

TRAINRIDER

The Newsletter of TrainRiders/Northeast



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

submitted by Wayne E. Davis

Meeters and Greeters

Closer and closer to train time! Very soon we'll be looking for "Meeters and Greeters" for the new Portland/Dover/Boston trains. We envision having volunteer TNE members acting as "hosts" on some of the trains. Once the train schedule is determined, we'll work out a schedule for volunteers to "adopt a train." For instance, one might make a 10 AM run every Tuesday—down to and back from Boston or from Boston to Portland and return, etc. This will take people who are customer oriented and who enjoy riding on trains to assure that everything runs smoothly, to answer questions and to be generally helpful to the passengers and the crew. We want to do everything possible to assure that the service is the best that it can possibly be. Once the program is assembled, we'll do a special mailing to all of our members asking those interested to contact us. In the meantime, give it some thought. ■

NATIONAL RAIL NEWS

AMTRAK BEGINS ACELA SERVICE TO BOSTON

The unheralded arrival in Boston of Northeast Direct Train 12, the mail train, on Friday, January 28, 2000, marked the beginning of electrically powered service east of New Haven. It was the first revenue train to travel behind electric power all the way from Washington. A diesel locomotive was added at New Haven in case of trouble with the newly energized catenary; it wasn't needed.

Acela Regional Service, using electric power and extensively refurbished Amfleet equipment, began on Monday, January 31st with the 5:00 am departure of Train 130 from Washington and the 6:15 am departure of Train 131 from Boston. Train 132 leaves Washington at 1:10 pm while Train 133 departs Boston at 5:00 pm. Scheduled time between Boston and NYC (Penn Station) is just under four hours.

Wayne Davis and your editor joined the throng at Boston's South Station on January 31st for the Acela Regional Celebration Train. Following speeches and a buffet breakfast at the station, the train departed behind two electric "motors" for Back Bay, where additional passengers were boarded. At Route 128, the new service and the brand spanking new station were dedicated by a high school band and brief speeches. The trip

from Rte. 128 to Providence was uneventful, except for a brief interruption in power as the two motors accelerated and tripped an overload at a nearby substation. Providence had the biggest celebration, other than Boston, and the train then proceeded to New London, where Wayne and I left the train to await our connecting train back to South Station.

The refurbished cars were tastefully done



Jonathan Carter, Wayne Davis, Kevin Sullivan and Mike Murray aboard the inaugural Acela Regional Train.

and rode quietly and smoothly over newly rebuilt tracks. Since not all sections of the catenary are completed, the train switched from one track to the other, using 80 mph crossovers, a smooth move barely detectable to passengers. Further reductions in travel time await completion of the overhead catenary and FRA certification of 110 mph operation east of New Haven.

— *Maine Sunday Telegram*, January 30, 2000;
Railpace Newsmagazine, March 2000; *Trains*, April 2000

CAPITAL BILL COULD FUND HIGH SPEED RAIL

Representative Amo Houghton (R-NY), a senior member of the Ways and Means Committee, and Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN), the ranking Democrat on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, introduced H.R. 3700, "The High-Speed Rail Investment Act." Co-sponsored by 15 House members, this bill is the House companion to S. 1900 introduced in November 1999 by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and co-sponsored by 33 senators from both parties.

Amtrak President George Warrington said, "...I think American travelers are going to thank (Representatives Houghton and Oberstar) when high-speed rail begins to loosen the grip of transportation gridlock in various regions of the country...This creative, bipartisan legislation demonstrates that rail travel is finally being broadly recognized around the country as an efficient, cost-effective alternative to congested highways and airports."

Amtrak Vice-Chairman Gov. Michael Dukakis said, "This year we will usher in America's rail renaissance with the introduction of Acela Express in the Northeast. This bill will help speed the delivery of high-speed rail service to other corridors nationwide."

—*Friends of Amtrak Update*, March 20, 2000

HEARTLAND FLYER AMTRAK SUCCESS IN OKLAHOMA

The Heartland Flyer Coalition reported its February 15th meeting that the train was 100% on time in January. Amtrak's new *Heartland Flyer* carried 45,648 passengers between June 15, 1999, and January 31, 2000. The station at Norman, OK, has had a \$480,000 renovation contract approved by the city council. Oklahoma City has prepared plans for renovation of its station. Other stations have renovations completed or in the planning stages. Ft. Worth, TX, has set aside \$2.5 million to renovate the former Santa Fe Ry. station.

—*Rail Travel News*, February 16, 2000

REGIONAL RAIL

BOSTON-PORTLAND CONSTRUCTION—PROGRESS REPORT

Guilford Rail System maintenance crews began the new construction season the week of March 12, 2000.

A two mile runaround track, allowing passenger trains to bypass Rigby Yard in South Portland, is about half completed. All track and signal work are to be completed by December of this year. The reconstructed rail line will be one of the best Amtrak operates over in the U.S.

Governor King's \$280 million supplemental budget contains \$10.5 million to extend passenger rail service beyond Portland. Much of this money would go to construct a new trestle across the entrance to Back Cove to connect the former Union Branch with the St. Lawrence & Atlantic in Deering. A new intermodal terminal would be located adjacent to I-295 in Portland's Bayside section. Planning is continuing for a terminal at Sewall Street to contain a layover facility for Amtrak trains from Boston and would be used even if the new station is built in Bayside.

In Wells, the Maine Turnpike Authority has almost completed land acquisition for the Wells Intermodal terminal. It will be located directly across from Exit

2 on Routes 9/109, just west of the turnpike. The facility will occupy about 23 acres of land. The site plan will go to the Wells Planning Board for review shortly.

At the site of the Saco station, the city has purchased about two acres of land and has plans to acquire another two acres. Engineering work is underway. 180 parking spaces are anticipated. The Biddeford-Saco Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Corporation are anticipated as tenants of the building and may manage the station. A budget of about \$1.5 to \$1.8 million is projected, with about \$800,000 in federal funds.

Meanwhile, Amtrak shops in Beech Grove, Indiana, are converting three former F40PH locomotives to cab-baggage cars for Boston-Portland service. Control cabs provide additional baggage space and better protection for crews in the event of an accident.

—Mike Murray, Director, NNEPRA, presentation at Maine Rail Group meeting, Brunswick, March 11, 2000;

Personal communication, John D. Roberts, Right of Way Manager, Maine Turnpike Authority, March 21;

Personal communication, Peter Morelli, Economic Development Director, Saco, March 21;

The 470, February 2000;

Railpace Newsmagazine, February 2000

MBTA ACTIVITIES

Construction of stations at Ashland, Southborough and Westborough on the Boston/Worcester line have been delayed by cost over-runs on Boston's "Big Dig." The North Grafton station opened on February 26, 2000. Construction is underway on the relocated Framingham station, which is being moved 700 feet west to avoid blocking a busy grade crossing in the downtown.

Worcester city officials are asking the MBTA to make good on promised increases in service. They want ten trains each way per weekday, instead of the five they have had since service was re-established in 1994. The MBTA claims the service will not be expanded until the sta-

tions, mentioned above, are constructed.

The new Route 128 station, shared with Amtrak, officially opened on January 31, 2000. Two 1,050 foot long high-level platforms reached by elevators and escalators from the enclosed pedestrian bridge over the tracks, currently serve two tracks. Four tracks are planned for the future, once a new bridge is constructed for Route 128 over tracks north of the station. The 27,000 square foot station is attached to a 2,700 car parking garage with 550 spaces dedicated to long-term Amtrak parking.

—*Railpace Newsmagazine*, January, March 2000;
Northeast Corridor on Track, Amtrak, January 28, 2000;

personal communication, MBTA offices,
March 20, 2000

TRAINRIDER ACTIVITIES

Much of TrainRiders/Northeast's activities are carried out by our Chairman, Wayne E. Davis, who has devoted twelve years to the cause of bringing rail passenger service back to northern New England. TrainRiders has been effective in turning the attention of state and national leaders to the need for rail passenger transportation, often by simply reminding them, again and again, that the public needs more than highways and airlines for some of its travels. Yet, hardly a week goes by that does not bring out yet another anti-rail letter to the editor, talk show host or editorial position by various print media. However, they often respond positively to TrainRiders' positions and many are now either unopposed or genuinely supportive of rail passenger service.

Thus, it must have been pleasing for Wayne to listen to speaker after speaker at the recent Maine Rail Group annual meeting in Brunswick, ME, outline railroad developments which, whether passenger-related or not, bode well for the future of railroads.

Richard Willy, Vice President, Marketing, Guilford Rail Systems, spoke of increased freight service to the Maine Coast Railroad, of close cooperation with CSX and of recent inquiries to move potatoes by rail from northern Maine to New York City. Clearly, the improvement being carried out on their main line between the New Hampshire/Massachusetts border and Portland to allow passenger service place Guilford in a better position to compete for freight traffic.

David Dufault of CSX Transporta-

tion, who recently moved to Maine to forward CSX's interests here, spoke of massive investments in physical improvements following the takeover of part of Conrail's network. They are also improving car utilization and working with local economic development organizations to foster rail-served industries, either on-line or served by intermodal terminals. While both CSX and Norfolk Southern have experienced difficulties following their takeover of Conrail, which have adversely affected Amtrak's services over their lines, many of the planned improvements will ultimately allow better passenger service to co-exist with improved freight service.

Rob Elder, Maine DOT's Director of Freight Transportation, outlined the state's participation in three intermodal freight terminals and cited the safety benefits of getting more trucks off the highways. Maine highways now carry 89% of freight, one of the highest rates in the U.S. The 1999 transportation bond issue was the first ever in Maine with more state money for railroads than for highways! A short line operator is being sought for the Calais Branch, a part of which is to be improved for passenger service.

Michael Murray, Executive Director, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, recounted recent progress in reconstructing the rail line between Portland and Massachusetts.

Ron Roy, MDOT's Director of Passenger Transportation, ran through a long list of recent activities including

plans for the new passenger station in Portland, a survey underway to determine the market for weekend service between Montreal (3 million population) and Old Orchard Beach, the ongoing planning for a rail-ship terminal in Rockland (forming a possible link between the Montreal market and Acadia National Park) and the planning for intermodal passenger terminals at Auburn-Lewiston Airport, Portland and Bangor International Airport. The latter would be joined by rail to Hancock County Airport in Trenton, near Ellsworth, where Acadia National Park (ANP) is considering a new Visitors' Center as part of the intermodal terminal. He cited the enormous success of the ANP propane-powered buses which, in their first year (1999), with seven buses, carried 140,000 riders. Seventeen buses are on order for 2000.

Donald Gerrish, Brunswick Town Manager, reported that the town has purchased land for a station, in anticipation of the extension of Amtrak service beyond Portland.

Wayne's brief remarks praised those political leaders who have seen the value in passenger rail transportation, often changing long-held anti-rail positions. He noted John Melrose, MDOT Commissioner, who has strongly advocated balance among all modes of transportation, for his wide-ranging vision regarding the future of rail in Maine.

So, when people ask what TrainRiders is doing, we can say it is doing its usual thing, and doing it very well, thank you! ■

REGIONAL RAIL NEWS

RHODE ISLAND RAIL PROGRESS

The Acela Regional Celebration Train was warmly greeted on January 31, 2000, with a well-attended reception in the Providence Station. Speakers included Governor Almond, Providence Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., and Amtrak Chairman Michael Dukakis, former Governor of Massachusetts. Mayor Cianci, while noting

that the new Acela was not the first high speed train to operate through Providence, presented a plaque to Arthur Vadnais, of Smithfield, RI, a former mechanic on the *Comet*, which ran between Boston and Providence in the 1930s at up to 110 mph.

Moving at considerably less speed, the

City of Warwick's plans for a new station connected with T.F. Green Airport by a peplemover were leaked to the *Providence Journal*, which published them on February 29th. Three potential development teams presented proposals for the

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...RHODE ISLAND RAIL PROGRESS

(continued from page 3)

70-acre site astride the Amtrak main line. Two plans had the Warwick City Hall relocated to the site, a move quickly ruled out by the city administration. The public portions of the developments, without city hall, ranged between \$20 and \$113 million, not including purchase of the land. The 1,400 foot enclosed horizontal sidewalk connecting the airport and the station are anticipated to cost about \$28 million, leaving only \$4 million for the proposed station. The public strongly favors the moving sidewalk instead of a "horizontal elevator." The planning effort may be going "back to the drawing board."

—The Providence Journal,

February 8, 29, 2000;

The Providence Sunday Journal,

March 5, 2000;

Warwick Beacon, March 2, 2000

VERMONT RAIL NEWS

The Vermont Agency of Transportation and Guilford Rail Services (GRS) signed an agreement February 25, 2000, to use GRS tracks between Schenectady, NY, and Hoosick Jct., NY, in order to re-route the *Ethan Allen Express* via North Bennington and Manchester on its way to Rutland. The route is expected to save about 30 minutes travel time as compared with the current *Ethan Allen Express* via Whitehall, NY. Amtrak is preparing a capital improvement plan for the route, due in August 2000. Governor Howard Dean, while supportive of the project, indicated that it must compete with other rail projects in Vermont's capital budget. If all improvements are completed, the re-route could occur by winter 2000-2001. A January 11th vote by the budget committee of the Vermont House of Representatives approved \$825,000 to purchase relay rail and repair bridges to upgrade the state-owned Vermont Railway between Bennington and the New York State line.

The Vermont Agency of Transportation has received indications of interest

from six railroads to operate the White River Jct. to Wells River line purchased from Guilford Rail Systems in December 1999. The Northern Vermont Railroad, a subsidiary of the Bangor and Aroostook, itself a subsidiary of Iron Road Railways of Alexandria, VA, has proposed what is essentially an extension of its service between Montreal and Wells River. In their February 15th presentation to the Vermont Legislature, they proposed operating passenger service between White River Jct. and Montreal without state subsidy. This could replace the Amtrak operated *Vermont*, at least north of White River Jct., and would reconnect that service with Montreal, a link severed in 1995 when Amtrak discontinued the *Montrealer*. The *Vermont*, hampered by a backup move and longer route via Palmer, MA, has seen a slight decline in ridership during the last three years. It operates to St. Albans, VT, with bus connections to Montreal.

Green Mountain Railroad, part of the Vermont Rail System, has also submitted a proposal to operate the line, though without passenger trains other than for excursions. Green Mountain has trackage rights to operate over the Connecticut River line between White River Jct. and Bellows Falls. Green Mountain, named as interim operator, has rehabilitated and re-opened the track from White River Jct. to Wells River and is prepared to operate it for freight during March. The Boston & Maine, the line's former owner, also planned to submit an operating proposal by the March 14, 2000, deadline.

Both Burlington and Rutland want the rail freight yards in their cities relocated. The Burlington yard occupies prime lakefront real estate. A proposed new yard in Rutland, on a 77-acre state-owned site, is estimated to cost \$35 million, an amount the Vermont Railway System feels it cannot afford. If the yard is constructed, a combination of public and private financing is anticipated.

—Valley News, February 26, March 13, 2000;

Rail Travel News, January 16, February 16, 2000;

Railpace Newsmagazine, March 2000

TRAIN RIDES

It has been some time since we have had a train ride featured in this column. Perhaps a look at Maine's past will show some of the potential available in a state which has an extensive rail network suitable for operation of passenger trains. The first installment of the itinerary described the trip from Portland to Belfast, via Bath and Rockland. The second installment described the trip from Belfast to Calais, via Eastport. The following is from the Portland Board of Trade's second tour of Maine, held in 1912:

Portland Board of Trade's 1000 Mile Tour of Maine

"This year the tour will embrace the coast cities and towns along the Knox and Lincoln and Washington county railroads taking in Bath, Thomaston, Rockland, Waldoboro, Newcastle and Damariscotta, Wiscasset, Belfast, Ellsworth, Cherryfield, Machias, Eastport, Ayer's Junction, Calais and immediate points, thence into the province of New Brunswick going as far as St. John and home to Portland by way of Vanceboro.

THE ITINERARY

"Saturday, May 25 — Leave Calais 12 midnight (sleeping car berths ready for occupancy 9 p.m.). Train delivered to Canadian Pacific railway in Calais yard. Crosses bounding river to St. Stephen, N.B., now thirty-four miles to the main line of the Canadian Pacific railway at McAdam Junction. Total

mileage Calais to St. John, N.B., 119 miles. Arrive St. John, N.B., 6 a.m. (5 a.m. our time), train parked at station. Breakfast served in dining car, 6 to 8 a.m. (5 to 7 a.m. our time). Spend day at St. John, N.B. Chief commercial city of the Province of New Brunswick. Population 42,363.

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NEW HAMPSHIRE REPORT

Wayne Davis attended a meeting of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission and spoke of various rail-related developments which could affect the Nashua region. The state has voted money for an engineering study of an extension of MBTA's Lowell commuter rail service to Nashua.

Guilford Rail System construction crews have already started work on the line in New Hampshire. Much cleanup of used railroad ties, old rail and other construction debris has greatly improved the looks of the right of way near Exeter.

The Claremont Concord Railroad has been named as the operator of the newly state-purchased trackage connecting White River Jct., VT, with Lebanon, NH. This approximately three mile section is a portion of the former Northern line between Concord and White River Jct. The Northern once formed part of a through route between Boston and Montreal.

—Robert Hall, Board Meeting, March 16, 2000;
Railpace Newsmagazine, March 2000

MAINE TRANSPORTATION NEWS

Rails Along the Kennebec

Despite recent anti-rail letters and op-ed pieces which have been appearing in the *Kennebec Journal*, freight trains have once again returned to the east side of the Kennebec River. On February 7th, following removal of gravel over the tracks at a parking lot near the site of the Augusta station and repairs to the bridge over the river, industries on the city's east side were again being offered rail service. Cars are interchanged with Guilford Rail System at Brunswick five days per week and hauled to Augusta by the Maine Coast Railroad. The five day per week interchange is anticipated to make rail more attractive to freight customers along the Maine Coast Railroad.

Newton Hinkley, General Manager and Vice President of Maine Coast Railroad, said he would be pleased to offer commuter service on the line to Augusta using the same crew that operates the freight trains. A former Long Island Rail Road commuter coach, seating 123 passengers, has been received by the railroad; two more have been purchased. Ron Roy, Director, Passenger Transport, MDOT, said MDOT has a

survey underway to determine the market for Augusta area rail commuters.

—Annual Meeting, Down East Rail/Maine Rail Group, Brunswick, ME, March 11, 2000

Rockland Branch Developments

The Maine Department of Transportation expects contracts for the rehabilitation of the Carlton Bridge, which now carries U.S. Route One and the Maine Coast Railroad between Bath and Woolwich, to go to bid this summer. Plans anticipate removal of the highway from the span once the new four lane highway bridge over the Kennebec is completed, expected to be by Memorial Day 2000. The lift span will then remain in the "up" position except when trains are due, thereby permitting vessels to travel the Kennebec limited only by the height of the new bridge.

—George Poirier, FHWA, Maine Rail Group meeting, Brunswick, ME, March 11, 2000

NORTH OF THE BORDER

Transport 2000, the Canadian equivalent to the National Association of Railroad Passengers, is continuing efforts to restore regular passenger service to Cape Breton Island and on the route of the *Atlantic Limited* between St. John and Fredericton, N.B., through Maine points to Montreal. Following successful test trains on October 5 and 12, 1999, tourist trains will operate between Halifax, N.S., and Sydney on Cape Breton between May 9 and October 18, 2000.

In Gaspé, federal and provincial governments are looking with favor on subsidizing the Baie des Chaleurs Railway, operator of the publicly owned Chemin de Fer de la Gaspésie. The closure of the Gaspésie Paper Mill in October 1999, along with the cessation of mining at a copper mine near Gaspé, has removed virtually all freight east of New Carlisle. Regional economic leaders fear that without the railway any meaningful industrial development will not occur.

—*Atlantic Bulletin*, Transport 2000, March 2000;
Railpace Newsmagazine, March 2000

...Train Rides (continued from page 4)

In many respects resembles our own city of Portland. Great trade center and port for the Maritime Provinces. (Luncheon served in dining car 12 noon to 2 p.m.). Leave St. John, N.B., 6 p.m. Atlantic time (5 p.m. our time). (Dinner served in dining car). Pass Vanceboro, Maine, 9 p.m. (our time). Pass Bangor 12 midnight. Arrive Portland 4 a.m. Cars may be occupied until 8 a.m.

"The party, numbering eighty people, will travel in a solid vestibule train drawn by a powerful ten wheel passenger locomotive built by Schenectady Company (No.276). The train is made up of three sleeping cars, one diner and a combination smoker and baggage car.

"The three sleeping cars furnished by the Pullman Company will be of the most modern type and electrically lighted throughout, and with electric berth lights. Maine Central railroad dining car 1200, which will perform every service in the special, was built by the Pullman

Company for the M.C.R.R. It is seventy-two feet long and is exceptionally high grade in every respect and has been newly refitted. Like the sleeping cars this dining car is electrically lighted, its center lights being of combined gas and electric fixtures, while the side lights for each table are fitted for electricity only. All the lights are shaded which gives a beautiful effect to the interior of the car. The car is finished throughout in South American Vermillion wood, and carries electric fans with which the air can be changed and cooled rapidly. The Board of Trade special when it pulls out of the Portland Union Station, and in fact upon every mile of the coming journey, will present an appearance most creditable, while it will furnish to the participants of the tour the highest degree of comfort and elegance in railroad travel."

Members are invited to submit articles on their train rides, to share their experiences with others. Remember, there are many who have little idea what it is like to travel by train.

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THE MAN WHO WILL BE IN CHARGE

If anybody should ask you "Who's in charge of running Amtrak trains in our corner of America?" tell him **STAN BAGLEY**. He's the man responsible for Amtrak's Northeast Corridor business and operations, and that will soon include Amtrak service between Boston and Portland.

Twenty-five years with Amtrak, Mr. Bagley is in charge of planning and policy, finance, commercial development, engineering, marketing and communications, and the police department for the national Amtrak system. His workforce of more than 12,000 employees already serves nearly 13 million customers annually and controls the safe and on-time operation of 17,000 trains on the Corridor.

He was appointed President of the Northeast Corridor (NEC) in 1999, after having been Acting President from 1997. Under his leadership, the Corridor experi-



enced an unprecedented ridership increase of seven percent and a similar gain in ticket revenues. The Metroliner and other lines

either set new ridership records or realized significant ridership growth. The NEC topped its previous year's customer satisfaction rating and decreased injuries by 15 percent.

Launch of the first ever high-speed rail service in the U.S. is being developed under Mr. Bagley's supervision. He helped conceive and now leads the Transportation 2000 initiative, which entails manufacturing 20 new trainsets, massive infrastructure improvements, new station construction and enhancements, and new service standards to ensure every passenger a world-class travel experience.

TrainRiders is happy knowing Mr. Bagley will be in charge of our new Boston-Portland service (and beyond!). We welcome him, and look forward to a long and successful relationship.