

Rail Freight Service For New York City? Federal Money May Now Be Freed Up!

As our friend Eric W. points out, New Jersey's Gov. Christie recently had to return several billions of Federal transportation dollars which had been earmarked for the "ARC" project (a proposed new passenger rail tunnel between New Jersey and Manhattan).

Why not use these funds to complete the long dormant Narrows Tunnel project (see info link at http://www.brooklynrail.net/verrazano_rail_tunnel.html), connecting Brooklyn's dormant cross- county rail freight line with the CSX Staten Island branch, and thereby restore main line rail freight service to NYC? The extant "Team Yards" along the MTA's disused Bay Ridge branch offer the opportunity for inter-modal freight transfer to small local delivery trucks- which can be hybrid and/or electric powered. Think of all the pollution ridden diesel powered tractor trailer trips that can be eliminated.

Background:

The New York Connecting RR (NYCR) was jointly owned and operated by the Pennsylvania (PRR) and the New York, New Haven & Hartford RR (NYNH&HRR). This freight service (as well as passenger troop trains during WWI and WWII), extended from the trans New York harbor rail freight car- floats at Brooklyn's Second Avenue (Bay Ridge), then continued over the Bay Ridge branch and the Hell Gate Bridge, to the NYNH&HRR freight terminal in the Bronx (Oak Point, south Bronx).

Between 1918 and 1968, this route constituted the main rail freight artery between New England, and the mid- Atlantic and southern states. During the 1920's, in order to eliminate the highly inefficient New York cross harbor rail car- float system, a combined electric rail freight and passenger train tunnel (the Narrows Tunnel) between the Bay Ridge branch and Staten Island's Baltimore & Ohio RR branch, was started, but not completed, due to reported political interference exerted by business rivals.

Predecessor Lines- I: The New York Connecting Railroad:

The line was dedicated on March 9, 1917 by Samuel Rea and Gustav Lindenthal. A special train took the directors of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad over the line on March 25, 1917, and **at that time it was turned over to the New Haven for operation**, though the Southern Division (freight-only) was not completed yet. Passenger service began April 1, with the return of the Federal Express and the rerouting of two local trains. The Colonial Express began using it April 30, resulting in the first accident on the NYCR on August 20, 1917. **Through freights to Bay Ridge began January 17, 1918**, and the final work was completed August 7, 1918.[1]

Predecessor lines- II: The Bay Ridge Branch:

The freight-only Bay Ridge Branch runs through Brooklyn. **The entire line was electrified, starting on July 8, 1927, for New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad freight trains coming off the New York Connecting Railroad (Hell Gate Bridge)[2,3]**. Electric operation ended on December 31, 1968. [3]. The electrification

was capable of accommodating both the NYNH&HRR and the PRR electric freight locomotives; 11,000 V AC, single phase, 25 Hz.[4]

The first part of the this line was opened by the New York, Bay Ridge and Jamaica Railroad in 1876, from Bay Ridge to the crossing of the Brooklyn, Bath and Coney Island Railroad near New Utrecht. An extension from New Utrecht east and northeast to New Lots opened in 1877, and at the same time the New York and Manhattan Beach Railway opened the line from New Lots north to East New York. An extension north from East New York to Cooper Avenue (and then northwest to Greenpoint, later the Evergreen Branch) opened in 1878, and the Long Island City and Manhattan Beach Railroad (incorporated February 24, 1883, merged with the New York and Manhattan Beach and New York, Bay Ridge and Jamaica into the New York, Brooklyn and Manhattan Beach Railway (August 27, 1885) built from Cooper Avenue north to the Montauk Branch at Glendale in 1883. NYB&MB was leased to the LIRR circa December 1881. NYB&MB was later merged into the LIRR circa June 19, 1925. [5]

The PRR took control of the LIRR circa 1900, as a requisite part of their massive Penn Station project. In 1966, the State of New York bought the PRR's controlling interest in the LIRR, and then turned over the LIRR to the MTA for operation.

For additional detail information on the Bay Ridge branch, and the Brooklyn Grade Crossing Elimination project, here's the link to an internet article I wrote a number of years ago:

<http://www.rapidtransit.net/net/gcbook/index.htm>

Sources:

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Connecting_Railroad

[2] www.prrths.com/Hagley/PRR1927%20Jul%2004.wd.pdf See March 1927 and June 1927.

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay_Ridge_Branch

[4] Standard Handbook for Electrical Engineers, edited by Frank Fowle, 1933, pg 2094

[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manhattan_Beach_Branch

For a circa 1914 New Haven RR report,,which describes the NY Connecting RR in business terms, [see this link.](#)

As for a little "ferroequinology", the catenary support towers on the Hell Gate Bridge, alternated between PRR style towers, and NHRR style towers. In the western most tube of the East New York tunnel on the Bay Ridge line, extended length third rail ties will be found. Apparently, there was some thought given to electrify the line with both of the PRR's electrical systems; 660 VDC third rail, and 11KV AC catenary.

Other contemporary writings on the NY Connecting RR, found on Google Books:

http://books.google.com/books?id=_ENsAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA74&dq=new+york+connecting+railway&hl=en&ei=Orq3T

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