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Amtrak Car Retired



Amtrak's Great Dome car, a 1950's-era passenger car and a regular feature during fall foliage season on the Adirondack between Albany and Montreal, has been retired. The two-level passenger car sported a glassed-in upper level stretching the length of it and was the last of a fleet of six built for the Great Northern Railway's Empire Builder between Chicago and Seattle in the mid-1950s.

The Milwaukee Road operated its own fleet of 10 "Super Dome" cars that are similar in appearance with a glassed-in upper level; also stretching the full length of the railroad car. They were used on the railroad's Hiawatha passenger trains and -later on- on such trains as the City of Denver. Those dome cars ended up with cruise lines or scenic railroads. Amtrak spokesperson Jason Abrams said: *"due to the age and expense of maintaining this vintage car, the Great Dome Car will no longer operate as part of Amtrak's fleet."* The car is believed to be in storage at Amtrak's Beech Grove repair shops in Indiana.

Gary Prophet - president of the Empire State Passengers Association - said the news of the car's retirement confirmed what he had heard earlier as rumors: *"I'm very sad and disappointed that they decided to retire it and not make the necessary repairs to bring it back into service – so passengers could enjoy it during the autumn season."* Mr. Prophet rode the Great Dome car several times adding that its windows stretched to the top and *"made the dome car very unique, and a huge benefit for passengers riding through the Adirondacks."*

Amtrak now operates two-level Superliner lounge cars with windows that stretch from just above the floor to wrap around part of the ceiling. Because of the cars' height, they operate mainly between Chicago and destinations in the south and west. Lower clearances on eastern routes obviously prevent them from operating into New York City. Clearance is the reason why the Great Dome car operated on the Adirondack, only between Albany and Montreal. Prophet added that Amtrak and New York State invest in some cars with larger windows.

Amtrak spokeswoman Beth Toll last week said the passenger railroad has issued a request for proposal to replace aging locomotives and 40-year-old Amfleet coaches with new equipment by the early 20's. According to Toll: *"While the specifics of the new equipment and their delivery timeline are still under development, Amtrak expects the new equipment to feature larger windows for viewing the world-class Hudson River and Lake Champlain scenery between New York and Montreal, as well as improvements to restrooms, passageways between cars, climate control systems and other key components to maximize customer comfort on the route."*

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Press Release

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