

## DINNER TRAIN DEFEATS NIMBYs IN OHIO

*By Bill Engel*

A dinner train operator will go ahead with plans to provide service in the Akron, OH area after prevailing in court over opposition from one of the towns along the proposed route.

A Feb. 12 article in the Cuyahoga Falls *News-Press* announced that the U. S. Rail Corp. board of directors, operators of the dinner train, had voted on Jan. 29 to move forward with the proposed service, which had been opposed by the Village of Silver Lake. The vote came after an Ohio Supreme Court ruling in favor of U.S. Rail.

The dinner train would run along trackage that had fallen into disuse, due partly to

NIMBY actions. As Conrail identified lower-density freight lines in northeast Ohio during the 1980s and 1990s, one of the lines chosen for elimination was the former Pennsylvania Railroad route from Hudson, OH through Akron, Orrville, and Mt. Vernon to Columbus. By 1992, all that was left of the northern end of this line was a small yard and industrial track in Orrville, a yard in Akron, and less than 10 miles of track between Cuyahoga Falls and Hudson. A connection to the CSX New Castle Sub in Cuyahoga Falls allowed Conrail local freights to reach Akron via trackage rights.

When Conrail exited Akron for good, the six-and-one-half miles of track between

Hudson and Cuyahoga Falls wound up in control of Akron Metro RTA. They wanted to include it as part of the route for an Akron-to-Cleveland commuter train service. But part of the line ran along the border of the Village of Silver Lake, whose mayor and residents were adamantly opposed to any train ever again running on the tracks through their village. Along one section of line, backyards are 50 feet or less from the right of way.

After a lengthy study by the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS), and its counterparts in Stark and Cuyahoga Counties, a plan was put forward to phase in commuter train service  
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## STRANDED IN STAMFORD

*By Richard Rudolph, Chair*

A recent trip to New York during the February school vacation week to attend RUN's bimonthly board meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on what is happening on the Northeast Corridor. The good news is that ridership on Acela Express trains has increased nearly 20% for the four-month period ending Jan. 31. The increase in ridership can be attributed to improved on-time performance, faster service, higher customer satisfaction (Amtrak has upgraded meal service for first class passengers), and diversion from

regionals because of higher regional fares.

The bad news is that regional service is declining. While there are no comparable data currently available for the same four-month period ending Jan. 31, the most recent data posted for November 2006 show a 4% decline in regional ridership vs. the previous year and a 2% decline vs. projected budget. According to Amtrak, regional ridership was below a year ago mostly as a result of higher fares and increased brand switching to Acela due to the recent improvements in Acela

service. While this decrease in ridership is in part driven by a sharp increase in ticket prices, another factor is equally important in explaining the phenomenon. Amtrak has reduced the size of its coach fleet, resulting in fewer seats available on these trains. More than 100 cars are sitting in Bear, DE waiting to be overhauled or repaired. In the meantime, Amtrak is running six-car consists over the right of way, leaving passengers no choice but to either upgrade to Acela Express or seek other modes of transportation because the regional service is often sold out.  
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## MANY ISSUES KEEP NEW JERSEY ADVOCATES BUSY

By David Peter Alan

A number of pressing issues have kept rail advocates in the Garden State busy for the past several weeks. New Jersey Transit has proposed a fare increase, which the advocates oppose. Meanwhile, several large-scale capital projects remain in the spotlight as they make their way toward review by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). To add to the uncertainty, NJT Executive Director George D. Warrington has announced that he will leave the agency at the end of March and his successor has not yet been chosen.

Warrington proposed the fare hike at the January meeting of NJT's board. The plan calls for an across-the-board increase of approximately 10% in all fares, and it is scheduled to take effect on June 1. The Lackawanna Coalition and the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP) have expressed strong opposition to the increase, based primarily on two issues. The first is that transit riders now face their fifth fare increase since New Jersey's Motor Fuels Tax reached its present level, back in 1988. The other is the continuation of high off-peak rail fares, which advocates say discourages rail use and encourages automobile use during non-peak travel hours and on weekends.

"A fare increase is a tax increase," said NJ-ARP director William R. Wright. Wright specifically criticized the New Jersey Legislature for refusing to increase the gasoline tax, now the third lowest in the nation, while transit riders are again being asked to dig deeper into their pockets. If the Legislature won't raise the tax on the motorists and truckers, they have no business doing it to transit riders for the fifth time since the gas tax reached its current level," said Wright. For its part, the Lackawanna Coalition wrote to Gov.

Jon S. Corzine, asking him to find room in the budget for sufficient funding for NJT to avoid a fare increase. The Coalition expressed the opinion that raising transit fares without a substantial increase in the gasoline tax is unfair and unjust to transit riders, dangerous for the environment, and economically counterproductive. The Coalition's statement to the NJT board at the board's February meeting noted: "Highways are never shut down for budgetary reasons, and the gasoline tax is never increased. There always seems to be enough money to keep the highways going." In effect, the Coalition's February statement reiterated its January statement which noted: "We are sick and tired of transit being treated like a business while highways are treated as a giveaway program."

NJT last raised fares in July 2005, and also claimed at that time that a fare increase was needed, due to rising costs. Damien Newton of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign criticized the Legislature for its consistent failure to enact a dedicated funding source for NJT. The Lackawanna Coalition and NJ-ARP have made the same complaint for several years, noting that every other major transit authority has such a funding source. The 2005 fare hike raised off-peak rail fares by 25%, while peak-hour and commutation fares increased by only 10%. Weekly and monthly commuters also received a bonus of free transfers to local bus and light rail routes, so costs for some commuters actually decreased. Advocates, especially the Lackawanna Coalition, have blamed the sharp increase in off-peak rail fares for cuts in service that NJT swiftly implemented in 2006, one year after off-peak fares rose so drastically. Weekend service on the Morris & Essex Line to Hoboken was cut in half, to a train only every two hours or less. Seven weeks later, weekend service on the southern part of the North Jersey Coast Line was cut by 25%. NJT blamed the Hoboken cuts on "declining ridership," which advocates attribute directly to high fares for off-peak (including weekend) travel.

There was also a request that a fare increase be delayed until a new executive

director can review the situation. New advocates, however, expect that anything less than the full amount of proposed increases will be implemented.

Meanwhile, capital projects continue to attract attention. The Lackawanna Coalition and NJ-ARP have joined with their counterparts in New York City in opposing the construction of a new "deep cavern" terminal under 34th Street and 7th Avenue to augment the current capacity of Penn Station. The proposed terminal would be located approximately 140 feet below street level. If this deep terminal is built, there will be no connection between Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal. Such a connection had been a major strategic goal of the Access to the Region's Core proposal until 2004. Advocates on both sides of the Hudson River oppose both the proposed deep terminal under 34th Street and a similar "deep cavern" far below Grand Central for Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) trains. New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority has received funding support from the FTA for the latter project. Albert L. Papp, a director of NJ-ARP and political committee chair for the Lackawanna Coalition, spoke for both groups, saying, "The politicians in both states act like we're separated by the Hudson Ocean. It's only a river, and it has had rail tunnels under it for almost 100 years. More rail riders from New Jersey work on the East Side than the West Side, and everyone should have access to both."

New Jersey's advocates, as well as representatives from the Regional Rail Working Group (RRWG), expressed their opposition to the NJT "deep cavern" tunnel and terminal proposal at hearings in March, claiming that it is a waste of the taxpayers' money, doesn't really save any time for the riders, and is unsafe and inconvenient. Joseph M. Clift, former director of planning for the LIRR and (Continued on page 5)

## STRANDED IN STAMFORD BY AMTRAK

*(Continued from page 1)*

This is exactly what happened in Stamford, CT on my return from New York during the recent holiday period. I traveled from Grand Central on Metro North Sunday morning to visit a friend in Stamford. I had originally planned to leave the night before on the last train of the day leaving Penn Station at 7 p.m., but decided to stay over in the Big Apple until Sunday morning. Much to my surprise, I found myself temporarily stranded in Stamford upon returning to the station at noon after a wonderful heartfelt breakfast with a friend. An Amtrak ticket agent informed me there were no seats available until 5:30 pm. She took my name down and indicated that she would call over the P.A. system if someone canceled at the last minute. While waiting, I decided to speak to an agent over the phone, but soon discovered that there would be at least a 28-minute wait before a live person would be available to provide assistance. At the very

moment that I decided to seek alternative transportation back to New York to catch a bus for Boston, I heard my name repeated several times over the P.A. system. A ticket was now available for the 12:46 Acela Express, but would cost \$87.50 more than what I had paid for the regional ticket. Having

*It is a pleasure to ride on Acela rather than regional service, but the choice of riding on Acela should not be determined by an equipment shortage.*

parked my car at the Route 128 station, it seemed best to hop on the train rather than hightail it back to New York to catch a bus to South

and then an MBTA commuter train south to Route 128. To be sure, it is always a pleasure to ride on an Acela rather than the regional service, but it should be a free choice—not driven by a shortage of equipment.

To be fair, it should be pointed out that Amtrak is really carrying out a congressional mandate to curtail cost and increase revenue. While it may be cheaper to store cars in Bear and at the same time increase revenue through higher ticket prices, it doesn't make sense given what should be Amtrak's mandate: i.e. to provide a mode of transportation that is not only reliable, efficient, and affordable, but also available to the countless passengers who are willing to leave their gas-guzzling cars behind to reduce their energy consumption and impact on the environment. With a new attitude now in Washington, we can only hope there will be a change in mission at Amtrak. □

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## THE ONGOING SAGA OF THE #7 SUBWAY LINE EXTENSION

*By Andrew Albert*

The City of New York wants the far West Side developed. It also wants the Jacob Javits Convention Center expanded so it can accommodate many of the trade shows and conventions that New York is losing to other cities. So it has decided to fund the westward expansion of the #7 subway line from its current terminus at Times Square to the Jacob Javits Convention Center with a station at 34th Street and 11th Avenue. There will also be an intermediate station at 10th Avenue and 41st Street.

The city has issued bonds for the construction of the line, and the sale of the bonds has gone very well, coming in at a lower interest rate than was previously anticipated. The city has also gone on record that it would pay any cost overruns on land acquisition necessary to obtain the right of way for the extension. But here's the catch: The city will not pay any cost overruns on the CONSTRUCTION of the line. The amount they will pay is \$2.1 billion. If the line ends up costing \$2.5 billion, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) would have to pick up the difference. This would mean that the money would have to come from the MTA's existing capital construction projects, such as the 2nd Avenue subway and East Side Access (LIRR into Grand Central Terminal).

Transit advocates, such as the New York City Transit Rider's Council, have issued public statements that the #7 line extension was never in the MTA's expansion plans, and the city must fund the ENTIRE costs of the extension—after all, it is the city that has decided it was important enough to fund the line. Of course, development in the far West Side would greatly benefit the city, as it will bring in lots of tax dollars from the planned construction of office buildings, parks, stores, housing, etc. The MTA would also benefit from the sale of these sites as they are largely over the West Side rail yards, which is MTA property.

Nevertheless, there are many wrinkles in the plan, including not building the 10th Avenue station while the rest of the line is

being constructed. The city has decided not to fund the construction of this intermediate station, leaving it for the future, even though the sale of bonds was extremely successful and netted almost a billion dollars more than expected. The station is expected to cost \$200 million.

We (the New York City Transit Riders Council) asked the president of MTA Capital Construction how much more the station would cost if it were put off, and were given the answer: at least double, and perhaps triple the cost! When we heard this, we held a press conference at the corner of 10th Avenue and West 41st Street (the station's future location) to demand that the 10th Avenue station be built at the same time as the rest of the line. There are thousands of tenants in the area, and thousands more in the offing as construction is taking place all over this area. Another irony is that much of the city's planned construction over the rail yards will actually be closer to the deferred 10th Avenue station than the Javits Center station, which is many blocks away!

The new executive director of the MTA, Lee Sander, has said he will take a look

at the situation. While the opening date of the 10th Avenue station may be in doubt, the MTA has left no doubt with the Bloomberg administration about what it thinks of being left holding the bag for the cost overruns on the #7 line extension. Sander has told Mayor Bloomberg that the MTA will not be responsible for the cost overruns that will likely occur. (Overruns have occurred on most of the MTA's Capital Construction Projects.) So stay tuned: Either the MTA and the City of New York will work things out and construction on this line will begin in late Summer—or everything will grind to a halt, and negotiations will begin all over again. Make no mistake: The #7 extension is crucial to opening up the far West Side for development, development that will benefit everyone—the MTA by selling its valuable property, the City of New York by developing an area and bringing in lots of new tax revenue, and the people of the City of New York, who will gain new parks, schools, apartments, offices, and a larger tax base. The only question left is: who is going to pay for it? Stay tuned.

*Andrew Albert is the chair of the NYC Transit Riders Council, and riders' representative on the MTA Board.*

### SAVE THE DATE!

The Rail Users' Network is pleased to announce that it plans to hold its 5th International Conference at the Hyatt Hotel / Union Station in Dallas, TX, Nov. 10-11. The conference will afford participants an opportunity to explore how rail advisory and advocacy groups throughout North America can improve their practices to better represent rail passengers in a pro-active, coherent, and effective manner.

Registrants will have a prime opportunity to share information and experiences on their efforts, and those of their organizations, exchanging the "best practices" of these committees, boards and councils.

In addition to cutting-edge presentations by rail industry professionals, by those who influence, fund, and direct it, and by leading rail customer representatives, a series of interactive workshops will be held throughout the conference.

For more information please visit our website, [railusers.net](http://railusers.net), or call Richard Rudolph at (207) 642-5161.

## NJ ADVOCATES STAY BUSY WITH MANY ISSUES

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a member of RRWG, said, "The cost of this project will likely exceed the available resources for many years to come. Were New Jersey Transit to abandon their plans for a deep cavern terminal and return to the previous plan that provided for a connection to Grand Central, it would save billions of dollars, allowing the project to be completed. This would also get the riders to the East Side, where many want to go, as well as the West Side. This would also avoid safety and security problems inherent in a deep terminal, move people to where they want to go faster, and consequently remove more automobiles from the highways." □

Two other proposed projects received wide support from rail advocates in the Garden State. The first is a proposal to increase capacity on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor mainline by replacing or augmenting Portal Bridge, a swing bridge located just west of NJT's Secaucus Station. The 95-year-old span must be opened for boat traffic on the Hackensack River, often causing severe disruption of commuter rail and Amtrak operations to and from New York City. While the technical details are yet to be determined, rail advocates all acknowledge the severity of Portal Bridge as a choke point and the need for more capacity into Penn Station. "We need the FRA to fund capacity expansion at Portal Bridge before the FTA is asked to fund a tunnel with a deep cavern at its New York end," said Papp. He added: "These projects never should have been segmented. They were always linked in practice, if not officially. With expanded capacity into Penn Station and the kind of regional through-running proposed by the RRWG, we would not need a station so far underground that it would compromise passenger safety and add several minutes to every rider's trip."

The other project that has drawn wide support from advocates is the Cutoff Project, which would restore rail service to Scranton, PA. The last passenger train to Scranton ran on Jan. 4, 1970. NJ-ARP

and the Lackawanna Coalition have joined the Penn-Jersey Rail Coalition (see article in *RUN Newsletter*, Winter 2007 issue) in supporting the project. All three organizations stated their support at scoping meeting held during the winter. The proposal calls for rebuilding the line west of the present Morris & Essex line to the Delaware River (the tracks have been removed, but the right-of-way is intact) and upgrading the portion of the line in Pennsylvania to passenger standards. NJT has drawn criticism for relying too much on park-and-ride commuters and too little on potential riders in the towns, and also for holding all of the scoping meetings beyond the reach of the rail line. The NIMBYs could get in their cars to go to a meeting and complain, but transit riders couldn't get to the same meetings to show their support," complained Wright. The Lackawanna Coalition called for any future series of meetings concerning the Cutoff Project to include at least one transit-accessible meeting. Only three populated areas in Pennsylvania will be served by the new line: Scranton, Tobyhanna, and Stroudsburg. The other five new stations, including two in New Jersey, will be park-

and-ride facilities, far from residential areas. Once the line reaches Scranton, it could serve as a "first operating segment" for future intercity service to Binghamton, NY and eventually to Syracuse and Buffalo.

To complicate matters, NJT executive director George D. Warrington suddenly announced his resignation in January, effective at the end of March. New Jersey rail advocates have not received any word on why Warrington is leaving, or who might succeed him, although no rider advocates were appointed to the committee that will choose Warrington's successor. Warrington has generally received low marks from advocates for his performance during his five-year tenure as executive director at NJT, and members of the advocacy organizations hope that a change of leadership will result in improved performance by the agency. As in the past, however, this is more of a hope than an expectation.

*David Peter Alan is chair of the Lackawanna Coalition*

## CLEVELAND RTA CHANGES PARATRANSIT RULES

*By Steve Albro*

The board of trustees of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) has granted approval to require functional testing for paratransit applicants whose applications do not readily show that they can't use fixed-route transit service. GCRTA has entered into a three-year agreement with Novacare, a proprietary provider of physical therapy evaluation and services. The functional testing will be done with Main Street, a widely used instrument that tests the physical and cognitive capacities of disabled persons to perform independent skills in a public environment. The testing will take place at four Novacare sites in the greater Cleveland area.

Under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), paratransit eligibility is tied to the impact of the person's disability on his ability to access fixed-route transit. The person must be unable to use regular accessible buses or trains either all of the time or some of the time. Previously, eligibility was determined from the applicant's declaration of physical and

functional limitations on the paratransit application verified by the applicant's healthcare professional. If the applicant was refused eligibility, an appeal could be made to a panel composed of two representatives of GCRTA management and two members of GCRTA's ADA Committee of the Citizen's Advisory Board. The decision of the appeals panel is final.

Functional testing is viewed as an added tool to determine eligibility when review of the application and follow-up discussion with the applicant and healthcare professional does not clearly establish eligibility. It is estimated that 40 percent of applicants over the next three years will need to be functionally tested. As individuals who can use regular transit are screened, it will allow paratransit resources to be concentrated on those who really have to use it.

*Steve Albro is chair of the ADA subcommittee of the Greater Cleveland RTA's citizens advisory board.*

## BUS RAPID TRANSIT VS. RAIL: BOTH? EITHER/OR? AN ONGOING DEBATE

By Steve Hastalis

Many cities across this country are building new rail systems, upgrading existing rail lines for transit service, or rebuilding or expanding existing systems. I have ridden many of these systems and met people from throughout the country. I feel that rail transit enjoys wide popular acceptance. Advocates of rail point to its permanence, to its potential to carry large numbers of people, with minimal environmental impact, and to its reliability in bad weather.

Yet, advocates of bus rapid transit (BRT) consider this mode competitive with rail transit. They support bus service over rail service generally, often ostensibly for cost reasons.

Bus service certainly complements rail service in metropolitan areas which have both, and it provides necessary transit for people who either cannot drive or cannot afford a car. It improves the quality of life in communities that do not have the population density to support rail service.

Can BRT provide the same level of

service, with the reliability and efficiency of rail transit? This past January, I attended sessions of the Transportation Research Board (TRB), related to public transit. In a session on bus rapid transit, presenters reported on this mode in several cities. I have included some of my notes from this session as follows:

- Bogota's Transmillenio system now carries about 1.3 million people daily, equivalent to heavy rail. Most people work in the central business district, and low-income groups concentrate in outlying areas. This allows high capacity, about 160 per vehicle, exclusive right-of-ways with limited stop and express service, multiple doors per bus, high capacity stations with level boarding, and off-vehicle payment. The system handles 45,000 people per hour in each direction. South America tolerates much higher passenger loading than North America. South American BRT and North American light rail transit (LRT) have similar capacities. Heavy rail had an estimated cost of \$3 billion for 18 miles of trunk corridor in Bogota. Transmillenio

cost just over \$400 million. It provides 26 miles of trunk corridor and feeder service. Private operators compete for the market, but not within a particular market. Transmillenio has become an icon for Bogota, and citizens have become proud of it. A speaker asked about environmental quality. These buses are cleaner than old ones.

Responding to the previous discussion, the next speaker asserted that buses can carry as many people as trains can. He contrasted the 700,000 daily riders on Washington Metro, a 30-year-old mature rail system, with 1.5 million daily riders on Bogota's buses.

- Los Angeles' Orange Line is the first full BRT in the U.S. It reportedly has attracted enough riders to reduce traffic congestion. The Orange Line runs in an abandoned rail corridor. It serves residences through the San Fernando Valley and connects with the Red Line subway in North Hollywood. Buses do not leave the busway, and other vehicles do not enter. It has five mid-block  
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## THE LEGACY AND EFFICACY OF RAIL TRANSIT IN CHICAGO

By Steve Hastalis

As we consider bus rapid transit, let us also consider the importance of rail to a large metropolitan area such as Chicagoland.

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) provided 494.8 million rides in 2006, the highest ridership level since 1993. In 2006, CTA gained 2.4 million rides, or 0.5 percent, over 2005 ridership. CTA has now achieved ridership increases in eight of the past nine years. Since 1997, annual CTA ridership has grown by nearly 55 million.

CTA's rail system posted particularly strong gains, providing 195.2 million rides—an increase of 8.4 million rides

over 2005, or a gain of 4.5 percent. Throughout the year, rail ridership surpassed levels not seen since 1969. Bus ridership levels, however, fell by 1.6 percent in 2006, or 4.8 million fewer rides than in 2005, but at 298.4 million rides, still recorded higher levels than in 2004.

The \$530 million Brown Line Capacity Expansion project continues. Kedzie, Rockwell, and Kimball stations have reopened, following reconstruction. Francisco was scheduled to reopen in mid-March.

Paulina, Irving Park, and Damen stations will remain open during the 12-month temporary closure of the

Montrose and Addison stations.

Since the inception of the Brown Line capacity expansion project in 1998, three-track operation has been a part of the construction plan. This important phase in the capacity expansion project will allow Belmont and Fullerton stations to remain open while tracks and platforms are rebuilt and elevators are installed. The shift to three-track operation this spring in the rail corridor between Armitage and Addison will result in more crowded trains and longer  
(Continued on next page)

## BUS VS. RAIL: AN ONGOING DEBATE

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pedestrian grade crossings. Stations have off-board fare collection and real-time bus information. Buses run five to six minutes apart in peak and less often in off-peak, nearly 24 hours a day. The busway has no crossing gates. Most accidents happen because motorists drive into the busway and have collisions. Metro has decreased busway speed from 25 to 10 mph. Rubber pavement, designed to mitigate rolling tire noise of buses, has deteriorated, and Metro had to replace it for \$1.5 million. Metro has approved plans to extend the line about six miles and now seeks private development along its right-of-way. Suggested creative uses of the busway included limited stop or express, instead of just all stop, and letting suburban buses use the busway. Orange Line buses perform slower than local buses because they have to slow down for intersections and make all stops. Compressed natural gas (CNG) buses have slower acceleration than

conventional diesel buses. Engines that run on CNG have cleaner exhaust and run quieter than diesel engines.

In a comparison of Orange Line BRT with Red and Gold rail lines, the Gold Line has performed about 40 percent below the projected level of 30,000 riders a day. Red Line continues to increase its ridership. It performs faster than the Orange Line.

RUN favors rail for high-density transit service. The specific type of rail—for example, light rail, heavy rail subway, or commuter rail—depends on the history and infrastructure of a particular metropolitan area. We should support rail service which could provide the flexibility of through-routing, if possible. It is ironic and unfortunate that L.A. built a bus way on an abandoned former rail right-of-way. The rails of L.A.'s rail lines have not worn out, as has the rubber pavement on the BRT roadway. Moreover, electric rail cars

leave transit stops cleanly and quietly, while demonstrating best practices of environmental mitigation. Let us understand the legacy and importance of reliable, efficient rail.

*Steve Hastalis is a Chicago Transit Authority employee and RUN board member.*

## CHICAGO RAIL

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commutes for customers on the Brown Line, Purple Line express, and north branch of the Red Line.

The overall capacity expansion project involves modernizing the stations and making them ADA compliant. In addition, lengthening platforms at these stations will accommodate eight-car trains, up from the six cars currently in use. More customers can then ride this increasingly popular route.

Metra, Chicago's commuter rail agency, plans to run more trains on its Union Pacific (UP) North Line to give riders another alternative during construction on CTA's north side elevated lines.

On the south side, CTA has largely completed work on the Red Line, which runs in the median of the Dan Ryan Expressway, just in time for another season of ongoing reconstruction of that highway. Officials of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) have recommended various road alternatives. They also have suggested that people take the train. Rail transit alternatives include CTA's Red Line north from 95th/Dan Ryan; Green Line, the original south side elevated north from 63rd Street; Metra electric, originally the Illinois Central commuter operation; and Metra Rock Island.

The ongoing reconstruction of the elevated train system will enable it to continue serving Chicagoland for the next hundred years. This service, along with that which Metra provides to many outlying suburbs, improves the quality of life for a major metropolitan area. Moreover, these lines provide essential alternate service for short-term transportation crises such as road construction or immediate needs such as snowstorms. Let us support the sustenance and improvement of these vital services.

*Steve Hastalis is a Chicago Transit Authority employee and RUN board member.*

## DINNER TRAIN DEFEATS NIMBYS

*(Continued from page 1)*

between Akron and Cleveland that would eventually be extended to Canton. But the mayor of Silver Lake got himself on a key AMATS committee and the plan went nowhere.

Akron Metro, seeking to get some use out of its idle track, in 2002 agreed to lease it to a dinner train operator. Once again, the Village of Silver Lake stepped in to oppose the plan. The train is a business, their attorneys claimed, and where it would run in Silver Lake is not zoned for business. Also, since it does not connect with the rest of the rail system, it is not really a railroad.

An initial ruling in Summit County Common Pleas Court favored Silver Lake, but on appeal that decision was overturned. Subsequently, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled 4-3 in November 2006 in favor of the railroad.

In the *Falls-Press* article, the current mayor of Silver Lake was quoted as saying the village was still concerned

about noise and traffic congestion at two grade crossings. He hopes U. S. Rail Corp will work with the village to be a good neighbor.

The dinner train, to be known as the Cuyahoga Falls and Hudson Railway Co., hopes to begin operation in the fall of 2007. Much work will have to be done to rehabilitate the right of way before trains can run. Other details such as the location of the depot in Cuyahoga Falls and equipment to use will also have to be worked out.

At least it appears that this long-idle rail right of way will soon see trains operating along it. Perhaps the residents of Silver Lake will get used to the sound of locomotive horns again. What the situation would be if the next generation of transportation planners want to use the right of way for commuter trains between Cleveland and Akron is a question that is probably best left unasked now.

*Bill Engel is a RUN board member based in Clinton, OH.*

**FROM THE RUN  
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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!

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**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:

- \$35 (INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY)
- \$100 (ADVOCACY OR ADVISORY GROUP)
- \$250 (PUBLIC AGENCY OR BUREAU)
- \$500 (PRIVATE CARRIER OR FOR-PROFIT-COMPANY)

**MAIL TO** RAIL USERS' NETWORK, 55 RIVER RD., STEEP FALLS, ME. 04085 USA

