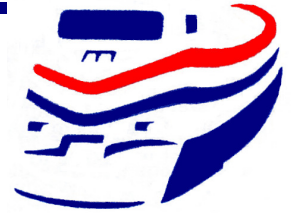


TRAINRIDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF **TRAINRIDERS/NORTHEAST**



Jim Nawrocki Photo

WORK RESUMES ON FREEPORT BRUNSWICK EXTENSION



John Ewing Photo

After completing most of the new continuously welded rail installation during the 2010 construction season, work has recently resumed to continue improvements on the Freeport/Brunswick extension. Slated for this construction season is the replacement of crossties, grade crossing and ROW improvements, signal work and the construction of passenger platforms at both Freeport and Brunswick

The *High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program* was announced in the spring of 2009, under which the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority was awarded \$35 million through a national competitive application process. The state of Maine committed the remaining \$3 million to complete the project.

This expansion includes the rehabilitation of approximately 27 miles of track owned by Pan Am Railways north of Portland and 1.2 miles in Brunswick owned by the Maine DOT. In addition to the existing freight trains currently operating on the line, the Maine Eastern Railroad has been providing freight and passenger excursion service between Brunswick and Rockland. This expansion is important because it will provide more mobility to Maine residents, increase tourism and economic activity, support the redevelopment of the Brunswick Naval Air Station and make rail travel to nearby Bowdoin College a reality.



Mike. Lyne Photo

The project is being managed by NNEPRA and their engineering consultant VHB. The majority of the work will be completed by Pan Am Railways labor forces and equipment, with certain elements to be constructed by Maine DOT. Upon completion of construction, Amtrak will extend two of the Downeaster's current daily round trips to Freeport and Brunswick and will connect cross-platform with the Maine Eastern for further travel east to Rockland.

Administrator Joseph Szabo of the Federal Railroad Administration congratulated the State of Maine and NNEPRA for becoming the first recipient of American Recovery & Reinvestment Act funds. He said, "Maine sets the example for the other states. You're going to be the very first of our rail projects to put rail into the ground."

Track Improvements

The first work element of the project is the replacement of decades-old jointed Rail with new continuously welded rail (CWR). The first shipment of rail was unloaded on August 2, beginning in Brunswick and heading northerly. Pan Am Railway forces installed the new rail last year onto new tie plates and are replacing 15 turnouts along the route. Approximately one third of the ties will ultimately be replaced with new ballast to support the track and provide drainage. The Yarmouth Junction diamond will also be replaced, setting the stage for the future expansion of service to the Lewiston/Auburn area.

The project is expected to take two years to complete. What will it take to upgrade 30 miles of track? Here are some the numbers:

- 35,000 ties
- 168,570 tie plates
- 522,650 track spikes
- 294,630 rail anchors
- 42,000 tons of ballast

Passenger Platforms

While the train stations are being developed through public/private partnerships in the communities of Freeport and Brunswick, the construction of passenger platforms is included in this project. The 400 foot long elevated platform in Brunswick will be located right in front of Main Street Station and will be used by both Downeaster and Maine Eastern passengers. The Freeport platform will also be 400 feet long, but it will include high and low level boarding areas. Both locations will have canopies, lights and snow melting heating elements and will be fully ADA compliant. It is anticipated that an additional 36,500 Downeaster passengers will be generated from this service extension annually.

Right Of Way Improvements

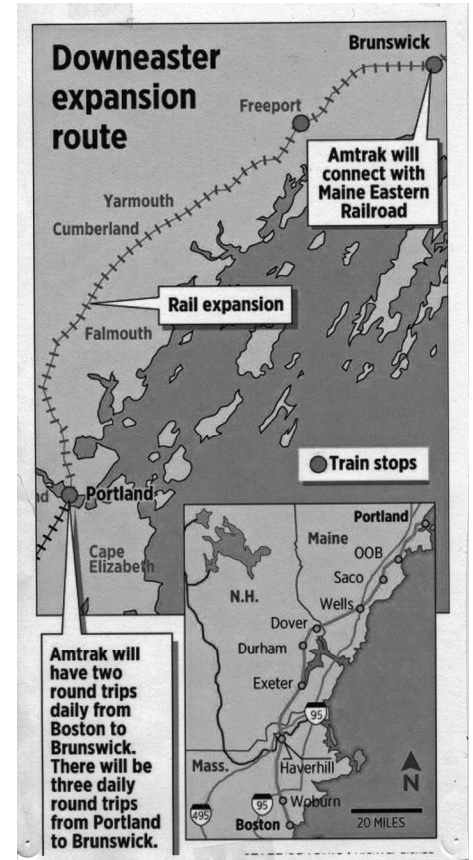
The project includes various area improvements such as ditching, the rehabilitation of three stone arches, reconstruction of headwalls and brush clearing. Fourteen culverts will be replaced or rehabilitated and the deck timbers of the Royal River Bridge will be replaced. A longstanding drainage deficiency in Brunswick, known as "Deep Cut", has already been addressed and proper drainage installed as part of the project's scope.

Grade Crossings, Signals & Communications

The corridor between Portland and Brunswick includes 36 at-grade crossings, all of which will be upgraded during the project. These crossings will be completely rehabilitated with new bituminous concrete pavement and rubberized flangeway seals for a smoother transition across the track. Vegetation management will occur around crossing locations to improve visibility.

In addition to the grade crossings, most of the existing wayside signals will be upgraded including new predictors, signals and gates as well as in-track signaling. The project will also extend the signal system on the Brunswick Branch to encompass the entire operating limits of the Downeaster service. The extension will simplify and enhance the safety of train operations and allow for faster speeds of up to 70 MPH.

Upon completion of the project, the Downeaster will begin serving Freeport and Brunswick with two daily round trips to Boston and one daily round trip just to Portland. The schedule is still under development.



Mike. Lyne Photo

Source: NNEPRA Downeaster Expansion Project Overview

Chairman's Update



To all those members and friends who responded to our recent "Dear Friend" letter as we attempted to solve our growing financial crises, a giant **Thank you!**

The move from the old office to the new was another sign of great support. Amtrak crew members pitched in with our board members and a fleet of trucks and moved everything in one day. That outpouring of genuine hands-on help was gratifying for all of us. So, another special **Thank You!**

You may remember when our Webmaster Bill Lord redesigned our website, he designed it to be *interactive*. At that time, we asked all members to send us their email addresses so that we could transmit our newsletter by email. Unfortunately less than 10% of our members complied so we will try again with this printed issue to ask everyone. *Please* - send us your email addresses. We need your address to not only distribute our newsletter, but to be able reach you with important Alerts.

Unhappily, the NH House and Senate have passed a bill to abolish the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority. That bill now awaits approval or veto by Governor Lynch. Most of our NH Downeaster commuters have unfortunately never signed onto our site nor joined TrainRiders. If they had, we would have been able to alert them to give them a chance to reject such legislation.

The Downeaster continues to astound with its growing ridership figures and highest customer satisfaction. We continue to expect that the extension of Downeaster service to Freeport and Brunswick will happen on

time in 2012, and we are happy to report that improvements are continually being made to the core service between Portland and Boston to reduce running time and improve ride quality.

Future Exeter Transportation Center



It's a big step forward for Exeter, the only Downeaster stop in New Hampshire without an operational station building.

Last fall, Article 36 on the town ballot asked voters to establish a Capital Reserve Fund for the purposes of installing a parking payment system, acquiring land and making capital improvements to the Exeter Train Station, including property redevelopment and matches for grants.

TrainRiders/NE Board member and Exeter Station Committee Chair Bob Hall said this warrant article represented the first step in the future expansion of the station. The committee worked with the New Hampshire DOT and received a \$282,240 grant to convert the old baggage building into a new Exeter Transportation Center. The center would provide indoor shelter, rest rooms and a dedicated area for purchasing tickets, and would not only support the Amtrak service, but all other modes of transportation.

Just to purchase and renovate the building, the projected cost is \$350,700. The town applied for federal grant funds through two programs: the NHDOT 2009-10 Transportation Enhancement (TE)

Program grant and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program. The total project amounts to \$403,200, with 70 percent, approximately \$282,000, being covered by the grant (available in 2012) and the remaining 30 percent being paid for by the town. Residents approved the town's commitment at a March 8, 2011 public warrant article vote 1127 - 657.

Hall said \$49,000 of the town's portion of the funding would be offset by in-kind services such as the restoration being done by students from the Seacoast School of Technology.

Congratulations to Bob, the committees and the NHDOT!

Excerpted from Seacoast Online

What does it cost you to drive to Boston?

We all know that as gas prices begin to soar again, affordable public transportation options become even more attractive as an alternative to driving.

Let's do a couple quick car vs. train calculations using the IRS current estimate of what your average private vehicle costs you per mile at \$0.51 and Downeaster ticket prices:

Portland-Boston one way by car:

104 miles x \$0.51 = \$53.04
+ \$30 (parking) + \$5 (tolls) = \$88.04

Portland-Boston one way by train:

\$24 (peak), \$19 (off peak)

Dover-Boston monthly commute: (20 work days, 130 miles round trip)

130 miles x \$0.51 x 20 = \$1326.00
+ \$350 (monthly parking permit)
+ \$3.86 x 20 = \$77.20 (tolls)
= \$1753.20

Dover-Boston monthly pass:

\$299 (unlimited trips)

Need we say more?

The 23rd Annual Meeting of TrainRiders/Northeast will be held on Tuesday, May 17th, 2011 at the Holiday Inn By The Bay in Portland, Maine.



The program will begin with registration from 5:00 - 6:00 PM and end around 9:00 PM. This year's keynote speaker will be Mr. Joseph C. Szabo, Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration. We will, of course, also welcome Amtrak's Vice President of Government Affairs Joe McHugh, NNEPRA's Executive Director Patricia Quinn, MDOT Commissioner David Bernhardt and President of Pan Am Railways David Fink [invited].

Cost for the event including dinner is just \$40 per person (members), \$45 per person (non-members). The hotel has offered a very competitive room price of \$89 per night for those attendees wishing to stay, but room reservations must be made by April 17. Call the Holiday Inn at 1-800-345-5050 or visit their web site at www.innbythebay.com for more details.

Come join with fellow TNE members from many states, guests, federal, state and local officials and business leaders.

Mark your calendars and give us a call at (207) 879-7245 or find details and the registration form posted on our website www.trainridersne.org.

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