

# TRAINRIDER

*The Newsletter of TrainRiders/Northeast*



## STAN BAGLEY NAMED AMTRAK NORTHEAST CORRIDOR PRESIDENT



STAN BAGLEY, who represented Amtrak at the January 11, 1999, "First Spike" ceremony in Portland, has been named President of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor. He will be responsible for launching the new Acela high speed rail program on the NEC later this year. Amtrak President George Warrington, who appointed him, noted that "Stan is an invaluable member of Amtrak's leadership team with a command of the operation, strong working relationships with labor and a solid rapport with employees up and down the Northeast Corridor." We look forward to having him at the "Last Spike" ceremony when reconstruction of the line between Boston and Brunswick is completed.

Other recently announced members of Amtrak's national management team included Barbara J. Richardson, Executive Vice President; Arlene Friner, Chief Financial Officer; Sandra J. Brown, Vice President of Government Affairs; and David J. Carol, Vice President of High Speed Rail Development.

—*Working on the Railroad*, March 1999;  
*Railpace Newsmagazine*, April 1999.

## CONSTRUCTION STARTS ON AMTRAK'S MAINE SERVICE

GUILFORD RAIL SYSTEM MAINTENANCE OF WAY CREWS BEGAN replacing ties on the future passenger bypass at Rigby Yard, South Portland, Maine, on Monday, March 22, 1999. It is anticipated that tie replacement work will proceed from Rigby southward toward Plaistow, New Hampshire (the track actually passes through the southeast portion of Atkinson, New Hampshire, after leaving Haverhill, Massachusetts, the limit of MBTA owned track, before entering Plaistow). A second crew will commence working north from Plaistow.

In addition to tie replacement and laying new, continuous welded rail, the reconstruction will involve undercutting 17-20 highway bridges for clearance, resurfacing of 124 miles of track, installation or rehabilitation of six sidings and rehabilitation of 11 railroad bridges. An estimated 90,000 tons of stone will be required to support and ballast the new track.

Amtrak equipment for the initial service will include three F-40PHs geared for 100 mph operation, three F-40PHs converted to cab-control/baggage cars to allow push-pull operation (avoiding the necessity of turning engines at each end of the trip), 9 Amfleet coaches upgraded to Acela Regional standards, and 3 upgraded food service cars.

While Maine and New Hampshire residents have reason to be pleased with the start of actual construction on the rail line which will end their isolation from the high speed rail network, which now extends from Washington, D.C., to Boston, MA, they should realize that Northern New England is not the only region that is anxious to gain the benefits of high speed rail service.

On December 1, 1998, U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Rodney E. Slater, announced continuation and expansion of a public-private partnership to extend the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor to serve an urban population of 20.6 million persons by 2005. The corridor would link Washington, D.C., Raleigh, NC, Columbia, SC, and Jacksonville, FL. Atlanta and Macon, GA, would be included as other routes are upgraded for high speed rail service.

The Southeast, which still has multiple rail routes, may see re-activation of now unused routes for future passenger service, retaining current routes to

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## ...CONSTRUCTION STARTS

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accommodate increasing freight rail services. Both Virginia and North Carolina are considering purchase of rights-of-way to create these new passenger routes. Within Florida, Amtrak intends using the former Florida East Coast route between Jacksonville and Miami within two years, providing more direct travel to East coastal cities than present services via central Florida.

Citing the \$68 million federal and \$31 million state funding invested in the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor to date, the January-February 1999 *CAPT Newsletter* noted: "The extension of the Southeast Corridor will entitle the area to federal funds which will be combined with state and local funds to enable states to enhance highway grade crossing safety. To eliminate grade crossing hazards, the states plan for a mix of grade separations, improvements and closures.

The Southeast Corridor states and cities along the route will work with private railroad companies and the federal government to gradually upgrade existing rail-road rights-of-way to speeds of 110 miles per hour and greater.

Currently, California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington are inviting upgrades to existing rail corridors in order to provide improved passenger rail service."

It must be noted that all the above-mentioned cities on the Southeast Corridor have direct rail connections to the Northeast Corridor, something which Maine and New Hampshire lack. Timely completion of the Rail Link between North and South Stations in Boston is a necessity to gain the full advantages of high speed rail service in Northern New England.

—From the presentation of Victor W. Salemme, Amtrak Project Director for Portland-Boston Service, at 10th Annual Meeting, Maine Rail Group, Inc./Down East Rail, Owl's Head, Maine, March 27, 1999.  
*Carolinas Association for Passenger Trains Newsletter*, January-February 1999.

## AMTRAK ANNOUNCES ACELA

ACELA, PRONOUNCED "A-SELL-A," is Amtrak's new name for its Northeast Corridor (NEC) services. It was highlighted by an elaborate press conference in Penn Station, New York, on March 9, 1999. It will combine current Metroliner, NortheastDirect, Keystone, Clocker and Empire services under one name with one aim: high quality service for all its customers. Express Services, initially limited to the NEC, will be all reserved trains featuring First Class and Business Class. These will use the new equipment now rolling off the production lines in Quebec, Vermont and New York. Regional Services, which will include reserved Business Class and unreserved Coach Class, will use completely refurbished existing equipment. The Maine/New Hampshire service will be an Acela Regional Service. Acela Commuter Service will be unreserved



Coach Class only and will concentrate on commuter services.

Regional and Commuter Services on the NEC will provide frequent, lower cost services at greater frequencies and greater speeds than current Amtrak NEC services and will serve more stations than the higher speed Express Services.

333 Amfleet coaches and 52 redesigned cafe cars are to be completely refurbished for Acela Regional and Acela Commuter trains. Passengers will be greeted by more space (72 seats compared with 85 per coach in present equipment), at-seat electric outlets for laptop computers, storage compartments at the end of each car for oversized luggage, improved restrooms, overhead message signs and, in Business Class cars, conference tables and public phones.

—Amtrak Press Release, March 9, 1999

## TRAINRIDER ACTIVITIES

### We've Moved!

**T**rainRiders' office has been located within the same building on Congress Street. Thanks to Mark Stimson, we were offered the last available office space in the building, much of which has been leased by Mercy Hospital. Douglas Libby, Manager, Financial Operations, Mercy Hospital, managed to find storage space for files and other materials for which space could not be allocated in our new quarters. Ron Siviski, Manager, Telecommunications, and other Mercy Hospital staff, worked with TrainRiders/Northeast member David Schoppee, to re-establish our telephone and computer network in the new office. David Frost, another TrainRider, furnished the necessary window treatment to make our view of Congress Street more attractive. Other TrainRiders helping directly with the move included Betsey Buckley, Jim Friedlander, David Frost, Cindy Garfield, Clare Potter and David Schoppee. Wayne Davis reports he is well pleased with the new office and conference room and is thankful we didn't have to move to another location—a task which would have required replacing our telecommunications equipment and getting a new mailing address, among other things. Our sincere thanks to all who helped.

## REGIONAL RAIL NEWS

### VERMONT RAIL NEWS

**C**onsultants studying the extension of commuter service between Charlotte and Burlington to Essex Jct. have announced that additional federal funds are now available to study a further extension of commuter service beyond Essex Jct. to Montpelier and possibly Milton. If all three points are served, this would provide Burlington with commuter rail routes from south, north and east. Major employment centers are at Burlington, Milton, Essex Jct and Montpelier. The initial phase of the study is due for completion in June 1999.

—*Railpace* Newsmagazine, April 1999



## BOSTON-PORTLAND ROUTE MAY BECOME HIGH-SPEED CORRIDOR

**O**n March 11th, the Federal Railroad Administration received a joint filing from the Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation, and the Commissioners of Maine and New Hampshire Departments of Transportation requesting designation of the Boston-Portland route as a High Speed corridor. TrainRiders/Northeast started the process by bringing it to the attention of Maine and Massachusetts transportation officials. If the states receive the designation, federal money, matched by state money, will be available to improve the infrastructure along the route to allow higher speeds than the currently anticipated maximum of 79 mph.

The route, which would use MBTA rails south of the Massachusetts/New Hampshire boundary, has easy grades and few sharp curves, making it well suited to high speed operation. It also closely parallels I-95, which lies to the east of the

rail line once both are away from the Route 128/I-95 ring road around Boston. Improvements would undoubtedly include elimination of some grade crossings and better protection at others and could also include additional sidings or double tracking if passenger and freight traffic warrant it. Signalling would be improved, as required for speeds in excess of 79 mph.

At present, 30,000 commuters make the daily round trip between Maine and Massachusetts. Projected ridership on the initial passenger rail service would be 316,000 annually in 2000, or about 865 per day. This should rise to 800,000 to 1,000,000 annually by 2010, or between 2,100 and 2,700 daily. Higher speeds would make trains competitive with some short-distance air travel and could eliminate some highway travel, leading to better air quality and less energy use.

—Personal communication, Wayne E. Davis, TrainRiders/Northeast, April 5, 1999.

## MBTA EXPANSIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION

**I**n January, the MBTA signed a contract with the Central Transportation Planning Staff to study possible extension from the Worcester Line to Clinton. This would follow Conrail's Fitchburg Secondary from Framingham to Clinton, where it crosses over the Guilford line between Ayer and Worcester. Another extension would see trains beyond Fitchburg to Gardner. The line beyond Gardner to Millers Falls could become the new route of Amtrak's *Vermont*, now under consideration for re-routing from New York oriented service to one serving Boston. Boston-Newport service is under study as

an extension of MBTA service to Fall River. Massachusetts's Governor Paul Cellucci has asked the legislature for \$269 million to extend service to Fall River and New Bedford. The legislature has already approved \$136 million for planning. The route is yet to be established, but an extension of the Stoughton route to Taunton is favored.

The line to Greenbush, proposed as part of the Old Colony revival, faces opposition from the Environmental Protection Agency, which found no probable improvement in air quality resulting from restoration of commuter service over that line.

—*Railpace Newsmagazine*, March, April 1999

## MBTA PARKING AT A PREMIUM

**I**mproved and extended commuter rail has often attracted more commuters and automobiles than anticipated by MBTA planners. The Framingham stop on the Worcester line, with 404 parking spaces, has attracted 1,600 riders. Wellesley Farms, with 200 spaces, has 615 passengers workdays. Construction is underway on a station at Grafton, which will have parking for 271 cars. New stations are planned for Ashland, 700 cars; Southborough, 42 cars; and Westborough, 300 cars. However, the last three stations will not open until 2000 at the earliest.

On the Old Colony extension, Halifax (Plymouth Line) will add 100 parking spaces. The present terminus of the Lakeville/Middleboro Line will add 300-350 spaces.

While not strictly an MBTA project, the new station at Route 128 will include a 2,670 car four-level garage, the frame of which was under construction when observed by your editor on March 14. MBTA anticipates a 50% increase in ridership at Route 128 in the next decade.

Parking lot expansions are planned for the Fitchburg Line, the Rockport Line and the Haverhill Line, where construction of the new Haverhill station is about six months ahead of schedule due to the mild winter. A June opening is anticipated. It will have new platforms and 169 parking spaces. Wilmington Center will get a new station with a 230 car parking lot to serve the Lowell Line and Wildcat Branch (the latter the route of trains to Portland). The \$3 million project is expected to improve Wilmington's downtown. Land acquisition has begun for the project.

—*Railpace Newsmagazine*, February, April 1999

## ALONG THE TRACK

### MAINE TRANSPORTATION NEWS

**O**n February 24th, Maine Chamber and Business Alliance President, Dana Connors, testified before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation in support of Governor King's call for a five cent fuel tax increase. This was coupled with Chamber support for a 5% reduction in sales tax, resulting in an estimated overall tax reduction of \$25 million annually.

The increased fuel tax won't price gasoline out of reach, while the extra revenue would generate a 4:1 federal funding match for most transportation programs. It could also be a savings to taxpayers by

reducing bond issue borrowing costs.

In addition, municipal costs for highway-related expenses could be reduced by increasing the state-funded share of local road assistance. This could result in reductions in local property taxes.

Public transportation, and this may require changes to Maine's Constitution,

could be supported to a greater extent than it is now. There isn't a driver who won't, at some time in the future, lose the ability to drive. Public transportation, in some form, may be his or her only means of mobility, other than walking. Improved public transportation will also permit better utilization of future train service and the network of marine connections anticipated in Maine's long-range transportation plan. Shouldn't adequate public transportation be part of "The Way Life Should Be.?"

—*Impact, The Newsletter of Legislative and Regulatory Issues Facing Maine Business*, February 25, 1999



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## Eleven Years!!

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT** There's something frightening to me about the fact that eleven years have passed since we first came together to explore the possibility of having AMTRAK extend passenger rail service from Boston, through New Hampshire to Portland. It seemed like such a sensible and simple thing to request that a feasibility study be conducted and if that study turned out to be positive, we'd seek funding and build the system! But 11 years...However, I suppose since the rebuilding of the right-of-way has begun and even the new "run-around track" is being constructed (to get the train through South Portland's Rigby Yard at a respectable speed without interfering with freight service), we should be content. It appears that even some officials in my own city of Portland are actually looking forward to building a state-of-the-art intermodal terminal for the arrival of the train next year.

Since 1993, the Balzer Family, maker of tower clocks, has worked on a tower clock for the new station. TrainRiders agreed some years ago to assist with the capital drive to build the tower, which will be the centerpiece of the waiting area. The six-foot high clockworks will be visible from below. It will drive eight faces and ring a bell on the hour. Four faces approximately five feet in diameter will be located above the station roof. Four 30-inch diameter faces and the bell will hang directly below the works, visible from all sides of the waiting and entry areas. What a wonderful day it will be when everything is finished and trains are operating not just into Portland, but on to Freeport and Brunswick, Rockland, Lewiston and even Montreal. Even with so many wonderful things about to happen, I find myself asking "Why did it take so long?" Perhaps someone will search through our archives for the answer. Perhaps future undertakings by other citizens groups might be simplified if they analyzed our 11 years of dealing with federal, state and local officials. At any rate, it's been a heck of a ride so far for all of us. Stick with us though—there are lots of things left to do!

—Wayne Davis

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most substantial rail  
investment ever made  
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