



# TrainRider

The Newsletter of TrainRiders Northeast **CHANGING THE WAY THE NORTHEAST TRAVELS**

**Host Program  
seeks new  
volunteer hosts.**  
www.trainridersne.org

## Chairman's Report

### TROUBLE IN PARADISE

Newspaper headlines nationwide have focused on changes made, or proposed, by Amtrak officials that threaten the existence of Amtrak's national system (please see article on page 2). We too, are concerned about the national system and the Downeaster's place in that system.

Richard Anderson became president of Amtrak in July 2017 and served as co-chief executive officer with retired railroad president Wick Moorman until last December, when Mr. Anderson became sole occupant of that position as well, serving without salary. Prior to that he had served as CEO at Delta Airlines from 2007-2016.

Mr. Anderson's early messages seemed reasonable and even encouraging, recognizing the need for infrastructure improvements, better equipment and higher speeds, as well as indicating that privatization of the service probably would not work. **Now, however, his actions are causing significant concern among those such as TNE who want passenger rail service to survive and thrive not just in the Northeast, but throughout the country. It's not right that after our 29 years of constant efforts to bring Amtrak to the Northeast, we should now have to do battle with the very organization we worked closely with to make today's Downeaster possible.**

After all, we spearheaded the movement beginning in 1989 to collect nearly 90,000 Maine taxpayer signatures to have our Passenger Rail Service Act introduced to Maine voters in a referendum. We were surprised but delighted when Maine's Legislature voted to accept the Rail Act as their own bill—passing Maine's first citizen initiated bill on July 14, 1991. Our efforts continued for another ten years joining state and federal officials in Washington putting together the some \$40 million to fund our project. We testified before Congress in support of our initiative and in support of funding for Amtrak's 403B expansion service. With Amtrak, TNE co-sponsored the visits to Portland of the Spanish Talgo Train and the German Intercity Express when they toured America as potential candidates for Amtrak's first "High Speed Train." It took 12 years of effort by TNE before the first train between Portland and Boston could operate on December 15, 2001. That success led us to continue to our second goal—extending the service to Freeport and Brunswick on November 1, 2015, while also supporting the service's success by, among other things, organizing and running a program for on-board hosts, as well as hosts at some stations along the line.

**Today these efforts in support of the Downeaster and the national system are in jeopardy as a result of actions which have, among other things, reduced food service on the Lake Shore Limited and the Capital Limited, the reduction and, in some instances, elimination of special trains and private car service which added millions of dollars of revenue to Amtrak's bottom line each year, elimination of ticket agents at 10-25 stations, and a proposal to provide the middle fifth of the Southwest Chief service by bus instead of rail. We want you, our membership, to know that TrainRiders has taken several important steps:**

*(continued on last page)*

Our Executive Director, George O'Keefe, is moving on to new and exciting opportunities. While he was with TrainRiders for only a short period, George made many contributions to the organization. We wish him well in his new endeavors!

## Downeaster Exceeds Expectations —Again

### Ridership

July'17 — May'18

Actual 2017	Actual 2018
465,533	502,546

### Revenue

July — May

Actual FY2017	Actual FY2018
\$7,880,243	\$9,3440,908



### Overall Customer Satisfaction

Downeaster	Amtrak
90	78

### Value of Amtrak service for price paid

Downeaster	Amtrak
90	80

### Friendliness/helpfulness of train conductor

Downeaster	Amtrak
96	89

## Plan to See the Fall Foliage from a Vintage Glass-Domed Train Car

You can now admire the glorious changing colors of the fall foliage in New England aboard trains incorporating Amtrak's historic Great Dome Car. The vintage glass-domed car has an upper level with windows on all sides and overhead, to provide passengers with panoramic views of the scenic villages, coastline, marshes, streams and landscapes located all along the routes.

This year, the fall travel experience is offered on the Andironack and Downeaster trains. The Great Dome Car will travel along on four trips per day from Brunswick via Portland to Boston between 11 August and 23 September. On the Andironack train, you can immerse yourself in the changing tree colors and Lake Champlain vistas as you travel from Montreal via Albany and on to New York from 27 September to 2 November.

The seats in the upper level of the Dome Car are available at no extra cost, but they are unreserved and available on a first-come, first-served basis. It is the only remaining dome car in Amtrak service, and was built in 1955 by the Budd Company for the Great Northern and carried the name "Ocean View," and was known as car number 1391. It was conveyed to Amtrak in 1971 and has been refurbished on a number of occasions. It has been used in various Amtrak services including the Pacific Surfliners and other charters and excursions.

To make a booking on any Amtrak train: [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com).

—excerpt from *Lonely Planet* 7/17/18

## ROCKLAND TRAIN DELAYED

The seasonal train to Rockland was first scheduled to begin during the summer of 2018.

Recently, Richard Anderson, president of Amtrak, announced in Congressional testimony that Amtrak service over lines where Positive Train Control\* (PTC) was not required, as well as over unsignaled track (dark territory) would be evaluated and might not be continued. This includes the current Downeaster line where, because of low volumes of train traffic, PTC is not required. It also includes the Rockland Branch, which is "dark territory". Amtrak now says that the Downeaster line will have to undergo a "risk assessment", although, as of April 2018, an Amtrak representative could not say when that would occur, or what the standards of the assessment would be. Amtrak also says that the Rockland Branch will have to undergo an assessment before proposed new service can begin there. Initially, NNEPRA was told that this would be the first assessment done by Amtrak of lines around the country because Amtrak realized that the season for that service was short and could only happen in 2018 if the assessment were immediate. A few days later, however, NNEPRA was informed that Amtrak had changed its mind and that this assessment would not occur in time for service to Rockland this summer, a great disappointment to TrainRiders and NNEPRA. NNEPRA Executive Director Patricia Quinn pledged to work closely with Amtrak so that a "more robust" proposal for Midcoast seasonal service can be accomplished next year.

\* PST is an advanced system to automatically stop a train before an accident occurs.

Mark your calendar:

**DECEMBER 14**

for TrainRiders/Northeast's  
30th Annual Meeting at  
Portland's Holiday Inn By  
the Bay

### PROPOSED NORTH-SOUTH RAIL LINK

The proposed project would connect the rail networks north of Boston with the rail networks south of Boston with a pair of tunnels between South Station and North Station. This proposal is currently being studied by MassDOT as part of the so-called North-South Rail Link Feasibility Reassessment Study.

The study is not a resumption of the suspended environmental process which would protect the right of way and could lead to the construction of the North-South Rail Link.

— John Businger, Former Representative, Massachusetts Chair, North-South Rail Link Working Group

### RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION REGIONAL MEETING

Formerly the National Association of Rail Passengers (NARP) the national Rail Passengers Association (RPA) is the umbrella organization for three regional passenger rail groups. The New England region consists of members from Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.

The New England Regional meeting was held in Boston on March 24th, and was attended by Wayne Davis, Bob Hall, Valarie Lamont, and Bruce Sleeper from TrainRiders. State representatives reported on new and continuing



The logo for the new Rail Passengers Association

initiatives, e.g. the proposed North-South Rail Link, and expansion of seasonal service to Rockland, Maine.

---

REPORT FROM THE  
**2018**  
**RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION (RPA)**  
**MEETING**

**(formerly the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAIL PASSENGERS — NARP)**

*The RPA annual meeting was held in Washington, DC, April 15-18, 2018, and was attended by TrainRiders' Chairman Wayne Davis and Counsel Bruce Sleeper.*

Prior to the national meeting, TrainRiders had learned that Amtrak's new President, Richard Anderson, had announced major changes to some of the national system:

- Elimination of discounts for veterans and AAA members
- Elimination of the Coastal Starlight parlor cars (and calling for them to be sold as scrap to boot)
- Elimination of in-train tour guides on some western trains
- Elimination of private cars and private charter runs
- Proposed elimination and scrapping of the dome car which has joined the Downeaster for the past two years to much acclaim and popularity
- Elimination, starting on June 1 of dining cars on the Lake Shore Limited between Boston and New York City to Chicago, as well as on the Capitol Limited between Washington, DC, and Chicago, leaving sleeping car passengers with "chilled" meals to eat in their compartments, and other passengers will have access only to café car for these overnight trains
- Closing of 10-15 ticket counters at stations across the country

By statute, starting in 2020 Amtrak will no longer be able to use federal funds to subsidize its meal services. This may be the reason for the elimination of dining cars on

the Lake Shore Limited and the Capitol Limited. The reasons for the other actions being taken here are less than clear, particularly

since Mr. Anderson did not see fit to discuss them with any interested parties, or even given interested parties advance warning, before announcing them. Whether intentional or not, these actions are direct and substantial threats to not only the Downeaster, but also to the existence of Amtrak's national system. Although some of the already announced steps may seem minor, taken together they have the ability to downgrade the passenger experience, which is one of Amtrak's major product pluses in comparison to other transportation modes. TrainRiders has already addressed some of these



**Dome car to be scrapped?**



**Elimination of dining cars?**

issues with the Maine and New Hampshire congressional delegations, and we hope to see a Congressional coalition take shape in the near future to ensure that Amtrak is protected as a viable and desirable mode of transportation throughout the country. TrainRiders urges you to take action as well, contacting your Senators and Representatives in Washington, as well as Amtrak itself, to make your displeasure known.

— Bruce Sleeper and Wayne Davis





A LOOK BACK TO 1990

## “MORE BANG OUT OF YOUR BUCK WITH RAIL”

*Spring, 1990* —“Rail service wins hands down on every front as a means of transportation — on the environmental scale, the energy scale and the economic scale. What I haven’t been able to figure out as a tax payer and a U.S. citizen is why more time hasn’t been devoted to improving that mode.” Wayne

Davis, Chairman of TrainRiders Northeast, the driving force behind the all volunteer citizen effort to restore passenger service between Portland to Boston. When New Hampshire based Bankeast, caught up in the recent real estate squeeze and phased out their Maine offices, Senior Vice-President Davis found himself out of a job. “I decided not

to sit home and moan and groan about it,” and with that the ex-banker turned a life-long passion for trains into a full-time crusade.

For years, Davis regularly rode the club car from Boston to New York and the 10:30 p.m. sleeper to Washington. Last April, shocked by the condition of an Amtrak club car en route from Boston to New York, he fired off a letter to Amtrak President Graham Claytor. “After

complaining about broken seats and the burned out reading lights on the lovely Amfleet material which was new just six years before, I added—do you have any suggestions on how we would go about connecting Maine to the national system? In one week I received a three page personal letter from Claytor. He suggested I



A young(er) Wayne Davis in 1990. (We all looked younger then)

contact the National Association of Rail Passengers in Washington.” Two days later Davis was standing in the national headquarters of NARP talking to Claytor who put him in touch with Henry Fern, an 82 year old gentleman from Wiscasset who heads up the Maine branch of NARP.

Next came a January trip to Washington to attend the NARP National Director’s meeting as Fern’s guest, a presentation on a possible passenger connection between Portland to Boston before the Portland Chamber of Commerce, and a five-part TV series on Channel 13 on bringing trains back to Maine. TrainRiders Northeast was formed “and it has been going like gangbusters ever since.” — by Nellie Blagden, Editor, Maine Rail News

## LEWISTON-AUBURN PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE PLAN PROJECT

TrainRiders receives many questions about the status of the Lewiston-Auburn Passenger Rail study. The New England Passenger Rail Authority recently provided a list of frequently asked questions and answers. More information is available at [www.nnepra.com/projects/lewistonauburn-passenger-rail-service-plan](http://www.nnepra.com/projects/lewistonauburn-passenger-rail-service-plan).

### What is this project about?

The project will evaluate the demand for a passenger rail expansion to the communities of Lewiston and Auburn. It will consider whether the passenger rail expansion should be a commuter-based connection to Portland or potentially a regional connection to Boston.

From that initial assessment of passenger rail demand, the project will then develop service plan options that closely align with the desire of the Lewiston and Auburn communities while also considering available rail corridors and what kind of service could be provided for the communities that would use the expanded passenger service. The project will also estimate potential costs to build and operate the service.

### When will this project be completed?

The initial evaluation is scheduled to be completed this Spring. From the initial assessment of passenger rail demand, the project will develop service options, including potential costs to build and operate the service. This latter evaluation is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year.

### When will this passenger rail expansion be built?

At the completion of this project, consultants selected to help evaluate the option will prepare a Service Implementation Plan, which will identify next steps, including a potential schedule.

### Where will the station be built?

A specific location for a Lewiston-Auburn station has not yet been identified.

### How much will a passenger rail expansion to Lewiston-Auburn cost?

This has not yet been determined. Order of magnitude costs will be determined based on the corridors considered for the expansion, including infrastructure needs. Track, bridge, grade crossing conditions, signal and communications systems, stations, and maintenance facilities will be factored in. ■

**WANTED: A MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR.** John Middleton, TrainRiders’ longtime volunteer Membership Director, announced his retirement recently. John is eager to train a new volunteer to continue the work of data activities related to membership, donations, and the annual meeting. If you would like to become an active part of TrainRiders/Northeast, contact Wayne Davis for further information today.

## Is the Host Program for You?

The TrainRiders Host Program is an organization of volunteer train hosts functioning under the direction of TrainRiders/Northeast. The Downeaster passenger rail service is sponsored by the State of Maine through the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) and is operated by Amtrak.

The purpose of the Host Program is to have volunteers serve as goodwill ambassadors; to promote patronage of the Downeaster; to assist passengers with information onboard the train along the route and at scheduled stops; to assist train crews in certain duties and to promote rail safety.

Acceptance as a train host is contingent upon preliminary screening by the Host Committee, satisfactory completion of training and completion of “qualifying” trips with a qualified host.

Annual participation in the TrainRiders Host Program requires payment of a membership fee and includes a Host ID badge, a quarterly newsletter and an annual meeting invitation. Duties include arriving at the boarding station 30 minutes before train departure, obtaining handouts, introducing yourself to the conductor, assistant conductor and passengers, regularly walking through the train providing information, handouts and assistance to passengers, observing for hazardous conditions, cleanliness, heating/cooling conditions in coaches and café car, assisting with keeping the train neat and orderly and returning completed trip reports to assist in evaluating the service.

**Station Hosts:** TrainRiders/Northeast currently has volunteer Station Hosts at several stations – Dover, NH, Wells and Saco, Maine. Volunteers greet travelers and visitors, act as goodwill ambassadors, instruct passengers on the use of Quik-Trac ticket machines, hand out literature and schedules and answer questions about



## Dover and Exeter Clean-up

Saturday, May 3, 2018, was Dover and Exeter (NH) Clean-up Day and TrainRiders’ board members Steve Piper and Bob Hall were there to lend a hand. Over 150 community volunteers turned out to clean and spread mulch at 13 sites, including the Dover Train Station.



local businesses, tourist sites, etc.

These are great opportunities to spend time promoting public transportation and our popular Downeaster service.

If you are interested and would like to learn more about the Train Host or Station Host Programs, email TrainRiders/Northeast at [info@trainridersne.org](mailto:info@trainridersne.org) (mail to: [info@trainridersne.org](mailto:info@trainridersne.org)). We’d love to have you join the team!

## Stop, Look & Listen – The Long-Awaited Passenger Information Display System is Up and Running in Saco

Time	No. Train	To	Status	Gate/Track
7:05p	685 Downeaster	Brunswick	Last Call	1
8:25p	687 Downeaster	Brunswick	On Time	1
8:27p	689 Downeaster	Portland	On Time	1
8:42p	680 Downeaster	Boston North Station	On Time	1
8:44p	682 Downeaster	Boston North Station	On Time	1
11:10p	681 Downeaster	Portland	On Time	1

Attention please. This is the last call for Amtrak Downeaster Train 685 en route to Brunswick, with intermediate stops. Passengers should proceed to Track 1. Please remove any travel

Thursday April 5, 2018

The Saco station now sounds like Grand Central Station. We welcome this helpful new technology—improving the passenger’s experience as they await “America’s Favorite Train.” You can listen to an announcement at our website: [www.trainridersne.org](http://www.trainridersne.org)

Some projects take longer than expected. When NNEPRA’s Passenger Services Manager Brian Beeler joined the state agency, he was given the “opportunity” to shepherd to completion of the Passenger Information Display System for the Downeaster stops in Maine. Little did he know that it would require eight years to see it finally implemented. In fact, the effort was already “in progress” prior to his arrival. Constant Amtrak reorganizations, technology improvements and vendor changes caused the project to stretch on for more

than a decade.

It’s now up and running in Saco. Portland and Wells are next. The Downeaster trains are listed in order of arrival at the local station and any delays are posted as well. A pleasant female voice announces the arrival and final boarding call of the scheduled train, the text of which is seen on the display.

NNEPRA can also program any unanticipated delays into the system so passengers awaiting their trains will not longer be left in the dark.

– William Lord, TRN Board Member

**THE TRAINRIDER**

Box 4869, Downtown Station  
Portland, Maine 04112

(207) TRY-RAIL (879-7245)

Return Service  
Requested

**Membership, Donations, Bequests**

Join TrainRiders/Northeast or renew a membership by filling out this form and mailing it to TrainRiders/Northeast, Box 4869, Portland, ME 04112-4869, or use our website at [www.trainridersne.org](http://www.trainridersne.org)

- Renew a membership
- I'd like to become a new member

Please check a membership category:

- \$15.00 Student Member (with proof)
- \$45.00 Individual Member
- \$65.00 Family Member
- \$110.00 Sponsoring Member
- \$250.00 Supporting Member
- \$500.00 Endorsing Member
- \$1000.00 Sustaining Member
- Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ membership(s)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

**Chairman's Report** *continued from Page 1—*

- 1. In April, TrainRiders met with the Congressional delegations from Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts to alert them to the issues and has continued to maintain regular contact with them to resolve these problems;**
- 2. Supported a cooperative letter proposed by the Southern Rail Commission for Maine's two Senators and any other US Senators concerned with these issues;**
- 3. Strongly supported with the American Association of Private Railroad Car Owners the carrying of special trains and private railroad cars such as Amtrak's Dome Car tour across the country, an activity which generates revenue for Amtrak and is also a tremendous marketing tool for our Downeaster.**

Make no mistake, the Downeaster as well as the rest of the Amtrak system is in great danger right now, for the first time weakened not by attacks of outsiders, but, instead, by the actions of Amtrak itself. TrainRiders will, by itself and working with many others, continue to advocate for the Downeaster and a National Passenger Rail System, and we hope that this will be a partnership and cooperation with Amtrak as it has been for the past 29 years. We continue to need the support of our greatest asset, our members, in achieving these goals which we all share. —WD

*Remember Us*

*Leave your family a better choice for transportation in the future. A wonderful way to "Change the Way the Northeast Travels" is to leave a gift to TrainRidersNortheast.*



**TrainRiders Northeast Board of Directors**

Wayne Davis ME (Chair)	Andrew Hyland ME (Vice Chair)	George O'Keefe, Jr. (Executive Director)
Don Briselden (at large)	Robert Hall NH	James Oikle ME
Elizabeth Buckley ME	Valarie Lamont ME	George O'Keefe, Jr. ME
Mike Duprey (at large)	William Lord ME	Christopher Parker VT
Ellen Fogg ME	Janet Brown CA (at large)	Stephen Piper NH
		Nicholas Catoggio MA
		Robert Rodman (at large)
		Paula Boyer Rougny (at large)
		Fred Smith MA
		F. Bruce Sleeper (Clerk/Counsel)