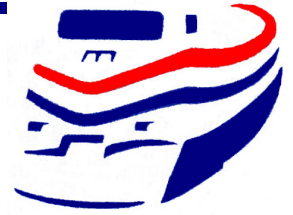


# TRAINRIDER

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THE NEWSLETTER OF *TRAINRIDERS/NORTHEAST*



★ ★ ★ *Dreams DO Come True!* ★ ★ ★

The Obama administration has allocated \$35 million in federal stimulus funds to expand our Downeaster passenger rail service north to Freeport and Brunswick with connections on to Rockland as part of its \$8 billion Recovery Act grants for developing a nationwide system of high-speed intercity passenger rail service. The funding is enough to complete the expansion for Amtrak's Downeaster service, including laying welded rail and improving 36 grade crossings along the 30-mile route.

In Brunswick, where the train station is already complete, the service will provide a much-needed economic boost, said Joanne King, chairwoman of the Brunswick Town Council. The train will make two or three round trips a day between Portland and Brunswick. "That is great news," she said. "It is vitally important to Brunswick. It's been talked about for close to 30 years."

The project will mean more passengers for Maine Eastern Railroad, which operates a seasonal passenger train between Rockland and Brunswick. When the expansion is completed, people will be able to ride a train from Boston to Brunswick and then on to Rockland, with an immediate cross-platform connection. There has not been regular passenger rail service linking Rockland, Brunswick and Portland since April 4th of 1959.

Maine US Representative Chellie Pingree said the project will create 200 jobs and work will start immediately. The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority already has agreements in place with Amtrak to operate the expanded service and with the route's owner, Pan Am Railways, to do the track rehabilitation work.

The Downeaster has proven to be one of Amtrak's best performers. In a joint statement, Maine Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins said the Downeaster has enjoyed steady increases in ridership since service began in 2001. Extending the service would give the Brunswick area, which is coping with the closure of Brunswick Naval Air Station, "...a much-needed economic shot in the arm", they said.

In a separate proposal, the rail authority is seeking \$52 million for track improvements between Portland and Plaistow, NH as part of an effort to boost the speed of the Downeaster and make it possible to increase the number of daily round trips between Portland and Boston from five to seven. The proposal would shave 10 to 12 minutes off the trip, making the service more attractive and competitive. That proposal is still pending.

The Downeaster would travel through Woodford's Corner in Portland, Cumberland Center, West Falmouth and Yarmouth Junction. It would stop in Freeport and Brunswick. At Yarmouth Junction, the railroad intersects with a mainline track operated by the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad. That track runs to Quebec via Lewiston, Auburn and Bethel. These improvements will be the first step towards eventually running passenger trains on that line to Montreal.

Excerpted from the Portland Press Herald

## Chairman's Update

Our cover story is the most exciting and long awaited news we've had to share in quite some time. We all expected it was coming and now it's here. Finally!

For the next two years we will see a true transformation take place here in the northeast right before our very eyes. We can't express enough our appreciation for the simply admirable job NNEPRA's Executive Director, Patricia Quinn and her staff have done to make this a reality.

### We've celebrated our train's 8<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

We all know our train is the best in the country. Why? Because we have a great group of people who put their souls into making this service the best it can be. From the NNEPRA Board and staff to the Amtrak supervisors, engineers, conductors, agents, police, food service, cleaning and maintenance staff, to the dispatchers in Billerica, to the State of Maine, to TrainRiders Northeast and its train hosts and station hosts, to the cities and towns in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts served by the Downeaster – the commitment is deep and in many cases personal. We take pride in our train and cherish it like it's part of a large, appreciative family.

### Here's what has happened:

Looking back we can note some very key milestones that have been reached: Ridership hitting 1 million, 2 million and now approaching its 3 millionth passenger, a fifth round trip that started in 2007 as a result of additional passing sidings constructed on the corridor, (thank you NH & MA) a brand new Saco station that derives its heat and power from green geothermal technology and a wind turbine,

which serves an ongoing \$100 million investment in the Saco Island development), a total rehabilitation of the Durham/UNH station to reopen the waiting room and reinvent the Dairy Bar restaurant, new Quik-Trak machines that deliver faster and more convenient ticketing options, WiFi on every coach and at some of our stations, future station stops already well established at Freeport and Brunswick, nationally recognized award-winning advertising deployments in Boston, and most importantly the established community of riders that's unique to this train service.

### Here's what is happening:

We want this momentum to continue! Plans are underway to construct an enclosed layover facility in Portland so the maintenance and mechanical folks can finally work out of the elements, funding has been secured to reconstruct the wye in Portland to enable equipment turns that are otherwise very costly and cumbersome to do in Boston, stimulus funding that has just been awarded to provide for the reconstruction of the corridor to Freeport and Brunswick thus enabling our next logical expansion and connection to the Maine Eastern Railroad, with over half a million riders under its belt, Exeter has applied for funding to expand their parking area and refurbish the existing Railway Express building into a waiting area with restroom facilities and ticketing, and the Maine state congressional delegation continues to lobby Congress to make a permanent change to CMAQ language that would enable those funds to continue to be used for operational costs.

### Here's what will happen:

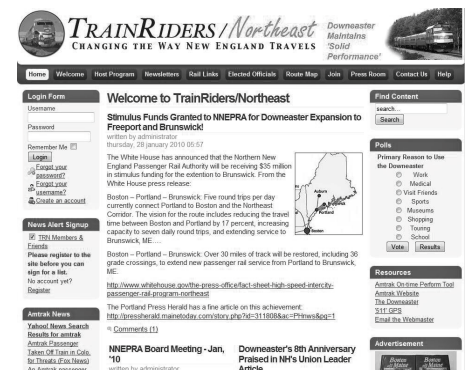
TrainRiders will continue to push for service to Lewiston/Auburn

and to Augusta. We're looking for further expansion on the Downeaster corridor to include 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> round trips that would require double tracking and strategic passing sidings. We hope that an investment of this magnitude would qualify for High Speed Rail stimulus funding and would better solidify our passenger rail presence as a viable and preferred transportation alternative. We're looking to regionalize our approach by coordinating with neighboring states to better leverage the federal funding that is available. Stay tuned!

We'd like to acknowledge all of you who support us, especially our major benefactors, who continue to make contributions to TNE so that we can continue doing business. It's what keeps us ticking.

- WD

## TrainRiders Debuts a New Web Site Feb 1



The digital age is upon us and TrainRiders Northeast is rolling out some very exciting new ways of doing business.

Our Board member and Webmaster Bill Lord has been working tirelessly to revamp our web site and turn it into a truly remarkable interactive experience. Starting Feb 1 it not only will display up to the minute news articles and have active hyperlinks to other sites, but it will also allow

train hosts to easily book, confirm or cancel their trips.

This is all wonderful, but we know news travels faster now than what is possible to distribute in a printed quarterly newsletter. Printing costs and postage continue to rise as well. What we'd like to do is make our website, [www.trainridersne.org](http://www.trainridersne.org) and e-mail our principal means of distributing the newsletter and getting other news and information out to our members. For this to be successful, **it is imperative that we have your current e-mail address.** We promise not to distribute it to anyone else without your permission. If you do not wish to or cannot receive this information electronically, we will still send the newsletter to you via US Mail. We hope that electronic delivery of these items will both help us save money and provide information on a timely basis.

### TrainRiders Seeks to Expand

On November 7 the TNE Board of Directors met in a special session to discuss reconstituting our committee structure. Now it's more important than ever for people to become more actively involved in TNE's day-to-day activities. This is why TNE seeks to expand its existing committee structure - to create places where members can assist the organization with their knowledge and expertise.

Our Host Committee already oversees the training, scheduling, and operations of the onboard and station hosts. Our Executive Committee, tirelessly continues to address ongoing issues in Washington, Augusta, Concord, Montpelier and Boston.

In addition to these, we need energetic volunteers to join in and

participate in one or more of the following areas:

- Membership
- Revenue Sourcing
- Political Liaison
- Media Response
- Public Relations
- Public Events
- Host

If you or someone you know would be interested, please contact us by phone at

**(207) TRY-RAIL**

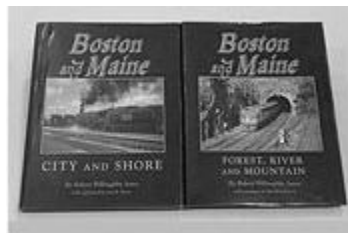
by e-mail at

**[info@trainridersne.org](mailto:info@trainridersne.org)**

or through our web site at

**[www.trainridersne.org](http://www.trainridersne.org)**

### ↓↓↓ History for Sale ↓↓↓



Robert Willoughby Jones, author of the historic Boston & Maine railroad books, *City and Shore* and *Forest, River and Mountain*, has made a generous donation to TrainRiders. We now have copies available for purchase. These books retail for more than \$80 each, but our special price is just \$30.00 each or both for \$50.00!

### NH Rail Transit Authority Speaks

When the NH state Department of Transportation opted not to apply for federal stimulus dollars pertaining to high-speed rail earlier this fall, it seemed to send an ominous message regarding

the potential of extending passenger rail to Concord.

Not so fast.

Peter Burling, former state senator and chairman of the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority, is still pushing for this service and he sees several potential options for making it happen.

During a recent infrastructure summit hosted by the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Burling said that the ultimate goal is to extend high-speed trains to Montreal.

"It's crucial for the development of our future. If we don't make this choice, the state of New York will," he said. Burling explained that New York has a high-speed rail corridor from New York City up the Hudson River to Montreal.

"There is going to be something of a race on to connect a major city to Montreal," Burling said last week. "If it's the Hudson River line, all you have to do is look at the map."

Progress was slowed earlier last fall when Pan Am Railways, owners of the rail corridor snaking its way north from the New Hampshire line to Concord, left the bargaining table. Since then, the Transit Authority, which has no funding, hasn't been able to entice them to return.

"It's overwhelmingly clear that people want that train," Burling said. The goal is to procure federal funding (\$300 million) for track upgrades allowing passenger trains to travel 70 miles per hour, with about 11 or 12 90-minute round trips each day between Concord and Boston. Passenger trains will get people off congested state highways, and improved freight accommodations



will similarly move 18-wheelers off the road, Burling said.

Each passenger rail car is worth about 100 cars on the highway. That would make for a lot fewer cars on Interstate 93.

DOT spokesman William Boynton said that NH had entered into talks with Amtrak which could be a potential operator for service between Boston and Concord

It was four and half years ago that Pan Am Railways started to engage the state in negotiations regarding track improvements and passenger rail. Talks progressed to the point where the Rail Transit Authority and the state filed a pre-application with the federal government for stimulus money designated for planning and construction.. Three days after the pre-application was filed, Pan Am Railways broke off negotiations. Without Pan Am on board, the state could not proceed with the application.

Burling said the Authority hasn't been able to entice Pan Am back to the bargaining table. "I still don't understand what the issue is. The Downeaster runs over their trackage. All we want to do is replicate the Downeaster package.

**All we want to do is replicate the Downeaster package**

Burling was clear the Authority is not working toward commuter rail but is pushing for inter-city high-speed rail. The distinction is important since federal funding can pay for up to 100% of the cost of qualified high-speed rail projects, but will only pay for up to 50% of commuter rail projects.

"We are going forward until the legislature and the governor tell

the people of the Authority, 'Everybody stop,'" Burling said.

Chris Clement, NHDOT Deputy Commissioner, said DOT embraces the NH Capital Corridor and noted that, in an unprecedented move, then Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation Jim Aloisi sent a letter urging support for extending rail into the Granite State.

### **Plowing forward**

Burling headed to DC to meet with the New Hampshire congressional delegation, Amtrak and other key legislators.

Mark Brewer, president of Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, said they are fully on board with bringing rail back to New Hampshire and specifically to the airport.

Jay Minkarah, Manchester's economic development director, said he doesn't think rail and current bus service are mutually exclusive; he thinks they would complement each other.

Minkarah said about 20 percent of Nashua's labor force commutes to Massachusetts, with about 6 percent commuting to Boston. About 5 percent of Manchester's labor force commutes to the Bay State. More locally, officials also point out there could be a much higher rate of inter-city use between Nashua, the airport and Manchester. Officials say the project is as much about bringing people to New Hampshire as it is about dropping people off in Boston.

Minimally, the state is looking to extend rail to Nashua — a plan that wouldn't require reliance on Pan Am. Boynton said officials are looking at a potential stop just across the Massachusetts border. Once rail is extended to Concord, Burling said, the train would cost

about \$10 million per year to run. Half would come from the fare box and the other half could come from a variety of places, such as CMAQ or creating a specific district from which a certain portion of economic growth tied to rail would be taxed to fund operations.

### **One region, one voice**

The federal government has made it clear that states need to regionalize their efforts with regard to rail, something the Midwest has done especially well. "We cannot expect to succeed in New England if we have a bunch of states individually pursuing their individual desires," Burling said. He's hoping for a New England rail consortium of sorts with an executive director to monitor the process, but "We're not there yet."

Along with the Concord project Maine would like to complete renovations on the Downeaster line that would shave 15 or 20 minutes off the travel time from Portland to Boston, while extending the line further north. Massachusetts wants to make needed improvements to the Boston-Worcester line, and Vermont would like to revive a rail line from Brattleboro south to New Haven, Conn.

Do people want what almost every society on the face of the globe has to move them around for jobs, vacations?" Burling said. "The overwhelming answer is yes. Maybe in 1952, people wanted a place to drive, but the circumstances have made it much less appealing." President Obama is pushing rail in much the same way as President Eisenhower promoted the interstate highway system Burling said.

Excerpted from Hippo Press  
Jeff Mucciarone

## Rhode Island purchases property for 'South County' commuter-rail station

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) recently purchased property for the Wickford Junction commuter-rail station and parking garage for \$3.2 million, Rhode Island Gov. Don Carcieri announced on Dec. 31.

The Wickford project, along with a Warwick, R.I., intermodal facility that's now under construction, will support the initial start up of the South County commuter-rail service. That service would extend the MBTA line beyond Providence 20 miles. Rail service to Warwick is expected to begin by year's end and service to Wickford Junction is slated to start in 2011.

The new service would provide an alternative to congested Interstate 95 and the Route 4 corridor, the state's fastest-growing region, as well as provide access to major employment, retail and recreational centers in Providence and Boston, said the governor.

The \$30 million Wickford Junction Station will feature a platform and 1,100-space parking garage. RIDOT expects the project to take 16 months to complete.

Progressive Railroading

## Vermont Opens Castleton Amtrak Station

As a result of growing and anticipated demand for passenger rail service to Castleton State College and Lake Bomoseen, Amtrak and the Vermont Agency of Transportation said that state-supported Ethan Allen Express trains will make twice daily stops at the recently renovated Castleton, VT station.



C. Parker 2 Photos

The southbound Ethan Allen Express, train #292 arrived Saturday, January 2, 2010 on schedule at 11:02 AM as the first train to officially stop at the station.

The historic refurbished Castleton Depot, originally built in 1850, is replacing the small outdoor Fair Haven stop, which continued to accept passengers through January 9.

"The new station is beautifully remodeled and will offer Amtrak passengers first-class accommodations," said Vermont Agency of Transportation Secretary David Dill. "Castleton is a perfect location for a train stop as the college is right down the street and picturesque Lake Bomoseen is just a stone's throw from the village."



The Castleton Depot is privately owned by Mary Ann and Val Jakubowski, whose family purchased the property from the Delaware and Hudson Railroad in 1966 and began renovations in 2005. The rehabilitated station offers passengers an indoor waiting room, complementary parking and meets accessibility

requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In addition, it provides convenient access to the downtown area and will be open one hour prior to scheduled arrivals and departures of Ethan Allen Express trains that operate between Rutland and New York via Albany, NY. The Green Mountain Country Depot deli, bakery and coffee shop also is located in the building.

Amtrak and the Vermont Agency of Transportation will be working to enhance station parking capacity and upgrade the existing platforms at the renovated facility.

"Amtrak is delighted to have a new station stop in Castleton that provides area residents direct access to rail transportation and visitors a connection to area attractions", said Michael DeCataldo, Amtrak General Superintendent NE Division.

The Depot will be unstaffed, but passengers have several different options for making reservations and purchasing tickets.

Excerpted from Railway Track & Structures

## Brunswick Station a Reality!

Tenants have moved into Maine Street Station Buildings 1 & 3



Located in Brunswick, ME, Maine Street Station anxiously awaits the arrival of the Downeaster extension as a mixed-use development featuring retail/office space, an inn, residential condominiums, and a train station. This prime piece of real estate is

located at the steps of Bowdoin College and will be a stop on AMTRAK's Downeaster route.

Phase I, featuring approximately 40,000 square feet of retail/office space, was completed this past summer.

A charming New England-style inn comprises Phase II. Designed to provide a warm welcome to Brunswick and Bowdoin visitors, the exterior facade will complement the New England charm of downtown.

Planning for Phase III, a 16-unit condominium complex is also underway. The condos will feature one-floor living in a secure building with easy access to beautiful downtown Brunswick.



Doug Lavalley of Scarlet Begonias Restaurant opened to record crowds during mid October and Bowdoin's College Store opened to the public on October 30th. Bowdoin's dance studio is open and the train station space is nearing completion.

Courtesy Maine Street Station

### Freeport Village Station also Open for Business!

Freeport's newest retail development and lifestyle center is a 120,000 square foot state-of-the-art multi-level complex on a 3.6 acre site in the shopping mecca's downtown.

The site is particularly prominent given its location across from L.L. Bean's famous flagship store on

Main Street. L.L. Bean held a lengthy and extensive competition and selected Berenson Associates to develop the project from a field of approximately 10 developers.



"We are honored to have been chosen by L.L. Bean to develop such an exciting project in their hometown and believe our experience and integrity were as important as our development plan and concepts in winning the opportunity."

Since its opening in the spring of 2009, Freeport Village Station has worked to feature approximately 40 retail factory outlet stores, restaurants, three elevators providing accessibility, a 550 car parking garage and other public amenities.

Berenson Associates kicked off its leasing program with the signing of the Phillips-Van Heusen Corporation for four of its premier outlet stores – Calvin Klein, IZOD, Van Heusen and Geoffrey Beene. Forbes magazine named Phillips-Van Heusen to its "Best of the

Best" list for 2006, cited for performance, leadership, innovation and execution.

Over three million people visit Freeport each year, drawn primarily by the shopping and the great outdoors. Many national retailers have stores in Freeport, and the Town has become a destination for both full-price and outlet shopping. Sales per square foot average among the highest in New England. Freeport Village Station will enhance the already exciting Freeport experience while maintaining the Town's character.

According to Freeport Town Manager, Dale C. Olmstead Jr., "Freeport Village Station will lead a 21st century revitalization in Freeport to ensure that the area not only continues to attract millions of visitors each year, but thrives as a premiere Northeast destination for years to come."

Excerpted from Berenson Associates

### Dover Station Sports a new Entryway Vestibule



The City of Dover, NH has recently completed the addition of a beautiful new glass vestibule to the station's main entrance.

The heated vestibule provides an added buffer from cold air coming into the station and gives COAST bus riders and other patrons a place to stay warm and out of the elements during the winter months.



The Quik-Trak ticket machine has been moved into the vestibule to allow for all-day access, our hope since the bus company formerly operating the station moved out in August of 2008. Since then, the TrainRiders Northeast volunteer Dover Station Hosts have been routinely opening the station building ½ hour before each train departure.



Now, the first host unlocks the vestibule door at 5:15 AM (6:30 AM on weekends) and the last host locks it up at 9:00 PM when the last southbound departs town.

The doorways are also now ADA accessible with pushbutton activators for wheelchair patrons.

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## Gene Skoropowski Moves On

One of TrainRiders and the Downeaster's biggest supporters has officially retired after 10 years at the helm of California's Capitol Corridor. He began his career as an architect who commuted to Boston on the Boston & Maine Railroad in the 1970s, and became an early advocate for improved passenger rail service.

Skoropowski left his architectural job in hopes of playing a part in improving commuter service in the Boston area. He successfully managed commuter operations full time in Boston, then

Philadelphia, and finally landed in Oakland, Calif., where just three trains to and from Sacramento ran daily. Under his leadership, the Capitol Corridor grew to 16 daily trains.

Skoropowski's smiling portrait and message in each timetable welcomed riders aboard "your Capitol Corridor," and thanked them for riding on "your trains." This spirit of partnership worked as he effectively bridged the gap between Union Pacific and Amtrak. The Capitol Corridor, which stretches from Auburn to San Jose, CA, ultimately achieved a 90 percent on-time performance record, one of the best in the nation [competing each month, of course, with the Downeaster]. His philosophy, Skoropowski said, is this: "Provide a decent service, run it frequently, reasonably and reliably, and people will ride."

David Kutrosky, longtime deputy director of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority, has been made the new Executive Director.

Excerpted from Railnews

## Downeaster Performance Highlights in 2010

The Downeaster has maintained solid performance through the first two quarters of Fiscal Year 2010.

A total of 246,082 passengers generating \$3,511,524 in revenue travelled on the Downeaster during the 6 month period exceeding budget projections by about 3% and contributing to a cost recovery of 59%.

- \* Avg Daily Ridership: 1,337
- \* Avg Passenger Fare: \$14.27
- \* Avg Daily Miles per Passenger: 80

On Time Performance is improved at 85%, but challenges still remain. Infrastructure deficiencies and track capacity constraints

caused 70% of delays for the period.

Travel between Portland and Boston, which represents nearly 30% of all ridership, has increased about 8%.

About 75% of Downeaster passengers traveled on weekdays, an average of 1,448 per day, generating 69% of all revenue. An average of 1,085 passengers per day traveled on weekends/holidays.

About 34% of all passengers traveled using a multi-ride pass. At an average of fare of \$6.91, passholders generated 16% of total revenue.

The Downeaster continues to excel in customer service and satisfaction scores compared to Amtrak's national average.

### Customer Satisfaction Sep-Nov 2009

|                        | DE | Amtrak |
|------------------------|----|--------|
| Overall Satisfaction   | 93 | 84     |
| Value for Price Paid   | 93 | 77     |
| Conductor Friendliness | 96 | 83     |
| Overall Cleanliness    | 90 | 75     |
| Café Experience        | 95 | 71     |
| Food Service           | 89 | 82     |
| Quality of Food        | 77 | 66     |

To date, the Downeaster has carried 2,772,332 passengers 227,635,606 passenger miles, and has generated \$38,602,574 in farebox revenues.

Courtesy NNEPRA

**Thank you all for continuing to ride the Downeaster!**



J. Mayo Photo

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## Heads Up!

Our 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting will be held this year the first week of May at the Holiday Inn By the Bay in Portland. We sure hope to see you there!

(Guest speakers to be announced)



### **TrainRiders Northeast Board of Directors**

Wayne Davis ME (Chair)

Andrew Hyland ME (Vice Chair)

Robert Kahn ME (Secretary)

F. Bruce Sleeper (Clerk/Counsel)

Don Briselden NH

Ellen Fogg ME

Robert Martin ME

Eve Reed MA

Elizabeth Buckley ME

Robert Hall NH

James Oikle ME

Robert Rodman ME

Marybeth Burbank ME

Valarie Lamont ME

Christopher Parker VT

Paula Boyer Rougny ME

Mike Duprey NH

William Lord ME

Stephen Piper NH

Janet Brown CA (At Large)

Benjamin Kirkland NC (At Large)

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### ***THE TRAINRIDER***

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Portland, ME 04112

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