

# The Bulletin



**Electric Railroaders' Association, Incorporated**

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## The Bulletin

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**In This Issue:**  
**Rails Under the River Revisited — the Hudson & Manhattan (continued)**  
...Page 2

## THIRD AVENUE RAILWAYS' PLOW PITS by Bernard Linder

While looking through my newspaper clippings, I found a picture of a plow pit and I decided to write this article explaining why it was built. Plow pits disappeared with the trolley cars, but hardly anyone knew about them when they were in service.

Because nearly all overhead wires were blown down during the Blizzard of 1888, a law was passed to prevent this disaster by prohibiting overhead wires in Manhattan. When the Manhattan lines were electrified, underground third rails were installed and plows were attached to the trucks. The plows extended through slots between the track rails and made contact with the third rail. Because he wanted to help develop the Bronx, Manhattan's Borough President allowed the company to install trolley wire on Bronx lines entering Manhattan for short distances on 135<sup>th</sup> Street, 155<sup>th</sup> Street, 181<sup>st</sup> Street, 207<sup>th</sup> Street, Broadway north of the Kingsbridge car house, both ends of the car house, and 217<sup>th</sup> Street.

In the 1930s, I was studying electrical engineering at City College and I rode the 149<sup>th</sup> Street Crosstown frequently to Convent Avenue, a short walk to the college. When the car stopped at the plow pit, I was able to watch the crews, who were so efficient that there was no congestion on this line, whose cars ran on a 4-minute headway in the rush hour and 5- and 6-minutes during midday.

Plow pits were located at E. 125<sup>th</sup> Street west of First Avenue for Willis Avenue cars and W. 145<sup>th</sup> Street west of Lenox Avenue for the 149<sup>th</sup> Street Crosstown cars. At this plow pit, Broadway and 145<sup>th</sup> Street cars also switched from underground to overhead power. Then they operated beneath the trolley wire a short distance, where they were

turned at the crossover east of Lenox Avenue.

At the plow pits, there was an overlap between the overhead trolley and the underground third rail. Cars stopped twice at white lines painted on the pavement between the track rails. Cars in this service were equipped at one end with a single-pole double-throw (SPDT) switch, which was adjusted manually by the crew. Because the Willis Avenue cars operated around the Fort Lee Ferry loop, the SPDT switch could be at either end.

The man in the pit, the man on the ground, and the Motorman all worked together to avoid delays. Westbound cars stopped at the first white line, where the plow was attached. At the second white line, the man on the ground pulled down the pole. If the SPDT switch was at the front end, the Motorman adjusted it. If it was in the rear of the one-man treadle car, the man on the ground reached inside the car, pushed hard on the treadle, entered the car, adjusted the SPDT switch, and left promptly. The car continued its journey in Manhattan. Eastbound cars stopped at the first white line, where the man on the ground raised the pole. The SPDT switch was adjusted by an employee, depending on its location. At the second white line, the plow was removed, after which the car wended its way to the Bronx.

The 125<sup>th</sup> Street plow pit was in service until 33 buses replaced 27 Willis Avenue trolley cars on August 5, 1941. The 145<sup>th</sup> Street plow pit was no longer required after August 17, 1947, when buses replaced trolley cars on the 149<sup>th</sup> Street Crosstown, the last trolley line to receive power from underground third rail in Manhattan.

*(Continued on page 6)*

**NEXT TRIP: LIRR EAST SIDE ACCESS PROJECT TOUR, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25**

## RAILS UNDER THE RIVER REVISITED — THE HUDSON & MANHATTAN by George Chiasson (Continued from August, 2015 issue)

### MCADOO & MCCREA'S RAPID TRANSIT TRAINS REACH NEWARK

On November 18, 1911 the new Centre Street Bridge was opened to Pennsylvania Railroad and surface traffic, with a single track carrying the Centre Street Branch across the Passaic River, as previous in common with autos, trucks and horse-drawn wagons while pedestrians used sidewalks on either side. Built of riveted steel beams with concrete piers, anchorages, and decking, it actually incorporated two levels that could open as part of a single, 230-foot swing span, with an upper deck of 18-foot vertical clearance that was devoted to use by the Hudson & Manhattan. PRR had already given up its steam-powered "shuttle" service across the bridge from the Park Place station in Newark to Exchange Place by this time, the railroad company having continued its operation for several years after September, 1902. The Center Street Branch itself remained busy nevertheless, with freight and switching moves on both sides of the river several times a day. Until early 1910 these trains had continued to cross the Passaic River on the original, 76-year-old New Jersey Railroad swing bridge, which was replaced by a temporary wooden trestle that had an even smaller moveable span until the new structure's lower level was completed. After a minor property dispute was settled on the Newark side of the river, rapid transit trains began making practice trips to and from the new Park Place terminal on November 23 by extending the existing service from Manhattan Transfer, and then finally began carrying revenue passengers three days later, accompanied by a local media blitz which glorified its "86 trips per day." The entire extension was formed by a short two-track addition to the steel elevated structure that already existed west of Manhattan Transfer and followed the Center Street Branch across Harrison to the Passaic River Bridge. The Park Place terminal was composed of three stub-end tracks at ground level (which had in turn descended from the upper bridge) that were surrounded by a trio of platforms staggered at three different lengths: the northernmost extended out 340 feet from the block, the middle reached approximately 319 feet, and the southernmost just 257 feet. There was also a short spur for the U.S. Express Company protruding out of the terminal's easterly side, which had a separate side platform along the southern edge that ran 165 feet out from the block. All was contained within a mildly elaborate, three-sided, single-story structure measuring 165 by 70 by 95 feet across its brick frontage, which was fitted into the southeast corner of Centre Street and Saybrook Place. Architecturally, it embodied the Colonial Revival style then so common to some of the Pennsylvania's local station

buildings around the Northeast. In 2015 its site across from Military Park is occupied by the Victoria Theatre, located near the present convergence of Park Place, Centre Street, and Rector Street. What used to be Saybrook Place survives as a driveway feeding onto McCarter Highway, ½-block south of Rector. Since 2006 it has been crossed by the Broad Street Station branch of NJ Transit's Newark Light Rail (as that former "City Subway" has been known of late), which in a convoluted way keeps its previous heritage of traction active.

By sometime in early 1912 New York H&M and Jersey City-bound Pennsylvania Local trains were diverted from "Shanley's Cut," to which main Track 1 had been realigned in 1887-8, to a newly-laid iron positioned through the original (1838) Bergen Cut and were passing through the abuilding station at Summit Avenue. This facility was a rather elaborate undertaking even in its earliest incarnation, consisting of three 374-foot (8-car) platforms that were reached through the mezzanine of a fair-sized terminal structure suspended along the Bergen Cut's hand-excavated cliff side next to Hudson Boulevard (formerly the Hudson Public Road, now JFK Boulevard). The three electrified tracks through the new station were each designed to expedite the line's specialized traffic flows: the easternmost functioned as a bypass for both the PRR and H&M trains to New York (though the degree of express operation at that time remains a mystery), while the other two ("middle" and westernmost) were solely intended for use by H&M trains (inbound and outbound, respectively), as revealed by their tight loading gauge, all complete with an attached, specially-sized layup yard for future relays and rapid transit equipment storage needs. To accomplish this in the limited space available, (westbound) Track 2 of the Jersey City Branch was left in its existing alignment through Shanley's Cut, complete with third rail, being chiefly used by the Pennsy's local trains from Exchange Place, but also by H&M when required to fly past the new station. On April 14, 1912 all Newark H&M trains added Summit Avenue as a station stop using only the middle platform and its two surrounding tracks, with eastbound traffic routed off Main Track 1 through some of the new switch work associated with the future storage yard. Extensive construction work was then completed through the balance of that year and into the next, with the remainder of the great Summit Avenue station complex finally ready for use on February 23, 1913. At that time the station's other two platforms were placed in service along with a system of elevators to link the mezzanine with each specific loading area, such that it was advertised patrons could remain in the

*(Continued on page 3)*

**Rails Under the River Revisited***(Continued from page 2)*

warmth of the station house until their trains were literally ready to be boarded. Service was altered and enhanced as a result, with the line from 33<sup>rd</sup> Street to Grove and Henderson Streets in Jersey City being extended into Summit Avenue, where its trains were discharged at the western side platform, relayed into the storage yard, and pulled back to the easterly side platform to reload for the trip back to 33<sup>rd</sup> Street. Newark and Hudson Terminal trains thus continued to use the existing middle platform without interruption. The adjoining yard (Tracks 5-9) was also opened as of the same date (if not earlier), while the prominent "Rocky Bluff" that was originally created by the excavation of Shanley's Cut (and shows prominently in surviving photographs) remained as was. From that occasion forward the system's four basic routings, which have now survived for over a century, came to be: Hudson Terminal to Hoboken; Hudson Terminal to Newark; 33<sup>rd</sup> Street to Summit Avenue (later renamed Journal Square); and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street to Hoboken. On the other hand, in these years after Penn Station's opening the Pennsy's degree of local service to its own Marion station was concurrently curtailed; a surviving schedule of that era shows only a handful of "franchise" trains stopping there on weekdays (including Saturday) and Sundays while many trains a day came and went from the Summit Avenue facility less than a block away.

On March 6, 1913 the last completely new station was added to the joint H&M-Pennsylvania line in the modest community of Harrison. It was located at Railroad Avenue, 1½ blocks north of the Pennsylvania's 1904-built "Harrison" station on the cut-off at 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Its seven-car outside platforms were installed on the steel elevated structure above the Centre Street Branch which connected Manhattan Transfer with the new bridge across the Passaic River and had separate, manned fare control facilities with direct stairways and no mezzanine. Despite all but being written out of PRR's schedules, the older location's name was nevertheless adjusted to "Harrison-4<sup>th</sup> Street" to avoid confusion with the new rapid transit stop. After that occurrence H&M's infrastructure remained in a relative state of tranquility through the onset of World War I in 1917. A year and a half later, on November 18, 1918, just after the Armistice was reached, Tracks 1 and 2 of the Harsimus Cove Branch were extended west through the northerly side of the original (1838) Bergen Cut between Waldo Avenue and "SC" interlocking (Summit Avenue). These were connected to the pre-existing trackage by slightly widening out a piece of the original excavation along the northerly face of the Bergen Cut and adding a concrete retaining wall. Their purpose was to remove the freight traffic moving to and from the Harsimus Cove Branch from the shared, cramped trackage through "Shanley's Cut," which had become a bottleneck as trains of all types sidestepped the Summit Avenue station. As part of this relocation the #2 main track was

actually de-electrified (third rail removed) and a very long, electrified siding installed where the original Track 1 once was, intended exclusively for Hudson & Manhattan equipment storage. Henceforth Track 2 was used exclusively by westbound Jersey City passenger trains (such as they were in later years), while those bound for Exchange Place continued to pass around the "rim" of Summit Avenue and later Journal Square on #1 as long as they lasted. The Summit Avenue facility itself was enjoying a great business, but had not yet truly matured. During the following decade the Hudson & Manhattan and its business partner would continue to flourish through ongoing development in that area and massive re-investment in its physical plant, eventually reaching a peak that would only be stifled by unforeseen external events.

As for Hudson & Manhattan founder William Gibbs McAdoo, he remained with the company until March 5, 1913, at which time he assumed the duties of U.S. Treasury Secretary under President Woodrow Wilson. He had actually attracted Wilson's attention much earlier than that and served as national chairman of the Democratic National Committee during the 1912 election. On December 26, 1917, McAdoo was also appointed to the post of Director General of Railroads with the newly-formed United States Railroad Administration, as war came to the U.S. and the American railway system was "nationalized" for military, commercial, and security purposes. This arrangement remained in effect until the Armistice was signed in November, 1918 (though USRA didn't finally relinquish its hold on the country's railroads until sometime in 1920). McAdoo had by then relocated from New York to Southern California and faded into private law practice, vying unsuccessfully for the Democratic Presidential nomination in both 1920 and 1924. He was also instrumental in aiding the formation of United Artists studios in 1919, acting as legal counsel on behalf of such motion picture notables as Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, D. W. Griffith, and Mary Pickford. By virtue of his new residence and association with Hollywood elites, McAdoo made a successful bid for the office of U.S. Senator representing California in 1932. There he lasted only one term, largely dogged by the effects of the Great Depression and his own personal issues. Being beaten for re-nomination by Sheridan Downey, he resigned immediately after the November, 1938 election short of his "lame duck" period. He then continued to be a background supporter of various (conservative-leaning) Democratic causes until he died in Washington, D.C. in February, 1941, succumbing to a heart attack while attending festivities associated with the third inauguration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 2015 he rests eternally at Arlington National Cemetery.

#### THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE HUDSON & MANHATTAN

As H&M came to grips with its post-World War I economics, so too did it begin to respond to the incredible

*(Continued on page 6)*

## THIRD AVENUE RAILWAYS' CAR HOUSES

65<sup>TH</sup> STREET AND 54<sup>TH</sup> STREET CAR HOUSES SOLD AT AUCTION NOVEMBER 20, 1946



53<sup>rd</sup> Street and Tenth Avenue Car House.  
Bernard Linder collection



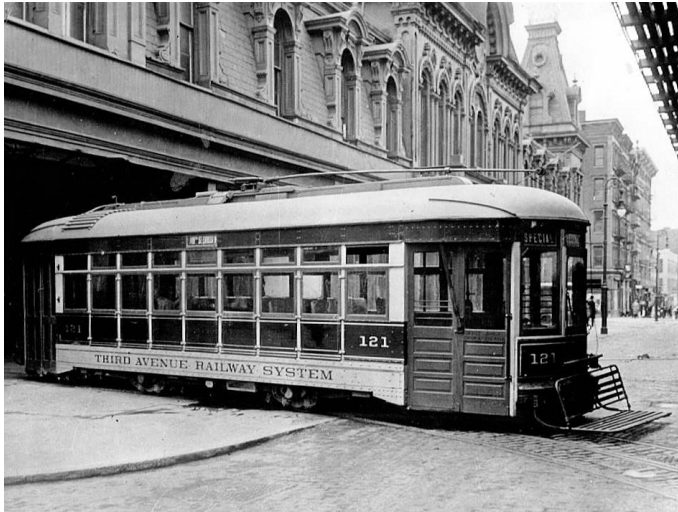
54<sup>th</sup> Street Car House, October 6, 1946.  
Bernard Linder photograph



65<sup>th</sup> Street Car House, Third Avenue and E. 65<sup>th</sup> Street, October 6, 1946.  
Bernard Linder photograph



65<sup>th</sup> Street Car House.  
Bernard Linder collection



Single-truck convertible 121 at 65<sup>th</sup> Street Car House.  
Bernard Linder collection



Harlem Car House, Third Avenue and E. 129<sup>th</sup> Street, October 6, 1946.  
Bernard Linder photograph

*(Continued on page 5)*

**Third Avenue Railways' Car Houses**

*(Continued from page 4)*



**Amsterdam Car House, Amsterdam Avenue and W. 129<sup>th</sup> Street, July 28, 1946.**  
Bernard Linder photograph



**West Farms Car House, Boston Road and E. 175<sup>th</sup> Street, November 12, 1946.**  
Bernard Linder photograph



**West Farms Car House, Boston Road and E. 176<sup>th</sup> Street, November 12, 1946.**  
Bernard Linder photograph



**Semi-convertible at West Farms Car House, 1934.**  
Bernard Linder collection



**Yonkers Car House, Main Street and Buena Vista Avenue, Yonkers, June 21, 1952.**  
Bernard Linder photograph

**Third Avenue Railways' Plow Pits**

*(Continued from page 1)*

The following cars ran in this service since 1931:

UNTIL AUGUST 5, 1941	AUGUST 5, 1941-AUGUST 17, 1947
71-100	71-86
884-893	967-992 (16 cars)
967-994	
1126-1145 ex-681-700 (renumbered 1939)	

**FORGOTTEN PLOW PITS**

An old-timer recalled seeing a plow pit at W. 225<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, and he was probably correct.

Broadway and 145<sup>th</sup> Street service was extended on Broadway from W. 181<sup>st</sup> Street to W. 242<sup>nd</sup> Street during the summer months starting July 2, 1919 and continuing until September 11, 1921. Cars operated from W. 181<sup>st</sup> Street and Broadway to W. 145<sup>th</sup> Street and Lenox Avenue until service was discontinued on June 29, 1947. Buses were not substituted because service was provided by other buses.

Shortly after the Manhattan Bridge was opened, trolley cars started running from Flatbush Avenue and Fulton Street, Brooklyn, across the bridge and Canal Street to Desbrosses Ferry, Manhattan. The plow pit at Canal Street near the bridge was relocated to Flatbush Avenue Extension between Nassau and Concord Streets. Cars 721-770 were operated on this line until service was discontinued on October 4, 1919.

**Rails Under the River Revisited**

*(Continued from page 3)*

ridership growth that had been ongoing since its beginnings a decade and a half previous. Its state was then chaotic by nature, given that by design the system's maximum consist was fixed at six cars, and at that almost entirely during the rush hours with shortened trains otherwise. This circumstance was owed as much as anything to H&M's ongoing financial unsteadiness and the rising cost of labor. In 1920 the company's self-assessment manifested itself in the form of an initial equipment acquisition, 25 "Class E" cars (401-425) that were built by American Car & Foundry and placed in service starting in April of 1921. These were quickly joined by 25 more from the same source over each of the next two years, Class F units 426-450, which began entering the fleet in September, 1922 and finally Class Gs 451-475, which first appeared in November, 1923. In the main these allowed H&M to adjust itself through the addition of more service with longer trains, which from that time forward were expanded to as many as eight cars each (but most often remained at six or seven) in peak periods. On the surface, all 75 of these latest units were similar to those previously delivered, but for the addition of electric marker lights and relocation of their hand brakes to the interior. The only remarkable difference otherwise was an extra 2 feet 10½ inches in overall length to 51 feet 3½ inches, thanks mainly to a slight enlargement of the vestibules that resulted from their "wrap-around" end profile, a vital change given the system's crush demands. Less obvious was that their updated body construction technique added 10,000 pounds to each car's weight (for an average of 79,200 pounds light).

As one might have expected from such a steadfast organization, all of the newer cars were universally compatible with H&M's existing fleet. This trait was reflected in the continued employment of two GE #76 motors (yielding the same 320 horsepower combined), while the series also incorporated that era's most-typical version of a control group as provided by Gen-

eral Electric — the PC-10 — which was quite capable of working with the Type M control used on the older A, B, and C Classes, and could also mix with the MP-38 variants used in joint operation. In actual practice these most recent groups were mixed with Classes A, B and C (after their door controls were retrofitted to match starting in 1922) as well as each other because of the standardization of Conductors' door control arrangements. Thereafter, all cars were equipped with one electric button for each door leaf (three overall) and could be paired up, requiring only three persons instead of five to operate the doors on a 6-car train (or 4 on a 7- or 8-car train), plus the Motorman. Through time the oldest cars also tended to be assigned to the two routes serving Hoboken, where shorter trains were better able to accommodate the never-ending ridership hordes. This trend was even further abetted by the arrival of H&M's final 20 rapid transit cars (Class J's 501-520) from ACF in 1928, which were also of an identical nature and topped off the "Steel" or "Black" portion of the fleet at a total of 255 units. By that time the older cars had also been retrofitted with electric marker light clusters on either side of the storm door to match the more-recently-delivered editions, and the use of hand-mounted marker lights was otherwise discontinued.

Likewise, H&M and the Pennsylvania Railroad teamed up once again to similarly expand the fleet of "Red cars" assigned to the jointly-operated route between Hudson Terminal and Newark. With a combined quantity of 16 cars built by ACF, the four delivered (and marked) for the Hudson & Manhattan were designated as Class H (numbers 801-804), while the dozen shipped in on behalf of PRR (numbers 1961-72) carried that railroad's "MP-38a" classification. Once again all newer cars were universally interchangeable with the existing Class Ds and MP-38s (and H&M's own cars) in every way, but the newer units did exhibit a slightly different window line set in a "1+2+1+C+1+2+1" configuration, which contrasted with the "2+2+1+c+1+2+2" arrangement of the 1911 rolling stock. As a result the two body profiles clashed a bit in general use and each subgroup was

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Rails Under the River Revisited

*(Continued from page 6)*

readily recognizable. Whatever the case, these three fleet elements (50 Class A, 255 and 112 "Red" cars) carried on all service as it crested into the next decade. It is said that the ultimate downfall of the Hudson & Manhattan Railroad was precipitated by the opening of the Holland Tunnel under the aegis of the publicly-operated New York and New Jersey Bridge and Tunnel Commissions in 1927. Precise analysis or not, the economic alternative this project provided and the onset of the Great Depression eventually resulted in the system's first significant ridership losses and a degree of fleet attrition by 1933.

Another underlying thrust of H&M in the 1920s was the execution of some station expansion and the maintenance of a state of overall "good repair," though generally on a modest scale within and made most obvious without by a good coat of paint on facilities around the system. One notable exception to this was the addition of passageways between the Erie station and the Pavonia railroad terminal that was undertaken in 1924-5 to again facilitate the daily throng of interchange traffic. Another important project, underwritten by the Pennsylvania Railroad, was a total reconfiguration of the original Summit Avenue facility. This had in fact become better known as "Journal Square" sometime in 1923, when it was an emerging transportation hub for the various motorbus lines that were sprouting up in the area to meet both H&M and several trolley lines of Public Service Corporation (most notably the 7/Jackson, 13/Greenville, and 17/Summit Avenue routes). The station's second name was derived from the local newspaper, *The Jersey Journal*, whose new headquarters building adorned the general redevelopment of the heretofore modest combination of several streets as they gathered to pass over the Pennsylvania, a union that dated back to its beginning in 1838 when the first wooden plank bridge was erected across the New Jersey Railroad's Bergen Cut. At this time the area was transformed into a prominent commercial district by a partnership of the various real estate and transportation companies, through the acquisition of abutting residential properties and a marked expansion of the streetscape. When completed this redevelopment included a major off-street transfer station for Public Service trolleys and the local motorbuses that proliferated the landscape by the mid-1920s.

Sometime during 1925 a finished wooden overpass (mounted on steel supports) was added from Magnolia Avenue on the residential (north) side of Shanley's Cut into the mezzanine of the Journal Square station, then after various light commercial buildings had been completed at no less than five contiguous intersections, a huge concrete overpass (spanning almost 200 feet between its curb lines) was opened on December 4, 1926 to replace the original steel-and-wooden-deck structure carrying Hudson Boulevard across the cut. This in turn opened to a plaza at its southerly end that fronted a

grand hotel, the Public Service terminal, and a number of other commercial establishments, with Public Service's trolleys otherwise weaving their own way through the background from Summit (where they crossed above the Pennsy on a sturdy overpass) to Sip to Bergen Avenues. Initial construction of the revised station complex had barely begun by late 1926 and continued for another 2½ years. Not only was the station itself rebuilt but so also was that tall, isolated "Rocky Bluff" beneath Hudson Boulevard leveled to accommodate the new overpass and the addition of another five storage tracks (10-14), which were collectively dubbed "Yard B." This up-to-date facility was centrally-controlled from "WR" Tower, which was placed in service on January 5, 1928. It was inserted at the west end of Tracks 12-13, and attached to the west side of the new Hudson Boulevard overpass.

The same installation would also handle the various routings through the amended Journal Square station after it was operational, an event that finally transpired following a re-dedication ceremony on June 1, 1929. While condensing its platforms from three to two slightly wider installations, the number of tracks contained within the station was doubled from three to six, with a negligible associated widening of the overall right-of-way. Thus were granted separate paths of travel for all three varieties of service passing through the complex. North to south on H&M this included westbound express trains, trains to Newark, and terminating Journal Square trains surrounding the northerly platform; and departing 33<sup>rd</sup> Street trains plus the eastbound H&M to Hudson Terminal on either side of the southerly platform. As before, the southernmost track (Main #1) was used by eastbound Pennsylvania Locals to Jersey City and H&M expresses, both of which "went around the rim" to bypass the Journal Square station entirely. Above the station, the existing granite-faced head house from 1913 was altered substantially to meet the new platform alignments, while the adjacent lobby building received a new outward shell of sculpture-adorned red brick. Altogether, these changes established a day-to-day setting at Journal Square that would endure for almost another half-century. One final occurrence that should be noted with regard to the Hudson & Manhattan during this time period was the closure, or more accurately the discontinuance of utilization, at its power house in Jersey City, which also took place sometime in 1929. Thus was the company relieved not only of its manpower, maintenance, and fueling requirements, but was also free to take advantage of the economics by then offered through the mass availability of electric power through common commercial sources (i.e., "the grid"). This means had been nothing more than a supposition when H&M so wittingly established itself smack in the middle of one of America's densest existing urban environments in 1908, but was now just coming into a graceful maturation that would last far into the future, a standing then truly representative of the destiny enjoyed by Northern New Jersey and Greater New York itself.

*(Continued next month)*

# Commuter and Transit Notes

No. 322

by Ronald Yee and Alexander Ivanoff

## METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

MTA is now expecting to reap an additional \$1 billion through 2019 from a combination of better than forecasted revenues from fares, tolls, and real estate transaction taxes as well as some cost savings realized from worker pensions and fuel costs. These monies are expected to be applied toward supporting the unfunded portion of the upcoming \$32 billion capital program as well as provide around \$183 million to improve services to meet changing and/or rising ridership volumes and patterns as well as provide staff to handle service delays and support the expansion of Select Bus Service (SBS). (*New York Daily News*, July 22)

An FRA status report revealed that both commuter railroads operated by MTA, the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad, will not meet the December 31, 2015 deadline for the implementation of Positive Train Control (PTC). (*Star-Ledger*, August 11)

## MTA METRO-NORTH RAILROAD

Rockland County Executive Ed Day sent a letter to Metro-North Railroad President Joseph Giuletti requesting that the railroad provide a viable alternative to Pascack Valley Line Train #1601, which is slated for cessation of service on September 30. This train provides post-midnight service from Hoboken to Spring Valley on Mondays through Fridays. The first option would be to operate a train exclusively for New York State residents, bypassing all stops in New Jersey. While it would cost \$640,000 annually to operate, it would be a relatively small added expense in the face of the \$40 million gap between what Rockland County pays in MTA taxes and the services it receives. As this alternative may be too expensive a bill for MTA to foot, a bus alternative may prove to be more financially viable. It would involve an MTA-sponsored connecting bus at Secaucus, New Jersey leaving at around 12:45 AM that would make the run up to Rockland County, offering comparable travel times. (*Editor's Note by Ron Yee: ERA Member Randy Glucksman, Chairman of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council, had first presented this bus alternative to the MTA Board.*) (*Journal News*, July 28)

Connecticut United States Senator Richard Blumenthal called for the Federal Railroad Administration to impose penalties on railroads not in compliance with the Positive Train Control (PTC) mandate of December 31, 2015. Metro-North Railroad officials have stated that the earliest they would be able to bring PTC to Metro-North would be sometime after 2018. (*The CT Mirror*, August 12)

## MTA LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD

LIRR officially rededicated its Massapequa station after a two year, \$20.5 million rehabilitation. The 12-car platform, its waiting rooms, staircases, escalators, PA system, lighting, and canopy were replaced and a state-of-the-art video security system installed. This station

was originally constructed in 1953 as part of the grade crossing elimination project on the Babylon Branch. This project was performed over several stages, enabling LIRR to keep the station in service during the two-year project. (*Progressive Railroading*, July 29)

## NJ TRANSIT

NJ Transit rail commuters into and out of New York's Penn Station endured severe disruptions to their commutes on four of the five weekdays during the week of July 20-24. Most of the delays stemmed from disruptions to the power supply to the catenary in the Hudson River tunnels, highlighting the urgent need to fund the Gateway Tunnels, which would enable the existing former Pennsylvania Railroad North River Tunnels to be closed down in a planned manner, one at a time, for a total overhaul and repair effort that would be expected to take about one year each. In each instance during this particular week, the Hudson River tunnels were reduced to single-track operations, creating 60-90-minute delays and highlighting the need for the construction of the Gateway Tunnels. Subsequent issues with feeder cables resulted in limitations in the number of trains that could be in the tunnels at once. This resulted in peak period delays through July 31, when the cable in the tunnels was replaced. (*Star-Ledger*, July 24)

Calling NJ Transit's latest contract offer "utterly unacceptable", the unions representing NJ Transit commuter rail employees rejected the latest offer from management. The proposal from NJ Transit included a 10% raise over a 7.5-year contract with increases in employee health care premium co-pays. The unions are demanding 17% over 6 years plus a cap limiting health care co-pays to 2% of an employee's base weekly pay. They have been working without a contract for over four years. An emergency board has already been appointed by President Obama in an attempt to prevent a strike in 2016. NJ Transit is already raising fares in 2015 to cover a \$56 million budget gap, which will grow far worse as early as next year. (*Fox Business News*, August 5)

NJ Transit will offer only limited service on the Atlantic City Line during the weekend of September 26-27 to limit the crowds on its trains when up to 2 million people are expected to attend the Pope's visit in downtown Philadelphia. In a move similar to SEPTA, passengers must purchase a special ticket that went on sale August 15 to be able to ride NJ Transit trains to and from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania that weekend. NJ Transit Atlantic City Line trains will operate non-stop between Atlantic City and Philadelphia, skipping all intermediate stations. Substitute bus service on Route 419 will cover Pennsauken Transit Center to downtown Camden and Route 450 will provide a connection between Cherry Hill and Camden and Route 406 covering the Camden-Cherry Hill-Route 70 corridor. (NJ Transit website, Au-

(Continued on page 9)

## Commuter and Transit Notes

*(Continued from page 8)*

gust 14)

**AMTRAK**

As Amtrak retires its AEM-7 locomotives, it is stripping off key components that it feels would be collectible items to railroad buffs and, in the process, earn back more money than at the scrappers. Items such as number boards, bells, horns, and light fixtures are being removed during the decommissioning process at Wilmington, Delaware. Amtrak is selling these items on eBay and while there is no set schedule of when and what is being sold at any given time, prospective buyers can view the offerings on eBay at [www.ebay.com/usr/amtrakofficial](http://www.ebay.com/usr/amtrakofficial). (Al Holtz, July 27)

Amtrak began a two-year test of a prototype high-level platform at its Ann Arbor, Michigan station. Because of the freight trains which travel on the same tracks, platform edges must be set farther back from the tracks to insure that they do not get damaged by wide freight loads. The experimental platform, officially called a "Setback Level Boarding Platform," slides closer to the tracks when a passenger train stops adjacent to it and rolls back and away from the tracks once the passenger trains are ready to depart. To meet Americans with Disabilities Act regulations, crews must still utilize portable "bridge plates" to span the small gap that remains between the rail car door vestibule and the actual platform edge. If this platform prototype (built by RLE International, based in Madison Heights, Michigan) proves successful in the upcoming two-year trial period, Amtrak plans to install it at other stations. (Editor's Note by Ron Yee: It will be interesting how reliable this platform on rollers is in dealing with the harsh Michigan winters, famous for heavy "lake effect" snows and ice storms.) (Crain's Detroit Business online, July 28)

The privatized *Hoosier State* began its first day of operation on August 2, 2015 operating between Indianapolis and Chicago. Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) will pay around \$225,000 per month to operate the service. The Iowa Pacific trainset, painted in Illinois Central-themed colors, will offer limited free WiFi on all cars based upon available bandwidth from cellular carriers along the tracks, an ex-Santa Fe full length dome car with café service on the lower level, and two heritage coaches featuring leg-rest seating powered by GP-40-FH-2 locomotives on each end with operating crews provided by Amtrak. This consist is scheduled to operate in both directions on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays with an overnight round trip to Indianapolis leaving Chicago on Monday evenings, returning on Tuesday mornings to Chicago. Service had originally been expected to start in January, 2015 but has been postponed by a series of delays stemming from Federal Railroad Administration rulings against the state of Indiana, liability insurance issues, and other political snafus, and delays in finalizing agreements between Amtrak, CSX, and Iowa Pacific. The *Hoosier State* had been operating on contract extensions between Amtrak and

Indiana since January, 2015. (*Northwest Indiana Gazette*, August 2)

After taking a month longer than expected, Pan Am Railways completed a track maintenance program that replaced 22,000 railroad ties on the tracks utilized by the *Downeaster* services connecting Boston's North Station with Portland and Brunswick, Maine. Trains resumed regular timetabled service after August 1, eliminating the significant delays experienced by passengers aboard morning and afternoon trains as well as the bus-ing of passengers during the midday. Ridership is down 500 passengers daily and the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority plans on making a large marketing effort to lure people back onto the trains. (Amtrakdowneaster, August 1)

Under the "no pain, no gain" mentality, buses will replace Amtrak train service on the 62-mile rail line linking Springfield, Massachusetts with Hartford and New Haven, Connecticut between August, 2015 and July, 2016. This is to accommodate a massive track work program that will result in an increase in service from six daily round trips to 17 between New Haven and Hartford with 12 going farther north to Springfield. Trains #470, 476, 479, 490, 493, and 495 on Mondays through Fridays will be replaced by buses operating on the rail schedule, except at Meriden and Wallingford, where the buses will depart to New Haven 20 minutes earlier. A \$88.5 million project already underway at Springfield Union Station will create an intermodal rail and bus hub there by Fall, 2016. Interestingly, Amtrak's *Vermont*, which plies these tracks and continues north into Vermont will not be affected by this project. (*The Republican*, August 3, 2015)

New York Senator Chuck Schumer proposed the formation of a new non-profit corporation to plan and finance the construction of two new Hudson River tunnels to relieve the damaged North River Tunnels currently used by Amtrak and New Jersey Transit (NJT) trains. The proposed "Gateway Development Corporation" would coordinate efforts to formulate a financing plan and coordinate such funds from the states of New Jersey and New York as well as Amtrak, NJ Transit, The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, and ultimately, the federal government, which the Governors of New York and New Jersey want to ultimately foot the lion's share of the bill, as the tunnel is seen as vital to the economy of the entire Northeast and probably the nation. Planning and engineering for the tunnels would also be coordinated through this one entity to avoid conflicting and/or overlapping efforts. (*Asbury Park Press, Crains New York*, August, 11)

Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC) is among the 11 railroads that are on schedule to meet the December 31 deadline to operate their trains under the protection of Positive Train Control (PTC). 189 of the 193 locomotives assigned to trains operating on the Northeast Corridor have already been equipped and all sections of track will be equipped with functioning PTC by the deadline date. Tragically, it will come too late to have

*(Continued on page 10)*

**Commuter and Transit Notes***(Continued from page 9)*

prevented the May 12 fatal wreck at Frankford Junction. SEPTA is one of the other 11 rail operators that will meet the PTC deadline. (*Star-Ledger*, August 11)

**OTHER TRANSIT SYSTEMS****BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

MBTA is changing the way it is monitoring, rewarding, and penalizing the performance of Keolis, the contract operator for its commuter rail operations. In an effort to improve Keolis' performance to prevent a repeat of last winter's fiasco where services either shut down completely or were severely curtailed and the on-time performance and car cleanliness was lacking, MBTA will assess penalties for poor performance under a daily cap, replacing the old monthly cap, which may have been the reason Keolis did not have much incentive to improve performance once a monthly penalty cap had been reached. That cap had been reached each month from October, 2014 to June, 2015 for poor on-time performance and six out of nine months for other types of performance penalties. The \$7.5 million in penalties MBTA has already received from Keolis is being reinvested back into the service in the form of service improvements and the hiring of additional fare agents to work aboard the trains. Keolis plans to introduce an improved operating schedule on November 1 in preparation for the winter season. To reduce the possibility of cascading train delays and cancellations systemwide, efforts will be made to keep as many sets of equipment confined to a limited number of lines instead of operating them on an interline basis where delays on one or two lines could easily cascade across the entire system. (*Nashoba Publishing*, July 23)

**PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND**

In what may be a first in over 32 years, a private company is hoping to start up a commuter rail service between Providence, Rhode Island and Worcester, Massachusetts by 2017. The Boston Surface Railroad plans to operate the train over 45 miles of Providence and Worcester (P&W) tracks and would require \$3-5 million in infrastructure improvements such as a new passenger platform at Worcester as well as a passing siding on the P&W line. Financing to establish this service would be strictly private with no federal or state funding. The service would be operated with a fleet of three used locomotives and 12 former Amtrak coaches and take around an hour for the trip. (*The Herald-News*, August 6)

**PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

SEPTA recorded a milestone peak level of ridership on its regional rail system. For fiscal year 2015 ending on June 30, the system carried 37.4 million trips, two percent more than in the previous fiscal year. Ridership has increased from 24.8 million in 1998, an increase of over 50%. As the system continues to attract greater numbers of riders, SEPTA is investing in the network's future. Using the funds from the passage of Pennsylvania Act 89 in 2013 (which provides for long-term

statewide transportation funding solutions) will enable SEPTA to begin to address significant portions of an estimated \$5 billion backlog of needed repairs and improvements to vital infrastructure such as power substations, bridges, track, maintenance facilities and passenger stations. (SEPTA website, July 24)

The upcoming visit by Pope Francis to Philadelphia over the weekend of September 26-27 has resulted in 900,000 hits on the online sales website at SEPTA, causing it to literally crash and shut down. In response, SEPTA sold the "Papal Passes" on a new website in the format of a one-day lottery held on August 3, with winners being notified on August 6 by e-mail, upon which they would have three days to submit a valid payment. Winners would be limited to a maximum of 10 passes each and the passes mailed 2-3 weeks after payment was received. SEPTA hoped that this sales format would not result in ticket scalping, i.e. being re-sold by the winners to others at substantially higher prices. (*Editor's Note by Ron Yee: I do not recall any such restrictions on MTA transportation lines, commuter rail as well as subways and buses, when Pope John Paul II visited New York City. In fact, Metro-North published special "Papal Visit" timetables for all three lines, encouraging the use of mass transit. SEPTA's network and capacity is not as extensive, forcing officials to limit the service to prevent a total meltdown of their transit systems. Like many events that draw very large crowds (e.g. Belmont Park (LIRR), post-Super Bowl at the Meadowlands in NJ (NJT)), it would seem that the post-event period is the true test of how effective a transportation plan is in accommodating massive crowds.*) (philly.com, July 29)

SEPTA held a similar lottery for Papal Passes costing \$10 for adults (\$5 reduced fare) and valid for three days but limited to Routes 100, 101 and 102, Norristown, Media and Sharon Hill light rail lines, with a free transfer to the Blue (Market-Frankford) Line for service to downtown. (SEPTA website, August 5)

**WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA**

Concerns have been raised about asbestos hazards aboard Washington Metro's (WMATA) oldest railcars. WMATA has reassured the public that the asbestos is limited to locations that do not expose them to any hazard. The only asbestos release risk would occur as the 1000-series cars are disassembled in the scrapping process. An evaluation of the 4000-series cars that will also be retired revealed that they do not contain asbestos. (*The Washington Post*, July 28)

A six-car train without passengers aboard derailed at an interlocking between the Smithsonian and Federal Triangle stations, disrupting the morning commute for thousands of riders on the Blue, Orange and Silver Lines on August 6. Six stations were closed until the accident scene could be cleared up, with limited service being restored to four of the stations for the evening rush hours operating on a single track between McPherson Square and Federal Center. The Federal Triangle and Smithsonian stations remained closed for the rest of the day. (*The Washington Post*, August 6)

*(Continued on page 11)*

**Commuter and Transit Notes***(Continued from page 10)*

A MARC commuter train struck a dump truck in Silver Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland near the intersection of Seminary Road and Forest Glen Road around 4:46 PM on July 20. The maintenance truck driver was the only person injured; none of the 600 aboard the train were injured. Service on the Brunswick Line was suspended for over two hours with trains held in Washington D.C. until at least one track could be cleared. Passengers aboard the train involved in this accident were placed onto another train around two hours later with service being resumed after 7 PM. (*The Washington Post*, July 20)

MARC is seeking \$58 million for eight new diesel locomotives to replace its aging and unreliable fleet of ten electric locomotives. MARC is seeking to take advantage of economies of scale by piggy-backing its order onto an existing order of "Charger" class locomotives by Metra in Chicago with Siemens. Based on Siemens' existing platform of *Eurosprinter*, *Eurorunner*, and *Vectron* locomotives, the Chargers will have 4,400 HP, 16-cylinder Cummins QSK95 diesel engines compliant with EPA Tier IV requirements. The four AEM-7s are 27 years old while the 6 HHP-8s are prone to mechanical failure and are available for service less than 50% of the time. Amtrak notified MARC that it plans to cease maintaining and supporting these ten locomotives after the summer of 2016 as it has already retired its 15 HHP-8s and expects to have retired all of its remaining AEM-7s by then. The new locomotives will not be delivered until Fall, 2017 and will require MARC to assume all electric locomotive maintenance for their final year of operation. (*Railway Age*, *The Baltimore Sun*, August 10)

**CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA**

An initial public consultation was to begin on August 11, 2015 on proposals to expand the light rail network in Charlotte.

Charlotte Area Rapid Transit (CATS) is seeking feedback on plans for the 12.7-mile Lynx Silver Line, which would link the city center with the suburb of Matthews, which has a population of around 27,000.

Route options for the line are being evaluated as part of the Lynx Silver Line/Southeast Corridor Transit Study, which will conclude next June with recommendations to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Metropolitan Transit Commission. (*Railway Age*, August 6)

**FLORIDA**

Commissioners of the Southeast Overtown Park West Community Redevelopment Agency voted to commit an additional \$17.5 million toward a project that will link CSX tracks near the Hialeah Metrorail station to the tracks of the Florida East Coast Railway, enabling Tri-Rail trains to travel directly to downtown Miami. Tri-Rail passengers would no longer have to transfer to Metrorail at the Hialeah Metrorail station to reach downtown. The full funding of the \$70 million project would provide two additional elevated platforms for Tri-Rail trains at the Miami-Central station, which will serve the high-

speed trains operated by All Aboard Florida.

Meanwhile, All Aboard Florida, which is the inter-city passenger subsidiary of Florida East Coast Railway (FEC), moved another step closer to completing financing for its Miami-Orlando service on August 5, when the Florida Development Finance Commission voted unanimously to allow the company to issue \$1.75 billion in tax-exempt bonds.

The first phase of the network from Miami to Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach is due to open in 2017. The project is being financed through a mix of debt and equity without federal or state grants. All Aboard Florida says operation of the network will be self-sustaining with no requirement for subsidies.

All Aboard Florida forecasts ridership of 5.3 million and farebox revenues of \$294 million by 2020. The project includes a \$1.5 billion investment in upgrading FEC's existing Miami-Orlando line and will reduce the journey time for passenger trains on the 235-mile corridor to around three hours with 16 trips per day in each direction. (*Railway Age*, August 7)

**CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

Metra has met its on-time performance (OTP) goal for the fourth consecutive month. The commuter rail operator attained a 97% OTP in March, 2015 and 97.2% for both April and May of 2015. June, 2015 saw an OTP of 95.8%, an improvement over the 93.1% back in June, 2014. Overall, the railroad averaged 95.8% for the first half of 2015. (*Metro*, July 23)

The Northern Indiana Commuter Transit District's (NICTD) South Shore Line is planning to reconfigure three cars by April, 2016 with bicycle racks capable of carrying 25-30 bikes each, making it the last United States commuter railroad to permit and accommodate bicyclists aboard its trains. While original plans to accommodate bicyclists were contingent on a new car order that was expected within five years with five coaches retrofitted with bike racks, NICTD relented to pressure from cycling interests and came up with an interim solution of retrofitting three current coaches. However, bicyclists will be restricted to the trains equipped with the bike rack coaches and must board and disembark only at high-level station platforms. (*Merrillville Post-Tribune*, August 9)

**KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI**

Kansas City Mayor Sly James says it is crucial that the new downtown streetcar system can carry passengers in time for next March's Big 12 conference men's basketball tournament. But city officials acknowledged Tuesday that there may be a significant delay in the delivery of the streetcars, which could adversely affect that schedule.

While the actual track work is done and the electrical wiring should be ready by the end of September — plenty of time to test the system and begin public operations by early March — now the streetcar delivery is becoming a worrisome problem, city officials admitted.

The vehicle manufacturer has said the cars may not be ready until the end of this year, but Kansas City offi-

*(Continued on page 12)*

**Commuter and Transit Notes***(Continued from page 11)*

cials say that is unacceptable.

The four streetcar vehicles are part of Kansas City's \$100 million, two-mile streetcar system that will run from the River Market to near Crown Center.

Kansas City has a contract for delivery of Urbos 3 platform vehicles built by CAF USA Incorporated, a subsidiary of the Spanish rail firm Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles. The four vehicles, which together cost about \$18 million, were begun in Spain. But final assembly is being done in Elmira, New York, in part to comply with "buy American" requirements attached to federal grants for streetcar projects.

The delays are partly due to the complications of transporting parts from Europe and partly to worker training in the United States.

City Manager Troy Schulte said the contract, signed in November, 2013, called for the first car to be delivered by June 10. City officials were notified shortly before that time that delivery would be delayed until late September, but they were not terribly concerned because they knew the downtown construction wouldn't be finished until about that same time.

Each vehicle must be tested for 300 miles along the route, and Schulte said consultants had advised that a late September delivery would provide ample time to complete testing for a March 1 public operations start. That time frame has not been met. Kansas City leaders want the cars in service in time for the NCAA competition in March which will be held there. CAF faces financial penalties of \$1,000 per day for missing the June 10 delivery date, with the city pursuing those damages.

Concerns about the vehicle delay were apparent to several individuals even as Kansas City held a public rally July 29 to mark completion of track construction and to let people view a finished streetcar stop. Several hundred people turned out for a lively party and speeches in the River Market, but nothing was said about the vehicle issue, an issue that since the public rally has become noticeable in recent days.

CAF is a very experienced streetcar manufacturer, but it normally makes the vehicles in Europe. Kansas City's four vehicles, and five others that are going to Cincinnati, are the first being assembled in the United States. The first two vehicles that were assembled are bound for Cincinnati.

Cincinnati officials, also dealing with issues with CAF, have fired off a letter to the company expressing frustration about the delay and threatening legal action, according to a story in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* from August 10.

There are a number of reasons for the delay, including training of workers in New York and transportation of parts from Spain. Schulte said one big delay occurred when CAF failed to get parts onto a boat traveling from Europe. Currently discussions are being held to speed up work to get the schedule back.

Schulte noted the city could get by with just two vehi-

cles during the public start-up if it has to. (Kansas City Star via Al Holtz, August 11)

**NEW MEXICO**

A flash flood on July 31 washed out around 150 feet of single track on the New Mexico Rail Runner commuter rail line north of Algodones. A late-running westbound Amtrak *Southwest Chief* operated over that section only an hour before the washout occurred and a northbound Rail Runner train had passed by a mere 30 minutes prior. High water alarms set trackside to detect such events were triggered, bringing trains to a halt before they could enter the section of damaged track. 110 passengers on subsequent trains experienced delays. Passengers were bused between the Bernalillo and Santa Fe County NM599 stations. The trainset that covers the weekend Belen-Albuquerque-Santa Fe trains was stranded by the washout in Santa Fe, resulting in the cancellation of all Saturday and Sunday service, forcing the postponement of the Rails, Trails and Ales Brew tour that had been planned for that weekend. Amtrak operated a bus bridge for the *Southwest Chief* between Albuquerque and Lamy, New Mexico. The line was reopened August 3. (*Albuquerque Journal*, August 1)

**SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**

For three decades, mechanics at King County Metro Transit kept their aging fleet of 1980s-vintage trackless trolleys alive by mixing, rebuilding and cannibalizing parts.

Finally, a new generation of vehicles have arrived to sustain the agency's popular network of wire-powered buses for another 20 years.

The first five new trolley buses were to hit the streets of Seattle on August 19, starting with routes 1, 2, 3, 36, and 70. Over two years, Metro will deploy 174 new vehicles in the city, all of them purple. The federal government is covering \$138 million of the \$186 million price.

Metro is one of six North American agencies that operate trolley buses, which carry 74,000 of its 421,000 weekday passengers.

They accelerate instantly up Seattle hills, without spreading noise and fumes to compact neighborhoods such as First Hill.

The trolley buses, by New Flyer, offer low-floor entrances. They can travel briefly offline under battery power, to bypass crashes and construction zones. The new buses are also lighter and have power operated power poles that can be adjusted by handheld ropes.

Meanwhile, Metro is testing rechargeable battery-electric buses on Eastside and cross-lake routes. Batteries are mounted under the floor, like a Tesla electric car.

They recharge in four minutes, using a docking device that automatically descends to a roof-mounted port at the Eastgate Transit Center. The estimated range is 23 miles per charge.

If tryouts succeed, Metro has an option to buy 200 vehicles from California-based Proterra, to replace diesel-fueled buses. (*Seattle Times*, August 18)

*(Continued on page 13)*

**Commuter and Transit Notes***(Continued from page 12)***SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**

San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (MUNI) opened the E Line on Saturday, August 1, 2015. The weekends-only line follows the Embarcadero and connects Fisherman's Wharf with the CalTrain terminal and AT&T Park. Until a turn-back loop is built at 19<sup>th</sup> Street, only double-ended streetcars are assigned to this line. The vintage streetcars cannot stop at high level platforms and stop at street-level platforms just beyond the high-level platforms used by the LRVs on the N and T Lines. Signage at both platforms clearly identify where the cars for each line are expected to stop. (*Progressive Railroading*, August 3)

**LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

Active testing with light rail cars under their own power commenced at the end of July, 2015 on the 6.6-mile, seven-station extension of the Expo Line from Culver City to Santa Monica. The test trains will be performing evaluations of the catenary and platform clearances as well as the function of the grade crossing traffic signals and gates. Testing will be performed between 8 AM and 5 PM, Monday through Friday. The pre-revenue testing phase will involve trains operating on a 6-12-minute headway during simulated peak periods with 10-20 minute headways during the off-peak hours. Select weekends will feature five-minute headways. The line is scheduled to open in 2016 and connect Santa Monica with downtown Los Angeles for the first time since Pacific Electric's Santa Monica Air Line closed in 1953. (*LA Times*, July 30)

**OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA**

Canadian Minister of Transport Lisa Raitt and Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, President and CEO of Via Rail, announced on July 31 that the Canadian government will invest \$C 102.5 million (\$US 77.6 million) over two years to improve the safety and efficiency of passenger operations on the 187-kilometer Ottawa-Montreal corridor.

Via Rail will use the funding to modify Renaissance coaches for use in Ottawa-Montreal service to provide a consistent level of service, improve access for passengers with disabilities, and replace older equipment.

Track and structures will be upgraded, with continuous welded rail replacing jointed track at various locations, while a new passing loop will be constructed at Barrhaven to improve operations at the Ottawa end of the line. Signaling and centralized traffic control will be modernized and Ottawa station will be repaired with increased platform heights to improve access for passengers.

Desjardins-Siciliano says the enhancements will enable Via Rail to increase services from four to six trains per day from 2017. (*Railway Age*, August 3)

**BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA**

The British Columbia government re-expressed its commitment of \$7.5 million to rebuild the rail line that was the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway, with intent on restoring passenger train services between Victoria and

Courtenay. The funds would be deposited with the Island Corridor Foundation, a partnership between local native tribes and local governments as matching local funds once the federal government commits \$7.5 million to the project, providing a total of \$15 million to bring the line up to standards that would permit the resumption of passenger train services by VIA Rail Canada. However, there is an ultimate cap of \$20.4 million on all track and infrastructure work. (Al Holtz, July 30)

Vancouver TransLink passengers will soon see upgrades at three well-traveled stations. Construction work is already underway at the Commercial-Broadway, Metrotown, and New Westminster stations. The \$66.6-million Commercial-Broadway station upgrade is expected to be complete by spring 2017. It is the busiest station on the network with 90,000 rapid transit trips per day and 60,000 bus trips per day using the 99 B-Line and two other frequent bus routes. Upgrades include a new platform for westbound Expo Line trains, a new pedestrian walkway over Broadway connecting to the Millennium Line and the westbound 99 B-Line stop, widening of the walkway that provides access to the north station platforms, new elevators and escalators, an expanded Broadway concourse, widened entrances to the Broadway Station, and a new bike parkade. The \$57.8-million Metrotown SkyTrain Station and Exchange upgrade is expected to be complete by December, 2017. This is SkyTrain's second busiest station serving 50,000 rapid transit trips per day plus 25,000 trips from the bus exchange. Upgrades include a rebuilt east stationhouse, new center and west stationhouses, new escalators, stairs, and three new elevators to improve access, improved station design with better lighting and visibility, improved bus connections, and a new bike parkade. The \$12.3-million New Westminster station upgrade is expected to be complete by Summer, 2016. Upgrades include a replacement elevator and escalators to improve access for customers, improved station design with better lighting and visibility, and better integration with the surrounding community. (*Trains Magazine* via Al Holtz, July 30)

**MÜLHEIM, GERMANY**

The Mayor of Mülheim, Dagmar Mühlenfeld, named the first of 15 Bombardier Flexity City LRVs Mülheim an der Ruhr at a ceremony on August 14 attended by the CEO of Mülheim Transport (MVG) Wolfgang Michels.

Bombardier has already delivered the first six vehicles to MVG and the NF2 units started to enter service in July. The body shells are being built at Bombardier's Bautzen plant, while the trucks are coming from its Siegen factory and the electrical equipment from its facility in Mannheim.

The LRVs are 70% low-floor and are air-conditioned. The three-section bi-directional vehicles are 30 meters long and 2.3 meters wide and can accommodate 172 passengers. (*International Railway Journal*, August 17)

**OSLO, NORWAY**

Swedish national train operator SJ marked the launch of its enhanced service between the Norwegian and

*(Continued on page 18)*

## TRACTION TOUR TO SOUTHERN EUROPE

### by Jack May

### (Photographs by the author)

### (Continued from August, 2015 issue)

In the previous segment I should have mentioned that this date, May 1, May Day, would be my last full day in Europe and would mark the end of my journey. I would be flying back to the U. S. the following morning. So my trip on the 10:57 from Bergamo to Milan was my penultimate train ride. Upon arrival at Milan Centrale at 11:50 I found a locker quickly and reached the adjacent trolley stop forthwith. I did not stop to admire the iconic stub-end railway terminal, constructed in 1931 during the fascist Mussolini era, as I have done that in the past and could do it again later. The weather had turned gloomy again, but that did not stop me from buying a day ticket and using it for a number of hours. It would stay dismal, but with only an occasional drizzle, but also with the sun peeking through the clouds briefly from time to time.

Milan is Italy's second largest city, with a population of 1.5 million (3 million in metropolitan area). Despite the construction of a 4-line heavy Metro system (soon to be 5), it still retains the status of being one of the favorite cities of trolley enthusiasts worldwide, especially Americans. This is probably because it still operates a remarkable number of Peter Witt streetcars from the late 1920s over a network of 18 routes that stretches for almost 80 miles (see <http://www.urbanrail.net/eu/it/mil/tram/milano-tram.htm>). In fact 5 of Milan's tram lines are still exclusively served by the iconic Peter Witts.

My principal aim for the day was to ride Milan's most recent line, which extends to the north partly over the alignment of an interurban route that was abandoned in the early 1960s. I also wanted to pay my respects to the Peter Witts, as well as get to ride the newest rolling stock on the roster, the Siriettos, a short version of the Ansaldo Breda Sirio cars. If there were enough time, I would also get to Milan's last interurban rail line, a 7½-mile-long side-of-the-road route to Limbiate.

The 5, 9, and 33 lines all serve the station, but I needed a 5 to get to the new Route 31. After photographing one of the new five-section short Sirios in its new (retro) yellow livery, a route 33 Peter Witt came by and finally a similar route 5 car. Over the years that I have visited Milan, I have seen a number of liveries on these venerable old cars. In 1960 they were painted two-tone green and sported trolley poles, and with their large route number signs closely resembled Philadelphia's 8000-series cars that had been replaced a mere 3 years earlier. Soon the poles gave way to pantographs and then the green was changed to orange, a color that became a standard for Italy, being applied to cars in Naples, Rome and Turin as well. The color scheme has since reverted to yellow, the same shade that was used when

the Peter Witts were introduced in the late 1920s. (Interestingly, San Francisco has acquired 11 of these cars for operation on its F line, and there are examples in all three paint schemes.)

To get to the 31 I would have to change to the 7, which is the only route that intersects it. The 5 and 7, and later the 31, traverse a very wide boulevard, similar to Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn, with local and express automobile lanes separated by grassy, tree-lined islands. In this case each of these verdant traffic separators along Viale Fulvia Testa also contains a streetcar track. It's a very nice stretch of road for the traction photographer, although the trees cast shadows on the streetcars. I took some photos where I changed from the 5 to the 7 (they share four stops). Longer 7-section Sirios were running on the 7 and I decided to make a round trip to the end of that line. It had been the newest line of the system, opening just a few months (December, 2002) before Phil Craig and I rode it in 2003, and I wanted to see it again. One of its main features is a long tunnel at *Trenitalia's* Greco Pirelli station, where it runs under the beginning of the throat leading to Centrale. Since our visit a tram station in the cut leading to the long underpass has been placed into service, but I was very disappointed to see it totally covered with graffiti. It was as bad as the cars on the Catania metro, but fortunately this disease no longer affects any of Milan's streetcars.

After returning from the terminal at Precotto (location of a car house) to Bicocca (the junction, also the inner terminal of the 31), I transferred to a similar Sirio car on the new line, which opened in 2009. The trackage continues up Viale Fulvia Testa, the wide boulevard, eventually running with both tracks in the westernmost reservation. The boulevard eventually runs along a nice park, and then becomes a highway, with the 31 veering off onto a local arterial street, continuing northward in the pavement. This street is interesting, as it has some wide sections where there has been redevelopment, but is also very narrow amidst some ancient-looking buildings in an old neighborhood. I have a feeling that we were now off the route of the old Monza interurban, which I suspect followed the alignment of what is now the highway. Anyway, the line eventually finds its way into the center of Cincello Balsamo, where after a stop at the town square, it embarks on a one-way loop through a few adjacent streets, with cars laying over on a parallel street. There are seven stops after the line leaves the boulevard and eight stops on reservation along the wide thoroughfare.

*(Continued on page 15)*

**Traction Tour to Southern Europe***(Continued from page 14)*

You might think it strange that this line starts out so far from the center of Milan. But it is highly likely that most of its traffic consists of passengers transferring from Milan's newest subway line, the M5, which runs under the boulevard and its streetcar lines for 14 of its stops. So on my return I transferred to the M5 at its northern terminal, Bignami. I was now heading for Comasino, the northern end of Metro line M3, and the inner terminal of Route 179, the interurban to Limbiate.

The M5 line, which opened on February 10, 2013, is very much like the new Brescia metro, but its trains are longer, consisting of four units instead of three. But both are totally automated and have platform doors at stations. The Ansaldo Breda rolling stock has huge "railfan" windows in the front and rear, but the entire line is underground. Only the northern end of the M5 has been placed into service.

I changed to the M3 at Zara, and upon arriving at Comasino I found the terminal of the line to Limbiate. But nobody was waiting at the platform. Signs indicated the 179 runs with buses on Sundays, but rail cars would operate on May 1 — although only until 14:00, after which there would be no service at all. May Day had stuck again. I saw the M3 would take me to the heart of Milan, the Duomo, so I rode to the city center. On my first visit Milan's trams operated right in front of the entrance to the famous cathedral, but no more. At least they run in the vicinity, in fact six routes operate within a block or two.

So I hung around that area doing some photography on streets that had little traffic due to the holiday. I then rode the M3 for four stations from Missori, one stop below Duomo, up to Repubblica, just short of the railway station. This location was once a highlight of a visit to Milan, as there was a beautifully manicured grand union at that point. Unfortunately, with the advent of the subway system, streetcar route realignments resulted in it losing some of its grandeur. Nevertheless, it is still an above average place for photography and I took some slides before it began raining again. I finished my afternoon of Milan transit with a ride on a Route 33 Peter Witt back to the railway station, accompanied by a handful of passengers and a beagle.

Despite the on-and-off showers, it had been a good day, and after retrieving my suitcase I soon boarded the 18:25 to Malpensa Airport. It was adjacent to an SBB-CFF-FFS train to Basel, Switzerland, which I would

have preferred to ride. My train seemed to follow a circuitous routing, making a lot of turns, and I eventually saw Nord Milano trains operating along the same right-of-way. It was a very slow, stop-and-go ride, and arrival was at 19:26, nine minutes late. I had reserved a room at a hotel in the area, and now needed transportation to get there. I approached the Hertz Rent-a-Car counter and asked the clerk if he would call the hotel for me. He agreed, and soon a van was on its way to pick me up. I left the airport at 19:53 and arrived at the hotel ten minutes later.

I chose these lodgings because of the price, and I guess you get what you pay for. In this case, the room was clean and large enough, but the furnishings were rather threadbare and I could feel the floor through the carpeting. The hotel does not have a restaurant, but instead there was a room service menu with small-plate offerings, which no doubt, were heated in a microwave. So my last meal in Europe was rather austere, but I did not go to bed hungry. And on the positive side, unlike so many hotels, my room was well-lit and I could read comfortably.

The hotel rate did include a Continental breakfast, which was quite ample, and it appeared that there were a large number of customers partaking in the juice, cereal, bread and hot beverage offerings in the centrally located hall. Shuttle service was scheduled every 20 minutes and I rode the 8:20 back to the airport in clear weather. My United flight was announced soon enough, and we pushed off at 10:40 (10:20), leaving the ground eight minutes later. I had seat 26A in 2-3-2 configured Boeing 767 widebody. We were fed a decent lunch and some snacks, and entertained by a wide variety of movies and TV shows. Our route took us westward between Paris and London, and then passed over the Labrador-Newfoundland border, crossing northeastern Quebec just south of Gaspé, and finally over northern New Hampshire, southern Vermont and then right down the Hudson River from about Rutland. Finally we veered to the west, turning back between Middletown and Goshen, and followed routes 208 and 4 to the Hackensack River, which we followed right in. We hit the ground at 12:54 and pulled up to a gate in Terminal C at 13:00, thirty minutes early.

Clare was waiting in the car, and we were home by 14:00. It was an exceedingly great trip.

This completes my trip report. Thanks to many of you for your comments and additional information, some of which resulted in corrections and the addition of supplemental segments.

*(Continued on page 16)***Around New York's Transit System***(Continued from page 18)***Interim NYC Transit President Named**

MTA Chairman Tom Prendergast appointed James Ferrara as Interim President of NYC Transit on August 11, 2015, succeeding outgoing president Carmen Bianco, who retired on August 21. Mr. Ferrara was the Presi-

dent of MTA Bridges and Tunnels (B&T), having worked his way up to that position since joining as a Bridge and Tunnel Officer in 1977. Vice President and Chief Financial officer Donald Spero will assume the role of interim president at B&T during this period. An international search for a permanent NYCT President is already underway.

**Traction Tour to Southern Europe**

*(Continued from page 15)*



Milan Peter Witt 1641, operating on Route 5, turns onto Viale Fulvia Testa, joining the 7.



One of the new 5-section Ansaldo Breda "Sirietto" cars on a pull-out from the carhouse at the end of route 7 is shown operating inbound along Via Anassagora. The "DEP" on its destination stands for Deposito, or carhouse. This will have to be changed when the car begins revenue service.



Two views at the outer end of the new Route 31, showing seven-section Sirios in Milan's green livery.



Had the 179/Limbiante interurban been operating during the afternoon of May Day, I would have come across this view when I arrived at Comasino, the line's terminal. In the fall of 2014, some 18 months after this trip, I got back to Milan and rode the line, taking this photo.



Milan's famous Duomo, built in 1234, and the city's most famous landmark.

*(Continued on page 17)*

**Traction Tour to Southern Europe**

*(Continued from page 16)*



The most ecumenical location streetcars reach in the Duomo area nowadays is Piazza Fontana, just behind this view of a Route 12 4900-series "Jumbo" car on Via Larga. These units were built from 1976-8 in two series, by Fiat (the first 50) and Stanga. In this view of car 4875's left side, note that the cab is offset to the right side.



On the other hand the right side of the Jumbo cars is straight, giving these units their iconic asymmetric appearance. Fiat-built 4915 is shown at Missori, a major intersection just south of the Duomo.



All of the Eurotrams I saw were in ugly advertising wraps. They have been running on route 15 ever since their delivery in 2000 and 2001. This view is also at Missori.



Sirietto 7519 is shown operating on route 24 at Missori.



Peter Witt 1990 is working westbound on Route 33 as it approaches Piazza de la Republica.



A contented passenger aboard a Peter Witt. What's not to be happy about?

## Around New York's Transit System

### NYC Transit's Train Movement System Described

Member Dennis Furbush sent in an Internet link from Devour.com (also available on YouTube) describing how the current signaling and dispatch control of train movements in the New York City Subway system, much of which is over 80 years old, is being replaced by Communications Based Train Control (CBTC). It is a nine-minute video describing the current fixed block signaling system and the system of the future at NYCT, CBTC. You can view the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mjx3S3UjmnA>.

### R-32s to Live Another Day

The 1964-5 vintage, Budd-built R-32 class subway cars have apparently received a reprieve from their scheduled encounter with the scrapper's torch in 2017-

8. Contained within MTA's 2016 Preliminary Budget report are identified financial and staffing provisions for continued scheduled maintenance of the R-32 fleet through 2019. It was reported that both ridership growth necessitating a larger car fleet for revenue service as well as the ongoing delays associated with the R-179s that are slated to replace these cars, will result in the R-32s soldiering on until 2022. The MTA budget is providing an estimated figure of \$1.1 million in 2016, \$15.9 million in 2017, \$17.7 million in 2018, and \$15.5 million in 2019 in added costs to support this decision. No figures were provided for the 2020-2 time frame, but it could be inferred that the annual numbers would be similar until the cars are actually retired.

*(Continued on page 15)*

### Commuter and Transit Notes

*(Continued from page 13)*

Swedish capitals in a ceremony at Oslo Central station on August 10, which was attended by Norway's Transport Minister Ketil Solvik-Olsen, the Mayor of Oslo Stian Berger Røsland, and SJ CEO Crister Fritzon.

SJ announced in January that it would replace the two daily Inter-City trips between the Swedish and Norwegian capitals with three X2000 trips, reducing the journey time for the 572-kilometer trip from 5 hours 38 minutes to around four-and-a-half hours with intermediate stops at Karlstad and Arvika.

In June the plan appeared to be in jeopardy because Jernbaneverket was planning two and a half years of daytime closures on the Kongsvinger Line between Lillestrøm and Kongsvinger from mid-2016 for catenary renewals. However, Jernbaneverket subsequently agreed to defer the start of these works until 2018 to allow time for planning alternative arrangements during the closures.

SJ previously operated X2000s to Oslo between 2000 and 2004 under its Linx 50:50 joint venture with Norwegian State Railways (NSB). However, competition from low-fares airlines led to a 40% decline in ridership and SJ decided to redeploy the trains on busier domestic routes. SJ says around 1.1 million passengers fly between the two cities each year and it believes rail could ultimately increase its share of the air-rail market on the route to 20%.

SJ is offering free Wi-Fi onboard in both first and standard class accommodation, with at-seat breakfast, hot drinks, fruit, and newspapers in first class. (*International Railway Journal*, August 10)

### WROCLAW, POLAND

MPK Wroclaw's new fleet of Pesa Twist low-floor LRVs entered passenger service in the Polish city on

August 14, when the first three vehicles were introduced on Line 3.

MPK Wroclaw awarded Pesa a contract to supply six three-section bidirectional vehicles, and an option for two additional vehicles was exercised in March, taking the total value of the order to Zlotys 66 million (US\$17.5 million). The first vehicles were delivered in June, but alterations were required to platform faces at 15 stations before the fleet could enter service. The 30-meter-long standard-gauge LRVs accommodate up to 220 passengers.

In July MPK Wroclaw placed a Zlotys 23m contract with Modertrans, Poland, for six Moderus Beta partially low-floor trams with an option for a further 16 units. The first of these vehicles will be delivered in December. (*International Railway Journal*, August 18)

### HARBIN, CHINA

China launched passenger services on its most northerly high-speed line on August 17 with the start of commercial operations on the Harbin-Qiqihar Line in Heilongjiang Province.

The completion of the 281-kilometer line has reduced the journey time between the two cities to 1 hour 25 minutes.

Construction began in July, 2009 on the Yuan 36 billion (US\$5.8 billion) line, which has eight stations and a design speed of 250 kilometers per hour, albeit with provision for 300 kilometer-per-hour operation in the longer term.

In the meantime, construction was officially launched the week of August 10 on the Jinan-Qingdao high-speed line in Shandong Province. In a break with previous practice, China Railway Corporation will fund only 20% of the project, with the remaining 80% coming from local government sources. (*International Railway Journal*, August 17)