



## *Conference Proceedings*

Statewide Conference On:

# **HIGH-SPEED RAIL - CRITICAL TO NEW YORK STATE'S ECONOMIC FUTURE**

Wednesday, March 7, 2001

Convention Center @ Oncenter, Syracuse, NY

*Presented by:*

**EMPIRE CORRIDOR RAIL TASK FORCE**



CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

STATEWIDE CONFERENCE ON

**HIGH SPEED RAIL – CRITICAL TO NEW YORK  
STATE’S ECONOMIC FUTURE**

SYRACUSE, NEW YORK  
MARCH 7, 2001

*Sponsored by:*

**EMPIRE CORRIDOR RAIL TASK FORCE**  
CENTRAL NEW YORK REGIONAL PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL (SMTC)  
CSX TRANSPORTATION

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EMPIRE CORRIDOR RAIL TASK FORCE  
SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL (SMTC)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In May 1997, the Empire Corridor Rail Task Force (Task Force) was created as an outgrowth from the Central New York Rail Conference, sponsored by the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board (CNYRPDB) and the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC). The voting membership consists of elected County Legislative Chairs from across the Empire Corridor, from the Hudson River to Lake Erie, representing a population of over 3.5 million. The purpose of the Task Force is to actively encourage the improvement and expansion of rail passenger and freight service in the upstate portion of the Corridor, and promoting its linkage with the national and global economy.

Activities undertaken by the Task Force include:

- Encouraging ongoing capital funding of Amtrak
- Supporting enhanced Empire Service product line in the upstate portion of the corridor
- Working with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to develop a statewide High Speed Rail plan
- Working towards the development of a High Speed Rail Initiative
- Co-sponsoring the 1998 Marist Poll on Rail Passenger Service in New York State
- Examining and encouraging the resolution of equity in railroad taxation
- Encouraging growth of economic development in conjunction with rail freight/passenger improvements
- Supporting the study of rail transportation/land use to encourage economic development
- Encouraging the passage of legislation in the State Legislature to support rail initiatives with adequate funding
- Providing a forum to discuss short line railroad issues
- Active participation in the Governors Passenger Rail Advisory Council

The Task Force has a Technical Committee of knowledgeable professionals to develop and produce technical reports and background memorandums to allow the Task Force membership to debate, discuss and resolve key strategies to improve the corridor operations and the economic impacts on this key segment within New York State. Reports have been issued on such critical subjects as incremental improvements for high speed rail passenger service and the impact of taxation on New York State railroads.

The 1997 Rail Conference was successful in establishing rail passenger and freight issues as a new focus for various government entities, and in providing a forum to allow partnerships to develop with the private sector railroads.

The purpose of the **2001 Statewide Conference: *High Speed Rail - Critical to New York State's Economic Future***, was to build upon the successes to date and to accelerate rail improvements in the state with a primary focus on economic development and job creation. The conference was set up with key presentations focusing on freight partnerships, high speed rail and economic development and a keynote address on high speed rail in New York and other corridors. After the presentations there were three breakout sessions to further advance discussion. Background was provided to the panels and attendees and a question was formulated to enhance discussion. After the sessions were completed the panels brought action items back to the conference for consideration.

The panels included:

- **Intermodal Connectivity:** Is it desirable to have the Empire Corridor function as a spine of intercity travel while utilizing a network of connecting, dedicated services feeding this spine? Does this increase the marketability of Empire Service and enhance the opportunities for bus transit? How do participants get this included as part of a comprehensive non-auto state transportation plan?
- **High Speed Rail and Economic Development:** Should an economic analysis be conducted of the states proposed high speed rail plan to show what economic impacts will occur in this state if investment advances beyond the study stage?
- **Rail Taxes/Freight and the Economy:** What can be done to make the tax situation in New York competitive with surrounding states? What assistance can be developed to help our local and regional rail carriers address infrastructure needs caused by business generation?

There were five (5) recommended actions that resulted from the **Intermodal Connectivity** discussion. These included:

1. Having the NYSDOT undertake a leadership role and provide direction and financing of an intermodal plan for the state.
2. Using the State Operating Assistance Program (STOA) to facilitate intermodal connections.
3. Requesting the State develop policies and leadership for improving station facilities. This would include ensuring that station facility plans are forward-looking.
4. Enhancing communication between transportation providers to better coordinate schedules.
5. Providing coordinated information on the Internet to enhance rail/bus utilization.

Under the category of **High Speed Rail and Economic Development** there were six (6) recommendations for action. These included:

1. High speed rail should be more aggressively marketed to government and the general public. A picture of high speed rail needs to be defined.
2. An economic analysis to support high speed rail advocacy needs to be implemented to demonstrate economic as well as mobility benefits.
3. The State and Amtrak need to enhance frequencies and amenities on the Empire Corridor. Marketing of upstate city pairs and competitiveness of service needs to be developed.
4. The establishment of the linkage between upstate high speed rail service and tourism needs to occur.
5. US Customs and Immigration needs to streamline procedures at the US/Canada border to reduce bottlenecks.
6. The State should position itself to take advantage of the passage of the High Speed Rail Investment Act, as well as actively support passage of the measure. Business leaders and local elected officials should also actively lobby for passage of this measure

The last breakout session involved **Rail Taxation/Economics of Freight**. Out of this panel discussion came four (4) recommendations for action. These included:

1. Actively encouraging local and state governments to support the Governor's and Legislature's pending bills on taxation that hold communities harmless.
2. The NYSDOT and the Industrial Development Agencies (IDA's) need to create a database of "shovel-ready" industrial sites that are rail accessible.
3. The state Industrial Access Program should take into consideration carload volumes as well as job creation.
4. The State and IDA's should consider developing Brownfield's adjacent to rail facilities for rail yard expansion.

The above-mentioned action items were presented to the Conference attendees in a final general session. The Conference Chair will present them to the Task Force for action and further development.

# INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

## **WILLIAM E. SANFORD**

*CHAIRMAN:*

*EMPIRE CORRIDOR RAIL TASK FORCE \* ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE \*  
SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL, POLICY COMMITTEE*

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Welcome to Syracuse and to the second Rail Conference held in Central New York. Our message today is **High Speed Rail – Critical to New York State’s Economic Future**. This is an issue that has generated much thought and discussion, but with this conference we want to do much more, we want to generate action, development and a high speed rail transportation network that we can ride on in the near future, not just come back and talk about again and again.

The time for talk is passing us by. We need to act. Rail investment and partnerships with our freight and passenger railroads, as well as our manufacturing partners in the railroad business, will result in job creation and continued economic activity. We need to more clearly define this interaction.

With us today we have several experts working with the issues of rail transportation and economic impacts. Their message will be very important to us as we continue to advocate for a high speed rail system along the Empire Corridor.

This afternoon we will be moving into several breakout sessions to further define issues. Your comments and insights will be important as the moderators will be bringing forth recommendations and action points from these sessions for the Task Force (and all of us) to pursue. Your honest input is desired and solicited.

Onondaga County has secured a \$25,000 challenge grant. If we are able to generate interest here today that results in each community along the corridor to raise dollars from economic development groups, business groups, IDA’s, etc., we will be able to conduct an analysis of the corridor that will undoubtedly result in a plan for higher speed rail and economic development.

# KEYNOTE ADDRESS

## **PAUL H. REISTRUP**

*VICE PRESIDENT-PASSENGER INTEGRATION, CSX TRANSPORTATION*

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It's time to get moving **AGAIN**:

It's in New York State's interest to implement high speed rail. At one point the Empire Corridor was second only to the Northeast Corridor (NEC) from New York City to Washington. Now, others are overtaking and surpassing:

- Portland to Seattle (Oregon and Washington State)
- Richmond to Washington (Commonwealth of Virginia)

There is a need for urgency in developing plans and a strategy. Those ready with a plan stand to obtain substantial bond funding from the pending High Speed Rail Investment Act. CSXT stands ready to initiate a policy west of Hoffmans, but it must meet freight railroad criteria for joint operations.

We need to address the following:

- Major New York State Issues
- "Models" from other State Corridors
- Scope what is needed

The Empire Corridor has a good foundation. We have 95 miles at greater than 85 miles per hour (MPH), with 110 MPH for 27 miles (fastest in United States outside of the NEC). New Turbo trains are also coming on line that can accommodate the higher speeds.

New York State Issues:

- **Taxes.** Taxes are a major stumbling block and disincentive to any improvements, not only for high speed rail, but freight service capacity as well. The Governor and the Legislature have recognized the issue and are working to resolve it. Until this issue is resolved little substantial work can advance. CSXT cannot be asked to make improvements for passenger service that will result in substantially higher taxes.

- **Station Design.** Where do you need to stop and how should the stations be designed? Minimum requirements should be established so that facilities are built to accommodate growth, not just the status quo. Platforms should be required on both sides of the main line to reduce station delays and to improve operations. This would eliminate passenger trains crossing from one track to another to access platforms, as well as improving operations in cold weather when “straight-lining” the railroad occurs. “Straight-lining” happens when cold weather interferes with operation of the interlockings and switches.
- **Configuration of the trackage.** The configuration of the trackage is consistent with the station design mentioned earlier and impacts both capacity and reliability. Passenger operations must function well with existing freight system operations. Sections of passenger-only dedicated high speed track may be necessary to improve operations and capacity. Trip time reductions are more important than maximum authorized speeds. Reliability is necessary for both freight and passenger operations. We need to keep both distinctive customers satisfied for this to work.
- **Funding.** We need to establish the program and associated capital and operating costs and a method to fund the program. A program without a known funding mechanism has no value because it won’t be implemented.

There are also important safety issues that need to be part of the design and funding mix. These include:

- **Design speed goals.** For what purpose do you want to design the infrastructure? Dedicated passenger track can be designed for speeds over 100 MPH. Any work done on the existing main line track needs to consider slower freight operations as well as improved passenger speeds. Interlocking design and higher speed crossovers can also be included in the overall design to reduce running times.
- **Cab Signals/Positive Train Control (PTC).** The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requires cab signals on railroads that have speeds higher than 79 MPH. This would include freight engines as well as passenger locomotives. Improvement costs would need to consider these requirements. Included with cab signals is a requirement for PTC with positive train stops at higher speeds. PTC involves the application of data communications, automatic positioning systems, wayside interface units, on-board and control center computers, and other advanced technologies to manage and to control railroad operations. PTC can help reduce the probability of collisions between trains, collisions between trains and maintenance-of-way crews, and overspeed accidents. Overspeed accidents are those where a faster moving train overtakes a slower train on the same track. PTC systems can also enhance operations by reducing delays, improving track capacity and asset utilization, and improving running times.
- **Grade Crossings.** Crossings need to be consolidated or closed. At 125 MPH, you need to eliminate crossings altogether.

Now let's look at two existing models in other parts of the US:

- **Seattle – Portland**. This corridor runs from Eugene, Oregon to Vancouver, BC on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. They're building a separate 110 MPH track dedicated to high speed passenger service. Track centers are greater than the norm to accommodate greater separation of freight and passenger traffic; as well as to enhance roadway worker safety. This new tilt equipment is built by Talgo and has been extremely successful allowing higher speed on curves. With the introduction of the new equipment, ridership has seen substantial gains even before speeds have been increased.
- **Richmond – Washington DC**. This extension of the NEC was developed from a Federal study. It was successful because of the partnership approach of the participants. All parties utilizing the corridor had a role. The parties included:
  - Commonwealth of Virginia
  - Virginia Railway Express
  - CSX Transportation
  - Amtrak
  - Federal Railroad Administration
  - Norfolk Southern

Scope for improvements to the Empire Corridor:

- The State of New York and its partners need to implement the improvements east of Hoffmans, NY.
- Develop a scope for speeds over 90 MPH. Elements that need to be included in this are:
  - Accommodation of a dedicated, separate high speed track. Anything in the 110 to 125 MPH range requires separation from the freight traffic. In addition, the Turbo and other new trains have specifications for speeds of 125 MPH or better and the State plans call for 125 MPH. Why build for lower speeds?
  - Allow for a wide right-of-way. There is currently a four track ROW with two tracks on it. There is room.
  - Portions of the old West Shore Railroad ROW may be possible candidates for sections of the high speed passenger track. Also, in the section between Batavia and Depew there is the old, vacant, two track parallel Lehigh Valley ROW that has no curves and no grade crossings. That is another possible option.

- Station Configuration. Develop standards to avoid retrofitting later. It always costs more to go back and fix something you did not take into consideration up front.
- Grade Crossing Elimination. To run at higher speeds you need to eliminate crossings. The FRA won't allow 125 MPH trains with crossings. Plan now and develop a strategy and funding source to do this.
- Line Capacity – Freight Growth. Not only do we need to accommodate increased passenger capacity but maintain and plan for increased freight growth. Remember that freight is what pays the bills and the reason CSXT is in business. Freight customers must, and will, be provided for.
- Liability. CSXT has an agreement with Amtrak who has liability insurance. Any high speed proposals need to consider this, as liability protection is a cornerstone to dealing with the subject.

CSXT is developing guidelines with New York State and Amtrak to address some of the above issues and to move the process forward. CSXT is ready to talk and has been an active participant in both the Governors Rail Passenger Advisory Council and the Empire Corridor Rail Task Force. Amtrak needs to take an active lead in this endeavor and work with CSXT to develop an operations agreement.

The Empire Corridor Rail Task Force and its Chairman have been influential in bringing rail issues forward and initiating action. When I first came here several years back rail was not on anyone's radar screen. Things are very different now. I encourage the Chairman and the Task Force to continue the good work.

# HIGH SPEED RAIL – IT MAKES ECONOMIC SENSE

## **JEANINE IPSEN**

*MANAGER OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS  
BOMBARDIER TRANSPORTATION*

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### **Bombardier/ALSTOM Consortium:**

Bombardier and its Consortium partner ALSTOM are currently building and delivering America's first high speed trainsets. Bombardier and ALSTOM first teamed up on high speed rail projects in 1987, first for Train a' Grande Vitesse (TGV) projects in North America and later "incremental" high speed rail (more gradual increase in speeds on existing rights-of-way, in "mixed traffic" and with grade crossings).

### **The Northeast Corridor (NEC) Project:**

Due to the requirements of the NEC and to North American safety regulations, no existing overseas high speed rail equipment would have been able to operate on the NEC. Amtrak put out a world-wide solicitation call for trainsets in 1993 and tested several foreign-built trains on the corridor. Amtrak then took elements of a variety of high speed trains, and developed a specification that called for an entirely new technology. In May 1996, the Bombardier/ALSTOM Consortium was awarded a contract that included four elements: 1) design and manufacture of 20 high speed trainsets; 2) design and manufacture of 15 high-horsepower locomotives compatible with Amtrak's existing NEC fleet; 3) design and construction of 3 dedicated state-of-the-art maintenance facilities; 4) a ten-year contract for maintenance of the trainsets and facilities.

### **NEC Trainsets:**

Along with *Acela Commuter* and *Acela Regional*, the new *Acela Express* high speed trainsets are part of a new Amtrak Brand for the NEC. These trainsets incorporate service proven elements in an entirely new type of trainset. They further reduce the trip time between Washington and New York (where the Metroliner already operated up to 125 mph) and reduce the trip time between New York and Boston to about 3 hours (down from the original 4 hours 20 minutes). Top speed on the south end is now 135 mph and on the north end 150 mph, but even more important than top speed is the fact that the advance tilting system allows the trainsets to go through the numerous curves at higher speed without compromising safety or affecting passenger comfort. These trainsets are also the first to be built to meet the 1999 FRA Tier II Passenger Equipment Safety Standards, which include requirements for increased structural strength and energy absorption elements. Each trainset has one first class car, four business class cars, and a cafe car, with 304 revenue seats.

### Non-Electric Locomotive (NEL):

Because most corridors in the US looking at higher speeds are not electrified and because electrification can cost \$3-5 million/mile, the FRA decided that a new technology was needed and in early 1998 invited the industry to assist in development and demonstration of a prototype non-electric locomotive that could replicate the speeds and approach the acceleration of an electric locomotive. Later that year, Bombardier was chosen as the private sector partner and signed a cooperative agreement with the FRA for the joint development (with the cooperation of ALSTOM). The NEL is lightweight with a high power-to-weight ratio, designed to operate in revenue service up to 9 inches of cant deficiency, and geared for a maximum operating speed of 150 mph (with a 5,000 hp turbine engine). The NEL is to head to Pueblo, Colorado in April 2001 for high speed testing. Corridor demonstrations should begin this fall.

### Economic Impacts of High Speed Rail Projects to New York State:

The detail about the trainsets and NEL were to give the audience an appreciation for the fact that these are complex pieces of equipment that require a highly skilled work force. New York State provides a significant portion of that work force.

- Bombardier's Plattsburgh, NY plant is the final production facility for the powercars for the *Acela Express* trainsets and the high horsepower locomotives for Amtrak. In addition, much of the work of the NEL was performed in Plattsburgh, a 133,000 sq. ft. facility with a half-mile test track. Current employment is over 700 with over 100 of those employees involved only on the high speed equipment.
- Bombardier also has a facility in Auburn, NY that is used by Bombardier Aerospace and Bombardier Transportation, with total employment over 300. One impressive fact is that because employees at Auburn gained valuable expertise on HVAC (heat, ventilation, air conditioning) systems on the NEC project, as of March 2001 there are about 60 employees working on the HVAC systems for the NY subway cars.
- When ALSTOM acquired its facilities in Hornell (propulsion/motor shop, car shop, and engineering center, and truck/apparatus shop) in 1997, there were 50 employees. There are now over 700 employees and ALSTOM's goal is to increase that to 1000 by the end of 2003. Initially, 100% of the Hornell work force was involved in high speed rail projects, and virtually all the initial employment growth can be attributed to high speed rail.
- **Engine For Growth:** At both Bombardier and ALSTOM, important skills gained on the NEC project were transferred to other rolling stock projects. Some Consortium employees on the NEC project were sent to France for high tech training about HSR rolling stock. Subsequently, there has been cross-training at the US facilities. But the economic impact to NY State does not end with the employment numbers at the production facilities of the railcar builders (Keep in mind that Bombardier and ALSTOM are not the only high speed rail rolling stock manufacturers in NY State.) For every piece of rolling stock, a carbuilder purchases

hundreds of smaller pieces of equipment from subsuppliers, many of them in NY State. Therefore, high speed rail creates jobs on several levels.

**High Speed Rail = Economic Development:**

Here are some of the ways high speed rail makes economic sense:

- Direct rolling stock manufacturing jobs
- Secondary effect of training, etc.
- Jobs at rail car subsupplier companies
- Other rail industry manufacturing
- Passenger rail service employment
- Jobs related to tourism
- Lower costs to business travelers due to congestion

# PANEL DISCUSSION ISSUES

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## **Intermodal Connectivity**

### **Background:**

Many municipalities have invested or are in the planning stages of multimodal transportation facilities. These facilities usually consist of rail, intercity bus, and transit bus modes. The modes operate from the same facility, and occasionally have connecting services, but there is an absence of planned connectivity. Although some states, notably California, have instituted a comprehensive connecting bus network with Amtrak corridor service, it has not become a reality in New York State.

### **Question:**

Is it desirable to have the Empire Corridor function as a spine of intercity travel while utilizing a network of connecting, dedicated services feeding this spine? Does this increase the marketability of Empire Service and enhance the opportunities for bus transit? How do participants get this included as part of a comprehensive non-auto state transportation plan?

## **High Speed Rail and Economic Development**

### **Background:**

New York State is the home for facilities of some of the largest railcar manufacturers in the world. Two of these include Bombardier and Alstom. In many parts of the USA, and all over the globe, investment in higher speed rail transportation is providing high paying manufacturing jobs. There are many aspects of the economic impact felt by investment in high speed rail. There is direct employment by the manufacturers of the equipment, employment by the owners and operators of the equipment, tourism jobs, suppliers to the manufacturers and operators, and much more.

Tourism could be further enhanced by high speed rail improvements. Its impact on local economies could be significant.

The message of these economic impacts has never been clearly articulated to policy makers and investment in high speed rail in this country lags behind many (what were formerly considered) third world countries. New York State has developed a preliminary

State Rail Plan with some improvements to the Hudson Line of Amtrak. A study is planned for 2002/2003 to examine operating and infrastructure issues west of Albany.

**Question:**

Should an economic analysis be conducted of New York State's plan to show what economic impacts will occur in this State if investment in high speed rail advances beyond the study stage?

**Rail Taxes/Freight and the Economy**

**Background:**

The Empire Corridor Rail Task Force published a study of the railroad tax issue in 1999. The results of this study concluded that the tax situation for railroads in New York State creates a significant disincentive to invest in enhanced freight facilities and also has been a block to advancing any rail passenger improvements in the Empire Corridor. Both the railroads and the Task Force were concerned about the potential impact tax changes might have on municipalities. A cooperative process between the Task Force and the railroads seeking a "win-win" situation resulted in action by the Governors office and the New York State Legislature on this vital issue.

During this panel discussion, representatives from the railroad industry will provide an update on the legislative and litigation actions that have been occurring prior to this conference.

The availability of rail freight service, whether via Class 1 carriers, regional railroads or short line railroads, has had a key economic impact on our region. New business has created jobs and the cost effectiveness of rail service has allowed business that would otherwise leave our region stay and expand. Yet obtaining government funding to assist with this increase in development is difficult. Government funding is still primarily highway oriented. These impacts and opportunities will be examined during the second part of the panel discussion.

**Question:**

What can be done to make the tax situation in New York competitive with surrounding states? What assistance can be developed to help our local and regional rail carriers address infrastructure needs caused by business generation?

# SUMMARY OF THE INTERMODAL CONNECTIVITY BREAKOUT SESSION

## *Panelists:*

*DEWAIN FELLER, ROCHESTER RAIL TRANSIT COMMITTEE*

*MARTIN HULL, CAPITAL DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY*

*FRANK KOBLISKI, CNY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY*

*ROBERT LENZ, EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION*

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There was a consensus that it is desirable to have the Empire Corridor function as a spine of intercity travel, and that this would increase the marketability of the Empire Corridor and enhance the opportunities for bus transit. Creating intermodal connections will increase the number of origin-destination pairs for Amtrak, intercity bus companies, and transit authorities. New funding for connecting bus service could benefit bus companies and transit authorities.

There were no specific conclusions as to how this should be implemented; however the discussion centered around five basic recommendations:

- Several options should be explored for providing bus connections to the Empire Corridor stations,
- Stations that currently do not have facilities for intermodal connections need to be improved,
- Intermodal opportunities can be facilitated through improved communication and coordination between carriers,
- Existing intermodal options need to be made more user friendly through improvements in the delivery and availability of passenger information, and
- Leadership, direction and financial support from New York State are necessary to successfully achieve the first four recommendations.

## **Bus Connections**

Several options for providing bus connections were discussed:

- Encourage Trailways and Greyhound to serve Amtrak stations, either through co-location of facilities with Amtrak or by making a second downtown stop at the Amtrak station,
- Encourage transit authorities to reroute some city and regional transit buses to the Amtrak station, and
- Create dedicated "Thruway" buses.

One possibility was for the State to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for connecting bus services, and to award financing to the bus company/transit authority with the best proposal in each region. The RFP could go to Trailways, Greyhound, other private (transit and charter) bus companies and transit authorities.

It was suggested that it may not be possible to develop a uniform solution throughout the state, and each local region may have to make the decision as to which option(s) to implement. However, it was discussed that certain minimum standards should be set (e.g., one-seat rides should be provided to major destinations such as universities and surrounding population centers, instead of relying on connections via downtown circulator buses).

Within each region, there may need to be a mixture of solutions in order to provide connections to different markets. The markets could include connections to the downtown core, urban neighborhoods, local universities, other transportation hubs, large suburbs, outlying population centers and universities.

If a station is located along major transit bus corridors within a city, it may be relatively simple to provide connections to the transit bus system. It is more difficult to make connections to regional destinations (population centers, universities and other destinations that are outside of the immediate urbanized area). While several transit authorities operate regional (park and ride) bus routes, it may not always be practical to use these routes to serve the train station. If the train is late, it may be difficult to hold the bus until the train arrives. The exceptions to this are regional routes that can end their runs at the train station without a need to immediately turn around to start another run.

If a regional bus route can not be used for a certain destination, it may be necessary to provide a dedicated bus. Dedicated buses would provide the fastest and most-convenient service to the train station. However, a serious drawback to dedicated routes is that (being single purpose routes) they would attract much lower ridership than multi-purpose regional transit buses. The lower the ridership, the operating cost per passenger would be higher.

An issue is how to serve destinations that are outside of the service area of the existing transit authorities (or are in the service area of another transit authority). If an agreement cannot be reached with the transit authorities, it may be best to contract with Greyhound, Trailways or charter bus companies. If a Greyhound or Trailways route currently serves

the destination, it may be best to contract with the company that currently serves the destinations, as to avoid the problem of subsidizing competition.

### **Station Facilities**

Several cities on the Empire Corridor are in need of improving their station facilities in order to provide intermodal connections and improve passenger facilities, particularly Niagara Falls and Rochester. Stations that were recently renovated or constructed may need additional improvements to improve intermodal connections. Even the Syracuse station, which is a true intermodal station, may need improvements such as widened bus turning radii and a second Amtrak platform. The new stations under consideration in Lyons and Dunkirk should incorporate intermodal needs into their designs.

If connecting bus service is provided to outlying communities that do not have bus stations (Auburn was specifically mentioned), it may be desirable to construct/ renovate a facility that would provide amenities such as a waiting room, ticket counter and rest rooms. Unlike transit bus service, intercity travelers catching a bus to an Amtrak station are likely to have luggage and may arrive at the stop a considerable time before the bus departs. Passengers would not be inclined to catch a bus under these conditions, especially if there is inclement weather. The facilities could be on-street (they wouldn't necessarily have off-road bus bays) in a storefront, or they could be co-located with some other public facility.

All passenger facilities need to take into account special needs such as the elderly, wheelchair-bound passengers, and TTY phones for the deaf/hearing impaired.

Stations need to have easy-to-find kiosks or counters where passengers can get information on connecting buses and rental cars.

Station facility plans should be forward-thinking in order to accommodate increased Empire Corridor service frequencies and to accommodate potential future commuter rail and/or light rail connections.

### **Communication and Coordination**

Creating intermodal connections is more than building one headhouse for Amtrak and buses; it is a matter of creating seamless connections. A considerable amount of discussion was focused on the need to improve communication and coordination between Amtrak and other carriers. Where intermodal connections already exist or easily could exist, there are often communication and planning barriers. This is a problem not just with the bus companies, but also with MTA Metro North at the Poughkeepsie and Yonkers stations.

There needs to be a greater coordination of schedules between carriers. The carriers (including Amtrak) also need to coordinate planning efforts with other carriers.

In New York State, Greyhound and Trailways make the most money on the routes that parallel the Empire Corridor, not on the routes that intersect it. Thus, Greyhound and Trailways are likely to continue to be competitive with Amtrak, and this will limit their cooperation.

The issue of intermodal connections extends beyond making connections with buses and commuter rail. Rental cars should be easily available at major stations. There are currently some stations that are listed as having rental cars available, but the cars are at the airport, and passengers must find their own way of getting to the airport. It would be best for the rental car company to bring the car to the station if a passenger books a car in advance. The rental company could also provide transportation from the train station to their facility. If not, a bus connection should be made to the car rental facility.

### **Passenger Information**

Even when properly planned and coordinated intermodal connections are provided, it is necessary for passengers to be able to easily get schedule information. When a potential Amtrak passenger is considering taking the train, a deciding factor is whether they believe that they can get to their final destination on the other end. The passenger needs to be able to easily get route and schedule information from an integrated, user-friendly information source.

Connecting bus information to major markets such as universities and outlying population centers should be included in the Amtrak printed schedule, just as is the case with Amtrak Thruway buses. It would be desirable for the Amtrak web site to provide links to transit bus schedules and maps, and to information on car rentals.

### **State Leadership and Funding**

State leadership, direction and funding will be necessary in order to achieve the other goals. This is a statewide issue, and it needs to be handled on a statewide basis.

Since intermodal issues extend across department and organizational boundaries, it is necessary for the State leadership to begin with a commitment and direction from the Governor. All NYSDOT regions and departments need to be committed to intermodal goals. Leadership will be required to encourage transit authorities to cooperate.

It may be possible to reshape the State Operating Assistance Program (STOA) to facilitate intermodal connections. Most likely, expanded funding or a new funding source will be needed to create bus connections. Tying the proposed changes to a funding source will make the program work. Depending on the connecting services that

are desired, it may be necessary to have dedicated buses administered by NYSDOT, or grants provided to transit authorities, intercity bus companies, charter bus companies, or private transit bus companies.

An adequate level of State funding will be necessary to improve station facilities, especially considering Amtrak's severely constrained budget. State leadership and policy will be needed to encourage station improvements in cities where the local leadership is less committed to rail, and to ensure that Empire Corridor stations have facilities that support intermodal connections. The State should also ensure that station plans are forward-looking.

Since many transit authorities are likely to put connections to the Amtrak station on the bottom of their priority list, State leadership will be necessary to encourage the interest and cooperation of the transit authorities.

State funding is probably needed in order to make major improvements to passenger information. One of the best tools for passenger information is the Amtrak web site, which is a national resource funded and maintained by Amtrak. If New York State wants a higher level of information for the Empire Corridor (possibly requiring considerably higher data maintenance), it may be necessary for NYS to provide the additional funding and logistical support required.

Another option would be to establish a corridor-related website similar to those excellent sites provided by the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the Capitol Corridors for their rail operations.

# SUMMARY OF THE HIGH SPEED RAIL / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BREAKOUT SESSION

## ***Panelists:***

*THOMAS BLANCHARD, METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION*

*JEANINE IPSEN, BOMBARDIER*

*HUGH LORDON, KEY BANK NA*

*PAUL REISTRUP, CSX TRANSPORTATION*

*STEVE SALATTI, EMPIRE STATE PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION*

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There was a general consensus of the panel that high speed rail will have significant positive impacts (if implemented) on the economy of New York State and the Central New York region in particular. There were several areas of discussion that emphasized the need to “get moving” and resulted in recommended actions for the Task Force. These included:

## **Getting The Message Across**

Mr. Blanchard from the Metropolitan Development Association (MDA) gave an example of an industry that is considering establishing facilities in New York State. That industry is high-tech, would employ thousands in the manufacturing sector, would generate tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of dollars in related infrastructure improvements, would create thousands of construction jobs, would reduce costs incurred by other New York businesses, and would result in cleaner air and add longevity to our State’s roads and bridges.

If such a company came knocking at its door, the MDA would guarantee that those in the economic development business and government would fall over each other to make sure this investment and jobs came to New York; not in 10 years, or 5 years, or even 3 years, but today. To the MDA, high speed rail across the Empire Corridor represents exactly this type of economic development opportunity. The issue is important enough that the MDA has incorporated development of high speed rail across the corridor within their Vision 2010 strategic plan for the region. The MDA is also working with members of the Advance Upstate New York Alliance (comprised of members of the MDA, Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce and the Buffalo-Niagara Partnership) to secure their interest and commitment to high speed rail.

Despite the interest of the MDA, its partners, and those attending the conference, it seems that too few people and organizations (including elected representatives) truly understand the importance of what high speed rail means in terms of the State's economic future.

As a result, the MDA frequently gets a “shrug of the shoulder response” when talking to people about high speed rail. It seems they don't believe it will happen, don't know what it is (is it those levitating trains I used to read about?), and certainly have absolutely no idea of the economic benefits that would be generated in their own backyard if high speed rail came to upstate New York in a timely fashion.

Therefore, the MDA believes the challenge is to better communicate information to decision-makers and the general public. The most useful information would contain answers to the fundamental question: *If high speed rail is developed across the corridor what will it mean to our community, our county and our region?* This educational process is not unique and New York is already behind.

As an example, Chambers of Commerce in 13 Southeastern cities have recently formed the Southeast Economic Alliance (SEA) to expand fast trains into Virginia, North Carolina and other southern States. They have raised \$240,000 to develop a strategy and business plan for high speed rail and a blueprint for lobbying for state and federal money for the project. The stated goal of the SEA is rapid implementation of competitive, reliable and safe high speed passenger service across the region. The SEA believes that improved passenger rail service is an important investment for that rapidly growing region and that it will drive billions of dollars in economic development. The SEA is committed to leveraging the business community to ensure that the Southeast Corridor becomes a reality and not just press releases. Quoting from an article in the Virginia Pilot, “local leaders were warned last month at a high speed rail seminar that they're not being aggressive enough about getting connected to high speed rail because its not viewed as a high priority by decision makers and the general population”.

The time is now to accelerate such an effort in the Empire State. The MDA and the business leadership of the Central New York region understand that getting linked to high speed rail is vital to the region's economy. Developing a truly 21<sup>st</sup> century transportation infrastructure significantly enhances our competitiveness. We need good roads and bridges; and (even) better air service; but high speed rail must be part of the equation and we need to make sure it is implemented in a timely fashion.

### **Economic Analysis**

There was strong agreement amongst the panelists and attendees at this breakout session that an economic analysis (such as that recommended by Chairman Sanford) is needed. In showing strong support for such an effort, the MDA (through its Foundation) has offered the Task Force \$25,000 as a challenge grant to kick-start such a project.

Many times studies are completed that focus on ridership or operational issues, yet the economic questions of “what's in it for me or my community?” remain unanswered.

What is needed is an analysis that addresses that question and where the results of the analysis can be used as a marketing tool for mobilizing support for implementation of a program. It's much easier to support something that has clear, easy-to-define positive economic impacts up front, than to wait years after an operational study is completed and then have to start the process. By then momentum and support are lost. The economic study must be a tool to demonstrate economic as well as mobility benefits clearly and without equivocation. Ms. Mary M. Rowlands, Director of the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council, voiced a need for such a study and expressed surprise that the necessary funding has not yet been raised.

### **Frequencies and Amenities**

The Empire Corridor, west of Albany, currently does not function as a true "corridor" in that frequencies are not conducive to developing a business clientele, and amenities available on other corridors (such as the Cascades and Pacific Surfliner) are lacking. While the corridor in New York State is currently operating with 30-year-old Amfleet equipment (with limited legroom and small windows), other corridors are receiving new equipment geared to the business and scenic environment of the regions traversed. Although New York State is investing in the rebuild of seven 25-year old Turbo trainsets, there are shortfalls to this equipment and already are known to have capacity restrictions.

An approach similar to California and other states, where traditional coaches and business class cars with wide windows and computer hook-ups have been built should be considered. Most of these cars are built in New York and, unlike the Turbo's, could be reordered. In addition, these cars would not be "orphans" and could be added to a train to increase capacity when conditions warrant, allowing for increased revenues and ridership. When the Pacific Northwest Corridor (Washington State) ordered Talgo trainsets, ridership rose well over 100 percent before speeds are even increased. Clearly, it's the perception of service quality, frequency, overall running time and amenities, not the fastest running time, which generates ridership and revenue.

### **Marketing**

In discussion of this subject, "marketing" was interpreted in two ways. Mr. Hugh Lordon of Key Bank suggested that one aspect of marketing was the need for greater regional and statewide coordination. Syracuse and Central New York can't be the only ones talking about the benefits of improved rail service. As part of that marketing effort there needs to be more partnering to secure support for high speed rail, whether that support is financial, legislative or political. We have seen all the effort and coordination amongst business leaders and politicians for the attraction of low-cost airlines. Shouldn't we be doing this for improved rail service, the so-called "third leg" of the transportation system, as well?

The other aspect of marketing discussed was the promotion of existing rail service. Currently there is no active promotion of the service provided beyond Albany to the west and there has apparently been no marketing analysis of the corridor. With Amtrak constrained by significant financial issues, is it realistic to expect it to pay for improved services desired by the State of New York and its citizens? Other states have “stepped up to the plate” providing a service plan or vision and have backed up the vision with funding and the coordinated promotion of their corridors and state. One only has to look at North Carolina, California and Washington to name just three (all three have excellent web sites to generate interest, information and potential ridership/tourism).

There was also a discussion of the ability to move between upstate city pairs, yet past efforts to market these by Amtrak were discouraged by the Northeast Corridor officials, who were required to put limited resources to those markets which would generate the greatest return. Marketing of upstate city pairs and competitiveness of service needs to be aggressively developed, and the State needs to be involved. The corridor west of Albany, although officially considered part of the Northeast Corridor, is apparently an orphan with few resources to address upstate needs. It was also noted that in different parts of the country where state DOT’s, authorities or tourism councils have become actively involved, the corridors have developed specific identities. Examples of this included the Cascades (Pacific Northwest), Capitol Corridor (California), Pacific Surfliners (California) and the Carolinian (North Carolina). The Empire Corridor needs an identity as well as a vision for service.

### **Tourism**

In relation to the corridor identity issue, it was discussed that a linkage must be established between upstate high speed rail service and tourism. State and local tourism officials (as well as Amtrak) need to be encouraged to develop a mutually beneficial rail/tourism plan. Opportunities discussed included the expanded Carousel Center (located next to the Amtrak station in Syracuse), which is expected to be a significant attraction for both in-state and out-of-state travelers. One consultant has suggested it would attract over 29 million visitors per year. In the Mohawk Valley the Adirondack Railway, which will soon be operating out of Union Station in Utica, has potential to become a major gateway to the Adirondack Park Region and could link directly to current and future corridor service. There is no major highway into the heart of this renowned wilderness and recreational region, which makes rail even more attractive. In the Genesee/Finger Lakes region there is potential of linking rail with the proposed hydrofoil operation across Lake Ontario from Rochester to Toronto. The consensus was that there are significant opportunities, few of which have been grasped to date.

### **Customs**

Customs is a continuing roadblock for travel beyond Niagara Falls to Toronto. Delays are frequent and rail passengers are treated to a “third world” experience that neither car nor air passengers are subjected to. Yet, even with these dubious experiences, the Maple

Leaf is one of the most frequently sold out trains on the Empire Corridor. There needs to be a methodology that would allow Customs and Immigration to streamline procedures at the US/Canada border to reduce delays and provide a better passenger travel experience.

### **High Speed Rail Investment Act**

With Amtrak's budget constraints, the passage of this federal legislation is crucial. These funds would allow a more proactive partnership between the State and Amtrak to provide those services, which the State may identify as desirable when they complete a high speed rail plan. There was a consensus of the panel and attendees that passage of this bill must occur and that significant support should be expressed by business leaders and elected officials to ensure passage.

# SUMMARY OF THE RAIL TAXATION / ECONOMICS OF FREIGHT BREAKOUT SESSION

## *Panelists:*

*JOHN CASELLINI, CSX TRANSPORTATION*

*GERARD F. EDWARDS, CSX TRANSPORTATION*

*CHARLES POLTENSON, SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL*

*MIKE SMITH, FINGER LAKES RAILWAY*

*BRUCE WRIGHT, SOLVAY PAPERBOARD*

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One of the primary focuses of this breakout session was the tax situation for railroads in New York State. There was a consensus amongst the panel that this was the greatest barrier to progress in improving rail passenger and freight service in the state and region. Mike Smith of Finger Lakes Railway related his experience of attempting to invest in the former Geneva Cluster of trackage (now Finger Lakes Railway), but was deterred by the exorbitant taxes and 89 taxing jurisdictions that he would have had to deal with for a 118-mile line. If it had not been for the Payment-In-Lieu-Of-Taxes (PILOT) agreement with six separate County Industrial Development Agencies (IDA's), Finger Lakes would not be running today serving an increasing customer base.

CSXT panelists shared the latest status of the litigation against the State and municipalities, which the railroad was required to initiate to react to the higher tax ceilings imposed in New York State. They also advised of the status of working towards legislative solutions they were seeking through the Legislature and Governors office to avoid a court-ordered settlement, the latter of which was likely to be more damaging to municipalities.

The panel turned to the issues of rail freight as an economic engine. Mike Smith of Finger Lakes Railway related how opportunities have been created on his railroad resulting not only in new business locating along his corridor, but increasing his existing business as well. One of the main problems in attracting new business along rail corridors is a lack of "shovel-ready" industrial sites. In addition there has been a tendency to develop housing and retail (incompatible land uses) along and adjacent to the rail corridors. This prevents the development of industry and attraction of potential new rail customers, while creating conflicts between homeowners and rail operators.

Bruce Wright from Solvay Paperboard related the role rail service has played in the expansion of Solvay Paperboard operations. The availability of rail service was one of the factors that have contributed to the growth of Solvay Paperboard.

The panel focused on several ways to enhance economic activity. These included:

- Actively encouraging local and state governments to support the bills sponsored by the Governor and progressing through the Legislature that resolve the taxation issue and hold local municipalities harmless. It was agreed by everyone that without a resolution to the tax situation there is little to no incentive to invest scarce resources in New York State. It was also agreed that holding the municipalities harmless was an important component of resolution of this issue.
- The NYSDOT and the IDA's need a database of properties that are rail accessible and can be developed easily. This list should be promoted on the World Wide Web. Reference was made to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Web Site.

Under the page for the Bureau of Rail Freight, Ports and Waterways, is a Rail Freight Properties Directory, which identifies properties located along the regional and shortline railroads in Pennsylvania that have the potential to be rail served. The Directory identifies 205 properties that are served or have potential to be served by the Commonwealth's 51 regional and shortline railroads. This directory supports similar efforts created by the Class 1 railroads such as CSXT and Norfolk Southern (NS). The panel was unanimous in suggesting that something similar would be most helpful to New York in enhancing marketing of sites.

- Several panelists suggested that the State Industrial Access Program take into consideration increased carloads as well as job creation. Prior to 1998, this program was a highway access program. Examples were provided of rail-served businesses that improved rail access and maintained employment (an important consideration as the economy slows), but increased rail carloads thereby improving transportation economies and deriving air quality benefits from a shift from truck to rail.
- An audience member suggested that the State and IDA's consider utilizing Brownfield's for development of rail yard expansions to enhance the ability to serve rail customers. The rationale was that Brownfield's are typically located in existing or former industrial areas, frequently near existing rail facilities, and are often unattractive to new industry due to the environmental mitigation factors.

These sites, if utilized as improved rail storage and switching facilities, will enhance capacity of the operation. The situation of Finger Lakes Railway in regards to constrained yard facilities in Solvay was cited as an example of an area where increased yard capacity would significantly improve service to a major customer.

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

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## **Intermodal Connectivity**

1. The NYSDOT needs to establish and provide direction and financing of an intermodal plan for the State. This plan would have the Empire Corridor function as a spine with dedicated feeder buses increasing origin-destination city pairs. The State could issue a Request For Proposal (RFP) for connecting services and award financing to the best proposal in each region.
2. The NYSDOT should reconsider the State Operating Assistance Program (STOA) to facilitate intermodal connections.
3. The State should develop policies and provide leadership in improving station facilities. Improvements should be encouraged in cities where local leadership is less committed to rail to ensure that Empire Corridor stations have facilities to support intermodal connections. The State should also ensure that station facility plans are forward-looking.
4. Seamless connectivity is more than simply a shared facility. There needs to be an improvement in communication between transportation providers. In addition, coordination of schedules is crucial to the passenger. Rental cars also need to be available at key corridor stations.
5. Coordinated information (such as the old NYSDOT “You Can Get There From here” guide) needs to be posted on the Internet with links to rail and bus providers.

## **High Speed Rail and Economic Development**

1. High speed rail needs to be more aggressively marketed to government and the general public. We need to define and create a “picture” of what high speed rail is. This must include our two U.S. Senators.
2. There needs to be an economic analysis to support advocacy of high speed rail and to demonstrate economic as well as mobility impacts. This tool will help change perceptions of the economic value of high speed rail.
3. The State and Amtrak need to enhance frequencies and amenities on the Empire Corridor. One must be able to move between upstate city pairs. Marketing of upstate city pairs and competitiveness of service needs to be developed.

4. A linkage must be established between upstate high speed rail service and tourism. Tourism officials (and Amtrak) need to be encouraged to develop a mutually beneficial rail/tourism plan.
5. Encourage Customs and Immigration to streamline procedures at the US/Canada border to reduce bottlenecks.
6. The State should position itself to take advantage of the passage of the High Speed Rail Investment Act, as well as actively support passage of the measure. Business leaders and local elected officials should also actively lobby for passage of this measure

### **Rail Taxation/Economics of Freight**

1. Actively encourage local and state governments to support the Governor's and Legislature's pending bills on taxation that hold communities harmless.
2. The NYSDOT and the IDA's need to create a database of "shovel-ready" industrial sites that are rail accessible. List them on the World Wide Web.
3. Modify the State Industrial Access Program to take into consideration carload volumes as well as job creation.
4. The State and IDA's need to consider developing Brownfield's (where available) for rail yard expansion. Brownfield's are typically in industrial areas, frequently near existing rail facilities, and are often unattractive to new industry due to environmental mitigation factors. These sites may increase capacity of rail infrastructure, thereby improving air quality by reducing truck traffic.

## CLOSING REMARKS

### **WILLIAM E. SANFORD**

*CHAIRMAN:*

*EMPIRE CORRIDOR RAIL TASK FORCE \* ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE \*  
SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL, POLICY COMMITTEE*

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I hope you all enjoyed your day talking about our favorite subject, High Speed Rail.

The speakers were outstanding and delivered a message with a sense of urgency that is needed to advance our agenda.

The breakout panels offered great insight as to what our future (short-term and long-term) direction should be. The thoughtful questions posed to the panelists' elicited informative responses.

The question before us now is: *What do we do with this information? Where can we effect change or provide new direction in the important areas discussed?*

We addressed high speed rail as an economic development tool, the importance of dealing with lower taxes on rail property, intermodal connectivity, station facilities, grade crossings, infrastructure, funding sources, as well as many other topics.

We leave here today with several recommended actions by this group. Recommendations to the New York State Department of Transportation will be delivered personally by me to the Commissioner at our next Governor's Passenger Rail Advisory Committee meeting in August.

Our Federal delegation (Senators and Congressmen) will be made aware of our desire to have an economic analysis done pertaining to high speed rail's impact on our economy. As you have already heard, the Central New York Metropolitan Development Association will provide the first \$25,000 toward this study. When the total amount is finally made available from all sources, we will have the results that will lead to a great marketing tool for the Empire Corridor and our region.

Much time was spent on the tax issue and our recommendations for reduction will immediately be sent to the Governor's office, as well as elected officials across the state.

I truly believe that with all of us helping to push these key initiatives, progress will be made and we will be one giant step closer to bringing rail back to its proper place in New

York State.

I would again like to thank our speakers, our panelists, the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council, the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board, Onondaga County and especially the staff members who were responsible for bringing us together.

Have a safe trip home. Go by rail if you can.

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