

# TRAINRIDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF **TRAINRIDERS/NORTHEAST**



## From the Chairman's pen...

By now, most everyone who has followed our 14 year odyssey is aware that the first of our original goals—Amtrak service between Portland, Dover, and Boston—is not just operational at last, but it has exceeded all original projections for ridership and income. Our host program receives praise from passengers and Amtrak train crews alike, and the service has a remarkable on-time record. (We need MORE TRAIN HOSTS). For those who think we're just resting on our laurels, let me assure you that we are working with state and federal officials to not only improve the existing service, but to extend and expand passenger rail service as proposed in our original goals set forth in 1989. At this moment the environmental assessment review is in process for the extension of the existing Amtrak service to Freeport and Brunswick, through Yarmouth. (Montreal, here we come!) We anticipate completion no later than early next year. The Maine DOT has added the development of a wye to the environmental assessment which would connect the present Portland Terminal track on the Mountain Division to the Union Branch, eliminating the need for a backup move for trains proceeding from the Portland Terminal to Brunswick or Auburn. Recently, the Libra Foundation completed a most handsomely landscaped parking facility on Presumpscot Street in Portland adjacent to the St. Lawrence and Atlantic tracks in anticipation of the passenger rail service extension.

The Rockland division track upgrade between Brunswick and Rockland, which

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## AMTRAK IS SPARED AGAIN, BUT HOW LONG THIS TIME?



WHILE NEARLY \$2 TRILLION FROM US TAXPAYERS HAS BEEN LAVISHED ON HIGHWAYS AND AVIATION since Amtrak was created 31 years ago, the nation's passenger railroad found itself in a familiar position this summer—fighting for survival.

Blessed with little more than a survival-level budget throughout its history from the US Congress and seven presidential administrations, Amtrak has limped from one crisis to another.

The difference this time is that Amtrak has at its controls a chief executive officer who says what he means and does what he says. President and CEO **David Gunn** bluntly told Congress and the Bush Administration to give him a budget by Independence Day or he would shut down the Amtrak system. ...Suddenly, members of Congress and the Bush Administration...scrambled to come up with a last-minute funding package. But the package remains incomplete.

Transportation Secretary **Norman Mineta**, who initially tried to tie an Amtrak rescue package to a de facto elimination of long-distance passenger trains...agreed to give Amtrak a \$100 million federal loan with few strings attached. The only conditions are those which Mr. Gunn has already agreed to implement, including greater scrutiny by federal watchdogs of Amtrak's finances—something that Mr. Gunn's predecessor George Warrington was unwilling to do.

That still left Amtrak \$100 million short of being able to run its trains past mid-August to the close of the fiscal year at the end of September. As part of the deal between Amtrak and Secretary Mineta, Congress would have to decide on how best to close the \$100 million gap: special appropriation, another loan, or a loan guarantee. Initial discussions...suggest this could be mired in politics.

Leaders of the Democrat-controlled Senate support both halves of the Amtrak rescue package, as well as a large federal spending bill. But leaders of the Republican-controlled House of Representatives oppose the large federal spending bill and suggested that it be pared down or else the House won't approve the Amtrak rescue package. While it's nice to see that Amtrak apparently has become so important to become a political bargaining chip, this is an extremely risky move.

—Ohio Passenger Rail News, Summer 2002



## HOW MUCH MONEY DOES IT TAKE TO RUN A RAILROAD?

**Q:** Why should the government subsidize Amtrak?

**A:** No passenger operation in this country today, even the airlines—except maybe for Southwest—covers capital costs. They certainly don't pay for the airports and all that stuff.

You have this desire to say we have to do what the airlines can't do, operate without a subsidy. Highways are even more subsidized, although a lot of it's hidden. Look at Manhattan. It's the most valuable real estate in North America, and yet what percent of it is paved over for the automobile which they don't pay for? It's an incredible subsidy. The problem is, we are a creation of the federal government. When they set it up, we were supposed to be off subsidies in three years. It's nuts. I knew it was nuts then. We have this absolutely Jekyll-and-Hyde situation, where you go up on the Hill for support you need to run trains. What you get is 50 cents of support and it costs you a dollar.

**Q:** Would cutting the long-distance trains help?

**A:** Mathematically, there is no way you can take this company, carve it up, and get the service you require. The

long-distance trains don't need that much capital, but the corridor needs lots of capital.

You can't be all things to all people. We need national support for any part of the system, even the Northeast Corridor. There's no way you're going to get money out of Congress for the Northeast Corridor if you don't have broad-based support in other areas.

**Q:** The Amtrak Reform Council, the advisory group established by Congress, raised the idea of competing companies to run trains, and giving ownership of the Northeast Corridor to a separate entity. Others have talked about high-speed rail corridors in the Midwest run by new companies. Would that work?

**A:** This business of saying someone else is going to run the Midwest corridors—where are these people going to come from? It's going to be another one of these situations where you're starting from scratch. This isn't a new business. There are certain skills you need to run it. We have those skills and do a pretty good job at it.

—Excerpted from Five Questions for David L. Gunn, *New York Times*, June 16.

**"It's nuts. You get 50 cents of support and it costs you a dollar."**

## BUSH ADMINISTRATION APPEARS TO SEEK AMTRAK'S DEMISE

CRITICS SUCH AS RUSH LIMBAUGH are wrong when they characterize Amtrak's request for a \$200 million emergency loan as just another bailout. United Airlines is requesting nearly \$2 billion in an emergency loan. US Airways says it may go bankrupt without a \$1 billion federal loan. (Note: In August, US Airways did go bankrupt.)

When Congress in 1997 passed the Amtrak Reform Act, which required Amtrak to become self-sufficient within five years—something the government has never required of airports or highways—it allocated \$5 billion to help Amtrak achieve that goal. Unfortunately, Congress stifled Amtrak by providing only half that amount.

It has been reported that as a condition for the loan, the Bush Administration, through Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, demanded that Amtrak dismantle its national route structure—trains that serve the majority of this country. Amtrak instead should concentrate on limited corridor operations between big cities.

To me this means that the Bush Administration appears more interested in destroying Amtrak.

Imagine what our airports and highways would be like if the federal government provided only table scraps. This year alone, aviation is receiving \$40 billion—more than Amtrak received in 31 years.

I'm thankful Amtrak has a new CEO, David Gunn, who...has a strong record of turning around transit systems and other organizations. Congress should allow him to make reforms without trying to sabotage our important national rail passenger system.

—USA Today, July 4, written by Doug Ohlmeier, vice president Missouri-Kansas Rail Passenger Coalition, Lawrence, Kansas

## THE ACELA NEWS AND BLUES



A harbinger of the news that hit headlines on August 16, when Amtrak pulled 20% of its Acela runs, came on August 6 when the *Washington Post* wrote that the Acela was rapidly becoming a disappointment.

Not only had the promising high-speed train broken down so often since the delivery of the first train sets in 2000, but disputes between Amtrak and the manufacturer became so heated that the two are now suing each other in federal court.

Despite the Acela's popularity with travelers—it now carries more New York/Washington passengers than Delta

and US Airways shuttles combined—problems spiked in July with an average of one cancellation or en-route mechanical breakdown every day.

In early August, Amtrak President David L. Gunn said he would never order another Acela Express, which is manufactured by a consortium of Bombardier Transportation of Montreal and Alstom of Paris. Amtrak began considering temporarily replacing some Acela sets with Metroliners, which are slightly slower and older but have a much better on-time record.

The next generation of train, according to the *Post*, was more likely to be a modified version of some already suc-

cessful European high-speed train.

The Acela was supposed to go into service several years ago and bring in an extra \$180 million yearly to help Amtrak meet a congressional mandate to become "operationally self-sufficient" by the end of 2003, a requirement that has since been abandoned. But the trains saw repeated delays and developmental problems. In a rush to get the trains on line (the first one arrived more

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included over \$30 million worth of continuously welded rail, new ballast and improved crossings, is scheduled for completion by November. While the current freight service operator will continue to provide such service until next summer, the DOT is currently developing an RFP (Request for Proposals) for future operations which is anticipated to be issued by the first of the new year.

The DOT recently finalized the contracts for the second phase of the Bangor to Trenton corridor study (Mt. Desert Island and Acadia National Park will benefit greatly from this one!). The project is, however, complex and will most likely take a year and a half to complete. At the same time, the environmental assessments for the development of the Auburn intermodal facility and the waterfront intermodal facility in Rockland have been contracted.

Stick with us. We want the Downeaster to go faster (still no word from the STB on the request for 80 mph—"soon" is what we're told by officials). Since TNE was instrumental in having the Portland Dover Boston line designated a "high-speed rail line" by the FTA, we're anxiously awaiting word about the steps to be taken to achieve such speed (90 mph or higher). Unfortunately, space does not permit the listing of the multiple rail activities taking place right now with the DOT and the Rail Authority, but you'll be pleased.

Thank you for your continued support—without it we could not do what we do. Together we CAN make a difference and change the way New England travels.

—WJ

## ...ACELA (continued from page 2)

than a year past and already extended deadline), the manufacturer made modifications to each train set to solve the latest problem, meaning that none of the 18 sets delivered to Amtrak is the same as any other. This complicates maintenance and troubleshooting.

Gunn said the problems are "not simply a matter of tweaking." He said Amtrak and the manufacturers have identified more than 200 modifications to the original design, and most of the train sets will have to go into shops for lengthy periods. ■

## Paws Aboard!

It was just another day's work when puppies Genoa, Gibson, Mesquite and O'Hare joined old pro Tyne for a recent Downeaster ride up the coast.

The five dogs belong to Canine Companions for Independence (CCI), a non-profit organization that enriches the lives of persons with disabilities by providing highly trained assistance dogs. Their golden and Labrador retrievers turn on lights, pick up keys, open doors and perform other tasks.

Easily identified by their yellow and blue vests, the well-behaved dogs may be found working with their trainers throughout the United States. The adventure begins when volunteers foster the pups and educate them about the human world for about a year. Training includes trips to the supermarket, out to eat, to the bank, to the workplace and beyond.

One of the foster parents told us that riding the train was a great chance for the pups to learn about commuting by train. "You never know what the future holds for these dogs," she said, "so it's great that Amtrak welcomes them aboard. It's a

real service to the dogs and their future partners."

If the recent ride on the Downeaster indicates anything, it is that these dogs are ready to sign up for work. All of them, even four-month-old Mesquite, took the day in stride. The train's whistle, rumbling on the tracks, stopping and starting didn't phase one of them. But it wasn't long before they were the talk of the car, attracting questions from conductors and other two-legged passengers.

The puppy raisers/trainers were pleased. "We do attract attention," said one, adding that the dogs must learn to sit quietly while their person talks to others.

On arrival in Saco, Maine, the group detrained for a lunch break, and as the five dogs and six people gathered at a restaurant, the dogs laid quietly around the table. They were absorbing lessons from top dog Tyne as well as their people. Later, back on board the train, they all settled down for a nap. It was just another day of working at what they love to do—helping the human species.



Doris Saulnier supervises as pups Mesquite and Gibson take in the scenery on the Downeaster. The pups are learning proper behavior as commuters, information they hope to use when they become service dogs in the future.

For information about Canine Companions for Independence, visit their website at [www.caninecompanions.org](http://www.caninecompanions.org).

## IN BRIEF

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### STB PUTS DOWNEASTER DISPUTE ON FAST TRACK

The ongoing squabble between Guilford Rail System and Amtrak over passenger train speeds on the new service Boston/Portland is before the Surface Transportation Board again. Guilford argues that passenger train speeds should remain limited to 59 mph, while Amtrak cites test results showing nearly all the track safe for operation at 79 mph. —*Delaware Valley Rail Passenger Association News*, June

### THRUWAY SERVICES NOW IN MAINE

August 2: Amtrak entered into a partnership with Concord Trailways of Concord, NH, to have the bus company provide connecting service to and from the Downeaster to points in Maine. The new thruway service includes Brunswick, Bowdoin College, Bath, Wiscasset, Dama-

riscotta, Waldoboro, Rockland, Camden-Rockport, Lincolnville, Belfast, Searsport, Bangor and the University of Maine at Orono. Buses depart/arrive the Portland Transportation Center. Passengers can buy combined train and bus tickets from Amtrak in a single transaction: 1-800-USA-RAIL. For bus schedules call Concord Trailways at 1-800-639-3317.

### DOWNEASTER GOES TO THE BEACH

July 12: The first train in decades stopped in Old Orchard Beach. More than 150 people, including speakers from MDOT, the Northern New England Chamber of Commerce and the town, were there to greet the first passengers from Boston.

The platform will soon be completed, and is 200 feet long with a canopy and heat coils to melt snow and ice.

—*Portland Press Herald*, July 13



## TRAIN GIVES BUS A BOOST

Proponents of the Downeaster had predicted that the new train service would lure its passengers from automobiles rather than buses. As it turns out that counterintuitive idea has proven to be true, at least for Concord Trailways which shares the Portland Transportation Center with Amtrak. Company officials say bus ridership between Boston and Portland is up about 5% this year. "The train has brought such pizzazz to the area that it has brought more business to our company," said Ken Hunter, vice president of transportation for Concord Trailways. —Portland Press Herald, July 15

## DOWNEASTER SUCCESS GOOD FOR MAINE BUSINESS

Amtrak's Downeaster rail service from Boston boosted southern Maine businesses this summer, slightly helping to ease the effects of a stumbling economy.

The service carried over 225,000 people from its startup through August, far exceeding the projected ridership for that period.

"What we're seeing is certainly no disappointment to Maine businesses," said Vaughn Stinson, director of the Maine Tourism Association. "Anything that brings more people and exposes people to Maine is very good for us. There's a lot more demand for the rail than people thought there would be." —The Maine Sunday Telegram, Sept. 1

## NNEPRA APPOINTS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority has named John Englert to replace Michael Murray.

Englert has held management positions with the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, MTA Long Island Bus and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. At Amtrak, he was service manager for the Lake Shore Limited.

—Maine Sunday Telegram, Sept. 15

## NORTH/SOUTH RAIL LINK CONNECTING NEW ENGLAND

The Sierra Club welcomes Amtrak's Downeaster train to the new Anderson Station in Woburn, MA, and looks forward to the day the Downeaster runs through the North/South Rail Link at North Station in Boston to continue its journey to Providence, RI, and beyond.

The link is the missing one-mile connection between North and South Stations. Building it will remove 24,000 cars from the road each day. The longer we wait to build it, the worse traffic becomes, the more "bad air" days we will experience, and the more money—\$2 billion per year—we will throw away idling on congested roadways.

This connection will allow the public to travel between towns north and south of Boston without changing trains. —The Sierra Club

## OUR LATEST GREATEST PROFILE

BRUCE SLEEPER, counsel for TrainRiders/Northeast, was born in Maine, grew up in Maine (once moved a few houses down the street), is married and lives with his wife Jody and three kids in Maine. He did, willfully, go away to school—University of Chicago for an undergraduate degree and University of Michigan for a law degree.

We are relieved he came back. From his base at Portland's Jensen Baird Gardner & Henry, where he specializes in bankruptcy law, Sleeper has been a board member since 1989, the year TrainRiders was founded.

But long before that, when Wayne Davis represented banking and mortgage interests, Sleeper knew him as a client of the firm. He recalls that both of them were once at a meeting in Washington when a US Senator came in and asked the assembled crowd, with a hint of amusement, how many of them rode trains. To the senator's surprise, all the hands in the room went up.

"After that," says Sleeper, "Wayne and I occasionally talked about trains, but when he put his first ad in the newspaper, I didn't know anything about it." This was the ad that invited anyone interested in having train service return to Maine attend a meeting—and attracted 21 people. "I never saw any of those ads," says the good-natured Mainer who is responsible for having tackled some of TNE's most difficult work.

The fledgling organization soon needed bylaws, articles of incorporation, tax exemption status, and other organizational consultation and paperwork. Davis, who by now was no banker but a grassroots organizer dedicated to bringing passenger rail service back to Maine, soon invited the lawyer to join the board.

Sleeper took a regular shift at the

Maine Mall collecting signatures from 9 AM to 9 PM seven days per week. The program lasted for three months and resulted in 90,000 voter signatures. Sleeper then worked with lawyers at MDOT and Amtrak to draw up the document that became the first citizen-initiated bill to be adopted in the history of Maine. Called the Passenger Rail Service Act, it became law in 1991.

After Sleeper worked on Northern



Bruce Sleeper

New England Passenger Rail Authority legislation, worked with the FRA, which awarded \$6000 to the MDOT for design work on the rail-bus center in Portland, waded through the paperwork that got TNE its 501c3 status, negotiated with the

Railway Labor Executives' Association, MDOT, Maine's Attorney General, the US Department of Labor and the legion of other individuals, corporations and government agencies that became involved in the arduous process that took 13 years to realize its first goal—Boston-Portland rail service.

Sleeper became a seasoned field worker in the many disappointments that TrainRiders encountered. Along with the rest of us, but more invested in physical work hours, he saw the stated promise of rail service to Maine slip away time and again through the 1990s. As he says, "We thought we had it, and we thought we had it, and we thought we had it."

In the darkest hours it sometimes looked as if Maine would not have a train in this era, as if the forces arraigned against passenger rail service were too powerful, and occasionally too evil, to overcome. Some people gave up the fight. Many more stayed with it, and among these Sleeper was in the forefront.

He's on the phone with Davis

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## TRANSPORTATION CENTER, PORTLAND—HURRAH! NORTH STATION, BOSTON—HELLO?

An August weekend trip to Boston found us at Portland Transportation Center on a Friday morning that was lively with vacation travelers. Lines for the 8:30 AM bus and the 8:45 AM train to Boston melded together at their respective ends and even intermingled with incoming foot traffic. It was a festive crowd, and having just spent two hours on I-95 cocooned inside a speeding car, we were pleased to join it.

Wayne Davis was in the eye of the hub-bub, handing out flyers, responding to questions, towering over everyone. When he came over to say hi and we greeted him by name, a person next to us said, "You're Wayne Davis! I saw the article about you!" We moved on as he graciously dealt with his public.

Despite the buzz of dozens of passengers as they arrived, departed, milled about, shifted luggage, unfolded baby strollers and drank coffee, the terminal was clean, sparkling, and filled with sunlight. There were plenty of seats to go around, and ticket agents of both modes were friendly and helpful.

The conductor of the train appeared out of nowhere, opened the gates, made announcements and led business class passengers down the trainway before returning to fetch the next group. (A person in a wheelchair had been allowed to board earlier.) One passenger exclaimed, "This is what you call the *personal touch*."

Riding the Downeaster improved our already good mood. The day was crisp and breezy — the kind of a day when pedestrians along the way wave at the train and passengers wave back.

We dozed, read the morning newspaper and ate an early lunch (had pulled out of the driveway at 6 AM with no sustenance), but our main activity—the train rider's occupational "hazard"—consisted of looking out

the window as the scene flew past.

North Station is one droopy end to an exhilarating journey. Never intended to be a long-distance train station, it was built to suit commuters hurrying through. But when your mode of transportation is the Downeaster, you expect a little more buff and polish. (Not to mention that South Station, a mile away, is testimony to effective and joyful restoration.)

As a passenger from New York told us en route back to Portland the next day, he couldn't find the Amtrak ticket window, couldn't find out what track or at what time the Downeaster would arrive. (The incoming train, which was ten minutes late, left 30 minutes behind schedule. In the interim, waiting passengers wanted info. We too looked at the board: no track number, no time. We asked at the ticket window—no one knew.)

Meanwhile, we walked to the far end of the platform along Track 2, which is the Downeaster's slot (Mainers, particularly members of TrainRiders, know things that New Yorkers and such do not) for the unmitigated fun of sighting its approach (Train ahoy!). But we found a Big Duck Truck reclining across tracks 1 and 2, and the Downeaster had to come in on Track 10. We missed all the excitement.



September 13: Ron Roy, MDOT Director of Passenger Services, Portland's Mayor Karen Garaghty, and Harry Blunt, President of Concord Trailways, cut the ribbon to officially open Portland's new Transportation Center.

The scrubbed look of that train contrasted with the dumpiness of North Station, which the arriving passenger can avoid looking at but the outgoing one is subjected to as he waits for departure. In addition to grit and grime, there are not enough benches. Many people, including senior citizens, sat on the floor with their backs against pillars and walls. A scattering of hawk-eyed standees watched benches and swept deftly down when spots became vacant.

A little-noticed bench—an empty one—could be seen along the platform of Track 2,

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## ... Bruce Sleeper Profile

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every other day, and as anyone involved with TNE would attest, he is always available, cheerful, high-spirited and capable. He's our source for legal information and, as Davis says, "the one we run to when we hit a sticky spot. He's always there in a crisis."

More recently Sleeper has been working on the Downeaster's host program, which requires a lot of documentation with Amtrak—liability questions, insurance, feedback forms to go over with representatives from Amtrak. He serves on a consumer advisory committee, and he looks forward to the day when a shuttle—or a continuation of trackage—will connect Boston's North and South Stations. "A shuttle would cost several hundred thousand a year," he says, noting that he has ridden the Downeaster five times with either Jody or one or more of the kids, "but not the whole family at once."

Why does he invest so many volunteer hours into a form of transportation? "It's lots of fun," says Sleeper, adding that in a state like Maine it is possible to get things done. "People in the legislature are available, even the governor can be available. People are willing to listen, to go to work for you."

(We would like to add that forging a return of passenger rail to Maine is, of course, the best cause in the world.)

"The scale is good in Maine," says our favorite counsel. "If you're persistent, you can get in touch; you can get to the government. It's doable."

Given such a positive outlook and such focused energy, TNE's future trials—no one suggests it will be easy to extend service to Bangor and beyond—take on a new perspective. In Maine, it's doable. ■



# TRAINRIDERS' SURVEY OF CANDIDATES

The following questions were asked of candidates in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. The answers of those who responded are shown below. **Y** = Yes **N** = No **W** = Waiting for feasibility studies, etc. **NA** = Not Applicable

	Maine Candidates						New Hampshire		Mass.
	Thomas H. Allen	John E. Baldacci	Jonathan K. Carter	Peter Cianchette	Susan M. Collins	Kevin L. Raye	Jeanne Shaheen	Martha Clark	Edward Markey
<b>QUESTIONS:</b> <b>Would you support...</b>									
(1) ...increased government funding of passenger and freight rail service to a level more on a par with other transportation modes?	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
(2) ...increased federal funding for Amtrak's capital expenses?	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
(3) ...expansion of passenger services with local, state, and federal funding to Bangor... via Brunswick, Augusta, and Waterville?	Y	Y	Y	Y	W				Y
via Lewiston/Auburn and Waterville?	Y	Y	Y	Y	W	Y			Y
(4) ...connecting Maine with existing rail service in Canada?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y
(5) ...acquiring federal and state funding to achieve higher speed and more frequent service in the Boston-Portland Corridor?	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
(6) ...efforts to ensure construction of a link between Boston's North and South Station?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
(7) ...legislation to permit some of the funds destined for highways to be used by Amtrak?	Y	Y	Y	N	W	Y	Y	Y	
(8) ...modifying state laws to permit the use of highway gas tax revenues for railroads?	NA	Y	Y	N	NA	NA	NA	Y	NA
(9) ...acquiring federal and state funding for construction and operation of a Boston, Nashua, Concord corridor to Montreal?							Y	Y	
(10) ...efforts to extend rail service from... Lowell to Nashua?							Y	Y	
Nashua to Manchester to Concord?							Y	Y	
Newburyport to Portsmouth/Kittery?							Y	Y	
(11) ...acquiring federal and state funding of the above lines?							Y	Y	
(12) ...state legislation to limit the liability of private rail line owners and operators in the case of passenger rail accidents?							N	Y	

\* NOTE: Questions 9 through 12 were asked of candidates only from New Hampshire. Questions 3 and 4 were not asked of New Hampshire candidates.



## NEW HAMPSHIRE REPORT

**DURHAM/UNH RAIL STATION UPDATE:** The University of NH continues to improve the station site and, along with the New England Center and the Town of Durham, supports expanded train service.

Safety sign upgrades, platform markings and permanent fencing have been completed, and UNH Security is working with the Dairy Bar on educational efforts for visitors to the station. In October, they will host a rail safety event on campus.

The term plans for station re-design and expansion are moving forward thanks to an \$800,000 CMAQ funding allocation scheduled for fiscal year 2005.

The platform surface heating system, funded by NHDOT with UNH paying utility maintenance costs, will be completed before the arrival of winter, as will installation of a Quik-Trak Ticket machine for which UNH provided a 20% match, and construction of a climate controlled enclosure. UNH will pay ongoing operational costs.

UNH and the Town of Durham have requested the NNEPRA to provide Monday service at the Durham/UNH station commencing with

Downeaster schedule changes this fall.

Final design plans are complete for the addition of a new Campus Shuttle stop at the entrance to Depot Street, where the station is located. This will allow passengers direct access to the local transit system. Construction should be completed this spring.

THE EXETER STATION has become a popular place with passengers headed not only south to Boston but north to Old Orchard Beach and Portland, among other destinations.

A new Quik-Trac machine at Gerry's Variety, which is open from 6 AM to 11:30 PM, allows easy purchase as well as pick-up of reservations made by computer or telephone.

Across the parking lot from the station, The Circus Cafe, with outdoor seating in summer, offers breakfast, lunch and dinner every day except Sunday. Many people stop by to see the enormous 1920s Howe's Great London Circus poster, which was recently discovered on a wall of the cafe after having been hidden for 81 years. The scene depicts galloping white horses with "lady somersault riders" in fancy costume. The colors are still vivid, and it is believed the art work dates to the late 19th century. ■

## ...TRANSPORTATION CENTER, PORTLAND...

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on the other side of the sliding glass gate. Maybe people think that bench is out of bounds, and maybe it is. We found it to be a peaceful niche—just us and a pigeon that came over and asked for crumbs from the fast food stand. (We had nothing to give.) Relative to the station's overall demeanor, the fast food concession could be said to provide architectural interest.

Last January, Wayne Davis wrote to the MBTA, which owns and oper-

ates North Station, about the possibility of making it more user-friendly. He sent copies to Governors Swift of Massachusetts and King of Maine. Result? The MBTA hauled out a few more old benches—but benches they are, and a lesser number of people now sit on the floor.

If you haven't seen the Portland Transportation Center, please stop by and take a look. For best effect, do it while holding a Downeaster ticket in your hand as you wait the announcement to board your train. ■

## TRANSIT SUCCESS STORY

The American Public Transportation Association announced that transit ridership growth again exceeded increases in auto travel in 2001. Over the past five years, transit ridership rose 21% while vehicle miles traveled rose only 12%. Rail systems accounted for much of the gain in transit use, as compared to buses. The statistics demonstrate that people will choose transit if it is available, and makes the case for more long-term investment in commuter and light rail service. —*Delaware Valley Rail Passenger Association News*, June

## HIGHWAYS REAP ANOTHER WINDFALL

Bipartisan legislation which restores a minimum of \$4.4 billion in federal highway funding in fiscal year 2003 was overwhelmingly approved by the House of Representatives on May 14. The "Highway Funding Restoration Act" passed the House by a vote of 410 to 5. It had 317 sponsors, including all 75 members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and increases the level of highway funding for fiscal year 2002 to at least \$27.7 billion. —*Transfer magazine*, May 15

## ATTENTION MEMBERS OF AARP

You are requested to write a brief letter to **Judith Kenyon, AARP National Legislative Council, 601 E Street NW, Washington, DC 20049**, explaining why you think AARP should be lobbying for increased support of Amtrak. Be sure to sign and include your AARP member number.

AARP is the country's biggest lobby, and with over 33 million voting members their efforts carry a lot of weight in Washington. But the lobbyists can only pursue those issues listed in their Policy Manual. The process is underway right now to write the 2003 Policy Manual so we need to make sure Amtrak is included. The more member letters sent, the better odds of inclusion of the issue.

—*All Aboard: Newsletter of the Rhode Island Association of Railroad Passengers*, Summer

## CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY PASSES AUTO EMISSIONS BILL

After a long and expensive battle between environmentalists and the automotive industry in California, a bill designed to limit emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases passed the Assembly on July 1 and made its way to the desk of Governor Gray Davis. If enacted, the bill would require the state Air Resources Board to set "maximum, feasible and cost-effective reductions" for greenhouse gases on automobiles.

Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Oregon, have passed laws aimed at cutting carbon dioxide emissions from power plants, but the California bill would be the first in the United States designed to target automobile pollution.

—*Transfer magazine*, July 11



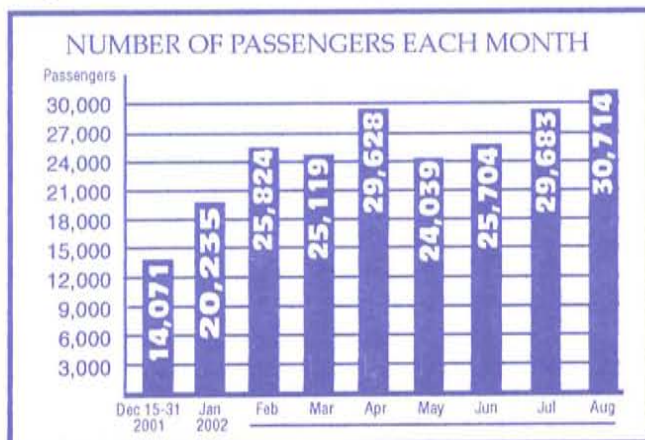
## Downeaster Ahead of Ridership and Revenue Curve

The Downeaster set new records for ridership and revenues in July and August. With 30,714 people riding the train in August, the highest monthly total yet, the total ridership for the 8½ months the Downeaster has been operating now exceeds 225,000 passengers.

Income from the service through August exceeded \$3,516,000. Revenues

have far outpaced expectations because the majority of people riding the train travel the full length between Portland and Boston. In July, for example, the average ticket cost \$15.70, compared to the projected \$10.00. Another boost to revenues has been the popularity of business class seating, which costs an extra \$8.00 for a full one-way trip.

The Downeaster continues to zip between Portland and Boston oblivious to problems that afflict Amtrak elsewhere, and this fall the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority hopes to begin running later departures on weekends so that riders may stay longer before returning home.



## ARE TRAINS POLITICAL OR POPULAR?

A CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll found that 70% of Americans believed the federal government should continue to subsidize Amtrak to keep a national passenger train network. Less than 30% believed the government should eliminate funding.

Some Amtrak critics claim a national rail system is being kept intact merely to satisfy members of Congress whose districts are served by the trains. Not only are most national system trains filled with passengers and mail/express, but this poll and others show Americans want federal support for Amtrak to continue.

### HELP SAVE OUR TRAINS!

**Tell President Bush** there needs to be a national—not disconnected—passenger rail network.

**Urge Congress** to maintain or enlarge the nationwide network and make the federal government a genuine funding partner with states in the development of high-speed rail.

### THE TRAINRIDER

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