



Rail Industry Vital to Local Economy

Waste by rail will remove long haul trucks from local roads

Geneva, NY – Despite the ongoing negative campaigns in opposition to waste by rail, this program is designed to remove heavy truck traffic already coming into the region on local and regional highways. Opposition groups continue to avoid conversation with the railroad and to misrepresent the rail business. “Waste by rail is an environmentally superior mode of transportation than heavy long haul truck trailers currently hauling waste to local landfills,” states Mike Smith, President of Finger Lakes Railway. This change in transportation method will reduce truck traffic, lower greenhouse gas emissions by 75% and save thousands of dollars in highways repairs across the state. “We are also looking into whether these ongoing headline attacks on the rail industry could be seen as an interference of interstate commerce,” says Smith.

“Finger Lakes Railway is a responsible corporate citizen that cares about the communities through which we operate,” states Joann Armstrong, Assistant General Manager of Finger Lakes Railway. “A majority of our employees and families, as well as the employees and families of the businesses we serve and of businesses that we use as vendors, reside in these same communities. The quality of life from both an environmental and economic standpoint is important to us all.” Armstrong and 40 other employees of Finger Lakes Railway live in the Finger Lakes region.

Local protests against regional trains which transport products safely and efficiently, unfortunately focuses on the wrong issues. The issues should focus on how businesses and residents can collaborate to help the surrounding counties create economic vitality by utilizing all their assets and resources. Protesters this Saturday will cross tracks owned by Norfolk Southern at Elizabeth Blackwell St. and Lake St. These tracks are used by Finger Lakes Railway, however, rail traffic has been postponed during the morning hours to avoid the crowds.

“This region, and all of upstate, needs jobs, industry, energy and innovation to survive in this uncertain economy,” states Deb Najarro, local rail industry consultant. “The wine and tourism industry in the Finger Lakes is world class, but it is seasonal and cannot possibly meet the financial needs of the communities where they operate. Every asset we have that is currently generating economic impact should be embraced, enhanced, and utilized to its fullest potential to help communities survive and to thrive. I am encouraging the opposition groups to find leaders who will think outside of their environmental-fear-box and to engage in conversation with the business community about how to move the region forward together.”

These opposition groups that regularly exert efforts to misrepresent the waste by rail business are alienating local businesses that do use rail, like farmers, as well as alienating local residents who don’t feel the same way they do. “Our local farms use the railroad for transporting product to market,” says Seneca County Farm Bureau President Ann Heizmann. “And we would not be here, producing food nor paying property taxes if we couldn’t get our product to market.”

“There are people in this community that quietly support the railroad and our business development efforts,” concludes Smith. “To isolate one commodity and one industry and to label THAT as the enemy is unproductive. If these local groups would take up us on our offer to collaborate and brainstorm on how to work together, we are ready and willing.”

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One example, to combat the concern over recycling and a potential NYC contract, Smith suggests local towns could adopt sister communities in NYC neighborhoods to partner with them on reducing their waste stream by reusing, recycling and composting. If awarded the contract to haul waste by rail, the railroad will continue to focus operating procedures and policies around safe train handling and environmental impact monitoring.

Finger Lakes Railway service supports 6000 jobs at local businesses in agriculture, manufacturing, and food and beverage production. They haul 18,000 carloads annually for mills, plants, and factories where local people are employed. The rail industry moves over one billion tons of product across our nation every year, focusing on efficient and safe transportation every day.

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About Finger Lakes Railway Corp.

Finger Lakes Railway Corp. is a Class III railroad that operates on 167 miles of track from its Waterloo headquarters. They operate in 6 counties in the Finger Lakes region including Ontario, Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Yates, and Schuyler. Their current customer base has grown to 89 active shippers. FGLK connects with CSX, Norfolk Southern, Canadian Pacific, and New York Susquehanna & Western railroads. Since they began operations in 1995, they have added over 50 full-time employees and now have 14 locomotives. They also currently lease 581 railcars to better serve their customers needs. For more information visit www.fingerlakesrail.com

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