuter rail, two incompatible "heavy rail" lines, and lines featuring four types of interurban-style cars and streetcars. In southern New Jersey, rail transit consists of a commuter line, a heavy-rail line and a non-electrified light rail line. Participants on the RUN tour rode every mode of transit, even including a bus.

The tour began with a ride along the Schuylkill River on the commuter rail line to Norristown. All SEPTA commuter lines are electrified, and most trains run with Electric Multiple-Unit (EMU) cars. In Norristown, the group changed for the "Norristown High-Speed Line" back toward Philadelphia. That line is an interurban-style line, powered by third rail. The terminal at the other end is the historic 69th Street Terminal, the transfer point for other streetcar and bus lines, as well as the Market-Frankford Line, a subway-elevated line that runs along Market Street through the city. It was built with track of the broad gauge used in all streetcar lines in Pennsylvania. All streetcar lines in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh still use that gauge today. At the Girard Avenue Station, it was time to get off the elevated line and onto the Girard Avenue trolley line, a line unique in Philadelphia. It was out of service for several years, and came back with rebuilt Presidents' Conference Committee (PCC) cars from the 1940s (referred to as "PCC II" cars in SEPTA circles). The group took the car to Broad Street and changed for the Broad Street Subway, which operates on standard-gauge track. After a short ride on

the Broad-Ridge Spur to Eighth and Market streets, it was time for lunch.

The participants had lunch at the Reading Terminal Market, a culinary mecca for many Philadelphians, and a place where food and railroad history meet. Hickey explained that there was a farmers' market on Market Street before the railroad came through. When the Reading Railroad (originally the Philadelphia & Reading) built Reading Terminal on the corner of 12th and Market Streets in 1889, the train shed was elevated and the market continued to operate at street level. The station began service in 1893, and the last train ran from there in 1984. Today, the old station and train shed are part of the Pennsylvania Convention Center, and the market continues to operate in its historic location. In the 1970s, the market was almost empty, but today it is full, and it attracts large numbers of Philadelphians and visitors who are looking for something good to eat. Our group feasted on pork sandwiches at Dimyck's and enjoyed Bassett's ice cream for dessert. Bassett's was founded in 1861 and was one of the market's original tenants in 1893.

The afternoon session began downstairs at the 13th Street Trolley Station. The group rode one trolley car (they still use that term in Philadelphia) to the street-running portion of the line in West Philadelphia, walked one block, and took another line back to 30th Street Station. The cars were modern versions of traditional streetcars, with trolley poles drawing power from an overhead wire. At 30th Street, the group caught New Jersey Transit's (NJT) Atlantic City Rail Line to the Pennsauken Transit Center, for a transfer to NJT's River Line, a Diesel-Light-Rail line that runs between Trenton and Camden. After a quick transfer and a short ride to the Walter Rand Transportation Center in Camden, it was time to take the

*(Continued on page 10)*



## RUN'S PHILADELPHIA CONFERENCE: AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS

*(Continued from page 7)*

its benefits, including expanded mobility choices, improved access to jobs, more healthy and active lifestyles, reduced household driving, less congestion and air pollution, reduced transportation costs, increased transit ridership and greater local economic development. He also provided information on where the “American Dream is Moving.” Residential building permits issued have dropped 54% in the Delaware Valley area between 2007-2011, while over 53% of the residential construction permits have been issued in the region’s core cities and developed communities.

Svekla also described DVRPC’s Smart Growth Project Data Base which he maintains. There are 55 completed development projects near transit, 22 in progress and 44 proposed. Rose Gray, Senior Vice-President for Community and Economic Development for the Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM), concluded the panel with a case study of Paseo Verde, a mixed-use, mixed-income, environmentally-friendly project in a low-income neighborhood in North Philadelphia proposed as a public-private partnership (P3).

The third panel of the day—Extending the Reach of Rail Transit—was moderated by David Peter Alan, Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition and RUN Board Member. The first presenter, Thomas R. Hickey, is a native Philadelphian, Chair of the Streetcar Committee of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and Chief Development Officer for Virginia Railway Express (VRE). Hickey reviewed the history of the development of rail and transit

networks in the Philadelphia area, and described how Philadelphia’s neighborhoods benefited from the streetcars that run on city’s streets. He said that Philadelphia has the largest streetcar system in the United States; only Toronto’s is bigger in North America. The next presenter, Ted Dahlberg, Manager of the Office of Freight and Aviation Planning for DVRPC, cautioned conference attendees to remember the importance of freight when considering starting new passenger rail services on existing rights-of-way. He said that 203 of the 352 municipalities in the region have rail freight service and called freight-oriented development an anti-sprawl measure.

***Advocacy is, obviously, a major factor in achieving more and better rail service for everyone.***

The panel concluded with Steve Fittante, Director of Local Programs Support at NJT and a former County Transportation Director, notably in Middlesex County. There he established a number of shuttle bus routes, which augmented NJT bus and rail services in the county. Fittante described the Middlesex County system he established, as well as other community transit systems that connected with local rail transit. He said that sometimes, “Small is beautiful,” that small transit systems can save money for counties and other governmental units, while providing much-needed mobility including connectivity with rail transit.

The final panel of the day focused on Best Practices for More Effective Advocacy moderated by Andrew Albert, RUN’s Vice Chair. Panelists were Naomi Roberson, of Smith Memorial Playground, Nico Amador, of RAGE, and Jeff Marinoff, of the South Jersey Citizens’ Advisory Committee. Ms. Roberson spoke about her (and others) efforts to get SEPTA to run the #3 bus to Smith on weekends, and how they organized to achieve this goal, which was ultimately successful.

Nico Amador spoke about RAGE’s efforts to end SEPTA’s policy of placing a gender on their monthly rail passes, a problem with transgendered riders, and conductors harrasing them, while Jeff Marinoff spoke about his successful efforts—with virtually no elected officials’ help—in getting a transfer station on NJ Transit’s River Line, connecting that line with PATCO’s line between Lindenwold and Philadelphia. Advocacy is, obviously, a major factor in achieving more and better rail service for everyone.

The conference ended on a positive note. Former SEPTA CAC Chair Aissia Richardson described how she became interested in transit, for her own benefit and that of the community. She contrasted her attitude with that of her grandfather, who never used transit and who would have celebrated his 100th birthday on the day of the conference, if he were still alive. “I’m delighted to be a transit advocate at this time in our history,” she concluded. RUN Treasurer Gary Prophet summed up the day’s proceedings, adding that advocates need to not only be “passionate and persistent” but also need to help each other and keep on pushing.

## SAMPLING PHILADELPHIA TRANSIT

*(Continued from page 8)*

“Lindenwold High Speed Line” back to Center City Philadelphia.

Hickey explained that timing is crucial when planning a transit tour. It is necessary to program meals, opportunities for snacks and “restroom breaks” into the schedule. Connection time is also important; if it is too short, there is a substantial risk of a misconnect. If it is too long, the participants can get bored during the long wait. Hickey had planned for a 35-minute connection at Pensauken, but it was possible to make the earlier Camden train, with a five-minute connection. That, along with another quick connection to a commuter train at Suburban Station, allowed the group to finish the tour an hour earlier than planned, without sacrificing any segments.

The commuter train from Suburban Station went to Media, and the group got off at Clifton-Aldan Station to ride the Sharon Hill streetcar, an interurban-style line whose cars use pantographs to draw power from overhead wires. Crews were working on the wires over part of the line, so SEPTA gave the group a surprise; a bus segment that was not part of Hickey’s

itinerary. The last segment of the tour was a ride on the Media Line (similar to the Sharon Hill Line) to its terminal. A long segment of traditional street-running in Media capped off the ride.

The group arrived in Media for dinner at the Town House, located one block from the end of the line, and one of Hickey’s favorite restaurants. Participants exchanged “rail stories” and became better-acquainted over dinner. About 8:00, after a long day of riding and learning about the area’s transit, it was time for the group to disburse, with several members boarding the streetcar to start on their journey home. Their RUN experience was over.

While professional planners outnumbered rail advocates at the Friday conference, the tour participants came from the advocacy community. Twelve of the conference attendees stayed for the tour. Three live in the Philadelphia area, while the others were RUN members from elsewhere in the country. Among the places represented were New Jersey (three Lackawanna Coalition members, including this writer); Cleveland; Chicago; Oklahoma; Washington, DC; and Norfolk, VA. Eight stayed

for the entire tour, including dinner in Media. Charles Graham, an operations supervisor with SEPTA, was also on hand for the entire day to help ensure that everything ran smoothly.

Everything did run smoothly, and all participants said that the tour was an enjoyable and informative experience.

Hickey has led tours for transit managers at APTA meetings for many years, although he said that he had started them for planners many years ago. This marked the first time that he had led such a tour for rider advocates. In a conversation over dinner, Hickey praised the tour participants, saying that they did not complain and showed great interest, and there was less attrition among attendees than on some of his other tours. High marks of this sort from the nation’s most experienced transit-tour leader should have a positive effect on the prestige and credibility of RUN, its members, and the rider-advocacy community. It appears that he enjoyed giving the tour as much as everybody else enjoyed taking it.

*David Peter Alan is Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition and a member of the RUN Board.*

### See any red on your address label?

It means your dues are past due!

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

## WHEN WILL THE IL ROUTES BEGIN?

*(Continued from page 3)*

### **Mix and match the routes to make a new one.**

So IDOT developed a creative alternative: Run the trains into Western Illinois over the BNSF's former Burlington Route via Aurora, Mendota and Princeton, and then switch them to the former Rock Island just west of Wyanet where the BNSF crosses the Iowa Interstate on a viaduct out in the corn fields. By building an interlocking at each end and a gently sloping 4,000-foot ramp the two railroads would be connected so that the new passenger trains could use the Iowa Interstate for the last 53 miles into the Quad Cities.

The cheaper alternative wasn't all that cheap, of course. The connecting ramp at Wyanet initially was budgeted at \$26 million, but those estimates expanded over time. So did the improvements needed on the Iowa Interstate, especially after federal legislation required the installation of Positive Train Control. Ultimately, the project was awarded \$177 million in federal funds and another \$45 million from the state.

But the work still hasn't started, and the reasons why are not all that clear. Neither IDOT nor Amtrak will speak for the record, saying only that opening of the service has now been pushed back from the original 2013 target date to 2016. Rumors are that Iowa Interstate has been less than cooperative, demanding more improvements than Amtrak and IDOT believe necessary to fit passenger trains onto the currently all-freight railroad.

"It isn't really an all-fleshed-out project as far as interconnectivity between the two railroads," IAIS President Jerry Lipka told the *LaSalle News-Tribune* nearly a year ago. "I personally don't see any construction starting until 2015."

On May 13, IDOT confirmed that the project is delayed. The best estimate officials now will give is "late 2015."

### **Quad Cities could be Illinois' biggest passenger-train success.**

The lag is painful because all signs point to the Quad Cities trains becoming the most successful of Illinois' state-sponsored routes.

If that seems fanciful, consider this: Currently, the busiest piece of passenger railroad in the state is the 184-mile Chicago-Springfield segment of the Chicago-St. Louis Lincoln Service route. But the Quad Cities, which are about 20 miles closer to Chicago than Springfield, are four times bigger in population.

And while Springfield has only one industry, state government, the Quad Cities have real industries—John Deere, Alcoa, 3M and dozens of less well known factories that build complex machinery for customers around the world. This classic American smokestack community also has 40 colleges and universities. Prospects for a passenger-rail corridor bode very strong—if the state can only deliver the trains.

But who knows when that will be? Every launch date so far has been pushed back, and as another construction season ticks relentlessly away, work on the Wyanet Connection and the IAIS upgrade have not yet begun.

### **Don't buy that ticket to Rockford yet—and definitely not Dubuque.**

The prospects don't look much prettier for Illinois' second long-promised new rail corridor, the former Black Hawk route across the top of the state from Chicago to Rockford, Freeport, Galena and Dubuque, IA, located, like St. Louis, just across the Mississippi from Illinois.

Unlike the Quad Cities route, Chicago-Rockford-Dubuque lacks a strong end point with a big population and a thriving economy. The biggest city on the route, Rockford, is still trying to find its way back to prosperity after three decades of globalization, NAFTA and offshoring plundered it of some of its most lucrative industries. Absent that 2006 political deal to double service on the original Downstate routes, Rockford probably wouldn't have been slated for a startup at all.

The Rockford startup also received a recent setback when IDOT announced it was changing the route the trains are to follow on their way out of Chicago. When a final route choice was announced in 2012, IDOT said it would use Canadian National's former Illinois Central Iowa Division alignment all the way. The reason—although IDOT never conceded it—was that the IC route was the cheapest alternative because the route was already there, intact, and no new connections were needed.

Advocates never liked the IC route. It followed a circuitous path out of Chicago, and because it had never been part of Metra's commuter rail system it had no suburban station locations. Basically, it ran through sparsely populated Chicago industrial tracts until it reached cornfields, avoiding most of the bigger suburbs and keeping away from the expressways that might have brought passengers to the trains.

Instead, the advocates complained, the trains should have been rerouted directly northwest aboard Metra's Milwaukee West Line through Elgin, then onto the former Chicago & Northwestern line to just outside Rockford, where a switch to the CN's former IC Iowa Division would occur. In addition to being more direct, the Metra routing would have enabled the trains to collect large numbers of suburban passengers at busy Metra stations such as Bensenville, Elgin and

*(Continued on page 12)*

## WHEN WILL ILLINOIS' ROUTES ACTUALLY OPEN?

*(Continued from page 11)*

Schaumburg, where large parking lots and nearby expressway ramps already were in place to provide easy access.

But IDOT nixed the idea because remote-controlled interlockings would have to be built to cross the trains over from Metra to the C&NW (now Union Pacific) track west of Elgin at Big Timber and again from the UP to CN at Cherry Valley, east of Rockford.

***IDOT realizes the advocates were right.*** Until two months ago, that is, when IDOT suddenly announced it had decided on the Metra/UP route after all and had found the money--\$223 million in state funds--to build the necessary interlockings and upgrade UP's unsignaled freight track between Big Timber and Cherry Valley.

IDOT's not saying why it came to its senses, but insiders say CN was putting

up resistance very similar to what IAIS was demanding for use of its track on the Quad Cities route: too much money for too many improvements. Now the cost of the interlockings at Big Timber and Cherry Valley began to look reasonable.

Unfortunately, getting the new interlockings built is pushing out the timetable for the Rockford trains just as far as it's been pushed for the Quad Cities trains—to late 2015. And just to add salt to the wound, IDOT has announced that the lone daily train will run only to Rockford and back. IDOT and CN are still discussing the improvements needed to get the trains to the River.

### ***Buddy, can you spare a coach?***

And nobody is talking about where the rolling stock will come from. Every car in Amtrak's hard-pressed Midwestern Horizon fleet already is in service. There's nothing to spare for a startup. Originally IDOT and Amtrak were planning to

cascade old Horizon cars down to the startup routes as the new Next Generation bi-levels funded by the 2009 Stimulus Act began replacing the old equipment.

But now the Next Gen production run itself is delayed, with an ever optimistic IDOT saying it expects the first "pilot" cars to appear in early 2016 and the first production cars to be delivered in late 2016.

Insiders say that's wishful thinking. The Nippon Sharyo plant at Rochelle, IL, hasn't turned out its first Next Gen car yet, and the latest notices from Japan say that the fleet's innovative Crash Energy Management technology absorbed more energy than the engineers had calculated when it recently was given its first test. The more you look at Illinois' two new routes the more it looks as if "All aboard!" has been replaced by "Back to the drawing board."

*F.K. Plous is director of communications at Corridor Capital LLC..*

## FROM THE SOUTHWEST CHIEF FRONT

***By J.W. Madison***

***New Mexico:*** A funding bill made it through the recent "30-day" session of the NM legislature, allocating \$50,000 for studies to ascertain the benefits of keeping the *Chief* where it is, emphasis on economic and development benefits. This true bill is a step up from the Memorial my group instigated during the last session. No money in a memorial.

\$20,000 of this will be used by the Legislative Council Service and \$30,000 by the University of New Mexico's Bureau of Business and Economic Research. The NMDOT will be studying the Lamy-Raton right of way (tracks, signals, bridges) using its own funds.

Rep. Roberto Gonzales and Sen. Phil Griego will be pushing all this during the next, or "60-day" legislative session.

Mr. Gonzales is planning Interim Transportation Committee meetings this June, to which they might invite legislators from Colorado and Kansas.

(Information courtesy the NM Branch, *SW Chief Coalition* )

***Kansas:*** As in Colorado, various communities are putting in for TIGER grants for upgrading and rail replacement on some of the slowest segments.

Passenger Rail Oklahoma and possibly others have pointed out that the issue of keeping the *Chief* where it is vs. rerouting via the Southern Transcon is somewhat more complicated in Kansas than in CO or NM, in that a reroute would abandon several small Southwest Kansas towns but would add populous Wichita and surrounding areas. Some people (like Rails Inc) like the idea of extending

the Heartland Flyer up to Wichita and Newton, where it would connect with the *Chief*.

***Colorado:*** Some pretty big news here: HB 1161 supports continuance of the *Chief* and studying the proposed reroute of the La Junta-Trinidad segment to pick up Pueblo and Walsenburg. This would enable direct *Chief* service to over 150,000 more people and close the Albuquerque-Denver Rail Gap by about 85 miles. This bill made it through and was recently signed by the Governor.

(Information courtesy of Rick Klein, La Junta City Manager)

Want to learn more? Check the last Newsletter or contact me.

*J.W. Madison is president of Rails Inc., based in Albuquerque, NM.*

# NYC'S VAST TRANSIT SYSTEM ABOUT TO GET EVEN BIGGER

*(Continued from page 1)*

the Century 21 store, the Woolworth Building, the South Street Seaport and the shopping mall which will replace J&R Music World's suite of stores. The station on the #1 line—Cortlandt Street—has not yet been built, but will soon be under construction with the completion of 1 World Trade Center, also known as the Freedom Tower.

The next expansion of the transit system is one that the City of New York helped finance—the #7 train extension to 11th Avenue/34th Street, also known as the Javits Center, for the convention center that it sits outside of. The #7 line, already one of the busiest in the system, running from Main Street in Flushing, Queens to Times Square, will grow by one station to the west and south from Times Square. It will serve not only the Convention Center, but the thousands of new apartments and offices that are part of the Hudson Yards development.

Unfortunately, another station on the line—10th Avenue—has not been built, and will not be part of the initial #7 line expansion. Many of us have lobbied for this station to be built while the line was being extended, arguing that it will cost far more to build it later, and the 10th Ave/41st Street station would have been a very busy one indeed, with the thousands of new apartments that have been built in the area. While an area has been set aside on the line for the eventual construction of this station, it will, sadly, not be in the initial operation of the extension. The Javits Convention Center is frequently a bastion of activity, with many tour buses, hotel shuttle buses, city buses, and courtesy vans occupying large tracts of land around the Center. It is hoped that this very convenient subway extension—making the Convention Center just minutes from Times Square and Grand Central—will eliminate the need for so many buses in the vicinity. The 11th Avenue/34th Street station incorporates a new type of escalator in the

NYC Transit System—and it is this particular type of escalator that has delayed the original opening date of the station (and extension) for several months. It is now hoped that the kinks can be worked out, and the extension will open by October or November.

The third piece of the major expansion story for the New York Subways is Phase One of the 2nd Avenue Subway, which is scheduled to open in December of 2016. This is a most eagerly-anticipated extension of the system, and one that has caused much distress and dismay to the Upper East Side. While most of the construction is, naturally, occurring underground, major barriers, containers, muck houses, and other structures have taken up residence along 2nd Avenue, putting some businesses in distress, closing others, and narrowing the avenue substantially in places. Hopefully, it will all be worth it, as a major north-south route in Manhattan is born, taking some of the stress (and crowding) off of the Lexington Avenue line (4,5,6), and making the eastern end of the Upper East Side much more convenient. In fact, it will be the Q train that will serve the four new stations in phase one: 63rd St/Lexington Ave, 72nd St/2nd Ave, 86th St/2nd Ave, and 96th St/2nd Ave. Phase two will take the line further north into Harlem, while phase three and four will take it into East Midtown, and down to Water Street in Lower Manhattan. When the line enters phases three and four, a new line, the T, will serve the length of 2nd Avenue. As the Q line serves Astoria now, along with the N line, it is hoped that when the 2nd Ave line begins operation, the W line will, once again, join the Astoria line.

Of course, there are other major expansion plans in store for the New York area, but these will involve the Long Island Rail Road's East Side Access Plan, bringing those trains into Grand Central Terminal. When this happens, the Long Island Rail Road will offer trains on their branches to either Penn Station or Grand Central. Those wishing to travel to

Atlantic Ave/Barclays Center in Brooklyn will have to change to a shuttle train in Jamaica. Currently all branches (with the exception of the Port Washington Branch) have either direct service to Brooklyn, or an across-the-platform transfer to Brooklyn. The new shuttle service will operate from a new platform—platform F—which will require a transfer involving stairs and/or an escalator, plus much more walking. This is due to a new Jamaica reconfiguration plan, which maximizes throughput through the Jamaica Terminal, but without a doubt makes the trip to Brooklyn less convenient.

Finally, when the Long Island Rail Road begins serving Grand Central Terminal, this will free up slots in Penn Station, which will make it possible for Metro-North trains to begin serving Penn Station, certainly from the New Haven line, via Amtrak's Hell Gate Bridge. Many elected officials from the Bronx are hoping for some new stations along the route, such as Co-Op City, Parkchester, Morris Park, and Hunts Point, to name a few. These new stations would give Bronx residents and visitors a speedy ride from the Northeast Bronx to Penn Station. Additionally, Metro-North's Hudson Line could also begin serving Penn Station, via Amtrak's West Side line.

New Yorkers love and utilize their transit facilities—so much so that the vast majority of transit users in the U.S. are right here in the Big Apple! With the expansions under way and planned, even more New Yorkers will have transit options at their fingertips. We can expect ridership to grow even faster than it is now, as more and more people recognize what just about every New Yorker already knows: the subway, bus, and commuter rail system is THE way to get around!

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

# THE ST. LAWRENCE AND ATLANTIC RAILROAD RESTORATION PROJECT (SLR)

*By Richard Rudolph  
Chair, Rail Users' Network*

Tony Donovan, the founder and President of the Maine Rail Transit Coalition (MRTC), and other rail advocates have been working tirelessly to establish commuter rail service on the line that the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad operates between Portland and Auburn but wants to abandon. The Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments recently submitted on their behalf an application for a TIGER VI (Transportation Investment Generating Recovery) planning grant to study the potential for restoring passenger rail service between Maine's two largest population centers, Portland and Lewiston/Auburn. If awarded, this planning grant would provide funding for an environmental assessment and final engineering required to address operational and logistical questions.

The proposed St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad Restoration Project (SLR) builds off of several earlier Maine DOT studies: a 2004 environmental assessment, a cost feasibility study completed in 2005 and the "Portland North" study which was funded through the FRA's New Starts Program in 2011. It is also based on the work that the Maine Rail Transit Coalition completed in 2013, "The Smart Growth Mobility Project." This study was funded by a coalition of groups including the National Association of Realtors, Sierra Club and the Tilliston Charitable Foundation. It examined the feasibility and impact of restoring the 30-mile rail corridor between Portland and Auburn.

The Saint Lawrence and Atlantic rail line which is owned by the state passes through Falmouth, Yarmouth and New Gloucester, and near the Auburn-Lewiston Municipal Airport. Beyond that, there is the potential to connect

to recreational areas in Oxford County (Bethel ski areas and the Oxford Casino) and onward to Montreal.

The SLR project would restore a critical component of the state's rail system to a "State of Good Repair," adding 30 miles of railway to Class 3 and 4 welded rail which is required for higher speed passenger service. The Back Cove Trestle Bridge between Falmouth and Portland would also be restored, providing access to Portland's waterfront. The swing bridge has been stuck in the open position ever since a fire occurred in 1984.

The MRTC envisions running 22 daily round trips from the Lewiston Junction Road Station in Auburn to the Portland OceanGate terminal at India Street in Portland with stops at Pineland in

***Rail advocates have been working tirelessly to restore passenger rail service between Maine's two largest population centers, Portland and Lewiston/Auburn.***

Pownal, Yarmouth Village and Falmouth using Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs). These are lighter and more efficient than conventional rail cars. Less frequent service would be offered on weekends and holidays. A shuttle bus service is also envisioned to bring passengers to and

from the Auburn Municipal Airport and downtown Lewiston/Auburn.

The start-up costs for the project would be approximately \$138 million with the state providing \$27 million through its bonding authority, another \$20 million in private investments and the rest from federal transportation grants. The annual cost of the service would be about \$38 million and that expense, according to Donovan, could be covered by user fares and "value capture" revenue-generation techniques. The model would involve recouping investment in the rail infrastructure by capturing additional tax revenues generated by raising property values along the rail corridor. Under MRTC's plan some of the additional tax revenue generated by the new economic development, which would occur within three-quarters of a mile around each of the proposed rail stations, would be used to support the service. This would require each community along the right of way to make its own decision as to how the projected increase in tax revenue will be used.

This is certainly a worthwhile project for further study, as it has the support of the Maine Congressional Delegation, the Auburn and Portland City Councils, town councils along the entire corridor, the Maine Association of Realtors and MaineDOT, but it is not at all clear that it will be funded this year. TIGER applications to the U.S. Department of Transportation for fiscal year 2014 totaled \$9.5 billion, 15 times the \$600 million set aside for the program, demonstrating the continued need for transportation investment nationwide. The Department received 797 eligible applications, compared to 585 in fiscal 2013, from 49 states, U.S. territories and the District of Columbia. At least four of these proposals have been submitted by various stakeholder groups in Maine.

# A NOT-VERY-MODEST PROPOSAL

*By J.W. Madison*

We have a long history in America of scrambling our private and public policies (our capitalism and socialism, if you will) so that we miss out on the best of both. An example for us rail advocates is the way we operate passenger rail service at the national level. Consider these:

**One:** Our passenger rail model is insanely upside-down in comparison to that of every single other mode of transportation in America. That is to say, one erratically managed, under-funded and ethically flabby passenger train corporation, neither properly private nor properly public, operating as a barely-tolerated intruder on privately owned infrastructure.

**Two:** All our other passenger transportation modes (and some of our freight modes) feature both private and public moving parts operating more-or-less reliably and serving just about everywhere, on publicly owned infrastructure.

**Three:** There exist private operators, with proven "track" records, who could make a go of passenger (and express) Rail service on our under-served track segments, or on segments yet to be restored, if our passenger rail operating model were right side up. Airlines, truckers, bus companies and boat owners don't have to own and maintain their rights-of-way.

**Four:** We just plain don't have enough tracks to serve all our rail needs.

So Rails Inc urges all passenger rail advocates to get behind these:

**1)** Establishment of a publicly-funded "Rail Interstate" system (tracks, station stops and signalling) which would re-connect abandoned and under-served areas once fully served by passenger rail, and bring new service to most cities and sizable communities built after the ascendancy of the automobile.

**2)** Opening up of long-distance passenger rail service to reasonably-regulated competition, both private and public. It's obvious that Amtrak, if it deserves to exist at all as a national carrier (or actually cares to), could use it.

To further explain:

\* Much of this trackage can be located right alongside our existing freight tracks.

\* We're not recommending the confiscation or seizure of any freight tracks. After all, the Class Ones and many short lines are doing a pretty good job of hauling their stuff. But the major freight tracks are getting crowded and Big Freight is no friendlier to passenger rail than it ever was. Much can be done with modern train control, but we need more track capacity.

\* We're not talking "High Speed Rail" here. Not yet. Class 4 (80 mph) is good enough until after the "Rail Interstate" starts generating ridership and tax revenue. After that, track speeds can be boosted with grade crossing separation, advanced train control and Talgo-style trainset design. We consider it more important to go everywhere anytime at highway speeds than to go a few places super fast.

\* A bonus benefit to our proposal would be to inform and clean up our never-ending discussions and arguments over "Subsidy," cost-vs.-benefit and return on investment; arguments that presently compare four or five apples and one lemon.

In short, let's run our national passenger rail network like we do all our others: socialism below the wheels (or keels) and capitalism above. Let the taxpayers fund the infrastructure, not the vehicles. Transportation infrastructure is a public good, like libraries, police and fire departments. They don't make money, they save it.

This article is an introduction, or "thinking out loud," piece. We have begun to work on the more realistic cost-benefit aspects of this, how it can fit in with other initiatives, etc. We have a long way to go. Stay tuned.

*J.W. Madison is president of Rails Inc., based in Albuquerque, NM.*

## ***Like the newsletter? Care to make it better?***

Why not send us an article, so we can possibly include it in the next edition!

Send your article to [rrudolph@fairpoint.net](mailto:rrudolph@fairpoint.net), and get published!

**FROM THE RUN  
BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS**

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, 55 River Road, Steep Falls, ME 04085

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

**Rail Users' Network  
55 River Road  
Steep Falls, ME  
04085**



**PLEASE BECOME A MEMBER OF RUN...**

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**

---

Advocacy or Advisory Group or Agency Name (affiliation if appropriate)

---

Name of individual Applicant (or group, Agency, or Company Contact Person's Name)

---

|                |      |                |             |
|----------------|------|----------------|-------------|
| Street Address | City | State/Province | Postal Code |
|----------------|------|----------------|-------------|

---

|              |            |        |
|--------------|------------|--------|
| Phone number | Fax Number | E-Mail |
|--------------|------------|--------|

Enclosed are dues of:

- \$40 (individual/family)
- \$100 (Advocacy or Advisory Group)
- \$250 (Public Agency or Bureau)
- \$250 (Private Carrier or For-For-Profit)

**Mail to Rail Users' Network, 55 River Rd., Steep Falls, Me. 04085 USA**

