

TRAINRIDER

The Newsletter of TrainRiders/Northeast



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Submitted by Wayne Davis

Mr. Davis Goes To Washington

On Monday, February 3rd, I boarded Concord Trailways Boston Express for South Station, and the morning day train to Washington. For the fifth year in a row, as a member of the Maine State Society in Washington, I'd been invited to give a five-minute report on the status of the proposed Portland/Dover/Boston AMTRAK service. (Some joked about it being time for my annual announcement that the service will be delayed—again! True to a certain extent, but we're still the eternal optimists. If all parties do what is expected of them, the service could be running by October of this year.)

Past visits allowed personal, one-on-one conversations with Senator Mitchell, Senator Cohen, Senator Snowe and members of the House, so I was especially pleased to be seated next to our new senator, Susan Collins. We shared a lively and very pleasant conversation. As always, the Society's Congressional Breakfast is a wonderful opportunity to "visit" with our fellow Mainers. Following the breakfast, I made my annual ramble through the Hill. I had arranged meetings with key transportation staff members, which provided additional contact with members of the delegation. In years past, the "ramble" was done with the Maine Commissioner of Transportation and other state officials, but this year Ross Capon, Executive Director of the

(continued on the next page)

The Train To Maine— When Will It Run Again?

The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority voted October 8th to submit the unresolved issues between Guilford Transportation Industries and Amtrak to the Surface Transportation Board. The Board will have received the issues by the time you read this. They were submitted to the Federal Transportation Administration for its five day review on February 6, 1997. Similarly, Guilford Transportation Industries had ten days for its review. Presumably, the Board began its deliberations during the week of February 17th. The Board has 90 days to render a decision, unless there is mutual agreement to extend the review period.

If the full 90 days are taken, a decision would be made by the beginning of the fourth week in May, say May 19th. Assuming a decision resulted in agreements to operate Amtrak service between Boston and Portland, construction could begin in early June. How long will it take to upgrade the tracks and signalling for passenger train operation? It depends on whom you ask.

Guilford has estimated it can lay no more than 6,000 feet of track per week, or about 1.14 miles per week. At that rate, the entire job, assuming

replacement of 78 miles of mostly single track between the Massachusetts state line at Haverhill, MA, and Portland, would take about 16 months. Any additional time would depend, in part, on how many miles of second track are installed to allow passenger and freight trains to pass one another.

In contrast, the State of Vermont, upgrading its state-owned freight line between Rutland and the New York border near Whitehall, NY, for its recently inaugurated Ethan Allen Express, managed to lay between 1.3 and 1.8 miles of track per day. A slightly more conservative estimate of one mile per day would allow the upgrading of Guilford's tracks in about 80 days. This could be completed by the end of August if work is started in early June.

Some bridge work has already been completed and the MBTA has been upgrading some of the route to be used by Portland-Boston trains. Also, Guilford's new intermodal service out of Waterville, one of three competing intermodal services in Maine, may benefit from faster schedules—a possibility with upgraded tracks. It looks like a "win-win" situation for Guilford, Amtrak and the industries and people of Maine. We eagerly await the Board decision and the start of construction. ●

Association of Railroad Passengers and Assistant Director Scott Leonard accompanied me. Time well spent to speak of not only the Portland/Dover/Boston service, but the North/South Station rail link in Boston and issues related to the AMTRAK budget and national system.

On the lighter side, Governor King, who, with his wife Mary Herman, was in Washington for the National Governors Conference, also addressed the Society. Shortly before the governor left the room, Mary Herman came over to tell me that she and the governor had come to Washington the previous Friday on AMTRAK's sleeper, The Night Owl. Further, that they'd had a wonderful trip, most enjoyable, and that they were looking forward to the return trip "on the 1:10 today." I promised not to tell anyone since both trips were apparently made without AMTRAK being aware that the governor of Maine and his wife were aboard. Now, if we could just originate our AMTRAK trips here....

Latest Little Surprise to Sap Our Energy: We've just heard that the folks in Vermont were able to rebuild rails at a rate of between 1.3 and 1.8 miles of track PER DAY. Why is it then that Guilford Corp. proposes handling only about 6000 feet of rail PER WEEK? With a straight face yet! Since it is about 77 miles from Portland to the improved MBTA rails near the New Hampshire/Massachusetts state line, what's wrong with 77 miles in 77 days? If Vermont did more than a mile a day, Maine certainly should be able to manage one mile a day! NEW BATTLE CRY—A MILE A DAY FOR SERVICE IN OCTOBER. Let's do what it takes. Write letters, send cards, make calls, contact members of your Congressional delegation, AMTRAK and the Maine Department of Transportation. But let's get this show on the road. Enough is enough!

P.S. My personal thanks to those of you who responded to our Holiday Appeal and to those who renewed your dues. —W.D.

Meeting Notices

National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), Region One: The Annual Meeting of Region One of the National Association of Railroad Passengers will take place in Portland on Saturday, March 22, 1997. The meeting will be at the Portland Club, 156 State Street, beginning at 10:30 AM. Reservations are required. For inquiries about transportation, call (1-800) 458-5394, Rail Travel Center, 9 Congress Street, St. Albans, VT 05478-1610. The cost of the meeting is \$25.00 per person. For program information, call TrainRiders/Northeast at (207) TRY-RAIL (879-7245). Invited speakers include Ross B. Capon, Executive Director of NARP; David Carol, Vice-President, High Speed Rail, Amtrak; and John G. Melrose, Commissioner, Maine Department of Transportation. ■ **TrainRiders/Northeast Annual Meeting:** Our Annual Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 19, 1997. Details to be announced. Save the Date!

Sunday River Ski Train Upgraded

The fourth season of operation of the Sunday River Express began December 26, 1996 and will run through Sunday, April 6, 1997. Operation is on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, except for peak ski vacation periods. The equipment this year is furnished by the Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad, which uses it in the summer for its tourist trains from Unity and Belfast.

Members of the 470 Railroad Club, invited as guests on a trial run on December 21, commented favorably about the features and riding quality of the Swedish equipment. Transition cars on both ends of the train, former TTX bulkhead flatcars,

are fitted with standard American knuckle couplers on one end and European style screw couplers and buffers on the other, making it possible for the train to be moved by any locomotive.

While it cannot be said that the train would not be operating without TrainRiders/Northeast, Wayne Davis arranged the initial meeting between Rod Rodrigue, President of the Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad, and Maine DOT officials regarding use of the B&ML equipment on the ski train.

Call 1-888-RAIL SKI or 1-800-392-5500 for further information on the ski train. —*Maine Sunday Telegram*, December 15, 1996; *The 470*, January 1997.

Mountain Division Transportation Corridor

New Year's Eve saw the Maine Department of Transportation purchase about 40 miles of the former Maine Central Mountain Division right of way from Guilford Transportation Industries (GTI). The line was purchased from Route 302 in Windham to the New Hampshire state line at Fryeburg. The \$1.1 million price does not include track materials, for which a three year option to buy was purchased for \$870,000, plus interest.

The purchase will permit planning to proceed on rail and recre-

ational uses of the corridor. The Mountain Division Alliance, of which TrainRiders/Northeast is a founding member, envisions eventual use of the line, if an agreement on the eastern portion into Portland can be negotiated with GTI, for both passenger and freight service as well as recreational activities.

Public meetings of the Alliance were suspended while purchase negotiations were on-going. Call (207) 761-7225 for information on current activities.

—*Portland Press Herald*, January 1, 1997.

Maine Railroad News

Guilford Transportation Industries

The Guilford-Conrail Intermodal service, named Down East Express, began operating January 6, 1997, when a trailer from the Chinnet Co. was loaded in Waterville for a cross-country trip to Portland, OR. The facility, constructed with 2/3 private, 1/3 public funding has two 3,000-foot loading tracks separated by about 100 feet. Conrail crews take over at Ayer, MA, and the cars are joined to Conrail's intermodal trains at Worcester. The train runs Monday-Friday from Waterville and Tuesday-Saturday from Ayer.

—*Morning Sentinel*, Waterville, ME, January 7, 1997;
The 470, February 1997.

St. Lawrence & Atlantic

St. Lawrence & Atlantic's intermodal service, operating via the St. L & A and Canadian National between Auburn, ME, and U.S. and Canadian midwest points on a four days per week basis since September 1994, saw its business increase 50% over last year.

—*The 470*, December 1996.

Maine Coast Railroad

Maine Coast Railroad's tourist trains will run again from Wiscasset, but this year they will go to and from Bath instead of Newcastle. Daily operation will be between Memorial Day and Labor Day, with weekend operation on a more extended schedule. For information on fares, schedules and special trips, call 1-800-795-5404.

Construction financed by the November 1995 \$525,000 bond issue to upgrade

three miles of track between Dragon Cement in Thomaston and Rockland began last fall. The contract was awarded to Maine Track Maintenance. Many ties have already been replaced. The track is used primarily for Dragon's cement trains to the barge loading facility on Rockland Harbor.

The former Maine Central Railroad passenger station in Rockland, which served as the City Hall for 37 years, has been leased by the MDOT to the Coastal Community Action Program for \$1.00 per year. The building was purchased from the city for \$260,000 in 1994. The agency began using the building in February following completion of interior renovations and improved handicapped accessibility.

—*The Courier-Gazette*, Rockland, Maine, December 26, 1996, February 14, 1997;
The 470, December 1996, January 1997, February 1997;
Railpace Newsmagazine, January 1997;
 Sharon White, Pres., Maine Coast Railroad,
 February 11, 1997.

Maine DOT Plans Passenger Rail Upgrades

The Maine Department of Transportation will shortly submit to the Legislature an ambitious plan to create a network of public transportation systems geared to tourism. Key elements include upgrading state owned railroad lines between Brunswick and Augusta and from Brunswick via Bath to Rockland. Bath, Augusta and Rockland are envisioned as terminals for ferries which would permit visitors to

directly transfer between trains and boats for tours on the Kennebec River and Penobscot Bay. The Rockland service could also connect with boats for Bar Harbor. A non-auto tourism feasibility study by Wilbur Smith & Associates of Hartford, CT, is expected to be completed in March 1997.

Unstated in the newspaper article is the fact that the MDOT clearly anticipates Amtrak or other rail passenger service extending beyond Portland to connect with the rail hub at Brunswick. Boothbay Harbor can be reached by boat via delightful inland passages from both Bath and Wiscasset, where the Maine Coast Railroad originates its seasonal tourist trains. Improvement of the Rockland Branch would also allow passenger rail service to relieve highway congestion during the construction of the new highway bridge across the Kennebec between Bath and Woolwich and any Route One bypass constructed around Wiscasset. The Maine Coast Railroad looks forward to any improvements to its state-owned tracks to better serve its freight customers. It's nice to see some of TrainRiders' goals beyond bringing rail passenger service to Portland starting to take shape in the form of Maine DOT policies and programs.

—*Portland Press Herald*, January 30, 1997;
 Sharon White, Pres., Maine Coast Railroad,
 February 11, 1997.

Vermont Rail Passenger News

Vermont gained a second Amtrak service when the Ethan Allen Express began its run from Penn Station, New York City, to Rutland, VT, on December 2, 1996. The 241 mile run is scheduled for between five hours and five minutes and five hours and twenty minutes, with the slowest schedule providing an average speed, including all stops, of 44.9 miles per hour. South of Whitehall, New York, the train follows the route of Amtrak's Adiron-

dack. Approximately 22 miles of track, mostly in Vermont (owned by the state and operated by Vermont Rail-way), had to be upgraded for passenger operations between Whitehall and Rutland. The \$4.8 million upgrade was paid for in part by \$3.5 million in federal funding. The train uses refurbished Amtrak Heritage equipment, well suited to its operating schedule and designed with large windows through which the scenery

of the Hudson River Valley and southwestern Vermont can be enjoyed. Bet they'll see more scenery than the drivers on the Interstates between New York City and Killington.

Having started well in advance of the peak ski season, initial ridership was modest with 25 people stepping off the first train on its arrival at Rutland. About 100 people reportedly detrained in Albany. By December 13,

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SPECIAL THANKS

Copier Donation

Steve Eaton, Eaton Copier Service, donated a Toshiba copier to replace our old copier which had seen better days. We thank him very much!

Archival Donations

We thank the following who responded to the plea of our Archivist, Joan Sullivan, in our last newsletter:

Doras Briggs; **Bo Leveault**, Print Media Productions; and **David Savidge**, Portland Advertising Specialties.

Extra Special Thanks

to **Mr. & Mrs. Charles M. Brown** for their most generous donations which permitted computer upgrading and greatly assisted our ongoing educational programs. We also thank **Benjamin Kirkland** and the estate of **Henry Feme** for their continuing generous support of our efforts.

Vermont

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the ridership to Rutland was up to 45 and Amtrak officials expressed satisfaction. At the end of December, 3,140 passengers had been carried between New York and Rutland, exceeding the first month goal of 2,000. The station is in downtown Rutland, adjacent to a 400 car parking garage, with a bus terminal about 400 feet away. A shuttle bus is provided by Killington, a nearby ski resort. Rutland last had regular passenger train service in 1953.

For its first year of operation, Amtrak's Vermonter exceeded ridership expectations with more than 70,000 passengers and revenues of \$3.5 million. It operated at 70% of capacity, similar to the Montrealer when it was terminated.

Commuter rail service between Burlington and Charlotte on the Vermont Railway was approved by a 6-3 vote of the Metropolitan Planning Organization. The \$9.3 million project will require a \$200,000 state contribution which is anticipated to be approved. Operations are planned to begin in 1998 and are intended to relieve highway congestion during reconstruction of Route 7.

Green Mountain Railroad, operating on state-owned track between Bellows Falls, VT, and Burlington, via Rutland, passes Okemo Mountain Ski Resort in Ludlow. The railroad and the resort have jointly announced trial ski train runs for the 1996-97 season, with connections to Amtrak's Vermonter at Bellows Falls and with the Ethan Allen Express in Rutland.

— Amtrak timetables, Fall/Winter 1996/97; *Rail Travel News*, Jan. 7, 1997; *The 470*, January 1997; *Railpace Newsmagazine*, December 1996, January 1997; *Amtrak News*, January 22, 1997.

ALONG THE TRACK

UPDATE

Florida Overland eXpress (FOX)

"Virtually on schedule, eight months after the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) awarded the FOX Consortium the exclusive franchise for a new high speed railroad between Miami, Orlando and Tampa, the second of two agreements was signed on November 12, 1996. The significance of this milestone (aside from the fact it WAS on schedule) is that the preliminary work necessary for financing, engineering, and certification for construction could now commence in a true public-private partnership. All work from now through the construction certification will be cost-shared, with FDOT bearing 75% of the cost and the FOX consortium bearing the remaining 25%. Work to date has been solely borne by the private FOX companies.

"The current phase of work to be carried out over the next 15 months includes:

- ✓ detailed ridership studies
- ✓ studies of several possible routing alignments for the train, with a "final route" being selected at the end of the current phase (approximately the end of January 1998)
- ✓ environmental assessment and preliminary certification work
- ✓ an extensive public information campaign

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Rhode Island Rail Funding Approved

Voters in Rhode Island approved a bond issue in November to fund the state share (\$72 million, to match \$65 million in federal funds) for the third track between Providence and Davisville, RI. The track will be constructed to clearances permitting double-stack containers to and from the port of Davisville (former home of the U.S. Navy "Seabees"). Use of Davisville, as compared with the Providence & Worcester's former proposal to upgrade waterfront facilities in East Providence, makes use of the deep water channels dredged to accommodate World War II aircraft carriers at Quonset Point/Davisville, allows ship operators a

shorter trip from the open ocean off Newport, and avoids the need to dredge a deep channel in the more polluted sediments of the Providence River. The main line of the Providence & Worcester between its namesake cities will also be upgraded and clearances increased.

Electrification of the Amtrak Shoreline through Rhode Island continues, with almost 800 catenary support foundations and a few poles in place by early December, mostly between Davisville and Kingston.

A recent visit to Kingston station found the station still in its original

location, awaiting spring weather for its move back from the tracks. A new foundation will have to be poured partly under the present location, so the station would have had to sit up on blocking during winter weather if the moving process been started in the fall. A mobile home type facility serves as the temporary station for Amtrak. There will be extensive parking lots and high level platforms. Existing bus and taxi (intermodal) facilities will be improved. Work is expected to resume in March and be completed by late 1997.

— *Railpace Newsmagazine*, January 1997, February 1997.

New Hampshire Rail News and Commentary

While the municipalities whose stations will be served by the Amtrak Boston-Portland service wait for the agreements to be signed, the University of New Hampshire has begun preliminary efforts to reuse its historic railroad station, now a dairy bar, for railroad purposes. A sign on the building urges readers to "excuse our appearance" while it is remodeled for passenger rail service.

The State of New Hampshire is taking possession of two rail lines being abandoned by their most recent operator, the New Hampshire & Vermont Railroad. They extend southwest and east of Littleton, NH. Rail and ties have already been lifted from much of the line between Littleton and Woodsville. Abandonment of the line east of Littleton, between Waumbeck Jct. and Gorham, will allow the State of New Hampshire to remove the railroad bridge over the St. Lawrence & Atlantic at Gorham. This will permit operation of double-stack containers on the St. Lawrence & Atlantic. A portion of the line east of the bridge may be acquired by Berlin Mills Railway to serve a paper mill at Cascade. State owned rights of way are to become recreational trails.

While state ownership of the line

between Gorham and Littleton, NH, assures that the right of way will not become a series of privately owned land parcels, removal of this track effectively cuts a useful east-west rail route between Portland, ME, and Swanton, VT, near St. Albans.

An article in *The Boston Globe*, January 23, 1997, noted that northern New England transportation departments are actively seeking east-west travel corridors for rail freight and passenger traffic. Iron Road Railways, owner of the former Bangor & Aroostook Railroad and Canadian Pacific Railway lines between northern Maine and Montreal, was cited as the most likely east-west route. However, that line is so far north that it is likely to be of chief advantage to Canadian travelers between the Maritime Provinces and Montreal. Similarly, the St. Lawrence & Atlantic between Portland and Montreal runs through only northeastern New Hampshire and, like the Iron Road route, misses Vermont.

A combination of the St. Lawrence & Atlantic from Portland, ME, to Gorham, NH; the line between Gorham and Waumbeck, Jct.; active New Hampshire & Vermont rails between Waumbeck Jct.,

NH, and St. Johnsbury, VT, and use of the State of Vermont's now inactive line between St. Johnsbury and Swanton, VT, would connect the Maine coast with Lake Champlain. It would also permit connection between Amtrak's Vermonter in St. Albans, and Amtrak service to Portland.

The entire route is either in state ownership or in active use by private railroads. Yes, upgrading of the lines west of Gorham would be needed for passenger traffic. A new connection would be required between the St. Lawrence & Atlantic and the abandoned line at Gorham. A bridge at Swanton (burned many years ago) and connecting track would be required at the western end.

If the former Maine Central route through Crawford Notch is reactivated between Intervale, NH, and Portland, ME, use of the reconstructed line from Gorham to Waumbeck Jct. would allow tourist travel by rail through much of the White Mountains. Perhaps the costs and benefits of upgrading Route 2 between Bethel, ME, and I-89 in Montpelier, VT, should be compared with the costs and benefits of making the rail route usable for freight and passenger traffic.

—Robert Hall, Exeter, NH;
Railpace Newsmagazine, February 1997.

FOX (continued from the preceding page)

✓ a legislative program which seeks federal funds (about 6% of the project cost) and credit enhancements to assist the State of Florida in issuing bonds for construction

✓ a refined financing plan which will include other potential revenue which can be generated as a result of the investment in the rail service (land development, fiber optics, water or other transmission lines, etc.)

"This 15 month phase will cost about \$9.4 million. The results of this work will be the basis of the next phase, which will entail preliminary final engineering in preparation for construction. This next phase will require about 4 years of engineering work and will cost some \$230 million, again shared 75%-25% between FDOT

and FOX. The FOX consortium is investing some \$350 million of its own funds in the early stages of the project.

"The State of Florida will actually own the fixed facilities of the system (tracks, stations, electric power distribution system, etc.) and the FOX consortium will own and operate the rolling stock (the trains themselves) as a private, profit-making transportation service using the publicly owned tracks and paying the State of Florida an annual fee for use of the facilities. As the major investor in the system, the State of Florida will also receive its proportionate share of the system profits. The FDOT will invest \$70 million per year for 40 years (all secured by the fixed facilities it will own) and the private FOX consortium will operate and maintain the system. By the end of the 14th year of operation, the returns are pro-

jected to be substantial enough that FDOT will be paid back more money than it invests. At the end of 30 years the bonds will be retired and the state will own an exceptionally valuable asset with no mortgage. At that point returns to the state grow exponentially. The arrangement is much like the way airports are funded and paid for. Publicly owned fixed facilities and privately owned passenger carrying equipment and privately operated service.

"The FOX system will use the proven, safe and reliable TGV train technology used since 1981 in France, Spain, Belgium, England, Netherlands and soon in South Korea. The total FOX project will cost about \$5 billion, all inclusive of design, engineering, rolling stock, stations and facilities. The first trains are planned to start running in 2004".

—Florida Overland eXpress News
Release, December 20, 1996.

AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

"THE 100TH BIRTHDAY BASH HAD ITS MOMENTS. Some myopic, some simply surreal. Motown celebrated the anniversary of the automobile with a centennial gala and Michigan raised its speed limit in honor of the event. And the chrome on the trim flashed at auto shows just before the second petroleum war in the decade took fire.

"Nonetheless, the American Automobile Centennial Commission's centennial fever was something less than contagious. At no time in the century since the Duryea Brothers rolled thirteen "motor wagons" onto the streets of Springfield [MA] in 1896 could a fete have fallen flatter. Across the American motorscape, the spark plugs are dirty, the tires are flat and the "mechanical pet," as *Life* put it in its special anniversary promotion, has enslaved its master.

"For a vehicle that hasn't shown a major improvement since before Harry Truman decreed its 50th birthday in 1946, the sticker shock of \$20,000-plus is startling. In servitude to the two million-plus motor vehicles a month we buy, and the almost 200 million we own, the nation is consumed by the car and the car culture. And getting there is not what it used to be.

"Driving the American dream machine 10,000-12,000 miles apiece a year, Americans have doubled the miles they traveled and now spend eight billion hours stuck in traffic. From the jammed tunnel under the Continental Divide to the Cross Bronx Expressway to our own Route 128, movement is stymied on the nation's corridors.

"A generation ago, in the complacent 1950s after the last celebration, the American Graffiti powerhouses rested between the hours of the commute. At midday, roads emptied out. After darkness, too, there was respite as the steel chargers of the post-war boom, all those fin-tailed Buicks, those fang-grilled Chevis and Fords, corralled for the night in the nation's ranch houses. In 1996, though, motorists drive four times the 50 million vehicles of that era and make far more dispersed trips. Trading time behind the wheel for space in the exurbs, work-bound Americans travel to ever-more sprawling homes.

"The impact of competition may be the least of it, however. Ask a driver why he or she buys a car and commuting to work or traveling to vacation spots is the response. Yet, the statistics tell another story. In fact, the numbers show that we travel a scant 22% of our vehicle miles heading to work. Vacation travel, the other rationale, accounts for merely 8% of the journeys recorded on the odometer.

"For the most part, our restless chariots are performing more mundane chores. Our asphalt nation is paved in innumerable mini-trips impossible without 2,000 pounds of steel. Chauffeuring and consuming — driving junior to sports or buying a bar of soap — comprise almost two-thirds of our vehicle miles, and hence our lives and days.

"We do so neither from choice nor from that vaunted freedom of the road. We do so because we have subsidized the car and highway, drained every other way of movement, and altered settlement patterns and land use in obeisance to the automobile. No wonder half the nation's households own two or three cars. They have to. We are compelled to drive and hence pollute our environment, aid global warming, siphon oil into our waters because we have — or think we have — no alternative.

"The car culture has changed the way we live as well as travel. It has eradicated walkable sidewalks and undermined bicyclable streets. It has eroded viable mass transit and wrecked rail. The government pays seven times as much to private as to public transportation. And thus the architecture of the exit ramp has decimated our surroundings, paving cities for parking lots and infiltrating suburbs and countryside with concrete-wrapped malls.

"The well-known poisonous potpourri discharged in the air from the tailpipe and into our waterways from the gas tank are only a small part of the damage. "Road kill" occurs on many levels. Everyday 120 lives are wasted by car fatalities while chronic assaults on health and habitat accelerate as car-fed global warming heats up the planet.



"Some birthday. Instead of lighting candles, we should calculate the true costs of these policies and practices.

"First, consider the \$6,000 a year in personal costs, out of pocket, to buy, maintain, insure and regulate the car. Then, add the indirect or external sum of \$3,000-\$4,000 or more (twice as much more, say some environmentalists) for less visible exactions from parking facilities, to environmental damage, to uncompensated accidents. Add the land opportunities lost by hardtopping 30% or 40% of our cities and asphaltting more than two million acres of productive farmland each year.

"If the sticker shock of the car and ongoing costs are high, the \$93 billion in federal, state and local funds for highways each year is equally so. Tinkering with the existing systems, widening and extending roads, carries a price tag of \$6.6 billion and new roads grow ever pricier. Boston's \$10 billion Central Artery, supposedly the last lap of the 42,500 mile Interstate system, will reach who knows what figure? And the hits just keep coming.

"From South Pasadena's infamous 710 Freeway to mid-America's quintessential road through nowhere, highways for every hill and hamlet, suburb and city, reenforce the cliché "if you build it they will come" — that more traffic follows more highways — has become a cliché. Notwithstanding, new ruses subvert our awareness. Such palliatives as the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane used as a bait-and-switch tactic for highway widening, or the so-called Intelligent Transportation Systems, win dollars and delay real thought or alternatives.

"Meanwhile, public transportation takes its knocks. Shockingly, Amtrak's federal budget was halved from \$400,000,000 to \$200,000,000 this year and train service cut shamefully when it should expand. Even now, auto lobbies are agitating to roll back the highway legislation (ISTEA) that has given states permission to use half of their federal transportation dollars in a non-motorized manner.

"And, yet, for all the freespending habits, the free ride's cost is becoming clear. The grassroots constituency grows as environmentalists, land use planners, pedestrian groups, bicycle activists, city-lovers and public transportation advocates make a legion of road warriors.

"Trains, revived from their nadir in the 1970s, survive and some have spruced-up their stations. Portland's new line to Boston should set off in 1997 with a new station to boot and

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the Northeast Corridor's high speed Boston-New York Amtrak line moves along. Rail ridership in the Pacific Northwest has taken off; Florida has plans for the first high speed passenger rail system to connect Miami, Orlando and Tampa. For all the acrimony between freight and passenger carriers, they share the capacity to lessen car-dependency and muzzle road and airport expansion.

"It's thin porridge compared to times past, but consider the overlooked potential: one third of the passenger flights in the nation, some 113 million people, according to the Department of Transportation, travel less than 500 miles to their destination. Passenger rail could easily cover those miles, not only benefitting from the former flyers but replacing cars and trucks; adding commuter rail stations; and accelerating intercity rail traffic.

"Romance of the road? What about romance of the trolley? A virtual chorus of "Meet Me in St. Louis" seems to echo as new streetcar riders spread from Sacramento to St. Louis. New lines in Denver and Dallas open. Short change, some say. Yet, the sense of a need for a balanced system grows. Ferries and water shuttles multiply. Lines stretch out with plans for transit-oriented development around them; more communities resist leap frog development and sprawl. While greenways and trails for bike and walking, amenity and mobility, multiply, on the large; "Traffic calming," curbing the car by narrowing and greening urban and suburban streets, spreads on the small.

"Meanwhile the negligible gas tax becomes ever more deplorable compared to Europe or Japan's \$4 or \$5 a gallon which supports their more balanced transportation systems. Arguments thus grow to make the car pay its way with fair value fees — from congestion pricing to a tax per mile.

"The paths to true mobility are many. The sense that we can undo our auto-dependency expands. And if the spurious celebration for the wonder days of driving did nothing else, it should encourage a look at the waning benefits and mounting deficits of our late motor age and inspire change." ■

Jane Holtz Kay is architecture and planning critic of *The Nation* and author of the forthcoming **Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take it Back** (Crown). A version of the above appeared in the *Boston Globe*.

HOLIDAY APPEAL

Our Holiday Appeal for funding brought in close to \$5,000! Thank you very much for your generous response. Donations were received from:

Jerry & Nancy Angier, Mrs. Newell A. Augur, R. Axtell, A. J. Belliveau RR Construction, Eliot S. Berkley, George Billmyer, Nellie Blagden, Richard Boisvert, Gordon Bok, Germaine Botto, James P. Bowditch, Gerald Brauning, Don Briselden, James Brown, George Campbell, Jr., Mr. & Mrs. Sumner Carlson, David Carol, Arthur A. Carter, Jr., Curtis Caswell, Samuel C. Cheraso, Donald M. Christie, Jr., Cliff House, Maynard B. Colley, M.D., Community Service Telephone Co., Elizabeth B. Darling, Richard L. Day, Vincent R. DeMarco, Ann DeWith, Harold L. Dowdell, R. W. Emerson, Harold Fellman, Barry Flynn, D. C. Francis, Robert P. Fuller, Ian, Lisa, Devon & Aldis Gamble, Margaret Gardiner, Robert Gardner, Linda Gillies, Richard M. Goldberg, Tom Greenman, Henry & Helen Grem, Warren L. Hall, J. Howard Harding, B. R. Henry, John B. Henry, Theodore O. Hesse, John P. Hogan,

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MBTA (continued from page 8)

has been moved from December 1996 to September 1997 to permit installation of in-cab signals and communications, including an automatic train stop system. Stations have been essentially completed at Randolph/Holbrook, Montello, Campello, Bridgewater and Middleborough/Lakeville on the Middleborough Line. On the Plymouth Line, stations are nearing completion at South Weymouth, Abington, Hanson and Halifax. The Middleborough yard is complete, track has been laid from Braintree to Plymouth, and the yard at Kingston is

under construction. At Quincy Center, the MBTA will construct a commuter rail station as part of the present Red Line rapid transit station and bus terminal, offering improved rail access to Quincy's businesses and tourist attractions.

The Final Environmental Impact Report on the Greenbush Line is expected to be completed in mid-1997. The \$215 million project is anticipated to begin construction in late 1997 and to be operating by late 1999.

—The New Old Colony Railroad Update, MBTA
Fall 1996; B&MRRHS Newsletter, Sep/Oct 1996,
Railpace Newsmagazine, January 1997, February 1997;
The 470, February 1997.

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

MBTA commuter service on Conrail's "Boston Line" between Boston and Worcester began using the newly completed second track between Westboro and Worcester on November 18, 1996. Conrail finished the work almost a month ahead of the December 15, 1996, scheduled date.

The Worcester Redevelopment Authority is expected to open bids early this year for the planned \$33 million redevelopment of the old Union Station in Worcester. Funding will be 80% federal and 20% state. Beginning November 10, 1996, Amtrak's Trains 85/6, Bay State, between Boston and Richmond, VA, run via Worcester to Springfield and New Haven CT. Amtrak's Boston-Chicago Trains 48/9, Lake Shore Limited, also stop at Worcester. Meanwhile, Connecticut State Senator Don Williams (D-Thompson) has been working with the Trail and Rail Action Committee to rally support for passenger rail service over the Providence & Worcester and New England Central between Worcester and

Groton, CT, and Worcester and New London, CT. The service would help alleviate highway congestion in eastern Connecticut and also serve both Native-American owned casinos. A November 16, 1996, Worcester-Groton excursion train was sold out — 750 passengers were boarded and 300 were turned away. If such a service is established, Worcester Union station could return to being a "union" station in the old meaning of the term, with service by three rail operators, the MBTA, Amtrak and whatever organization operates the trains to Connecticut points.

An MBTA preliminary ridership study of a portion of the old Central Massachusetts Branch of the Boston & Maine between Hudson and Boston will result in no action. Mass. Rep. Patricia Walrath has killed such plans following opposition from local residents. Hudson lost commuter service in 1965.

Voters in Milford, MA, voted 2-1 in favor of an extension of the MBTA

Franklin Line about six miles to Bellingham and Milford. The line, once a branch of the New Haven Railroad, is now used for freight only beyond the Forge Park/Route 495 MBTA station in Franklin.

The MBTA accepted a bid of about \$36.5 million for construction of the ten mile extension of the Ipswich line to Newburyport. Parking at Newburyport will include 838 spaces in three lots, plus platforms and a four track layover facility replacing one at Ipswich. The start of construction has been delayed by legal challenges, since an interim manager of the MBTA during the time bid specifications were drawn up had previously worked for the winning bidder. Your editor observed that substructure work on the U. S. Route One highway overpass at the site, a separate contract, was under construction during January, 1997.

The Old Colony Restoration Project is proceeding on schedule. Completion

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