

An Invitation to Join us in Toronto

RUN's 4th international conference will be held November 12-13, 2005 at the Hotel Novotel - Toronto Centre, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The conference will provide a unique opportunity to explore how advisory and advocacy groups throughout North America can improve their practices to better represent the interests of rail passengers. 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. Focusing on key issues, they will provide new insights and tools to improve, the effectiveness and quality of advisory and advocacy efforts.

Our keynote speaker, Jonathan Metcalfe, Great NorthEastern Railway's chief operating officer (Britain), will share his experience on providing excellent customer service. GNER recently won the bid for

a new franchise and they are the finest provider of customer and on-board service in the UK. Their operation is thought to be the best of the 25 train operating companies. Paul Cote, VIA's President, who is an outstanding champion of long distance rail passenger service, will also be honored for the work that he has been doing on behalf of rail passengers in North America. He will share his ideas about the future of intercity rail in Canada. Cont. page 5

There's a lot to Ride in Toronto!

By David Peter Alan

When attendees arrive in Toronto for the RUN Conference in November, we will also have the opportunity to ride the transit system that has been described as the best in North America. Toronto has light rail, subway/elevated lines, commuter rail and intercity trains to other Canadian cities on VIA Rail and to New York on Amtrak.

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) operates subways, streetcars and numerous bus routes in the expanded City of Toronto. The TTC has often been praised as a model for frequent and efficient service, and was headed by David L. Gunn, before he assumed his current position as CEO of Amtrak. Recent declines in automobile ownership in Toronto demonstrate the quality of transit service in the city. The TTC operates eight streetcar lines, the most of any

other city in North America. Cars run frequently through the day and until 1 a.m., when a network of bus routes begins to provide "owl" service within the central city.

The TTC has also operated subway lines (also known as the "Rocket") since 1954. One is a U-shaped line, with its center at Union Station. One branch heads north, with a slight easterly component, on Yonge (pronounced "Young") Street. The other branch heads north, with a slight westerly component, on University and Spadina Avenues. The city's newest subway line runs east on Sheppard Avenue, connecting with the Yonge Street Line. The Sheppard line is four stops long, and it opened in November 2002.

The other line runs east-west along Bloor and Danforth Streets. It connects with the "Scarborough RT" Line at its eastern end. The Scarborough Line operates with different

equipment and a change of trains is necessary, but no extra fare is required. Trains run frequently on both the Yonge-University-Spadina and Bloor-Danforth Lines until about 1 a.m.

The base fare on TTC is \$2.50 Canadian (\$20 for eight tokens), and allows enough transfers to go from one end of the system to the other. Monthly commuters pay \$98.75. A day pass is available for \$8, and it is good on all lines after 9:30 on weekdays and all day on weekends.

GO Transit, which was initiated by the Government of Ontario, operates seven commuter rail lines, all centering on Union Station. All except the Lakeshore East and Lakeshore West lines operate during peak hours only, although an extensive network of GO buses provides service during off-peak hours. Cont. page 6

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A long Train ride instead of a short flight

By Holly Frisch

"I'm not interested in an airplane," my traveling companion declared. "I want to ride a train or bus."

Traveling by bus was out of the question for me. It involved at least three transfers and, even if everything went smoothly, a minimum of 15 hours. As far as I am concerned, transfers equal trouble, especially on buses where missed connections are exclusively the passenger's problem.

I am totally blind and a reasonably seasoned traveler on all public transportation modes. My traveling companion has extremely limited vision, additional disabilities and virtually no experience traveling on public transportation, let alone without full time sighted assistance. She really wanted a train ride. Was I going to be insane enough to help her take her first one?

"No," advised my friends in the National Federation of the Blind. "Louisville has no more train service."

"No," urged my friend who is a special education instructor. "Don't take the risk."

"No," my family vehemently objected. "It's too much responsibility. We really wish you would fly. It would be so much shorter and easier. You could stop to visit us and attend your cousin's wedding." There, within that final sentence, was all the encouragement I required. I adore my family but intensely dislike large formal gatherings. I called Amtrak.

"No," the Amtrak agent repeated, each time with growing exasperation. "I said you can't get from Louisville to Washington,

D.C. by train."

"Where is the nearest train?" I persisted.

"Cincinnati, at least 90 miles away, at 5:00 in the morning. It's sold out the day you want it anyway."

"Where else does it go?" I persevered. "Maysville, Kentucky, but there's only one space. It's first class but real small, hardly enough room for two adults and a service dog."

"I'll take it," I decided.

"Where is it?" everyone asked. The Amtrak agent mistakenly told me it was 85 miles from Louisville.

"How are you going to get there?" questioned my friends in the National Federation of the Blind.

"I'll ask our Kentucky people," I responded confidently.

"You can't get there from here," the president of the National Federation of the Blind of Kentucky told me. "I don't know anyone who would want to drive you." This was two days before our train was to depart. We might have to take a cab.

Fortunately, the train left almost an hour and a half later than it would have from Cincinnati, but before 6:30 on a Sunday morning was still early.

"It's not 85 miles away, it's 130," explained one of the other members from Kentucky. "But I know someone who might drive you. I know and use her personally. She's a good driver and a very decent, responsible person." I thought that was the end of my transportation logistics planning responsibilities.

"Think about it," someone reminded me. "If that space doesn't become available until Maysville, it won't be ready for you when you board. You

and your friend will have to stand around awhile until the attendant cleans up that room." This was a major problem. Balance issues prevent me from standing or walking on a moving conveyance. Because my traveling companion has physical disabilities, I did not know her capabilities. I called Amtrak again.

By that time, a space had become available from Cincinnati, but the same problem would exist. The attendant probably could not prepare our space within the short time the train stopped in Cincinnati. After consultation, someone in Amtrak's customer relations department surprised me and made a generous accommodation. Overriding the additional fare it should have cost, she booked our reservation from Cincinnati with down line boarding at Maysville. This would give the car attendant ample time to prepare our room.

Our driver collected us at 2:30 a.m. Armed with maps, directions and common sense, she got us there with time to spare, although insufficient to breakfast together. That was not a disaster since first class fares include meals.

The train was 10 or 15 minutes late at most. The car attendant quickly put the finishing touches on our room and had us safely settled before it left Maysville. He remained fully attentive to us throughout the entire trip, served us all three meals in our room and walked my guide dog twice. In addition, he looked the other way although my traveling companion flagrantly exceeded the luggage limit. It would have been easier to solve the problem by placing some of her belongings in the storage area but, like many of us who cannot see, she was

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New York City's MTA on High alert

By **Andrew Albert**

Security has been tightened all across New York's vast mass transit system, including the New York subways, the Long Island Railroad, and the Metro-North Railroad, as well as the City's bridges and tunnels.

Immediately following the July 7 London bombings, it was decided to remove cell phone use from the City's four tunnels - the Holland, Lincoln, Midtown, and Brooklyn-Battery tunnels. The reasoning was that this would prevent a terrorist from remote-detonating a bomb by cell phone. It was not immediately clear who issued the order to remove cell phone use in the tunnels. The Port Authority, which owns the Holland and Lincoln Tunnels, initially said the N.Y.P.D. ordered the shut down, but they denied this. Shortly thereafter, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which owns the Midtown & Brooklyn-Battery Tunnels, restored cell phone service. That left New Yorkers with the odd situation of being able to use their mobile phones in two out of the four tunnels serving the City! Finally, the Port Authority turned on cell service in their tunnels, restoring

the normal situation in all tunnels.

Police officers may be seen all over the subways, and the governor has ordered State Troopers to patrol the commuter railroads. How long this present level of security will remain is unclear. But passengers are happy to see police officers riding their trains, patrolling their stations, and using bomb-sniffing dogs.

The MTA is proceeding with plans to install high-tech closed circuit cameras in the subway tunnels that travel under the rivers, including the subways, commuter railroads, and Amtrak tunnels. Several years ago, there was a plan hatched, in coordination with the Army, to install electronic sensors in the subway tunnels that travel under the East River, which would have identified any intruder that didn't have the "employee or track worker" electronic I.D. tag. This plan died when then MTA Chief of Security Louis Anemone, and his deputy, Nicholas Casale, were fired, for reasons having nothing to do with the security plan. The new chief of security, William Morange,

has deemed the Army plan infeasible, and thus the closed-circuit camera plan for the underwater tunnels was born. The MTA will be spending close to \$400 million on security within the next year. However, it is important to remember that, like London, New York's Transit System is an "open" system, and it is impossible to screen every passenger.

Thus, the MTA's "If you see something, say something!" passenger awareness campaign takes on greater importance, as the passenger becomes the eyes and ears of the system. It appears to be working, too, as many people have phoned in to the hot line to report suspicious packages, persons, etc. For now, and the foreseeable future, everyone must keep alert, and report anything out of the ordinary, such as a passenger wearing heavy clothing in the summer, or perhaps someone leaving a backpack and running away. In New York, ever since 9-11, this is the way it's been — and continues to be.

Andrew Albert is the chairman of the NYC Transit Riders Council.

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

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Holly Frisch	Alexandria, VA	Long distance commute rider
Steve Hastalis	Chicago, IL	Chicago Transit Authority
Bart Reed	Sylmar, CA	The Transit Coalition
David Peter Allen	South Orange, NJ	Lackawanna Coalition

Please send comments, letters to editor or articles for possible publications to the Rail Users' Network at: RUN, P.O Box 9373, St. Louis, Missouri 63117 or email to rrudolph@pivot.net

NJT FARE INCREASE CONFIRMED.

OFF-PEAK RIDERS TO BE HARDEST HIT, DESPITE EFFORTS BY RIDER ADVOCATES

By David Peter Alan

New Jersey Transit's fare increase proposal, which was vigorously opposed by the State's rider advocacy groups (see RUN Newsletter, Spring, 2005 at 2), has been confirmed almost as proposed. The action was taken at the April 21st meeting of the NJT Board of Directors, without opposition from any Board member. The new fares went into effect July 1.

The original proposal called for increases in peak-hour and rail commutation fares of 13.1 percent, while off-peak round trip (ORT) fares would rise by 32 percent. This steep rise was attributable to a change in the ratio of ORT fares to one-way fares. Historically, the off-peak round-trip fare has been 1.5 times the one-way fare. The proposal called for hiking the ratio to 1.75. The actual increase in one-way and commutation fares will be 9.9 percent (indistinguishable from 10 percent), while off-peak round-trip fares will rise by 25 percent. The ORT fares will now be 1.7 times the one-way fare between the same points.

The Lackawanna Coalition and the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP) argued vigorously for an across-the board fare hike, rather than one that targeted one class of riders (off-peak riders) for a much higher fare increase than other riders (peak-hour riders and monthly and weekly commuters). The increase for off-peak riders will be two and one half times the increase for commuters, based solely on ticket price. An added benefit for commuters will be free transfer between rail and feeder buses, a privilege that will not be

available to off-peak riders or peak-hour one-way riders. Some commuters will actually see their commuting costs reduced, since they will no longer be required to pay a fare on a connecting bus.

The Lackawanna Coalition and NJ-ARP severely criticized NJT for the sharp difference in percentage increases for different classes of riders. In response to the allegation by NJT that Penn Station (New York) fares were too low, the two organizations jointly proposed a fare structure that would raise Penn Station fares sufficiently to produce enough revenue to maintain the historic off-peak fare at 1.5 times the one-way rate. NJT rejected this plan. The Coalition and NJ-ARP also proposed a 13 percent fare hike across the board, rather than the proposed plan, which the advocacy groups criticized as "discriminatory" against discretionary riders. This proposal was also rejected. The plan finally adopted by the NJT Board even increases the differential between off-peak and commuter fare increases; the ratio rose from 2.44 to 2.49.

In a statement prepared by NJT, Executive Director George D. Warrington referred to off-peak rail riders as "incidental" riders. According to NJT, off-peak riders comprise about 20 percent of the agency's rail ridership. Under the new fare plan, off-peak riders will be expected to contribute 38 percent of the increase in revenue that the fare hike is expected to generate. Speaking for the Lackawanna Coalition and NJ-ARP, Albert L. Papp stated: "While we understand that New Jersey Transit must incur costs, we are gravely disappointed that they did not maintain the traditional off-peak round-trip fare of 1.5 times the one-way peak fare." Papp added: "We request that the entire structure of NJT's fare policy be completely reviewed prior to the next request for a fare increase."

The Raritan Valley Rail Coalition joined the Lackawanna Coalition and NJ-ARP in opposing the steep increase for off-peak riders. The advocacy groups expressed concern that such a sharp rise in off-peak fares would either encourage riders to spend a little more and ride during peak hours, or else would encourage them to desert the trains and return to the highways at off-peak hours. The Raritan Valley Rail Coalition expressed concern that high off-peak fares would erode the off-peak ridership gains that the Raritan Valley Line has shown over the past few years.

NJT held hearings at several locations around the State in February. James P. Redeker, chief architect of the new fare structure, told the Lackawanna Coalition that many of the speakers at the hearings were Coalition or NJ-ARP members. William R. Wright, a director of NJ-ARP and a member of the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition, attributed the light turnout at some of the hearings to an attitude of "You can't fight City Hall" on the part of the riders.

All three advocacy groups objected to the fact that New Jersey's gasoline tax has not been raised since 1988, and that the present transit fare increase is the third since the gas tax reached its present level. All three groups claimed that motorists and truckers on the State's highways are not being asked to pay their fair share of the cost of providing mobility in New Jersey. The advocates called for dedicated funding for NJT, to avoid what they expect will be a pattern of frequent, perhaps even yearly, fare increases. In South Jersey, the Delaware Valley Association of Railroad Passengers (DVARP) also called for increased state funding for transit, particularly operating funding.

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Toronto Conference (Cont. From page 1)

Other key officials from Amtrak, Go Transit and the Toronto Transit Commission will also be on hand to provide fresh insights regarding how rail passenger and rail transit services can be made more customer-friendly.

The five scheduled interactive workshops will focus on "best practice" in customer representation and on major issues facing rail passengers including the future of intercity passenger rail service, concerns of disabled passengers and the role of bus rapid transit in the modal mix. David Jeanes, the President of Transport 2000 Canada, George

Chilson, the president of the National Association of Rail Passengers and Anthony Smith, the national director of the Rail Passengers Council (Britain) will outline the common needs in the US, Canada, and Britain for a clear and positive direction and policy regarding intercity service.

Sunday afternoon will be used to sample the great variety of rail transportation in and around Toronto, including the TTC subway, streetcar, and light rail lines, GO Transit commuter rail, and VIA Rail Canada intercity rail services.

Please register soon. The early registration fee of \$125 (before September 25) includes a continental breakfast both days and lunch, refreshment breaks on Saturday, and all conference materials/handouts. The Novotel is offering a special rate \$129.95 (Canadian) per night, for double occupancy, through October 1, so be sure to make your hotel reservations early as well. Please call (416) 367-8900.

For more information please contact Richard Rudolph at (207) 642-5161. Checks should be sent to RUN's treasurer, Box 9373 St. Louis, MO 63117 USA.

Empire Corridor and the end of food service....

By Gary Prophet

Unfortunately, Amtrak has decided to eliminate all food and beverage service on the Empire Corridor trains that either begin or end in Albany, effective July 1, 2005.

Despite the fact that some of these trains provided food and beverage revenue of over \$500 per trip, Amtrak stated that the savings would be \$1 million dollars per year, as the food commissioner in Albany would also be closed. This affects more than just trains that begin or end in Albany, as the Toronto Maple Leaf can no longer receive food in Albany. The result of this is that the food and beverage that is loaded in Sunnyside Yard at 6 a.m. must last for the entire trip from New York through Albany across New York state to Niagara Falls and for the following day's return.

On recent Fridays, Train 63 sells most of its food during its eastbound trip and then on Saturdays, Train 64 is out of nearly every food and beverage item. This is resulting in a lot of lost sales, as Amtrak cannot sell food nor beverage that it does not have on the train. The same situation occurs on the other westbound trains across New York State, as no food can be restocked at Albany.

Prior to July 1, when Amtrak did have food and beverage service for the 2 hour

30 minute trip between Albany and New York, its operation was not even run according to Amtrak's own standards, which states the cafe car is open upon departure from its origin station. Most often, on northbound trains, the cafe car would be physically locked upon departure from New York's Penn Station and would open 25-45 minutes after departure. This common practice hurt food sales, as did closing the cafe car 20-45 minutes and sometimes an hour prior to the train's arrival in Albany or in New York. The trains that continue through Albany will continue to have food service and this includes all trains to Niagara Falls, the Toronto Maple Leaf, the Ethan Allen, and the Adirondack, although on the trains across New York State, the cafe is closed quite often during the trip. In fact, my last trip eastbound across New York State several months ago had the following cafe closed hours: Niagara Falls to Buffalo-Depew (50 minutes) for "getting ready to open", Syracuse to Utica (50 minutes) cafe was closed for "attendant break", Amsterdam to Hudson (80 minutes) cafe was closed for "inventory" and the last 45 minutes before New York, the cafe car was closed "to put everything away, inventory, and to reconcile the money."

Maybe if Amtrak had the cafe car opened for the entire 2.5 hours Albany

to New York, they would find their sales higher and if Empire Corridor trains operated from Niagara Falls to New York City with the cafe car opened all the time, except for one 30-minute break in the middle, the sales would be higher. It is also quite disappointing that the brand new food service and storage area, built as part of the new Albany-Rensselaer train station, is now closed. Amtrak's largest loss of revenue was not having the cafe car open upon departure from New York City. In fact, the conductor would often state that the cafe car was closed upon departure from New York City and that an announcement would be made when it was opened. The next announcement would often be that the cafe car was now closed, often 45 minutes before arrival at Albany. Ironically, each train still has a cafe car, but has no attendant and no food, nor beverages for the Albany to/from New York trains. Passengers are allowed to sit at the tables in the cafe car and half of the cafe car provides business class seating, although the business class seating no longer includes free beverages. I think that the short-sighted decision by Amtrak will likely be at least partially reversed, and morning trains from Albany to New York and mid-late afternoon trains from New York to Albany, will have food service restored at some future point and the food will be stocked once again at the Albany-Rensselaer station.

HALF A TRAIN, CITIES IN OHIO HIT

By Philip Copeland

With its April timetable changes, Amtrak strikes again.

This time, it's the Capitol Limited. Now, Elyria, my home and Sandusky are bypassed by Train 29, the West bound Capitol. So, you can go to Pittsburgh and D.C. and stop in between but, you can't return. Well, you can return but, you must 1) go by way of New York and reach Elyria and Sandusky via the Lake Shore but, there is no train back from Cumberland, Pittsburgh etc, or 2) you also can take a chance on Train 29 arriving in Cleveland before Train 49, The Lake Shore, and get off then at Elyria or Sandusky. The return from D.C. via N.Y.C. costs almost twice as much as the direct run and, takes some seven hours longer.

In addition to causing inconvenience and removing service to Elyria, you can't take a train from D.C. and other cities on the route to Sandusky, the home of Cedar Point, one of the largest amusement parks in the country, which has just opened for the season.

I have heard that the reason for eliminating the stops is that Norfolk Southern has indicated they don't want the stop in Elyria because of

all four Amtrak trains passing in the area between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. Also, I've heard the excuse that Elyria has only one platform and the trains must be on the inside track to stop. Apparently, the Capitol schedule was changed so that it could leave D.C. earlier to avoid commuter traffic which it had combined with on the previous schedule. Though I know the freights are busy these days, I question whether or not the convergence of the four trains near the same time, if they do converge, shouldn't be a problem if properly dispatched.

Since the time table change, I have been checking the arrival and departure times for the four trains, The Lake Shore 48 and 49, which do all stop in Elyria and Sandusky as well as Train 29, the westbound Capitol and Train 49 is consistently running two to five hours late, which makes it far separated from the other three.

Other options are to take a cab from Cleveland to Elyria when coming in on Train 29, a ride costing about \$50 to \$60. Or, you could have a friend pick you up around two or three in the morning. They'd have to be a very good friend. There is no bus service on Greyhound at that time of the morning.

It comes down to poor service for our county of 300,000 persons not to mention lost revenue. Most people wouldn't bother with the above alternatives and would drive or fly. Should we be glad we have the Lake Shore Limited both directions and the Capitol one direction? Should we be grateful we have any trains at all stopping here? At least two large cities in Ohio have no train service, Columbus and Dayton.

As some of you might remember, Amtrak discontinued the Lake Shore totally two years ago and we fought to get the stop back and won. You can be assured I have and will be advocating for our westbound Capitol stop. I had the opportunity to meet Mr Gunn at the NARP board meeting and he said he had received my letter regarding the issue and said he had referred it to his operations person. I've heard nothing since then, April 22nd. What is next? Will they cut out major cities like Cleveland or Toledo?

Philip Copeland is on the boards of RUN and NARP and is the regional coordinator for Elyria and Lorain County OARP.

A lot to Ride in Toronto (Cont. From page 1)

Trains on the Lakeshore Corridor run hourly, seven days a week.

VIA Rail operates three corridor lines from Toronto: to Montreal (four to seven trains daily), Ottawa (three to five trains daily) and Windsor (four trains daily). There is also service to Sarnia (although through service to Chicago was discontinued in 2004) and Niagara Falls. There are a few long-distance

trains operating at Union Station, as well. VIA Rail runs its "Canadian" three times a week to Vancouver, through Winnipeg and Edmonton. The Ontario Northland Railroad operates the "Northlander" six days a week to Cochrane. It is one of the last "independent" trains in Canada and heads north on a new daytime schedule. Amtrak is represented in Toronto by the "Maple Leaf," a daily train that makes ar

all-day run to and from New York City through upstate New York.

Toronto has been described as a "rail fan's dream" and serves as a model of a well-run transit system. Whether you join us for our conference, or you come to Toronto another time, we urge you to ride the city's transit. The regulars at RUN will be riding, too.

A Short Flight Instead of a Train Ride

By Steve Hastalis

In early July, I flew from Chicago to Louisville, a distance of no more than 300 miles, to participate in the annual convention of the National Federation of the Blind. Although the flight had a schedule of about an hour, the actual flying time lasted only about 45 minutes, and the plane flew its highest altitude of 22,000 feet for only a few minutes.

The airline provided excellent, on-time service both ways. As I took this trip, however, I wished that I could have ridden a train from downtown Chicago to downtown Louisville in three to four hours. Instead, the only rail transportation associated with this trip was my ride on Chicago's elevated trains to and from an airport.

Wouldn't it have been pleasant to travel from one downtown to

another, as passenger trains do so effectively, instead of getting to the airport hours early for such a short flight? Train travel from downtown to another would have provided competitive transportation with a short flight, especially when including ground transportation, security and baggage claim logistics before and afterward.

I recalled the wise recommendations of transportation experts and advocates. Quality rail service, with several trains a day, provides the best alternative for people traveling short to medium distances of up to 500 miles. Over the years, I have heard many proposals for high-speed rail corridors, most notably, service which the Midwest High-speed Rail Association.

Years ago, railroads such as the Monon, also Louisville and

Nashville, competed with each other between Chicago and Louisville. Most recently, Amtrak's service amounted to an overnight mail train with one or two coaches, no amenities and very slow operation south of Indianapolis.

We all have heard urgent predictions about the crisis in air travel, the projected increases in commercial passenger air service and the related need to expand airport capacity. We also have heard about airlines losing millions of dollars due to fuel costs. Regrettably, we have heard precious little discussion about developing viable passenger rail service for short to medium trips. Thus the airlines could use their planes most effectively, flying people long distances across country in only a few short hours.

Steve Hastalis, a RUN Board member, lives in Chicago.

NJT Fare Hike (Cont. From Page 4)

The battle over transit funding now goes to the Legislature where rider advocates will continue to press for secure and dedicated funding to meet NJT's capital and operating needs. Leaders of the advocacy groups vow to continue the fight in Trenton. With the defeat that they suffered at the hands of NJT on the off-peak fare issue, however, it is difficult to predict how determined the group members and other riders will be to campaign for more money for

the transit agency. At the present time, there does not appear to be the political will to raise the gasoline tax to provide needed support for transit. Will this situation change? Time will tell.

David Peter Alan is chair of the Lackawanna Coalition and a member of the NJT Citizens' Advisory Committee (Local Programs Support). On the national level, he is a board member of RUN and an advisory board member of the National Association of Public Transportation Advocates (NAPTA). He lives and practices law in South Orange, New Jersey.

Please become a member of RUN..

From the run
board of
directors

The Rail users' newsletter is published quarterly by the Rail Users' network, a 501 9c) (3) nonprofit corporation.

Rail users' network newsletter invites passengers to share ways to improve passenger rail service. Send your contribution to:
Rail users' Network,
p.o. box 9373, St. louis, MO 63117

Don't be left behind at the station - join us!

**Rail Users' Network
P.O. Box 9373
St. Louis, MO 63117**

We invite you to become a charter member of the rail users' network, a new organization to represent 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 together for the first time. In addition, 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.

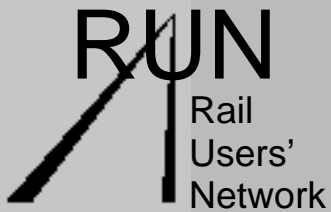
RUN members enjoy newsletters, an annual conference, a rail forum and other meetings to share information while working to improve and expand rail passenger service.

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

We certainly hope you will join this new organization - vital decisions and legislation affecting the nationwide rail transportation system are being made daily. Don't be left behind at the station!

Yearly dues

- \$35 for individual/family memberships
- \$100 for advisory committees and advocacy groups
- \$250 for government agencies and tourist/convention bureaus
- \$500 for carriers and profit making businesses



Letters to the editor

July 25, 2005

Chairman David Laney
Board of Directors
National Railroad Passenger Corporation
60 Massachusetts Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear Mr. Laney:

We are writing to you to express our deep concern about the direction Amtrak is taking concerning food service on its trains, specifically in the Northeast Corridor. As we're sure you know, one of the benefits of taking the train in this immensely populated area is the "amenities" — the ability to sit and relax and watch the scenery or read as you travel, the spaciousness of the train environment, and the ability to obtain food along the journey. If you take the food away, passengers will either do one of three things: 1) Get food before they board 2) Forego food for the entire trip 3) Use another method of travel.

Since we all want Amtrak to succeed, we believe it is important that all the amenities of train travel be available to our passengers. The removal of food service on the NYP-Albany trains, and the contemplation of downgrading or removing it from all the corridor trains raises some important questions:

- 1) Is Amtrak prepared to upgrade all of the food facilities in each of the stations along the route to compensate for the lack of food service on the trains?
- 2) Is Amtrak really saving any money if customers purchase food from a non-Amtrak source, and
- 3) Is this entire process budget-driven, or is there another agenda at work here?

As representatives of the traveling public, we would like to register, in the strongest terms possible, the fallacy of downgrading services in an attempt to persuade Congress that Amtrak is "taking measures to reduce its costs." Reducing items like food service is likely to produce a rash of angry letters and calls to senators and representatives up and down the corridor, the very people Amtrak needs on its side in the budget battle. We hope you will take appropriate steps to enhance, rather than reduce, the amenities that make train travel so rewarding and unique. We believe Amtrak's existence depends on it.

Sincerely,

Richard Rudolph
Chair
Rail Users Network (RUN)
55 River Road,
Steep Falls, Me 04085

Andrew Albert
Vice Chair
Rail Users Network (RUN)
150 West 88th Street
New York, N.Y. 10024

SAVE THE DATE — September 24

The Rail Users' Network next rail forum/board meeting will be held at the MTA's headquarters in New York City (347 Madison Ave), Saturday, September 24 from 1-5 pm. Invited speakers include Robert Terrell, executive director, of the Washington Street Corridor Commission (Roxbury, Mass.) and David Cameron, the vice-chair of the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council. They will provide service issue updates.

A long Train Ride Cont. From Page

extremely fearful of having her luggage where she could not touch it. Flexibly, sensitively, the car attendant squeezed it into every available space in our crowded compartment and explained to my companion she would have to walk with him to another location if she had to use the bathroom. The commode held most of her suitcases.

Miraculously, for once, the train arrived on time in Manassas, Virginia where I arranged for our trip to end. It was much better to terminate our train trip there than in Washington's overly busy security-conscious Union Station.

The crew helped us down to a friend who awaited us on the platform. The conductor was with me, so I thanked her, especially for the wonderful car attendant. "He's one of the best in our entire system," she said.

"Don't worry," my traveling companion assured me when I expressed regret because I couldn't thank the car attendant personally. "I gave him a great big hug for all three of us." She included Ginny, my dog, who thoroughly appreciated her two walks during the 12 hour ride.

Four weeks later, my traveling companion had a meeting to attend in Richmond. Once again, I was handling transportation logistics. All the cars were full. "Let's take another train ride," she suggested.

A friend Steve joined us on this short trip between Quantico and Richmond, Virginia. Desperately craving a few moments of peace and quiet, I encouraged the two of them to go on a foraging mission. I told Steve. "Maybe she might find it

interesting to experience walking through the train and changing cars."

Neither Steve nor Jackie knew if this was one of my better ideas, but they were both willing to try. "It was strange at first," Jackie said when they returned. "The train was really rocking, and I felt a little sick at first, but Steve showed me how to hold onto the seats. Coming back, it was a lot easier and I'm glad I did it."

"This was a good day," Steve observed. "She learned how people who are blind can get where they want to go without having to depend on sighted friends and family members or hire drivers all the time."

Steve, who is also totally blind, spent time teaching her to use her cane properly to locate the platform edge so she wouldn't fall. Under his tutelage, she was

a rapid enthusiastic learner. I am not a chapter officer in the National Federation of the Blind and, therefore, have no responsibilities at state board meetings. I look forward to the day when, in her direct unambiguous style, she will say "Thanks, but I don't need anyone traveling with me and, anyway, I want to go by myself and make some new friends." Then, I will feel free to take more trips to Williamsburg and spend the weekend with my knitting teacher, even if my most recent of these expeditions, only yesterday, was a train trip from that other place, not heaven!

Holly Frisch is a RUN board member.

Volunteers Needed:

Our work is highly collaborative. We need volunteers to achieve our goals. Several committees are being established and will meet on a regular basis and need members' input: They include:

- **Legislative Outreach Committee**
- **Newsletter/Communications Committee**
- **Conference Planning Committee**
- **Fundraising Committee**

Please join us!