

Boost For NY&LE Railroad Expected

By CHARLES BOWEN

GOWANDA — A new industry in the village of Cattaraugus is expected to give a boost to the New York & Lake Erie Railroad, which last week officially took over 16.1 miles of track between South Dayton and Waterboro from Conrail.

B-J Hughes Inc. of Cattaraugus, an oil- and gas-well servicing business, will begin being served by the Gowanda-based railroad in one to two weeks, according to Robert O. Dingman Jr., head of NY&LE.

B-J Hughes is expected to ship between 175 and 200 carloads annually, which would make it one of the local railroad's biggest customers.

"At that volume, it would be as big as anything else we have or bigger," Dingman said.

The industry is scheduled to receive silicon sand via the railroad for oil and gas well fracturing, according to Dingman.

And while NY&LE officials are pleased about the prospect of new business and their newly acquired line,

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they're still reeling from the blow delivered by the Erie County Industrial Development Agency in April, which took away the Buffalo-Gowanda link from NY&LE and gave it to the newly formed Buffalo Southern.

That switch caused NY&LE to lose its biggest shipper, the Gowanda Psychiatric Center, Dingman said. NY&LE and Buffalo Southern have been unable to reach an agreement that would allow the local railroad to use the Gowanda-to-Buffalo track.

NY&LE operates on a 65-mile short-line track owned by the Cattaraugus

County Industrial Development Agency. The South Dayton-to-Waterboro line was finally taken over last week after months of negotiations. That track cost the county \$240,000 with legal fees boosting the price tag another \$40,000. Appalachian Regional Commission funds were used to acquire the line.

Major shippers along the line include Carnation Dairy, Austin Milling, of South Dayton, Gier's Agway of Cherry Creek and Conewango Valley Mills of Conewango Valley.