



Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany and Steuben Counties

# Southern Tier Extension Railroad Authority

Center for Regional Excellence, 4039 Route 219, Suite 200, Salamanca, New York 14779  
TEL (716) 945-5301 FAX (716) 945-5550 TDD (716) 945-5301

“This institution is an equal opportunity organization”

Frank “Jay” Gould, Chairman  
Richard Zink, Chief Executive Officer

## STERA Operations and Accomplishments Report Prepared for the year ending December 31, 2020

### Description of the Authority's Operations

The Authority Board of Directors met 3 times in calendar 2020, in June, October, and December. At all Board meetings, the Authority receives a report on railroad operations from the rail operator Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad LLC (WNYP). The June Board meeting included (a) a comprehensive review of all reports and organizational policies, (b) a review of Authority structural, governance and operating policies and activities, (c) a comprehensive compliance review, and (d) the review and acceptance of the audit and management letter that had been prepared for calendar 2019. The June Board meeting also was the annual meeting, which included election of Board and Corporate Officers. The October meeting included election of Board officers, upon the resignation of the STERA Board Chairman. The STERA Audit Committee met in October. The STERA Governance Committee did not meet in 2020.

### Rail Freight Traffic Volume

In 2020, overhead freight decreased from 563 to 507 carloads due to Covid related reductions in highway infrastructure projects in New York and Pennsylvania. This impacted liquid asphaltic products that move across the line to Meadville, PA. Total local freight volume was down by 299 carloads in 2020, due primarily to decreased frack sand deliveries. Local freight business for customers between Cuba and Falconer was down a total of 78 cars. Notable decreases were Cuba Cheese/Sargents Transportation (-41), Bush Industries (-15), Monofrax (-18) and Cargill (-4) which has closed its operation in Poland Center. Much of the decrease in traffic was offset by an increase in freight car storage. Storage car count is up nearly 700 cars due to inactivity into gas fields across the country (storage of empty sand and tank cars) and an early to mid-2020 Covid related international reduction in intermodal movements (storage of container flat cars). Natural gas activity continues to slow nationwide at this time and the railroad is experiencing an uptick in request for car storage spaces.

#### **Total carloads for the entire system:**

<u>2019</u>	<u>Carloads</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Overhead Freight	563	(all STE East-West mainline traffic)
Local Freight	378	Southern Tier Extension line
	<u>6,357</u>	Buffalo line
	<u>6,735</u>	Total local freight
Total	7,298	Total system

<u>2020</u>	<u>Carloads</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Overhead Freight	507	(all STE East-West mainline traffic)
Local Freight	300	Southern Tier Extension line
	<u>6,136</u>	Buffalo line
	<u>6,436</u>	Total local freight
Total	6,943	Total system
Total	7,298	Total system

**Conclusions** – For 2021, Buffalo Line local freight traffic is projected to be less than 2020 levels, attributable to decreased frack sand unloading activity with the wax refinery traffic expected to stay level. Hoped for increases in US highway infrastructure and building projects causes STERA to believe its overall goal of increased rail carload shipping volumes can offset projected decreases in frack sand activity in 2021. WNYP business at the IGI wax refinery in Farmers Valley, PA remains robust and the owner is investing heavily in that facility. WNYP business in Meadville, PA continues to grow, and WNYP’s intention is to move as much of it as possible over the NS-Salamanca gateway.

### **Capital Construction Projects Completed as of December 31, 2020**

#### **A. FEMA Project**

As a result of a May 2014 storm event, STERA sustained storm damage at 47 locations in four New York State counties on the Southern Tier Extension railroad line. FEMA had declared a disaster in these counties (FEMA-4180-DR-NY), which made STERA eligible for funding from FEMA and the NYS Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) to assist in the repair of these damages, and to assist in the mitigation of additional damages that might be caused by future storm events at certain specific locations. WNYP provided the remaining required matching funds. The project began in 2014, and all work was completed in 2015. As of December 31, 2020, STERA is awaiting closeout by FEMA.

#### **B. Bridge Rehab and Track Realignment Project**

STERA had received NYS DOT 2005 Bond Act funds for the realignment of track from a bridge that in recent years had been in service to an adjacent bridge that in recent years had not been in service. WNYP provided the required matching funds. This project is located in the Falconer area in Chautauqua County on the Southern Tier Extension line. The goal of the project was to improve safety and track speeds, which would further improve competitiveness of rail service. Further, the project was part of an overall strategy to raise the entire Southern Tier Extension Railroad line to a 286,000 lb. capacity specification for 4-axle rail cars. The project replaced a bridge in need of major repair that had only a 273,000 pound per carload weight capacity with a bridge (the bridge placed back into service) that has a 315,000 pound per carload weight capacity (above the industry standard of 286,000 pounds); it was the last remaining 273,000 pound-per-carload bridge in the line. The project began in 2013. The project’s primary objectives have been completed; the realigned route and bridge crossing were placed back in service in November 2013. Secondary goals of installation of additional welded rail and 1,200 ties and the improvement of a switch serving the RHI Monofrax siding in Falconer also subsequently have been completed. Installation of 5,000 ties and ballast has been completed. STERA utilized all of the funds remaining that could be used within the geographic bounds of the original project scope. As of the end of 2016, all work had been completed, and as of December 31, 2020, STERA is awaiting closeout by NYS DOT.

#### **C. Cattaraugus County Rail Rehabilitation Project**

STERA had received NYS DOT PFRAP Act funds for tie replacement, track alignment, and grade crossing and turnout rehabilitation between Olean and Killbuck in Cattaraugus County, NY on the Southern Tier Extension Railroad Line. WNYP provided the required matching funds. The project involved the replacement of 10,000 ties, the installation of approximately 12,000 tons of ballast, the raising/surfacing/aligning of track and turnouts, the rehabilitation of three at-grade crossings, and the rehabilitation of eleven turnouts along 12

linear miles of railroad line between Olean and Killbuck. The goal of the project was to improve safety and track speeds, which would further improve competitiveness of rail service. Further, the project was part of an overall strategy to raise the entire Southern Tier Extension Railroad line to a 286,000 lb. capacity specification for 4- axle rail cars. WNYP provided engineering, construction, and construction inspection services on this contract (augmented by engineering review and inspection review by NYS DOT). WNYP engaged one or more third party private sector construction contractor(s) to provide certain construction services under subcontract to WNYP. All project work has been completed. As of December 31, 2020, STERA is awaiting closeout by NYS DOT.

#### **D. Tie Installation and Grade Crossing Repair Project**

STERA had received NYS DOT PFRAP funds for the installation of 8,000 ties and the repair of four grade crossings on a section of the Buffalo line located between Olean and Portville (Cattaraugus County). WNYP provided the required matching funds. The goal of the project was to improve safety and track speeds, which would further improve competitiveness of rail service. Further, the project was part of an overall strategy to maintain the Buffalo line at a 286,000 lb. capacity specification for 4-axle rail cars. The project also will serve customers located on the Buffalo line in Pennsylvania. WNYP provided engineering, construction, and construction inspection services on this contract (augmented by engineering review and inspection review by NYS DOT). WNYP engaged one or more third party private sector construction contractor(s) to provide certain construction services under sub-contract to WNYP. All of the work on this project had been completed as of the end of 2015; however, additional project funds remained, and STERA received approval from NYS DOT to extend the project deadline through the end of 2016 so as to complete additional project work elements to better serve rail shippers on the line. STERA used the extension and unspent funds to rehab four additional grade crossings on the Buffalo line north in the Olean area (Back Hinsdale Road, Oregon road, Haskell Road, and Promised Land Road), and install (approximately \$25,000 of) additional ties. As of the end of 2016, all work had been completed. However, at the end of 2018, STERA decided to pursue using unspent project funds to rehabilitate another grade crossing in Olean. NYS DOT had approved extending the project completion deadline, and had approved the proposed work on the additional grade crossing. This work was completed during calendar 2019. As of December 31, 2020, STERA is awaiting closeout by NYS DOT.

### **Capital Construction Projects Active as of December 31, 2020**

#### **A. Track and Bridge Rehabilitation Project**

In August 2015, STERA had submitted an application to NYS DOT for PFRAP grant funds, with matching funds to be provided by WNYP. The project would involve replacing 8,000 linear feet of welded rail in Carrolton in Cattaraugus County, and repairing three bridges in Jamestown, one bridge in Salamanca, and one bridge in Olean. All work except the Olean bridge is to be done on the Southern Tier Extension; the Olean bridge is on the Buffalo line. The goal of the project is to improve safety and track speeds, which would further improve competitiveness of rail service. Further, the project is part of an overall strategy to raise the entire Southern Tier Extension Railroad and Buffalo lines to a 286,000 lb. capacity specification for 4-axle rail cars. The bridge repairs specifically are intended to improve safety related to bridge integrity (reducing impacts on pedestrians/highway vehicles). STERA's intention is to contract directly with WNYP for the provision of engineering, construction, and construction inspection services on this contract (augmented by engineering review and inspection review by NYS DOT). WNYP may engage one or more third party private sector construction contractor(s) to provide certain construction services under sub-contract to WNYP; interested potential subcontractors may contact STERA and/or WNYP directly. In late 2016, STERA received a contract from NYS DOT funding a portion of the project. In 2017, NYS DOT reviewed and approved plans, but it was too late in the year to begin construction. Work commenced on four of the five bridges in 2018. In 2018, STERA began negotiating with NYS DOT and the City of Olean for a project scope change, which would involve filling (i.e., removing) the Queen Street bridge underpass (as opposed to replacing its deck) and installing a pedestrian underpass culvert, while simultaneously raising the height of the nearby Front Street bridge so as to increase highway clearance. As of December 31, 2020, this project modification has not yet been accomplished. STERA is awaiting approval of the project scope change by the NYS Administrative Law Judge.

A hearing in front of the NYS Administrative Law Judge was held in 2020, and if approval is received, the project should be completed in 2020.

**B. Olean Enginehouse and Yard Improvement Project**

In 2017, STERA received a contract for NYS DOT PFRAP grant funds, to be matched by WNYP funds. The project was to involve improvements to the enginehouse in the Olean yard, installation of a yard video security system, the installation of 6,000 6x8 ties in the Olean yard, and the replacement of 8 switches in the Olean yard. The work would be done on the Southern Tier Extension Line. STERA executed a contract with WNYP for contractual services in support of the project in 2017. Yard tie installation was completed in December. Switch installation occurred in 2018. The security system purchase and installation occurred in 2019. STERA has requested and received NYS DOT approval for the deletion of the enginehouse work from the NYS DOT contract. Accordingly, the project will come in under budget, and STERA has requested a change order from NYS DOT for the underage amount, with additional work to be done in the Olean Yard using these unspent funds. As of December 31, 2020, STERA is awaiting approval of this change order by NYS DOT. If approved, the project will be completed in 2021.

**C. STERA Tie and Rail Replacement PFRAP Project (Southern Tier Extension Line)**

In 2018, STERA submitted a grant application to NYS DOT for the 2018 PFRAP funding cycle. This project would involve replacement of approximately 13,000 ties and surfacing ten (10) miles of tie replacement and surfacing between Steamburg, SA-14.00 and Waterboro, SA-23.00, and between MP SA-27.0 and MP SA-28.0 (Poland Center) on the Southern Tier Extension Line. Approximately half of this project area will need substantial ballasting. The project also will include three (3) public highway grade crossing surface rebuilds at Coldspring Road (Randolph), Main Street (Randolph), and Goodwins Landing Road (Waterboro) and eleven (11) private farm grade crossing widenings and rebuilds. The project also will involve replace of switch timbers at one main line turnout (the No. 10 turnout at the Randolph Team Track. STERA has received and executed the NYS DOT contract and has executed the sub-contract with WNYP. All of the work would be bid by WNYP and/or done by WNYP itself. In 2017, STERA received a contract for NYS DOT PFRAP grant funds, to be matched by WNYP funds. The project was to involve improvements to the enginehouse in the Olean yard, installation of a yard video security system, the installation of 6,000 6x8 ties in the Olean yard, and the replacement of 8 switches in the Olean yard. The work would be done on the Southern Tier Extension Line. STERA executed a contract with WNYP for contractual services in support of the project in 2017. Yard tie installation was completed in December. Switch installation occurred in 2018. The security system purchase and installation occurred in 2019. STERA has requested and received NYS DOT approval for the deletion of the enginehouse work from the NYS DOT contract. Accordingly, the project will come in under budget, and STERA has requested a change order from NYS DOT for the underage amount, with additional work to be done in the Olean Yard using these unspent funds. As of December 31, 2020, STERA is awaiting approval of this change order by NYS DOT. If approved, the project will be completed in 2021.

**Capital Construction Projects Currently Proposed as of December 31, 2020**

**A. Proposed Bridge NY Project (Salamanca Main Street Bridge Replacement and Track Realignment, Southern Tier Extension Line)**

In 2017, STERA had discussions with the City of Salamanca and the Seneca Nation of Indians regarding a project that would involve replacement of the Salamanca Main Street rail bridge (replacing the 6 lane rail bridge with a two lane bridge, with higher clearance for Main Street underpass traffic) and the realignment of track just to the west of the bridge (re-routing of the main line in this area to remove the curvature of the line, which is a safety issue and which keeps train speeds down). Such a project (or at least the bridge replacement component) would be eligible for NYS DOT Bridge NY funding. The project grant application would not be submitted until a future year. The Seneca Nation of Indians representatives indicated that there would have to be approval by the Seneca Nation of Indians for both the bridge and track realignment projects to move forward. There has been no progress on advancing the project since 2017.

## **B. Proposed Transload Facility Project**

In March, 2006, the Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board, using funding provided by NYSDOT, USDOC EDA, and WNYP, began a feasibility and site selection study relating to the phased construction and operation of rail-highway freight transfer facility to be located somewhere along the NYS 3 portion of the Southern Tier Extension Railroad Line. The first phase was to involve construction of a transload facility, with potential future phases if justified by freight volume and market demand, to involve satellite marine terminal/inland port designation, intermodal container operations, and a nearby business or industrial park development. The study demonstrated commercial viability for the first phase transload facility and also recommended location of the transload facility at the WNYP rail yard in Allegany, New York (Cattaraugus County). This study report is available at [www.southerntierwest.org/html/publications.htm](http://www.southerntierwest.org/html/publications.htm). In January 2009, the Southern Tier West RP&DB, as part of the feasibility and site selection study project, undertook a preliminary engineering study for the construction of the proposed transload facility at the Allegany NY rail yard site. This engineering report, along with technical appendices, is available at [www.southerntierwest.org/html/publications.htm](http://www.southerntierwest.org/html/publications.htm). Based upon these studies and the express indication by NYS DOT that it would encourage and help fund the construction of the first phase transload facility, STERA would like to undertake the project, either by (a) constructing and owning the facility, with operation to be leased to a third party private sector company to be selected at a later date, or by (b) work with a private developer that would construct and either own/operate or own/lease the facility to another private sector operator. STERA's strategy is to build the transload facility in phases, as construction funds became available. STERA is currently in the process of seeking funding to undertake the construction of the first phase transload facility. When STERA obtains construction funds, it will procure engineering consulting services, undertake environmental analysis, secure site control, undertake engineering/design, and begin construction. STERA will not issue RFP's for any project-related services until funding is in hand for this project.

## **Discussion of Any Material Changes in Authority Operations and Programs**

Other than capital rehabilitation projects either commenced, ongoing, or completed in 2020 (discussed above), there were no material changes in STERA operations and programs during 2020.