

TRAINRIDER

The Newsletter of TrainRiders/Northeast



Gov. McKernan Signs Passenger Rail Service Act

Even before the Legislature and the Governor had finally agreed on a State budget, thus returning about 10,000 State workers to their jobs, Governor McKernan signed the Passenger Rail Service Act, formerly L.D. 720. On July 14, Governor John McKernan played a part in Maine legislative history, signing the first citizen-initiated act ever to become law without going through the referendum process. The Act resulted from the over 56,000 voter signatures on petitions collected between the November 1990 election and January 1991 by many members of TrainRiders/ Northeast and other interested citizens. Commissioner Dana Connors and Wayne Davis, acting as a lobbyist for RailVision, played important roles in guiding the bill through the legislature, whose Transportation Committee recommended unanimously that it be passed.

The Act directs the Maine Department of Transportation, "to take all actions that are reasonably necessary to initiate, establish or reinstate regularly scheduled passenger rail service between points within and outside this State." The bill goes on to further define those actions.

Although funding is mentioned in the Act, no funds are earmarked for this activity. "The Department [of Transportation] is directed to seek and use funds necessary for the implementation of this subchapter, in an amount not less than \$40,000,000. . . ." All revenues received from operation of passenger rail service are to be used to pay the operational expenses of that service and additional funds may be used to cover operating deficits.

The timing of the passage of the Act, coming as it does before the "mark up" of

the House of Representatives version of the Moynihan Surface Transportation Bill (S. 1204) places the State of Maine in a enviable position to take advantage of the features of that bill, which are intended to assist Oklahoma, South Dakota and Maine (states currently without Amtrak service) to obtain that service. An amendment, co-sponsored by David L. Boren (D-OK) and William S. Cohen (R-ME) allows those states to use Federal rural transit funding for up to 50% of operating losses of Amtrak trains in their states.

One of the Surface Transportation Act's more important features is that, with few exceptions, the Federal share of funding for transportation projects in all modes is now 80%, with 20% to come from other sources. The Interstate highways were constructed with 90% Federal funding. All states are allowed to use up to 50% of

Federal highway funding for certain non-highway projects.

An amendment introduced by John H. Chafee (R-RI) and Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) limits truck weights to what states allowed on June 1, 1991, a limit which should result in reduced maintenance on our highways compared to what those costs might have been if truck weights were increased further. Federal funding for local transit, including operating subsidies opposed by the Bush Administration, was increased 23% from \$3.8 billion to \$4.7 billion in FY 1996.

The House should be urged to pass a similar bill incorporating flexibility of States and their metropolitan planning organizations to use Federal transportation funding in the manner most effective in their areas. *NARP News*, June 1991



This is the TrainRiders/Northeast window in the Porteous building on Congress St., Portland, showing the display which is on loan from AMTRAK. The window has been responsible for many new members and has raised local awareness of our cause.

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Fourtin "Buc" Powell, Editor, Rockland, Me.

Making The Right Connections

On Sunday, July 14, 1991, Gov. McKernan signed the Passenger Rail Service Act (LD 720) empowering the State of Maine to actively seek and use not less than \$40 million to restore rail passenger service between Boston and Portland. This was the first time in Maine's history that a citizen initiated bill became legislation without first having to be voted on by the people. At least 40 people traveled to Augusta on May 14 for the public hearings and it was standing room only. Everyone who testified spoke in favor of the bill, including Maine Department of Transportation Commissioner Dana Connors, State Representatives Maria Holt (D) Bath, Sophia Pfeiffer (D) Brunswick and Beth Nagusky, attorney for the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

LD 720 sailed through the House of Representatives causing Speaker of the House, John Martin, to remark that this was indeed a history making event. However, when it came before the Senate, Sen. Michael Pearson (D), District 6, Chair of the Appropriations Committee (later replaced by Sen. Joseph Brannigan (D), District 29) diverted the bill to Appropriations where it sat for weeks, stuck in the middle of the battle over the budget and workers' compensation insurance. Finally, Appropriations released the bill with a 10-1 vote (Representative Lorraine Chonko (D), Topsham, House Chair of the Appropriations Committee, cast the dissenting vote). The bill was enacted by the Senate just minutes before the State Government shut down (for the second time) for nearly a week at midnight on Wednesday, July 10, 1991.

Commissioner Connors and I traveled to Washington (by train) to meet on July 24 with Representatives of Maine and New Hampshire, key members of the Senate Transportation Committee, Amtrak and the National Association of Railroad Passengers. We were there to convince Washington officials of the advantages of having rail passenger service play a larger role in the new Surface Transportation Act now before the House of Representatives. It is hoped that the House will incorporate the same terms in their version of the Act so that when Congress reconvenes in September, both Senate and House will act jointly to provide considerable Federal assistance for the start-up and operation of Boston-Portland passenger train service.

The Act, already passed by the Senate, allows, for the first time, use of Federal Highway Trust Fund money for non-highway capital costs and, for the three states now lacking Amtrak service (Maine, Oklahoma and South Dakota) up to 50% of operating losses could be covered from Federal rural transit funding. Federal funding would pay for 80% of the capital expenditures for starting train service with the States to provide 20%. For Maine, the flexibility to use up to 50% of Federal transit funding towards Amtrak operating costs will only be meaningful if Congress increases the amount received above current levels. TrainRiders does not want rail passenger service to compete for the already thinly-stretched Federal funds which help provide rural public transportation in Maine.

In other business, the high point of the winter for TrainRiders/ Northeast was, of course, the submitting of nearly 60,000 signatures to the Secretary of State, gathered by the political action committee, RailVision. Envelopes continued to arrive from town halls all over the state which had been too busy to meet the January 24 deadline. An estimated additional 20,000 signatures are now stacked up in a box in the back room of the TrainRiders/NE office.

I have continued to speak to Rotary

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Elections

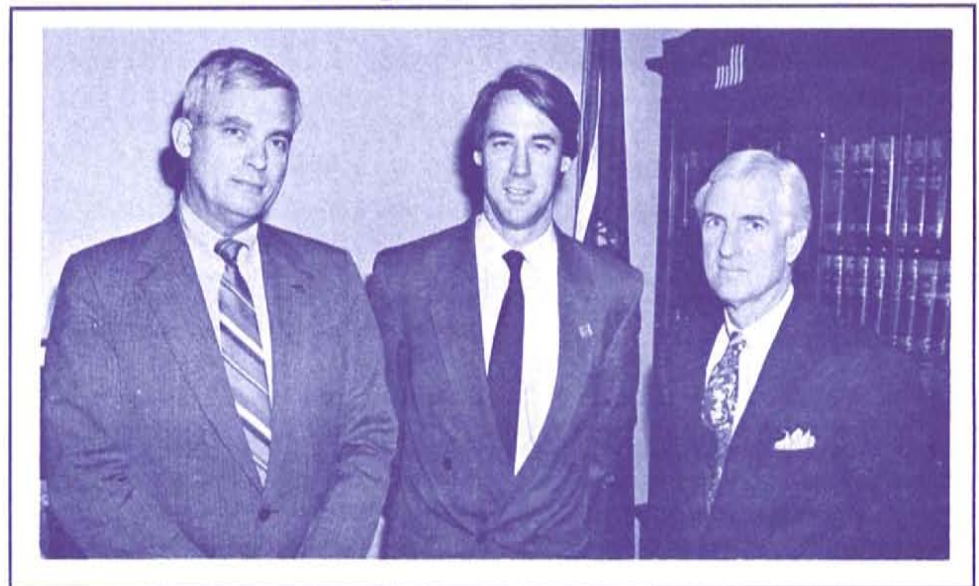
TrainRiders held their Annual Meeting on March 21, 1991. Wayne Davis reviewed accomplishments for 1990. MDOT Commissioner Dana Connors reviewed recent activities of his department affecting railroads in Maine, and pointed out how much has been accomplished and how critical it is that railroad rights of way are preserved for future use. He sees a much greater role for railroads, for both freight and passenger service, in Maine's future.

Charles O'Leary, New Hampshire DOT Commissioner, spoke to TrainRiders, emphasizing the legal differences between Maine and New Hampshire, where their State Constitution limits fuel tax use to highways only. While he saw a role for railroads, he was clearly less enthusiastic about railroad service than Commissioner Connors of Maine DOT!

The following were elected:

Chairman, Wayne Davis
Vice Chairman, John Hume
Secretary, Jeri Edgar
Treasurer, Peter Verrill
Clerk, F. Bruce Sleeper, Esq.

Directors were also elected.



Congressman Dick Swett (R-New Hampshire), flanked by Wayne E. Davis (left), TrainRiders/Northeast chairman and Maine Commissioner of Transportation Dana F. Connors, during their recent visit to Washington to seek funding for the Portland to Boston service.

ALONG THE TRACK

Amtrak Study Favors Maine Service

Amtrak's study, issued in July 1991, estimated that three daily Portland-Boston round trips would generate 223,000 passengers annually, an average of 102 passengers per train, or 13.5 million passenger miles, and revenues of \$2 million. Startup capital costs (which could be 80% Federally funded) are estimated at \$30 million for right of way improvements and \$19 million for cars and locomotives. First year operating subsidy needs are estimated at \$3.4 million (or about \$15.25 per passenger). It may be of interest that current subsidies for the Boston-Owls Head-Bar Harbor airline service are \$28.23 per passenger. (Order No. 90-8-43, August 27, 1990, USDOT).

It should be noted that the Amtrak study, and the Maine Department of Transportation study which preceded it, were based on having no direct rail connection between North and South Stations in Boston, thereby preventing would-be passengers between points north of Boston from riding through Boston to points south or west of Boston.

In contrast, New York celebrated the opening, on April 7, 1991, of the "West Side Connection" enabling Amtrak trains

on the Hudson River line to reach Penn Station, used by Amtrak's Northeast Corridor service between Boston and Washington, D.C. The connection, which cost over \$100 million, will save Amtrak \$600,000 annually in costs for the use of Grand Central Station. Once the new connection becomes familiar to travelers, it is estimated to produce 117,000 new riders annually, compared with the former need to transfer between Grand Central Station and Penn Station. One has to wonder how many more people would use Amtrak if it ran through Boston, as well, in the future. *Rail Travel News*

Rhode Island ARP Backs Service to Maine The May 30, 1991 meeting of the Rhode Island Association of Railroad Passengers adopted a list of proposed rail service improvements in response to a request from Amtrak. Among them were service to Maine and to Montreal, via Manchester, New Hampshire. They have also been supportive of the rail link through Boston. In turn, Wayne Davis is representing TrainRiders/Northeast in the Northeast Corridor Initiative Corporation, whose offices are in Providence R.I.

Swedish High Speed Train - Lessons For Maine - Part II A member of the Illinois Department of Transportation's fact-finding delegation to Europe, Ronald P. Boardman, rode Sweden's new high speed

train, the X2000, from Goteborg to Stockholm. He noted, "This is the same technology that has been chosen for the Florida High Speed Rail Network between Tampa, Orlando and Miami."

"The advantage of this train is that it can run on conventional tracks and round curves at much higher speeds with no passenger discomfort. Our top speed on this trip segment was 135 miles per hour, but the ABB equipment will be able to operate at 150 m.p.h. in the Tampa-Miami Corridor."

"The equipment will also be tested in the Northeast Corridor between New York and Boston. If X2000 train sets were used in this market, a three hour running time would be possible for the first time in history. It is hoped that the X2000 will also be brought to Illinois for a test run on the Chicago/St. Louis corridor."

The trip included a tour of the ABB (ASEA Brown Boveri) plant at Vasteras, Sweden. ABB has committed to come to Illinois to produce a detailed cost estimate and proposal for electrification and X2000 implementation of the Chicago-St. Louis corridor. Among other things, the Illinois delegation hopes to have ABB use the General Motors locomotive plant in La Grange, IL for assembly of ABB locomotives and equipment. *Railgram*, Illinois Assoc. of Railroad Passengers, April 1991.

NARP REGION 1 Annual Meeting in Portland

Region 1 of the National Association of Railroad Passengers held its Annual Meeting on March 2, 1991 at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, hosted by TrainRiders/Northeast. Dana Connors, Commissioner of the MDOT, noted that following the passage of the Staggers Act in 1980, rail freight traffic declined 50% in Maine, with a 33% reduction in trackage. He noted that recent acquisitions of track, approved by Maine voters in November, will allow a 100 mile network of freight service radiating from Brunswick. He stated that rail passenger service to Maine is, "A question of when."

W. Robert Bentley, President, Maine Coast Railroad, (which operates the Rockland Branch) spoke on changes in containerization and how it is affecting freight railroading. He outlined progress on the Maine Coast Railroad.

James Stoetzel of J. Stoetzel Associates, one of the subcontractors for Maine's recently completed Statewide Rail Passenger Service Study, gave a summary of available passenger equipment which might be used in Maine. He envisioned a "Maine Train" network radiating out from

Portland, using self-propelled diesel powered trains, to such points as Berwick, North Conway, N. H., Lewiston, Augusta and Rockland which would supplement the Amtrak service between Boston and Portland. He gave an overview of recent successful introductions and expansions of rail commuter service, including the Tri-Rail system between West Palm Beach and Miami, Florida - an area that had never had rail commuter service.

James Larson, Amtrak VP of Contract Administration, noted that in 1990 Amtrak carried 22,000,000 long distance passengers and 18,000,000 commuters on the various services it operates under contract with regional transportation authorities such as the MBTA in Boston. With 253 diesel locomotives (52 are on order), 65 electric "motors", 26 turbine powered locomotives and about 1,900 passenger cars, he noted that lack of equipment has been a major constraint to expansion of services. He noted that completion of Northeast Corridor electrification to Boston is five to seven years away, too late to release locomotives prior to the proposed Maine expansion of Amtrak

service. Larson hoped that Maine would become AMTRAK's 46th state. He said that restoration of passenger service to Maine fits with AMTRAK's goals in the next decade to add medium-distance routes, especially in areas where "driving is miserable, airfare is too costly and AMTRAK can provide frequency that will ensure adequate ridership to support the service, and that includes Maine."

Ross Capon, Executive Director of NARP, spoke of NARP's concerns over the lack of a rail link between South and North Stations in Boston. He also noted that the present funds for the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project are only a small part of the total needed to complete electrification to Boston and other aspects of the improvements.

Following the speakers, TrainRiders/Northeast presented an award to Samuel E. Stokes of Alstead, New Hampshire for his long-term efforts on behalf of rail passenger service in Northern New England.

Many attending the meeting from southern New England used the charter bus from Boston provided by VIP Charter Service of Portland.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

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Clubs, Kiwanis and on radio and TV talk shows. In February I participated in several programs sponsored by the League of Women Voters. In March I was the featured speaker at the Maine Association of Chambers of Commerce.

In New Hampshire, TrainRiders has been working with the Rockingham Planning Commission in Exeter, as it coordinates the activities of the Plaistow, Atkinson Transportation Advisory Committee (PATAC) in an effort to extend MBTA commuter rail service to the town of Plaistow.

TrainRiders has also been heavily involved with the North-South Station Coordinating Committee in Boston. This is a subcommittee of the Central Artery Project Committee dedicated to creating a rail link between North and South Stations.

In April, with the assistance of Michael Wethell and Maryanne Kowalski of Bombardier, I coordinated a visit to the Bombardier plant in Barre, Vermont with MDOT Commissioner Connors and New Hampshire's Commissioner for Transpor-

tation, Charles O'Leary. They were given a complete tour of the facility because it is assumed that the passenger cars for the new rail service to Maine and New Hampshire will be manufactured by Bombardier.

In May I represented TrainRiders and made a presentation at the National Association of Railroad Passengers annual meeting in Washington and attended Amtrak's 20th Anniversary ceremony. Henry Ferne, who is also a Director-At-Large for NARP, and I visited Congressman Andrews in Portland on May 10. Andrews expressed his support for TrainRiders' efforts.

Finally, now, more than ever before, TrainRiders/Northeast needs to build membership and continue the education process because, no matter what Congress does for us, the State will have to raise money through a bond issue in June, 1992. Between now and next March, it is hoped that TrainRiders members in Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire will hold several fund-raising events - all of which will require volunteer resources and

energy.

Again, I feel compelled to mention, for the benefit of those who do not know...we have no paid staff - and that includes me - all membership dues go to cover printing, office supplies and telephone expense - which is why new members and renewals are so very important to us. Please help us to continue the momentum.

TrainRiders/Northeast will be working on sponsoring a special Amtrak demonstration train from Boston to Bangor in late March or early April, 1992. It will stop at all the major towns to let people walk through the cars and see what modern rail passenger equipment is like. If the MDOT has repaired the washout on the line between Augusta and Brunswick (now owned by the State), the train may return via the State Capital for the benefit of the Legislature.

Following our success in getting the Passenger Rail Service Act passed, our efforts must continue. Many voters need to be informed of the advantages modern rail passenger service can offer Maine.

The Trainrider

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Forward & Address
Correction Requested

TrainRiders/Northeast is an organization of current and potential train users, interested citizens, associations and businesses who are committed to bringing modern and efficient passenger trains back to Northern New England