

## Chapter 8 Rail

A component of the SAFETEA-LU legislation is to improve interregional and international transportation and to serve the mobility needs of people and freight. New York State's Transportation Master Plan's vision is to create a seamless system in which travelers can conveniently shift between modes and operators to complete trips that meet their individual and business needs. Long-Range planning efforts in Herkimer and Oneida Counties are consistent with this vision in planning transportation systems that will serve the mobility needs of people and freight. Rail transportation is an efficient way to move freight and people while saving energy, reducing air pollution, relieving traffic congestion, and reducing maintenance and repair on the highway network.

Rail service in the HOCTS Planning Area consists not only of long-distance, pass-through freight movement. There are also short lines that deliver goods to local industries, passenger service provided by Amtrak at stations in Utica and Rome and the Adirondack Scenic Railroad. The use and condition of the Utica and Rome stations, the Adirondack Scenic Railroad and the implementation of high-speed rail are high priorities for the region.

Recommendations made in this chapter include: the implementation of the Union Station Master Plan, elimination or correction of unsafe grade crossings, restoration of the Adirondack Scenic Railroad, and support for high-speed passenger rail service.



## **2009 New York State Rail Plan**

The 2009 New York State Rail Plan presents a 20-year plan (through 2030) for the state's rail system and describes strategies and initiatives aimed at rebuilding the rail transportation system. The plan also presents New York State's rail infrastructure needs over the next 20 years and outlines recommended passenger and freight infrastructure investments.

The Plan includes the following elements:

### Freight Rail System

- Increase freight rail market share by 25 percent.
- Incorporate rail sidings, rail-truck transfer facilities, and "last mile" connections serving all rail terminals and shippers who need access to the rail network.
- Transport hazardous commodities by rail by taking advantage of the well-documented safety benefits of rail.
- Serve business upstate as well as downstate via an integrated rail network that is restored to good condition and maintained in a state of good repair.

### Intercity Passenger Rail System

- Transport double the total intercity passenger rail ridership as it does today.
- Provide reliable, faster, and frequent rail travel between Albany and Buffalo, making rail travel more time-competitive with driving.
- Move toward positive train control technology.
- Has Northeast Corridor rail infrastructure (including the Empire Corridor feeder line) in a state of good repair.
- Provide high-speed intercity passenger service throughout the Northeast Corridor.
- Provide greater intercity passenger service frequencies where there is market demand.

New York State plans shows more than \$10.7 billion of investment will be needed statewide over the next 20 years, including a third track initiative, with \$4.8 billion of this investment contained in the first five years. This includes the cost to achieve a state of good repair on the freight and passenger systems and to enhance and to expand service capacity.

### NYS Rail Survey

The 2008 New York State Rail Plan includes the results of a comprehensive survey, conducted by the Department of Transportation, of the rail industry's capital needs for all railroads operating in New York State. It summarizes and describes the intercity passenger rail and freight rail capital needs over the next 20 years. It also describes the proposed rail investment policy that will be used to address these intercity passenger and freight rail infrastructure needs in the future.

The NYSDOT rail needs survey asked the rail industry to categorize their capital projects into four basic programming categories:

- **Maintain Existing Conditions (Status Quo):** Capital investments required to maintain the existing condition level of a rail line into the future.
- **Develop State of Good Repair (SOGR):** Capital investments in this category are in addition to that estimated to maintain the Status Quo of the rail network.
- **System Enhancement:** Rail needs in this category include work to add, develop, increase

or otherwise improve rail services and/or schedule reliability on the existing rail network without significantly altering the configuration of the rail network.

- System Expansion: Rail needs identified for this category would reconfigure the rail network to significantly improve capacity, service levels and/or access to customers.

The results of the State Rail Needs Survey identified a total of nearly \$10.7 billion for rail network, facility and equipment improvements and/or replacements over the next 20 years or an annual average annual expenditure of approximately \$535 million.

About 9% (\$967 million) of the total 20 year rail needs were projects that would maintain existing conditions (Status Quo) of the rail road system in New York State. An additional \$1.382 billion, or 13% of total rail needs, was estimated to bring the railroad system to a State Of Good Repair for dependable and reliable freight and passenger rail services across the state. Together, the needs to maintain existing conditions and reach a State Of Good Repair represents 22% of the total rail needs over the next 20 years.

The vast majority (78%) of the 20 year rail plan needs were for rail system enhancements and expansions that would provide the state with new and/or expanded rail services for freight goods movement or intercity passenger travel.

Figure 8-1. Rail Needs in Oneida and Herkimer Counties

Type Project	Capital Project	Cost (\$M)
Station Platforms	Rome Station: Construct high-level platforms with freight by-pass	5.598
Station Platforms	Utica Station: Construct high-level platforms TK II 1 and TK II 2 with freight by-pass	8.957
Signal	Improvements to freight passenger performance	4.200
Signal	New approach signals at Amsterdam, Utica and Rome	1.679
Track	Rome – upgrade 12 existing turnouts	0.420
Track	Utica Yard – upgrade 14 existing turnouts	0.490
Transload Facility-Boonville	Improve track & build new forest products facility	1.700
Track Rehab – MHW	Preserve 62 miles of track, 32 bridges, other (3 Counties)	2.800
Track Rehab – MHW	Lyons Falls, Rome - rail & tie work	3.850
MOW Equipment	Vehicle for maintenance & construction	0.155
Industrial Park	Enlargement of towns industrial park	1.700
Engine House	Utica – expand engine house, upgrade yard	1.000
Transload Facility – Utica	Build siding, train to truck transload	2.850
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$35.399</b>

Source: NYSDOT. 2009 New York State Rail Plan.

## **Passenger Service**

Amtrak serves the inter-city, regional, interstate and international passenger rail needs in Herkimer and Oneida Counties. The Empire Corridor, which is part of Amtrak's Northeast Rail System, runs 462 miles from Buffalo to Albany to New York City. Utica's Union Station has four daily round trips and Rome has three. Destinations for these trains include Syracuse, Albany/Rensselaer, New York City, Buffalo, Chicago and Toronto.



### *Empire Service*

The rail corridor for Amtrak's Empire Service lies entirely within New York State and includes the following segments: Niagara Falls-Buffalo, Buffalo-Albany, and Albany-Rensselaer-Penn Station.

### *Empire Corridor West Railroad Transportation Plan Study*

The Empire Corridor West (ECW) study is a rail network modeling, operations simulation analysis, and infrastructure improvement feasibility assessment capacity study of the Empire Corridor from Rensselaer to Niagara Falls. The ECW study focus is identifying the potential infrastructure and operation elements beneficial to improving passenger and freight rail services on the current rail corridor west of Schenectady. The ECW Study final report, including infrastructure capital improvement recommendations, to be released in fall of 2009.

### *Lake Shore Limited*

The Lake Shore Limited provides long-distance service with endpoints in New York City's Penn Station and Chicago's Union Station. In New York State, it includes the following segments: Buffalo-Albany and Albany-Rensselaer-Penn Station.

### Adirondack Scenic Railroad



The Adirondack Scenic Railroad is the most notable example of New York's scenic and tourist railroads in terms of its length (141 miles) and because of the significant state funding commitment. Beginning in 2000, the state initiated a \$7 million program that substantially improved rail service on the entire Remsen to Lake Placid Travel Corridor. This included a \$2.5 million project to rehabilitate 11 miles of the corridor between Lake Placid Station and Saranac Lake Station. This segment was upgraded to Federal Railroad Administration Class II standards to allow for safe and comfortable operations for new excursion services. Also, \$4.5 million was provided for structure improvements along 108 miles of the Remsen/Lake Placid Travel Corridor, including track stabilization and upgrades, bridge improvements and restoration of four major washout areas between Remsen and Saranac Lake Station. These

improvements allow for the movement of locomotives and passenger cars between the existing southern service area (Remsen to Carter Station) and the northern service area (Saranac Lake Station to Lake Placid). The southern portion of those capital improvements deemed necessary to improve freight and intercity passenger rail services that may overlap with New York's commuter rail networks. Thus, certain commuter railroad projects that directly benefitted freight or intercity passenger rail services were included in the survey.

### Rail Safety

NYSDOT is the primary state agency responsible for rail safety activities in New York. Based on requirements in State Railroad Law and State Transportation Law, NYSDOT provides safety oversight for railroad freight carriers as well as intercity passenger rail (Amtrak) operations in New York State. NYSDOT also provides safety oversight and investigation activities for all rail commuter and transit operations in the New York metropolitan region as mandated by the Public Transportation Safety Board (PTSB) in State Transportation Law.

### Rail Security

The U. S. Department of Homeland Security and the New York State Office of Homeland Security (NYSOHS) are responsible for security. Security is addressed in the transportation sector mainly by identifying critical infrastructure assets and developing protection strategies for these. Other agencies, such as law enforcement and railroad operators, also address rail security needs. Amtrak has a range of security measures aimed at improving passenger rail security, some of which are conducted on an unpredictable or random basis including the following:

- Uniformed police officers or Mobile Security Teams
- Random passenger and carry-on baggage screening
- K-9 Units
- Checked baggage screening
- Onboard security checks
- Identification checks

The American Association of Railroads has established a Railroad Security Task Force. That task force produced the "*Terrorism Risk Analysis and Security Management Plan*" that was designed to enhance freight rail security. The plan remains in effect today. As a result, freight railroads enacted more than 50 permanent security-enhancing countermeasures.

### **Passenger Stations**

#### Union Station

Union Station redevelopment efforts have focused on maintaining and enhancing the Station's multimodal transportation functions. Work has already progressed through the implementation of several phases. Phases I, II, III, and IV have been completed

Phase I, was designed and construction was contracted through the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and consisted of improved road access, landscaping, lighting, drainage and parking improvement totaling \$2.2 million (\$1.5 FHWA). Phase II was completed in 1997 at a cost of \$2.4 million (\$1.900 STP-transfer to FTA). Improvements included a new roof, new electric and water service, public restroom renovations, clock repair, new public elevators, ground

level walkway to Track #2, renovation of office space on the 2nd and 3rd floors.

Phase III was completed in 2002 and focused on redevelopment of the Station including exterior renovations and enhanced public access. The first part included overhead walkway completion, stair tower, platform, and site and track improvements. The second part included exterior cleaning and masonry restoration on the main station building. Funding for the Phase III portion of the station totaled about \$5.25 million (\$4.2 million FTA). The project included an overhead walkway from the Station's second story over a portion of the existing walkway with a bridge to a new north side platform. The north side tower contains a stairway and a handicap accessible elevator. Bridgework also includes a new interior staircase in the main building serving the overhead walkway as well as the Station. The new platform improvements serve Amtrak and Adirondack Scenic Railroad passengers, while site improvements improve site safety and security. New and relocated track allows use of the station by the Adirondack Scenic Railroad in addition to site access from the North to allow site repair and maintenance.

Phase IV consisted of several parts and the second portion is currently in progress. One part included refurbishing all the existing canopies on the main station building. In addition, sections of the canopies on the REA building were refurbished. Where complete refurbishment could not be done asbestos and lead paints were removed along with all roofing and decking material. The structural steel was repaired and reconditioned including structural supports. The decking will be replaced with new roofing material in the future if funding becomes available. Phase IV also addressed the interior lobby historical preservation. This effort included replacement and reconstruction of all existing wood and glass storefront units back to a historically appropriate condition. Selected areas in the terrazzo floor were repaired and the entire floor was cleaned and refinished. Modern informational signs will be replaced with historically appropriate signage. An assessment of first floor electrical distribution, mechanical ventilating systems and lobby lighting was done and modifications made as necessary. An assessment of continuing moisture problems in the basement level was conducted and corrective measures taken to protect the building structure, electrical, and mechanical infrastructure. The cost of this phase of the project was \$2.1 M and was completed in 2005.



Phase V is in progress and continues to address the needs of Union Station including replacement of windows on the second and third floors with tight, energy efficient units. This was completed in the summer of 2009. Remaining funds will address long standing problems with the public address system and acoustics in the main lobby and outside areas serving bus and train travelers. The total estimated cost for Phase IV is \$4.0 million with proposed funding from FTA, NYSDOT, and Oneida County. Oneida County has requested additional federal funding to address continued site improvements, restoration of platform canopies and restoration and redevelopment of the Railway Express Agency (REA) building and other historic preservation needs. The Adirondack Scenic

Railroad is in progress in projects related to its operations which include side track construction and ADA lifts installation.

### Rome Station

The Rome Train Station first began renovations in 1999 when the City of Rome hired an engineering firm to make recommendations for improvements to the station, the tunnel, and platform canopy. Important elements of the study included addressing structural deterioration and leakage, a more passenger-friendly facility, and address compliance with ADA requirements, as well as those of CSX and Amtrak. In 2001, the City of Rome took action on the recommendations of the completed study and initiated the work to create a multimodal transportation center at the Rome Train Station. A grand opening at the Rome Station was held in April 2004 for the completed multi-modal transportation center. The station now connects the waterfront and the train station to commercial districts, the downtown area, Griffiss Technology Park, and Fort Stanwix. The transportation center offers rail, transit (and Rome VIP offices), and intercity coach and taxi service. Bicycle and pedestrian access is provided by on and off road facilities. Renovation efforts also included rehabilitation of the station interior with special emphasis on safety and alterations to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.



Presently the City of Rome is working with C & S Engineers on a plan to address both the existing (occupied) and abandoned (unoccupied) tunnel for possible future use of the Erie Canal. The scope of work in the existing occupied tunnel involves further renovations and protecting the new finishes from future water infiltration damage. The scope of work for the abandoned unoccupied tunnel is the first phase of work to make it ready for a future phase which will extend the tunnel access to the Barge Canal. The work will include removal of the lead paint from the walls and ceiling and painting the walls and ceiling, remove debris and refuse, replace the deteriorated wood bulkheads with roofing over the unused shaft and stair opening to improve security and make it weather-tight, provide a sump pump standpipe, upgrade lighting, electrical service and convenience receptacles to facilitate future maintenance, improve ventilation.

### **Freight Service**

On the freight side of the New York State Rail Plan, while providing energy efficient transport, the New York rail network reduces highway congestion, improves safety, and protects environmental quality by transporting thousands of tons of freight that would otherwise move on highways. Railroads are recognized as a much more energy efficient choice for moving goods. For each 1% of long-haul freight that switches from truck to rail, fuel savings would be approximately 111 million gallons per year and annual greenhouse gas emissions would fall by 1.2 million tons.

Rail allows industries and farmers in New York State to extend the markets for their goods. It provides competition, thus lowering shipper costs and promoting industry expansion and job creation.

Greater volumes of goods are moving within new global and regional trading blocs, and the timing and routing of goods movement is changing.

Figure 8-2 illustrates the status of rail projects in Herkimer and Oneida Counties from 2005 to 2009 and Figure 8-3 summarizes the planned grade crossing improvements through 2015.

Industrial properties within ½-mile of active rail corridors are illustrated on Map 8-1. Fifty-eight of these industrial properties are in Herkimer County and 142 are in Oneida County. A significant number of these properties are also adjacent to the canal system demonstrating the historical connection between rail and water transportation. Additionally, the rail lines run parallel to major road systems that provide modern access to rail yards and industrial properties.

Figure 8-2. Status of Rail Projects in Herkimer and Oneida Counties, 2005 – 2009

Project Type	Description	Status
Grade Crossing Improvements	Route 5A-Oriskany Boulevard- new concrete surface (NYSW yard)	Completed
Grade Crossing Improvements	Route 5/12 - new signals at New Hartford Industrial crossing (NYSW)	Completed
Grade Crossing Improvements	Leland Ave, City of Utica - concrete surface and gates & flashing lights - Brown's Feed (MA&N)	Completed
Grade Crossing Improvements	Big Moose Road, Town of Webb - new gates and flashing lights	Completed
Grade Crossing Closure	Lock Street, City of Little Falls (CSXT)	Completed
Grade Crossing Closure	Stickney Road, Town of Verona (CSXT)	Completed
Grade Crossing Improvements	Route 49 and East Dominick Street, City of Rome - new concrete surface and signals at crossing into Griffiss Business Park (MA&N)	Ongoing
Track Rehabilitation	Rehabilitation of track on Griffiss Business Park (GLDC/MA&N)	Ongoing
Track Rehabilitation	Rehabilitation of New York Mills Industrial Track(NYSW)	Ongoing
Grade Crossing Improvements	Reber Road, City of Rome - new automatic gates and flashing lights	Pending
Track Rehabilitation	\$1.49 million Track and Bridge Rehab (MA&N)	Pending

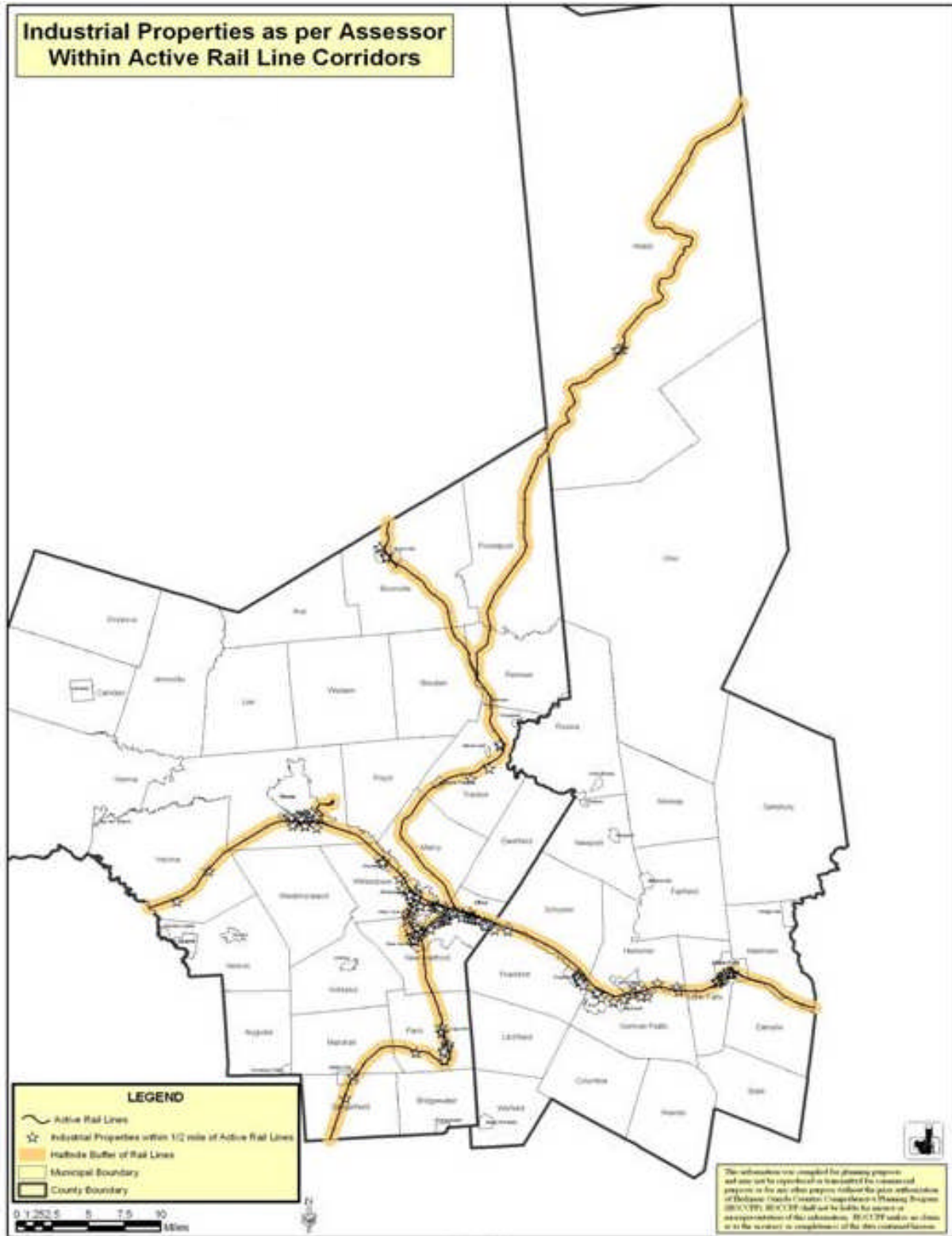
Source: NYSDOT, Region 2

Figure 8-3. Planned Rail Improvements, 2009 – 2015

FFY	RAILROAD	DESCRIPTION	COST
2009	CSX Chicago Line	BEEBES RD. TOWN OF LENOX	275,000
2009	CSX Chicago Line	GREENWAY-NEW LONDON RD.	275,000
		<b>TOTAL 2009</b>	<b>\$550,000</b>
2010	MHWA	DEPOT ST, VILLAGE OF REMSEN	177,000
2010	NYS&W	GREENMAN AVE, VILLAGE OF NYM	152,000
		<b>TOTAL 2010</b>	<b>\$329,000</b>
2011	MHWA	SAND RD, TOWN OF TRENTON	172,000
2011	GMVR	MILL ST, CITY OF ROME	128,000
2011	GMVR	S. JAMES ST. CITY OF ROME	135,000
		<b>TOTAL 2011</b>	<b>\$435,000</b>
2012	NYS&W	CLINTON ST	140,000
2012	NYSW ML	NOYES ST. CITY OF UTICA	124,000
2012	NYSW Utica ML	COLUMBIA ST. CITY OF UTICA	140,000
2012	NYSW Utica ML	WHITESBORO ST. CITY OF UTICA	8,000
2012	NYSW Utica ML	WARREN ST. CITY OF UTICA	8,000
		<b>TOTAL 2012</b>	<b>\$420,000</b>
2013	GMVR	RT 26, 49, 69, CITY OF ROME	161,000
2013	NYS&W	CHENANGO RD, CITY OF UTICA	128,000
2013	NYS&W	LOMOND PL, CITY OF UTICA	152,000
2013	GMVR	FIFTH ST. CITY OF ROME	8,000
2013	GMVR	BOUCK ST. CITY OF ROME	8,000
		<b>TOTAL 2013</b>	<b>\$457,000</b>
2014	NYSW NY Mills	FRENCH RD. CITY OF UTICA	140,000
2014	GMVR	S. MADISON ST. CITY OF ROME	124,000
2014	GMVR	GEORGE ST. CITY OF ROME	140,000
		<b>TOTAL 2014</b>	<b>\$404,000</b>
2015	MHWA	PINE ST, VILLAGE OF REMSEN	128,000
2015	MHWA	POTATO HILL RD, TOWN OF BOONVILLE	128,000
2015	MHWA	PHILLIPS RD, TOWN OF BOONVILLE	128,090
2015	NYS&W	WASHINGTON AVE, CITY OF UTICA	128,000
2015	MHWA Lyons Falls Br	BETHEL RD. TOWN OF BOONVILLE	120,000
		<b>TOTAL 2015</b>	<b>\$632,090</b>
		<b>TOTAL 2009 - 2015</b>	<b>\$3,227,090</b>

Source: NYSDOT, Region 2

Map 8-1. Industrial Properties within Active Rail Corridors



### Freight Rail in Oneida and Herkimer Counties

There are three railroads providing freight service in the Herkimer-Oneida Counties, CSX, NYS&W (New York Susquehanna & Western) and MA&N.

#### *CSX*

The primary rail freight carrier is CSX (formerly Conrail) main line that traverses both Herkimer and Oneida Counties along the Mohawk River serving Little Falls and Utica and utilizes the former New York Central main line trackage as its primary route between New York and Chicago. On average, approximately 1 million carloads were carried by CSX in the state of New York during 2000 to 2002.

On June 23, 1997, CSX Corporation (CSX) and Norfolk Southern (NS) Corporation and Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) filed an application with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) jointly seeking authority for NS and CSX to acquire control of Conrail and Conrail's assets. The Surface Transportation Board approved the acquisition in the Summer of 1998. CSX retains the Chicago Main Line that passes through Oneida and Herkimer Counties. CSX began operating the Conrail routes in the summer of 1999.

#### *NYS&W*

The NYS&W is a regional railroad that serves central New York and northeastern New Jersey. The NYS&W's rail line extends south from Utica to Binghamton and serves exclusively local shippers in Oneida County. Statewide from 2001 to 2002, NYS&W moved an average of 11,000 carloads.

The NYS&W's industrial track facility in Utica offers rail transload capability for dry and liquid flowables on a paved and lit area with space for six railcars. Additional track space in Utica can accommodate up to 20 railcars. The NYS&W's facility is accessible to I-90 (NYS Thruway), as well as Routes 8, 12, 28, and 5S.

#### *MA&N*

The Mohawk Adirondack & Northern (MA&N) is a short line that extends north from Utica. MA&N primarily serves local shippers in Herkimer County. In 2000, the Lyon Falls paper mill closed down. The mill closing reduced the overall MA&N carload numbers in New York State by 50 percent.

In November 2003, two significant rail improvements including an expanded rail siding and a restored rail siding in Rome and Utica provided opportunity for MA&N to bring raw materials to the East Coast Olive Oil Company and to Rome Strip Steel. At East Coast Olive Oil, the rail siding was expanded with the construction of a third line to better move product to and from the growing company. The restored line to Rome Strip Steel's facility marked a return of rail service after a 20-year absence. The project also included construction of a covered overhead crane to unload steel coils. The rail improvements were funded by \$1.5M in state grants.

**Summary**

In the next 20 years there will be an increasing need to provide relief to the highway system by finding alternatives to moving freight by truck. Rail shipping could help mitigate congestion and reduce air pollution on the highways. HOCTS supports future efforts to increase the use of rail as a viable alternative to move freight.

Passenger rail efforts should also be supported. There is a significant investment required by public and, to some extent, the private sector to improve service delivery and longevity of passenger rail in our two-county area and New York State as a whole. The 2009 New York State Rail Plan outlines the statewide objectives for improving passenger service.

## **Findings and Recommendations**

### **Findings**

- Union Station improvements have been completed.
- Passenger Access to trains at Union Station & Rome Station have improved.
- Adirondack Scenic Railroad continues operate out of Union Station.
- Amtrak provides valuable passenger service.
- High-speed rail corridor development program has authorized federal funding beginning in FY 2009.

### **Recommendations**

- Continue efforts to upgrade the physical and operating quality of Union Station and the Rome Train Station.
- Increase public awareness on the use of rail as a means of travel.
- Support plans for High Speed Rail and study potential impact on the two-county area.
- Improve Intermodal access to and from Union Station and Rome Station.
- Support Restoration of Adirondack Railroad for passenger and freight service.
- Continue to promote upgrading the physical and operating quality of essential passenger and freight rail service.
- Study the potential for increased use of short lines for freight and passenger service.
- Continue to eliminate or correct unsafe grade crossings.
- Continue to review abandoned rail lines for possible bicycle and pedestrian trails.
- Support rail security systems for Union Station in Utica and the Rome Station.