

TRAINRIDER

The Newsletter of TrainRiders/Northeast



Happy Holidays!

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Submitted by Wayne Davis

You're probably asking, what would I really like for TrainRiders for the Holidays? Well, high on my list is the train service to Portland, but it will be here next year. So, what are some of my immediately attainable wishes?

First, we need membership renewals and additional members. How about giving gift memberships or inviting another friend or relative to join us? Remember, getting passenger train service to Portland is only the first of our goals, set in 1989. We have a lot to do to get service to other Maine points beyond Portland. We're working with New Hampshire and Vermont rail advocates to improve passenger service for all of northern New England. We look forward to again being able to travel to and from eastern Canada by rail, too. We can't do it without your continuing help and that of others who may have thought we were not serious when we said trains would return to Portland. We are, and with your help, they will!

Second, would any members with corporate business experience within driving distance of Portland like to join our Board of Directors? We normally meet in Portland on the third Thursday of the month. Some of us have been giving our time and support since 1989. If interested, call me at the phone number below.

Third, we can always use volunteer help. We have ongoing and occasional jobs, such as mailing newsletters, that need volunteers. Call (207) TRY-RAIL (879-7245) so we can use your time to best advantage.

Fourth, we can always use another pair of eyes to scan newspapers for rail-related articles, editorials and letters to the editor. Send your clippings, with date and name of newspaper indicated, to TrainRiders/Northeast at the address below.

For the New Year, save the date of Saturday, March 23, 1996, for our ANNUAL MEETING. We are planning on an array of speakers. Time and place to be announced.

Happy Holidays!

TRAINRIDER ACTIVITIES

Portland Decides on Train Station

Portland's building committee voted on November 16 for a design with a round, barrel arch roof over the passenger waiting rooms and other facilities. The 5,000 square foot building is expected to cost between \$747,000 and \$782,000 to construct, with a total cost of under \$3.0 million, including land acquisition of \$1.8 to \$2.0 million. TrainRiders Board member Cynthia Garfield, a member of the committee, praised the architects for doing, "a very good job of squeezing it in with the available financing."

The city's request for more funding for the station through the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority was turned down November 17th. Portland has already received \$1.3 million in federal funds. Wells received \$1.2 million in federal funds to construct a new station, matched by \$300,000 from the Maine Turnpike Authority. Old Orchard Beach matched its \$150,000 in federal funds with \$37,500 in state Department of Economic and Community Development funds. Saco plans to spend about \$200,000 in local money to match about \$800,000 in federal funds for its new station.

—Portland Press Herald (Nov. 17, 18, 1995)

Trains and Tourism— Kennebec River Discovery Excursion

As a fitting follow-up to the April 25th participation of TrainRiders at the State House Tourism Day, DownEast Rail planned the Kennebec River Discovery Rail Excursion program. On 9 September 1995, Downeast Rail conducted the first "TRAIN AS A TOOL" rail trip from Brunswick to Augusta and return. This all-day outing was run in cooperation with local businesses, restaurants, and museums in the Richmond-Gardiner-Hallowell-Augusta area.

The trip demonstrated the use of alternative transportation as a means to bring out-of-state tourists and local folks to the attractions of the Kennebec Valley and Capitol area without their cars.

(continued on the next page)

The train left Brunswick at 8:30 AM with stops in Richmond, Gardiner, Hallowell and Augusta. The train also ran from Augusta to Gardiner and return during the day, enabling those interested to stop at more than one community. It was reported that this is the first time the train actually stopped in Hallowell since the first heyday of rail, which brought smiles to many faces. Among the guests on board was TrainRiders Northeast Chairman, Wayne Davis.

This was "not just a ride on the train." Promotional literature listing participating businesses was sent out in ticket mailings with rail historical information graciously provided by The 470 Railroad Club of Portland. Businesses and restaurants provided incentives to travelers to visit their establishments, with a cellular phone link for restaurant reservations taken on board the train. Connecting bus transportation was provided in downtown Augusta for visits to Fort Western and the Maine State Museum, and the Children's Discovery Museum was within walking distance downtown. DownEast Rail members provided on-board services, including narration on historic and other features of interest. A 16 mile ride along the Kennebec River was thrown in for good measure.

This kind of passenger excursion points up the possibilities for the multiple use of specialized diesel railcars for weekday commuter and weekend charter trip service on light density lines. Several decades ago the Budd Rail Diesel Car (RDC) was built in quantities for light density service, with the last built in 1962. The British Columbia Railway has operated RDCs since 1956 on lines with varying passenger loads and seasonal fluctuation, with continuing success, according to a BCR administrator.

According to *Railway Age* magazine, various builders in Germany and Great Britain are producing a new generation of self-propelled cars in 2 and 3 car configurations and with 75 to 100 mph maximum speeds. With the advent of Amtrak in Maine, the State should consider the use of self-propelled railcars and buses as feeders for that service.

Passengers on the trip also witnessed the arrival of the first revenue freight car to return to this segment of the "Lower Road" since the re-opening of the heavy mainline track from Brunswick to Augusta in 1993. Maine Coast Railroad delivered a loaded car to Pine State Distributors on the Augusta-Hallowell city line that day, delivered a second car on 12 October, and expects to move more in the future. Each car movement eliminates almost two heavy trucks from the highways.

Thanks to DownEast Rail members John Coughlin, Joe Gray, Bob Gross, Ed Hanscom, Newt Hinckley, Lou Johnson, Dave Potter, Jack Sutton and Ralph Werber for organizing the event, and to the Maine Coast Railroad of Wiscasset and Quality Copy of Hallowell for their assistance. ●

—Sylvanus Doughty, DownEast Rail

New Hampshire Members Report

The Town of Exeter recently completed a land survey of the station site in Exeter. Now that reuse of the site for passenger rail purposes is closer, the value of the site has increased — at least in the eyes of the owner. Bob Hall noted that, for the recent football game at Exeter between Phillips Andover and Phillips Exeter academies, 22 buses were chartered. The crowds used to travel by trains on the Boston & Maine (they are both on the line between Portland and Boston). At Durham, where weekend Amtrak service has been proposed, there is a new ice arena next to the station on the UNH campus. Certainly, the railroad can serve the needs of some sporting events, just as MARC is doing for baseball games at the Camden Yard stadium in Baltimore, MD.

In Dover, the 400 car parking lot adjacent to the station will shortly be vacated by its primary user, Liberty Mutual Insurance Co., which is moving its offices from renovated mill space in downtown Dover to a new site near the outskirts of the city. The depot building, from the latter days of Boston & Maine passenger service, will probably be remodeled and improved for the new station. Dover has about \$200,000 available for its share of station costs.

On September 27th, a meeting of the New Hampshire Railroad Revitalization Association was held in Tilton regarding reactivation of the old Northern Railroad of New Hampshire between Concord and West Lebanon, just across the river from White River Jct., Vermont. Wayne Davis was one of the guest speakers at the meeting.

As reported in the *Concord Monitor* and the *Manchester Union Leader*, there is significant interest by railroads to operate the line for

TrainRiders/Northeast Welcomes New Members

July 1995: William Crain, Pownal, ME; Timothy James, Portland, ME; Edward Norris, Portland, ME.

August: Warren and Jane Blake, Jefferson, ME; Erik Lund, Woolwich, ME; A. Roach, Alexandria, VA; Robert Sloane, Woolwich, ME.

November: James Bagnell, E. Boston, MA; William Cleaves, So. Portland, ME; Douglas Cook, Kennebunkport, ME; Pamela Gleichman, Portland, ME; Evan Issokson, Durham, NH; Johanna Kearney, Falmouth, ME; Thomas Kinney, Portland, ME; Robert Lenz, Clarence, NY; Dwight Smith, Kearsarge, NH.

December: Edward Buchanan, Boston, MA.

freight service. Jim Davis, General Manager of the New England Central Railroad, spoke at the meeting and both the New England Central and the Mascoma Valley Railroad responded to a New Hampshire DOT notice to railroads interested in operating the Northern. Traffic potentials are very good, with one paper recycling plant proposing to handle 235,000 tons of product annually. The line, about 59 miles of which is owned by the State of New Hampshire, parallels I-89 between Concord and White River Jct. Advocates of its reuse cite it as a short route between Boston and Montreal.

Guilford Transportation Industries, Inc., owns sections at both ends of the line and has failed to reach agreement with state officials and others wanting to re-establish rail freight service on parts of the line. NHDOT has plans to remove seven rail bridges on the state-owned portion of the line. Removal of the bridges would, of course, make reactivation of the line more expensive. The cost of making the line suitable for freight use is now estimated by the state to be about \$30 million.

The Conway Scenic Railroad, which opened its line from Bartlett to Crawford Notch to the public on Labor Day Weekend, had sold-out trains for the first weekend and for all Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday trains until the end of their regular season on Columbus Day Weekend. Saturday, October 14, saw a Railfan's Weekend run up the Notch and the first steam locomotive operated to Bartlett in 40 years. The 470 Railroad Club ran an excursion with 240 passengers to the Notch on October 21. The Conway Scenic RR will operate weekends from Conway to North Conway through December 17, 1995. The first operating weekend in 1996 falls on Easter, April 6th and 7th. Call 1-800-232-5251 or 1-603-356-5251 for information and reservations. ●

—Robert Hall, Bill Hunter,

The 470 (Sep., Nov.), NHRRRA Northern Line Update, Nov. 8, 1995, Conway Scenic Railroad.

Mountain Division Transportation Corridor

The Mountain Division Alliance continued to meet throughout the summer. At the September 19th meeting in Fryeburg, ME, Allan Bartlett, MDOT, informed us that Guilford Transportation Industries, Inc., (GTI) was now excluding about 5.4 miles of track west of Westbrook from the portion of the former Mountain Division being offered for sale to the State of Maine. This would eliminate the requirement under the Interstate Commerce Commission, for GTI to accept or forward freight for any future operator of the western portion of the Mountain Division. At the October 26th meeting, Allan indicated that, though this is unacceptable to the State, GTI has not changed its position. Perhaps GTI fears a future shortline operator could be competition for east-west traffic through connections at St. Johnsbury, VT.

Noting that GTI now interchanges traffic with the New Hampshire Northcoast RR, serving the gravel pits at Ossipee, NH, and with the Milford & Bennington RR in southern New Hampshire, neither of which

operates a "through line," I suggested that, if the State were able to offer GTI an agreement not to allow freight traffic over the Mountain Division beyond some point east of Whitefield, New Hampshire, perhaps they would agree to accept interchange traffic from another short line. This could, for example, allow the Conway Scenic RR and the Mount Washington Cog Rly. to receive coal and other supplies by rail, instead of by highway. After all, GTI now interchanges freight with the Maine Coast RR and the Belfast & Moosehead Lake RR in Maine. Jack Sutton observed that this should be discussed by the Governors of Maine and New Hampshire. Perhaps Vermont's Governor should be included, since Vermont has considerable experience in purchasing and arranging for short line operation of various rail lines abandoned by larger systems since the 1960s.

Deadline for negotiations on the Mountain Division has been informally extended. The MDOT retains right of "first refusal" before the line could pass to other owners.

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Senator Snowe Brings Amtrak to Town



In August, a special Amtrak display train came to Portland. Dignitaries standing at the site for the proposed passenger rail station are (from left to right): **Mike Murray**, Project Director for MDOT, **Wayne Davis**, **Tom Downs**, President of Amtrak, **U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe** and **Maine Senator Philip Harriman**.

Mountain Division Transportation Corridor

(continued from previous page)

Planning for the corridor continues, with much emphasis on the general economic benefits possible with State acquisition of the rail line. It was noted that the Shawnee Peak ski area, on Pleasant Mountain in Bridgton and Denmark, was closer to the track at Fryeburg than Sunday River is from the station in Bethel, ME. Also, the Selectmen of Sebago mentioned that Douglas Mountain, in Sebago, is the second most visited mountain in Maine, after Mt. Cadillac in Acadia National Park. Over this Columbus Day weekend, 186 automobiles were parked on Douglas Mountain (there is parking for four vehicles in a lot at the Nature Conservancy preserve) and concerns were raised about access for emergency vehicles, as well as lack of toilet facilities. The mountain is about five miles from the Mountain Division track in either East or West Baldwin, with the former allowing access over Route 107. Another instance where use of public transportation could reduce the negative effects of tourism. The Selectmen were also interested in possible commuter trains to the Greater Portland area, pointing out that about 1000 Sebago residents commute to Portland daily by auto and this is expected to increase with the expansion of National Semiconductor in South Portland.

At the Alliance meeting held on November 28, 1995, at Stimson Hall in Gray, Maine, some members expressed frustration at the lack of progress on the rail related issues, which are the key to the anticipated economic benefits to the region. The next meeting is scheduled for January 16, 1996, in Gray. All meetings run from 9:30 to 11:00 AM. Call David Willauer at (207) 774-9891 for additional information. ●

ALONG THE TRACK

Sunday River Ski Train Being Prepared for Third Season

The Sunday River Silver Bullet Ski Express, which ran this summer in Vermont, has returned to Maine and is now undergoing routine maintenance in preparation for its third season.

All trains depart Portland at 6:50 AM, Yarmouth at 7:05 AM, Auburn at 7:40 AM and arrive at Bethel at 8:50 AM. Return trips depart Bethel at 4:30 PM, arrive Auburn at 5:35 PM, Yarmouth at 6:20 PM and Portland at 6:35 PM. Food and liquid refreshments will be available on board.

Fares vary by the day of the week. Children under 5 ride free when accompanying a fare-paying adult.

Season passes on the train are available at \$209 for adults and \$135 for juniors. Lower rates apply when combined with season lift tickets.

Reservations are recommended. For information, call (207) 824-7245.

The Bethel station and movie theater at the station have been completed. Paving of the new road at the station site was done on November 15th. ●

—Dominique Neveux,
Sunday River.

—DAYS OF OPERATION—

DAILY

December 26, 1995—January 1, 1996

FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY

January 5—February 11, 1996

DAILY

February 16-25, 1996

FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY

March 1-31, 1996

—FARES—

	Adults	Jrs (6-12)
Fridays	\$15.00	\$11.00
Saturdays	19.00	15.00
Sundays/Holidays	17.00	13.00

Maine Coast Railroad Enjoys Banner Year

The headline was "borrowed" from the article in the September 29, 1995, *Portland Press Herald*, which indicated that the railroad had carried 12,783 passengers through the end of August, 28 percent more than last year. This traffic was attracted to a short, 14 mile round trip ride between Wasscasset and Newcastle operated twice daily. Debbie Hays, marketing director, indicated Maine Coast may run a bar and dining car next summer and is considering running tourist trains from Brunswick and Bath.

Meanwhile, Maine voters on November 7th approved bond issues which included \$525,000 in State money to upgrade three miles of track between Dragon Cement in Thomaston and Rockland used for Dragon's cement trains to the barge

loading facility on Rockland Harbor. Other Knox County MDOT projects to be financed through the bond issue include \$2.8 million for Knox County Airport improvements, \$1.9 million for the Route One bridge at Ducktrap River in Lincolnville and \$1.1 million to replace the Route One bridge over the Medomak River in Waldoboro. Knox County transportation bond issue totals, including expected Federal matching dollars, are \$4.48 million for highways, \$2.8 million for air travel and \$525,000 for rail.

On September 23, the 470 Railroad Club sponsored a passenger excursion on the Maine Coast RR from Brunswick to the harborside transfer facilities in Rockland. ●

—The Courier-Gazette (Rockland, Maine)
(Oct. 19, 1995), The 470 (Oct.),
Portland Press Herald (Sep. 29, 1995).

Members are invited to submit articles on their train rides, here or abroad, to share their experiences with others. Remember, there are many who have never ridden a train, other than as a tourist attraction or dinner train, who have little idea what it is like to travel by train.

Maine Coast Railroad—A Look Ahead

The railroad's freight business is increasing. With its recent resumption of service to a customer in Augusta, the Maine Coast RR is now operating, at least on an "as needed" basis, two of the three State-owned rail lines radiating out from Brunswick, where it interchanges with Guilford Transportation Industries, Inc. (GTI). The former Lewiston Lower Branch, with rail now removed from its last mile or so in Lewiston, has seen no recent traffic and the crossing, on Pleasant Street in Brunswick, has been paved over. However, the track improvements between Portland and the Massachusetts state line resulting from the need to operate Amtrak passenger trains at reasonable speeds could result in higher freight train operating speeds by GTI and improved freight service for customers served by the Maine Coast RR. This may attract more on-line and off-line freight business.

The Rockland Branch has depended, since it replaced the train and automobile/truck ferries across the Kennebec River in 1927, on the Carlton Bridge. Current estimated repair costs for the bridge, which carries a single track beneath the two lanes of the highway level, are \$50 million. On September 28, 1995, Governor King told members of a business group in Bath that he favored a less expensive option than replacing the Carlton Bridge with a four lane highway bridge incorporating a rail line beneath it, with lift bridge, at a cost estimated at \$205 million. The King proposal, involving a separate four lane highway bridge with 75 foot clearance, less vertical clearance than the 135 feet offered to ships by the present lift span, and repairing the Carlton Bridge for rail use only, is estimated to cost \$100 million, presumably plus the cost of repairing the rail portion of the existing bridge. Bath business people objected to the reduced clearance of the fixed portion of the bridge, wanting to have the ability to attract tall ships and cruise vessels to wharves above the present bridge.

They are adamant in their desire to have any future highway bridge of four lane width.

While, as a frequent user of Route One through Bath, your editor well understands the demand that four lanes be included in any future spans across the Kennebec at Bath, that, by itself, will not solve the traffic problem. Route One between Bath and the Route 196 interchange in Brunswick is four lanes, as is outer Pleasant Street in Brunswick (though congested with many highway-oriented businesses). Completion of the bypass through Topsham to Route I-95 should greatly reduce the present traffic backups and will provide a four lane highway, mostly limited access, from Bath to I-95. Route One east of the Kennebec River, with the exception of a short stretch in Woolwich between the bridge and just beyond Route 127 (north), is a two lane highway. Unless Route One is expanded to four lanes a significant distance east of Woolwich, the congestion now experienced within Bath when the Iron Works lets out will simply move further east to Woolwich. In other words, the four lane fixed bridge would be of significant benefit mostly to emergency vehicles, since at most traffic levels, only one direction of traffic on the bridge would be backed up on both lanes at any given time.

To avoid this scenario, Route One would need to be a four lane, limited access highway (as it will be south of Bath) at least to the intersection of Route 27 in Edgecomb, where a significant portion of the traffic "splits," some going to the Boothbay Region and some continuing further east. Any four lane to two lane reduction that does not include splitting the traffic will simply result in having the traffic "funnel" into two lanes, with resultant delays at peak hours. If Route One becomes four lanes all the way to Edgecomb, some means will have to be decided upon by Wiscasset to bypass the downtown, since it is not possible to create a four lane highway through downtown Wiscasset. In other words, the cost of the new bridge across the Kennebec is only a small

part of the cost of continued total dependence on the highway to move people.

As an alternative, the Carlton Bridge could be repaired (concrete barriers recently have been installed to improve safety for highway users) and rail commuter service could be instituted as soon as possible at least between Brunswick and Wiscasset or North Edgecomb and continued while the new highway bridge and any four laning east of Woolwich are under construction. This, given adequate rail service which would attract local riders, would relieve some of the pressure to construct the second highway bridge and its connecting four lane highways and reduce the highway congestion which inevitably accompanies construction.

As soon as Amtrak or other long-distance passenger service comes to Brunswick (the Town Council in Brunswick voted September 5 to support extension of Amtrak service beyond Portland to Brunswick—serving Freeport, as well), the commuter service on the Rockland Branch could offer passengers connections to Portland and beyond. Extension of the Brunswick commuter service from North Edgecomb to Rockland would allow Amtrak passengers to reach Rockland and other intermediate points, thereby somewhat reducing the seasonal tourist traffic which now plagues Route One in Mid-Coast Maine. Feeder buses to locations not on the rail line, such as Boothbay Harbor and Camden, as well as "off-peak" buses paralleling the rail line, could extend the usefulness of any rail service to more residents and visitors.

The Carlton Bridge and Bath's traffic problems need attention. Let's use the opportunity to let true intermodalism (rail and highway working together) solve the problems with minimum inconvenience and maximum advantage to Mid-Coast residents, businesses and tourists. Isn't that "The Way Life Should Be"? ●

—Maine Sunday Telegram (Sep. 17, 1995),
Portland Press Herald (Sep. 29, 1995),
The 470 (Nov. 1995).

VERMONT

Rail Passenger News

The Sunday River ski train rolling stock spent the summer in Vermont, transporting passengers between Burlington and Middlebury under the sponsorship of Sugarbush Resort. Vermont Railway, which operated the trains, repainted one of its locomotives to match the color scheme of the passenger cars. By October 1st, over 34,000 persons had boarded the train. Although not expecting to make a profit, Sugarbush Resort officials expected to break even this year, the first year the new service has been offered.

Meanwhile, the State of Vermont has entered into a \$1.0 million joint venture to upgrade the Clarendon & Pittsford Railroad track between Whitehall, NY, now served by Amtrak's Adirondack, and Rutland, VT, in anticipation of future Amtrak service

from New York City to Rutland. A study by the Killington Ski Area last year found that ski revenues would likely increase by 30% if timely train service were available from New York City. Vermont's Joint Legislative Committee on the Future of Passenger Rail Service in Vermont is studying how much money would be brought into the state if the proposed Amtrak service is extended north from Rutland to Middlebury and Burlington. (A connection at Essex Jct., just east of Burlington, could be made with Amtrak's current Vermonter; making two Amtrak routes through Vermont available to travelers.)

Amtrak's state-sponsored Vermonter, which began running on April 2nd, has doubled its passenger count since its start. The Vermonter consist includes a specially painted baggage car designed to carry bicycles (uncrated) and skis, in season.

Negotiations continue to have the train's run extended to Montreal, the former terminus of the Montrealer. Buses still provide a connection between St. Albans and Montreal.

Vermont contributed \$581,000 for Amtrak to operate the train for one year, with a guarantee of another \$169,000 if needed. Vermont is now pressing for elimination of the Claremont, NH, stop and adding stops in Randolph and Windsor, VT, pointing out the fact that New Hampshire contributes nothing to the operation of the Vermonter, which provides New Hampshire's only Amtrak stop. (Both White River Jct. and Windsor are on the Vermont side of the Connecticut River, easily reached by highway bridges from New Hampshire.) ●

—The 470 (Nov. 1995),
Railpace Newsmagazine (Sep., Nov. 1995).

RHODE ISLAND

Rail Activities

Amttrak has continued to prepare for electrification of its "Shore Line" through Rhode Island. By late July, three bridges had been undercut to increase vertical clearances; two local roads in Westerly and Exeter and one major highway interchange in Cranston. Work was underway on another local road in Providence, with a second local road scheduled once that is completed. The old Pawtucket station was to be undercut this summer.

Rhode Island DOT has proposed spending \$400,000 in FY 1996 to complete rehabilitation and relocation of Kingston station, the same amount in FY 1997 for a study of the Newport, RI, to Tiverton, RI, portion of the line which connects with Fall River, MA, and \$14.5 million in FY 1998 for stations at Wickford Jct. and Warwick for a proposed commuter service to Providence.

Fall River is to be served by an extension of the MBTA commuter service from Boston, so rehabilitation of the route from Newport to Fall River would make possible direct rail travel between Boston and Newport. The State received a \$250,000 settlement from a barge company for damage caused to the railroad bridge across the tidal Sakonnet River between Portsmouth and Tiverton.

—All Aboard: Rhode Island (Vol. 8, No. 2, 1995)

Bombardier Opens New Railcar Plant in New York

New York Governor George Pataki joined Bombardier and local officials on December 1, 1995, in dedicating Bombardier's new 61,761 square foot railcar plant in Plattsburgh, NY. The plant, which opened in August and now employs about 150 people, is working on 34 push-pull commuter cars for Metro-North Railroad. Along with its Barre, VT, and Auburn, NY, plants, Bombardier is well located to

supply rail equipment to U.S. users. Its North American Transportation Equipment Group also includes plants in Canada and Mexico. Bombardier purchased rights to former U.S. railcar manufacturers, Pullman and Budd in 1986 and 1987, respectively. They have supplied the MBTA with commuter cars and rapid transit cars.

—Bombardier Press Release, Dec. 1, 1995.

MBTA Developments

After a good start, with passenger loads exceeding projections, the MBTA commuter service from Worcester to Boston has suffered disruptions from Conrail freight traffic on the "Boston Line," the main link with the rest of their system. Delays of up to 60 minutes have caused ridership to drop about 20% from peak loads of about 500 during the summer. On July 28, 1995, the MBTA solicited bids to begin restoration of a second track from Westboro to Worcester, the contract being awarded to Conrail. The MBTA will also construct commuter stations in Millbury and Grafton beginning in the spring of 1996. The walls of the old Union Station in Worcester, now protected by a new roof, are being dried out to begin restoration of the long dilapidated structure.

On September 21, the MBTA advertised for bids to construct the ten mile extension of the Ipswich line to Newburyport. Cost estimates have increased over the years to \$46 million, with up to \$10 million being allocated for the station, which will include newsstand, restrooms and other services. There will also be layover facilities and parking lots at the Newbury-Newburyport line. The site is on old Route One, a short distance from the I-95 exit to Newburyport. Actual bids are anticipated to be significantly lower than the maximum.

On November 30, 1995, Governor Weld, who had announced he was seeking a U. S. Senate seat the day before, announced to a breakfast of the South Shore Chamber of Commerce that the still controversial Greenbush Branch will be rebuilt for rail commuter service. Final environmental reports are

expected to take six months, with construction to start in 1997 and trains to roll in 1999. Costs to restore the approximately 17 mile line from Braintree to Greenbush are estimated at \$215 million. It is anticipated to remove 4,400 automobiles daily from the overloaded Southeast Expressway. Experimental high speed commuter boat service from Scituate is to start this winter and is expected to be a longer term option for commuters from Hull and Weymouth (where the run would be made entirely within the more sheltered waters of Quincy Bay and Boston Harbor).

Meanwhile, track, signal and station improvements continue on the Plymouth and Middleborough lines of the MBTA "Old Colony" restoration project. The new passenger track is being laid alongside the Conrail freight

Landing Road. The right of way in Kingston, where a major parking facility is planned adjacent to Route 3, the Southeast Expressway, has been cleared and awaits track structure and ballast.

Further south, the MBTA plans to extend Stoughton service an additional two and one-half miles to North Easton on a line once considered for restoration all the way to Taunton. The extension is expected to cost \$17 million and serve 2,350 daily riders. Boston is reached via Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC) from Canton Jct.

Also planned is restored commuter service to Boston between New Bedford and Fall River via Taunton and Attleborough, where a new northward connection to Amtrak's NEC would be constructed. The NEC line through Attleborough already sees frequent MBTA commuter service between

Boston and Providence. Seasonal Amtrak service from New York to Cape Cod now uses the line from Attleborough to Taunton enroute to and from Middleborough and the Cape, a line already meeting passenger train operational needs. Routes between Taunton, Fall River and New Bedford, now owned by Conrail and used for freight only, will be reconstructed to passenger train standards for 79 mph operation. This is expected to cost \$156 million for trackwork and

other infrastructure improvements and \$90 million for new commuter equipment. A late 1997 startup is anticipated for the trains, which are expected to serve about 4,200 daily riders. ●

— Railpace Newsmagazine (Oct., Nov. 1995),
B&MRRHS Newsletter (July, Nov./Dec. 1995),
The Boston Globe (Dec. 1, 1995)



track between Braintree and Middleborough and site preparation work is underway for the Middleborough layover facility. On the Plymouth Branch, a new span over the South River in Kingston was in place on November 30, 1995, and supporting beams were in place over

Public Supports Continuation of Amtrak

This message was received in seven regional forums held around the country by Amtrak. Our Chairman, Wayne Davis attended and testified at the meeting held in Philadelphia, PA, while Board Member Charles Brown testified at Sacramento, CA. In all, more than 2,000 members of the public attended these forums, which were organized by Amtrak at the request of U.S. Senators Trent Lott (R-MS) and Larry Pressler (R-SD). The forums agreed on five main

themes: 1) America must have a national passenger rail system, 2) Amtrak must serve as an integral part of the intermodal transportation system, 3) Amtrak must have a dedicated and stable revenue source, 4) Amtrak must build partnerships and 5) Amtrak must be allowed and expected to operate as a business.

A 20 member National Forum for the Future of Passenger Rail met in May 1995 to make specific recommendations based on comments received during the forums. The

Forum made its recommendations to the Surface Transportation Subcommittee. These included establishment of a federal passenger rail trust fund using fuel taxes charged to highway users, establish more effective incentives for freight railroads to provide on-time Amtrak performance, establish liability limits, reform railway labor laws, and pursue expanded mail and express hauling as revenue sources for Amtrak. ●

—Passenger Train Journal (Aug. 1995)

Amtrak-Related Taxes Exceed Federal Amtrak Funding

The Government Accounting Office has estimated that highway congestion costs the U. S. economy \$100 billion annually in lost productivity. Although Amtrak covers a higher percentage of its operating expenses from revenues than do U. S. highways from

fuel taxes and tolls, Amtrak funding continues to be a political pawn of those convinced that it is unneeded. Jeanine Ipsen, Bombardier Government Relations Officer, stated, "Amtrak purchases \$500 million in goods and services annually and spends another \$800 million in

salaries — significant monies that support jobs and businesses in communities throughout the country. The taxes on those salaries and sales of supplies exceed Amtrak's Congressional funding." ●

—Innovation in Motion,
Bombardier Corp., Fall 1995, Issue No. 8

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.