

# Dingman Wants To Take Over Waterboro Line

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The operator of the New York and Lake Erie Short Line Railroad is taking a look at the possibility of incorporating a Conrail line between South Dayton and Waterboro, near Kennedy, into the system.

Robert O. Dingman, designated line operator of the old Erie Lackawanna Line that runs from Salamanca through Cattaraugus, said recently that there is some doubt that Conrail will continue operating the South Dayton-Waterboro section and other "light density branch lines."

If that section could be added to the section he now operates, along with a section that connects Buffalo and Gowanda, Dingman feels "there is an excellent chance of the system becoming viable without state subsidy."

The NY&LE has been operating since last October along the line between Salamanca and Cattaraugus with the assistance of a state Department of Transportation subsidy of \$155,000 a year.

The subsidy, which is due to run out in April 1981, was granted because of the large number of businesses that would have been affected had the section been allowed to be dropped from rail service. Studies show that several industries along the Salamanca-Cattaraugus section are "rail captive" in that the loss of rail service and the conversion to truck transport would be costly and could jeopardize the jobs of several hundred employees whose incomes contribute significantly to the economic stability of the area.

Dingman feels that if his line could also operate the Gowanda to Buffalo section, a better "economy of scale" could be achieved.

Such a proposal has been filed with the state DOT, but final approval would probably depend on the support of

shippers on the line and whether Erie County would be willing to buy the line from the Erie-Lackawanna trustees.

Concerning the South Dayton to Waterboro section now owned by Conrail, Roy Campbell of the Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board said Dingman is considering working out a deal in which Conrail would continue to own the line, but NY&LE would operate it.

STW is assisting the Cattaraugus County and Erie County industrial development agencies in attempts to get state and federal assistance to purchase the Salamanca-to-Cattaraugus section, and the Gowanda-to-Buffalo section.

Cattaraugus County would probably not be asked to purchase the Cattaraugus-to-Salamanca section from Conrail, however, Campbell said. He noted the cost that Conrail would be asking could be prohibitive and also cautioned that Conrail has yet to make any final decision on whether it would even abandon the line.

STW studies indicate, Campbell said, that if all three lines can be hooked together into one system, there is an excellent chance of the system being able to operate without state subsidies.

Studies also show that the Salamanca to Cattaraugus line cannot survive economically on its own, he said.

He noted that the state DOT recently announced that it was unwilling to supply funds for scheduled summer track rehabilitation on the Salamanca-to-Cattaraugus line due to "inadequate carloading figures."

Campbell said, however, that Dingman disputes the DOT position and says that car loading figures have actually increased on the line.