

TRAINRIDER

The Newsletter of TrainRiders/Northeast



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

submitted by Wayne Davis

HAPPY NEW YEAR! 2000—The Year of THE Train! Boston or Bust! You can almost hear the whistle!

This edition of *The TrainRider* is filled with all sorts of good news for anyone truly interested in public transportation and rail in particular.

1999 was exciting because it was in January of '99 that TrainRiders and the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority co-sponsored the Amtrak groundbreaking ceremony for the long-awaited Portland/Dover/Boston service. In June, federal and state transportation officials, state legislators and members of congress were brought together for the follow-up meeting to our highly successful Regional Rail Conference of the previous November. While Guilford Corp. and Amtrak labored to install thousands of ties and over two hundred thousand tons of rock ballast and began installing the new continuously welded rail, Maine's Commissioner, John Melrose, was taking the promise he made at that June meeting very seriously. He organized several meetings during the summer and fall with his counterparts in VT, NH, MA and RI to discuss the creation of a truly "Regional Rail System." As a result of those meetings transportation issues are being seriously discussed now that I never expected to hear discussed in my lifetime! Stay tuned, you folks in Worcester, Providence and other New England locations!

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NATIONAL RAIL NEWS

STB DECISION ALLOWS CONSTRUCTION TO CONTINUE

THE OCTOBER 22, 1999, DECISION OF the Surface Transportation Board to allow up to 79 mph speeds for passenger trains on the 115# rail removed the last legal impediment to operation of trains on schedules which will be competitive with automobile travel times between Portland and Boston.

While the media made much of the differing views of engineers representing Guilford Rail Systems (GRS) and Amtrak, the issue revolves around the adequacy of support for the track structure. With adequate support, the rail will be stiff enough to resist bending beyond safe limits. The design of the reconstructed railbed includes enough depth of ballast and other substructure to provide sufficient support to the 115# continuous welded rail. With adequate maintenance by GRS, that support will continue.

F. Bruce Sleeper, legal counsel to TrainRiders/Northeast and a member of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, made the following analysis:

"The Authority believes that the ballast that is on the line, along with additional ballast that is already being added, is sufficient to permit speeds of up to 79 mph for the new service. The adequacy of the ballast currently planned for the line is also reflected in the testimony cited by the STB in its recent ruling on the issue. Despite this, the Authority has agreed to study the ballast issue, since we all want to make sure that the service is operated safely and efficiently. However, neither the study nor any corrective measures should delay the project, particularly since we will shortly be coming to the end of the current building season and very little, if anything, has already been done to the line that cannot be quickly added to if that becomes necessary. Thus, Guilford has not put another 'hurdle' in the way of service initiation, but, instead, has pointed out an issue that can and will be resolved within current time restraints and will still permit service to start next fall."

—Friends of Amtrak Update, November 18, 1999.

AMTRAK PRESIDENT KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT MDOT'S 49TH TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE

AUGUSTA CIVIC CENTER,
DECEMBER 9, 1999.

George D. Warrington, President and CEO of Amtrak, summarized Amtrak's recent progress toward achieving subsidy-free operation by 2003. Noting that "successful businesses cannot cut their way to prosperity," he advocated passage of federal legislation which would provide \$10 billion in rail bonds to establish a dependable source of capital funding for much needed infrastructure and equipment. He envisioned a high-speed rail corridor from Maine to Florida, a relatively low-cost fix for mobility problems.

He cited Wayne Davis' efforts in placing Maine ahead of many states in solving its transportation problems through inclusion of passenger rail service. "Thank you to Maine for all the work you have done for Amtrak."

In response to questions from the

audience, Warrington suggested that a postal facility be sited directly on a rail line, noted that Amtrak is rebuilding equipment to accommodate bicycles along with other luggage, that Amtrak is moving towards Acela service to replace a tired, old image, and that Amtrak service extensions to Augusta, Waterville and Bangor are mostly a matter of money.



Maine Commissioner of Transportation John Melrose, seated, and George Warrington, President/CEO of Amtrak.

In addition to having Amtrak's President as keynote speaker, the conference featured rails in sessions on "The Role of Multimodal Development in Downtown Revitalization and Economic Development" and "Public/Private Partnerships in Transportation Development." One of the winners of the University of Maine Student Paper Presentations wrote a paper on the history of high-speed rail in the United States. TrainRiders provided its Amtrak signboards as backdrop for the morning speeches and staffed an information booth in the exhibit hall, manned by Guy Hunter and your editor, Fourtin Powell.

George Warrington noted that Amtrak operates 263 trains over a 22,000-mile system daily. Dan A. Gwadowsky, Maine's Secretary of State, the second speaker of the morning session, noted that Maine has 22,000 miles of public highways. Amtrak has a ways to grow! ■

RAILS FIRST ALONG THE KENNEBEC

The following letter to the editor appeared in the November 24, 1999 Kennebec Journal:

TrainRiders Northeast has raptly observed the recent flurry of stories, letters and editorials appearing in this newspaper on the subject of the proposed Kennebec River Trail. As a grass-roots citizens organization formed in 1989 whose purpose is to educate the public as to the benefits of passenger rail travel, TrainRiders has a unique perspective on this matter.

Several points should be considered. First, the state's purchase of the rail line between Brunswick and Augusta was approved by Maine voters who were asked whether they wanted the state to acquire certain rail lines "for the preservation and operation of rail service in Maine." Clearly, Maine voters approved acquisition of the line only for rail pur-

poses. Additional activities can be conducted on the rail right-of-way only if they do not interfere with rail service.

Second, a portion of the line in Augusta has been used for a parking lot. This use was permitted with the understanding that it could be terminated at any time and that the rock and gravel put on the line could be removed within a matter of hours. It was never contemplated that this "parking lot" would ever be a permanent dead-end for the rail line. Any contrary use would certainly violate the spirit and the letter of the bond issue.

Third, the contour of the land around the line makes trail use difficult. At many points the line is on steeply sloping banks of the Kennebec River which, at least in its present state, cannot accommodate an adjacent trail as well. Additionally, part of the line consists of narrow railway trestles that also cannot

accommodate the trail. Clearly, then the trail will either require substantial additional funding or will be required to leave the rail line at some points.

In the recent past, the line included two parallel sets of tracks. Unfortunately, when one set was removed, the other set was moved to the middle of the rail right-of-way. This further limits the space now available for trail use.

TrainRiders is not opposed to trail use along the right-of-way, but only if that use is consistent with sound rail safety practices. It has been suggested that a 10-foot separation between the train and the trail is sufficient for 30-mph rail operations. What this ignores is that the line will ultimately be used for passenger rail at speeds up to 60 mph.

For obvious safety reasons, we do not permit trail use of our interstates. The safety concerns with trail use of a rail line are even more obvious since

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MANY NEW ENGLAND SPONSORS FOR AMTRAK FUNDING BILL

ATEN BILLION DOLLAR "HIGH-SPEED RAIL INVESTMENT ACT," introduced by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), is designed to provide Amtrak with a secure source of capital funding—something which has been lacking since its inception in 1971. Instead of income from a traditional bond, purchasers would receive tax credits based on the amount of their bond purchases. The money would be invested in infrastructure, locomotives and cars to permit the expansion of high-speed routes. At present, the only high-speed route in New England is the Northeast Corridor, whose electrically-powered

trains are anticipated to be operating as far north as Boston early in 2000.

New England Senators co-sponsoring the bill are James Jeffords (R-VT), John Kerry (D-MA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME). **If your Senator is a co-sponsor, let him or her know you appreciate their support for Amtrak. Let other senators know you support Amtrak's improvement so that high-speed rail can offset the seemingly endless expansion of airports and increasing airline delays.**

—*Friends of Amtrak Update*, November 18, 1999.

PENNSYLVANIA FUNDS KEYSTONE SERVICE UPGRADES

With the largest infusion of capital since the days of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Pennsylvania recently announced \$140 million worth of improvements to the route between Harrisburg and Philadelphia. A half will be provided by the state, a half by Amtrak.

Improvements to the 104-mile line will permit travel time reductions of about 30 minutes, enabling trains to operate at 90 to 110 mph instead of the current 75 mph maximum. The route saw an increase in passengers from 400,000 annually in 1995 when initial improvements were instituted to almost one million per year—Amtrak's fastest growing travel segment in the Northeast in 1999. Improvements will be made to the overhead electric catenary,

signalling and stations. The last three grade crossings will be replaced by bridges. The route becomes an Acela Regional Service in 2000.

—*Friends of Amtrak Update*, November 18, 1999.

HEARTLAND FLYER AN AMTRAK SUCCESS IN OKLAHOMA

The new *Heartland Flyer* carried almost 11,000 passengers during its first month of operation between Fort Worth, Texas, and Oklahoma City, OK. The Amtrak train began operating on June 15, 1999, the first passenger trains on this route since the Carter Administration cut Amtrak service in 1979.

—*Railpace Newsmagazine*, October 1999

RAIL LINK COST ESTIMATE DECREASES

A five year study by MBTA has concluded that construction costs of the 1.1 mile Rail Link under Boston have decreased from \$5.69 billion to \$3.68 billion. Major savings are anticipated by using dual-mode (diesel electric + straight electric) locomotives through the tunnel, which would avoid the necessity of electrifying many MBTA commuter routes, and through improvements in tunneling technology. Major transportation benefits would include linking MBTA's north and south side operations, reduced highway

travel, and reduced use of MBTA subways through additional stations close to downtown Boston.

This is good news for future rail passengers from Northern New England, since it would permit through trains connecting with the entire Northeast Corridor. Initial rail service from Maine and New Hampshire will terminate at Boston's North Station, with dedicated buses running between the city's North and South Stations.

—*Railpace Newsmagazine*, December 1999.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

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It's been eleven years since that spring in 1988 when 21 of us got together to form a group to explore the feasibility of having Amtrak extend its passenger train service from Boston to Dover and Portland. Many of you joined us during that year and in 1989—and you're still with us!

I thank you for hanging on. If you hadn't, I couldn't have. It's the letters of encouragement and the generous donations made by some of you that allow me and the other volunteers to continue our efforts. I appreciate the rail news clippings that some of you send to me from all over the world and I look forward to communications with some of the "pen pals" that have developed during these many years. Keep 'em coming! And while we're on the subject of letters and mailings, we would appreciate it if you would keep us informed of address changes. We are charged 32¢ for every piece of mail returned to us whether it has a new address or not. We're also holding a stack of last summer's and fall's newsletter which were returned to us with "temporarily away" stamped on them. Your dues entitle you to receive newsletters from us so help us get them to you in a timely manner.

Remember when you send in your dues card to include your e-mail address, if you have one. You can also help us increase our membership—and clout—by using the flip side of the card to suggest new members—and please check the box that will allow us to use your name when we contact them.

Thanks.

—W.D.

TRAINRIDERS WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Michael DeLeon, Dover, NH
Patty Gaylord, Hiram, ME
Kenyon Karl, Warren, NH
Douglas Libby, South Portland, ME
Grafton Nunes, Biddeford, ME
Eric Robb, Stratham, NH
Garry Rutter, Saco, ME
Tim Soley, Portland, ME
Lynne Williams, Port Clyde, ME

BOSTON-PORTLAND CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS REPORT

Director of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, Mike Murray has reasons to smile these days. Guilford Rail System maintenance crews have finished undercutting and other ballast work over the entire route between the Massachusetts/New Hampshire line and Portland, though ditching remains to be completed. Tie replacement has progressed almost to Wells, ME.

Continuous welded rail (CWR) has been laid out into Maine and has been spiked down as far as Newfields, NH. Another train of CWR arrived in December, with two more scheduled for both April and May. Each train carries enough rail for about six miles of track and weighs 1400 tons per train. About 15,400 tons of rail had been received by the end of December, enough for 60 miles of track. Other interesting statistics: Around 75,000 ties have been installed on 200,000 tons of rock ballast.

Construction has been scaled back for the winter, but 36 to 40 workers continue on passing sidings, bridge repairs and signalling. Signal work includes wayside signals (to control the trains) and crossing signals, which must be modified to accommodate the higher speeds of passenger

trains. The Fore River Bridge, between South Portland and Portland, is receiving new ties and stringers.

A two-mile runaround track, allowing passenger trains to bypass Rigby Yard in South Portland, is still to be completed. A two-mile passing siding will be completed in Wells, ME (the rail and ties are visible from the Maine Turnpike overpass). At Newfields, NH, (Rockingham Junction) where double track was in place, the tracks have been reconfigured to allow freight cars for the Portsmouth Branch to be set off on the former Eastbound Main, thereby remaining clear of passenger trains which will use the former Westbound Main.

In Wells, the Maine Turnpike Authority has almost completed land acquisition for the Wells intermodal terminal. It will be located directly across from Exit 2 on Routes 9/109, just west of the turnpike. The facility will occupy about 23 acres of land.

—Personal communication, Mike Murray, Director, NNEPRA, December 15, 1999.

Personal communication, John D. Roberts, Right of Way Manager, Maine Turnpike Authority, December 16, 1999.

Personal communication, Victor Salemme, Amtrak, January 11, 2000.

MBTA STATION PROGRESS

Over the weekend of October 16-17, 1999, the station at Canton Junction, MA, was moved 65 feet south and 40 feet away from the tracks. This will make possible a relocated connection between the MBTA Stoughton Branch and Amtrak's Shoreline and allow MBTA trains to remain clear of Amtrak trains while boarding/detraining passengers.

Worcester Union Station's renovation has proceeded to the point where it was used for special events this past fall. The Worcester Redevelopment Authority selected Finard & Co. to develop the station into a shopping, dining and entertainment complex. Private investment is anticipated to range between \$26 and \$30 million. The publicly financed portion of the

renovation is expected to cost \$24.8 million. As of December 14 no firm date was set for use by travelers on Amtrak and the MBTA's commuter service.

MBTA's Framingham Station is being moved 700 feet west to avoid traffic congestion when trains are stopped at the station. Framingham has about 1600 daily commuters. The new changes will create about 70 new parking spaces. Preliminary results of a study of the CSX Fitchburg Secondary, which crosses the MBTA's Boston-Worcester line at Framingham, indicate good potential ridership to proposed stations at Route I-290 in Northborough and the 9/90 industrial park in Framingham, some of whom would be

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VERMONT RAIL NEWS

The "Ethan Allen Connector" between Rutland and Burlington ended its experimental run on October 31, 1999. As reported on page 36 of the December 1999 *Railpace Newsmagazine*, "Many felt the experiment did not last long enough to judge how many riders the train would attract, and should have continued through November. One week in October saw 300 riders, unlike its first day which only had 15."

Somehow, "testing" during a season which includes no skiing, a train which connects with a train which sees its heaviest usage during ski season, seems ineffective at best. Maine's Sunday River Express, which failed largely for lack of a Portland connection with anticipated Amtrak trains from Boston, shared with its Vermont counterpart a schedule which was too slow to compete with highway travel times.

However, *Railpace Newsmagazine*, in its October 1999 issue, devoted an entire article to Vermont's rail routes. "Fall Foliage in Vermont—Around Vermont by Train," gave suggestions for various circle tours of much of Vermont, with only short sections covered by other than train travel.

The Vermont Agency of Transportation has reached an agreement with Guilford Rail Systems to purchase 40 miles of rail line from White River Jct. to Wells River. Closing is expected in December. Purchase price is \$3.3 million, with another \$500,000 anticipated to be spent on rehabilitation of the track. The track could be open for freight traffic as early as next summer.

—*Railpace Newsmagazine*, October, December 1999;
The Providence Journal, November 25, 1999.

Dates To Remember

✓ NARP Region One Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, March 25th

✓ TrainRiders Annual Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, April 13th



We drivers cannot be made to pay our share of the true cost of driving. The topic is death to politicians.

But the costs involved are twofold: internal ones paid by each driver and external ones paid by others—accidents, traffic congestion, air pollution, water pollution, solid waste, loss of cropland, loss of natural habitat, climate change, and so on.

In a just world, persons such as factory owners, drug dealers and, yes, we car drivers would be held accountable for the cost of human illness we cause.

In this country, industry is slowly being brought to heel. The picture isn't so hopeful when it comes to global drug lords, some of whom rule entire countries. As for the third-mentioned class of miscreants, we humble drivers who are just trying to get to work and wish no harm to anybody, things are looking up.

At last month's annual MDOT conference in Augusta, the keynote speaker was George D. Warrington, President and CEO of Amtrak. He spoke about the immediate future of transportation in Maine and the economic impact of intermodal partnerships now being formed across the country.

Though the days when 50 percent of the federal DOT's spending went to highways, 25 percent to airports and 3 percent to rail are not over, two months ago 26 governors, including Angus King signed a letter to President Clinton urging him to include full funding for Amtrak in his Fiscal Year 2000 Budget Request. More than one-fourth of the Senate, including Olympia Snowe, co-sponsored legislation to authorize \$10 billion in rail development bonds for Amtrak over the next decade.

Ten years ago, 90,000 Mainers signed petitions to demand restored passenger rail service, and persons who have fought all the way for it in the intervening years include Governor Angus King, Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins—and, in the early days, and very strongly, George Mitchell—in addition to John Melrose, Mike Murray, Wayne Davis, Jonathan Carter, and others.

Passenger rail service is critical to the economy and ought to be a state's right.

Meanwhile, Amtrak and Pennsylvania recently formed a \$140 million partnership to build high speed rail between

RAIL'S PLACE IN OUR FUTURE

Philadelphia and Harrisburg. Illinois and Wisconsin are also purchasing high speed trainsets. Virginia is upgrading the Amtrak corridor between Richmond and Washington to connect with the new Acela service between Washington and Boston. And California just announced the biggest Amtrak-state investment partnership ever.

Such partnerships are happening, said Warrington, because people are tired of highway and airport gridlock. They want a more practical way to get where they're going. Trains are fast, energy-efficient, fun, "and they're a heck of a lot more comfortable." More importantly, they stimulate economic growth.

Amtrak has also formed partnerships with the private sector: Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railway; Norfolk Southern; the U.S. Postal Service; Dynamix (same-day express package delivery in the northeast corridor); Capitol One (launch a VISA card with travel credits); Hertz (cars at every railway station); Greyhound and other bus providers (development of connecting intermodal service).

The sleek, purring, bullet-nosed Acela is coming late this spring to the Washington-Boston corridor at speeds up to 150 mph. The seats are wider than in cars and planes and include laptop computer outlets. Scattered throughout each train are conference tables, telephones, and cafe cars—a whole new way to do business. Acela trainsets will be phased in until 20 are up and running.

Though the last train pulled out of Bangor in 1960, Washington-Boston service has never stopped running, and Amtrak ridership from coast to coast has increased three years in a row.

The most exciting news is that after many years of being one of only three states without passenger rail service, Maine is about to join the national system again.

One year from now passenger service will be cruising along at 80 mph between Boston and Portland. The following year, ser-

vice will extend to Freeport and Brunswick, and after that to Rockland and, possibly, Lewiston. After that, it's up to us—service that runs from the Bangor International Airport and downtown Bangor across the river and over the hills to Ellsworth and Trenton or Hancock—and from Trenton by bus or Hancock by ferry to Bar Harbor—or a line to link northern Maine's east-west corridor between Halifax and Montreal, where freight trains have never ceased to operate—and from there to Vancouver.

Each one of us has contributed, however unknowingly, to despoiling the environment of our beautiful country, and it's up to us to turn it around. A Maine transportation system that goes beyond fly-or-drive-or-forget-it to link planes, trains, buses, motor vehicles and ferries will take us a long way indeed.

Facts and Figures

Every full rail car removes 50 cars from traffic.

Rail freight gets 254 ton miles per gallon of diesel, highway freight 92 per gallon

Hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide emissions are cut by 90 percent when either heavy or light rail is substituted for an average commuter highway trip.

The European Union is spending \$50 billion on high speed rail projects. The U.S. has spent \$3 billion in the past 18 years.

The cost of widening the Turnpike in southern Maine is \$6 million *per mile*. The cost of upgrading railroad tracks already in place is \$400 to \$600 thousand *per mile*.

Question

How did the president of Amtrak travel to Maine's DOT conference last month? He flew in a commuter plane from Boston and here's what happened: After the approximately 15 other passengers figured out who he was, the cabin began to buzz—everybody telling Warrington or one of his aides that they can't wait until the day Amtrak arrives in Maine.

Paula Boyer Rougny, a journalist who lives in Bangor has been a member of TNE since 1993. She is the author of *Happiness Is A Kitchen In Maine: Recipes From Real Women*. She has written for *The New York Times*, *The Portland Press Herald*, *The Bangor Daily News* and for *The TrainRider* in the past.

NEW HAMPSHIRE REPORT

Construction of the station in Exeter is scheduled to start in the summer, to be ready for the trains in October 2000. Bob Hall observed that Phillips Exeter Academy would provide a ready market for Amtrak service to Boston. About 50 students travel to Boston on an average weekend. The December 16th end of semester movement of students included 13

buses, 9 of which went to Boston with 3 going to Connecticut and New York City.

Dover station is in the final design stages, with interior arrangements being done in concert with the future tenant. The station will be staffed and should be ready by the time trains roll in October.

—Robert Hall and William Hunt, Board Meeting, December 16, 1999.

RHODE ISLAND RAIL PROGRESS

Rhode Island experienced a 168 mph test run of an Amtrak electric train in October and is eagerly awaiting the start of Acela Regional Service. While the start of high-speed Acela trainsets has been delayed by technical problems, Regional Service should start early this year.

Westerly station, which has undergone \$2 million restoration, now sports a new red tile roof, cleaned Westerly granite stonework and rows of spikes to keep the pigeons at bay. The 1913 Spanish Colonial style station features chair lifts to enable handicapped passengers to use the pedestrian tunnel under the tracks. Additional parking occupies the site of the former freight yard north of the passenger station.

Rhode Island mourned the death of Sen. John H. Chafee, whose Chairmanship of the Environment and Public Works Committee enabled him to get \$25 million last year for construction of the Warwick Intermodal Facility. This year's TEA-21 appropriation included a \$300,000 "smart growth" grant to enable the City of Warwick to plan for the new station. The planning effort will include connecting shuttle trains to Providence providing access to all Acela high speed trains, integration of statewide bus service to the airport and station, and additional parking.

Meanwhile, planning for the station and its people mover connection to T.F. Green Airport continues.

In an editorial entitled, "Amtrak could ease Green's growing pains," the September 30th *Warwick Beacon*, noting that air traffic had already exceeded projections for the year 2010, stated the following:

"Convenience and accessibility, among other attributes, are threatened by what already exists during certain times of the day and week: gridlock of vehicular traffic on both decks of the terminal.

"However, at the 'foot' of the airport lies one resource that needs and deserves support and recognition: the train.

"Not only does it provide a unique link to air travel, potentially reducing the crunch of cars arriving to drop off and retrieve passengers, but Amtrak's new high-speed northeast corridor service could and should take some of the strain off of Green.

"And while the airport will continue to dominate long-distance transportation, by making the most of the train station and Amtrak, we can create a balance that will also serve the best interests of Green Airport."

—*The Providence Journal*, September 23, October 5, 10;
Warwick Beacon, September 30, 1999.

TRAINRIDERS MOVES TO NEW OFFICE

On December 1st, TrainRiders/Northeast moved from Congress Street to 470 Forest Avenue. The new office is on the second floor of a building containing a number of small businesses. Visitors can park behind the building, entering from Dartmouth Street. Two hours of parking is permitted

on Dartmouth Street. Our mailing address, phone number and e-mail address remain the same as before. Don't send mail to the new address; continue to use the box number. To visit, take Forest Avenue north from I-295 and turn left onto Dartmouth Street at the third set of traffic lights.

MAINE TRANSPORTATION NEWS

VOTERS APPROVE TRANSPORTATION BOND ISSUE

Rail transportation got its biggest infusion of public money in Maine's history on November 2, 1999, when voters approved the transportation bond issue. Perhaps the most interesting project authorized by the voters is the Lewiston-Auburn-Brunswick interconnection. The connection of the former Lewiston & Auburn Branch Railroad, now operated by the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad, and the former Maine Central Railroad Lewiston Lower Branch, currently, currently out of service, is intended to allow both freight and passenger service between Montreal and Rockland, via Brunswick. The \$6,000,000 bond issue will fund right-of-way acquisition and preliminary engineering.

Preliminary work on the Rockland Branch rehabilitation is already underway. Bridge deck and rail replacement on the long trestle east of Wiscasset was proceeding this fall, but is now suspended for the winter. This work and other projected improvements on the line will allow Class II/III train speeds (up to 60 mph) between Brunswick and Rockland. \$7,500,000 in bond funds will be combined with \$8,000,000 in federal funding to help complete a \$33 million project on this State-owned rail line. ■

ROCKLAND BRANCH DEVELOPMENTS

The Maine Department of Transportation has selected Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., to plan the upgrade and rehabilitation of the Rockland Branch. This same firm has been the primary engineering contractor for the ongoing rehabilitation of the Guilford Rail System's track between the Massachusetts/New Hampshire state line and Portland.

The 56 mile branch will provide trains connecting with Amtrak service to

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RAILS ALONG THE KENNEBEC (continued from page 2)

trains are much harder to stop than motor vehicles. Additionally, people in Maine and elsewhere have a long history of ignoring rail safety considerations when they go around barriers at crossings and walk upon or otherwise use rail lines that are in active use.

Finally, even with the best safety efforts, rail accidents do happen (although at a far lower rate than that for other transportation modes). Having a trail within 10 feet of an operating rail line, even with a barrier, is simply not safe.

Some have implied that the above concerns have been late in coming. However, state officials and others have expressed these same concerns in local newspapers over four years ago. In addition, Downeast Rail, the citizens group created to deal with this rail line expressed concerns in a

January 1995 letter to the Maine Department of Transportation which was also sent to local officials in Augusta, Farmingdale, Hallowell and Gardiner. These concerns should have been obvious to all for quite some time.

Despite all of this, in many places, the trail could safely be accommodated. Where this is not the case, however, it must be up to trail advocates to show where, how and if a trail can be safely placed near the rail line.

—Wayne E. Davis, Chairman
TrainRiders/Northeast
Portland

On December 15, 1999, Wayne Davis, Bruce Sleeper of TrainRiders/Northeast and Sylvanus Doughty of Maine Rail Group met with Kennebec Journal editorial staff concerning recent Journal editorials on railroads serving Augusta.

MBTA STATION PROGRESS (continued from page 4)

"reverse commuters" from Boston and suburbs east of Framingham. Businesses near the two proposed stations employ over 16,000 commuters, most of whom have to use their automobiles.

Meanwhile, local opposition to MBTA efforts to extend commuter rail to Fall River and New Bedford continues. The Easton Town Meeting recently voted \$40,000, in addition to \$55,707 already appropriated, to oppose plans to extend the Stoughton Branch through Easton to serve those cities. Massachusetts Environmental Secretary Robert D'urand ruled that the MBTA had failed to adequately consider the environmental effects of the route through Easton, thereby requiring

further study. The Attleboro route favored by Easton residents would cost \$407 million and serve 3,230 daily riders, while the route via Easton would cost \$410 million and serve 4,325 daily passengers. The Easton route shares with the Hingham route to Greenbush, also still in limbo due to local opposition, the fact that it was constructed over 100 years ago and operated many years without, seemingly, causing undue harm to local residents.

—The 470, December 1999; Railpace Newsmagazine, December 1999, January 2000;
Telephone call, Worcester Redevelopment Authority, December 14, 1999; The Providence Journal, November 23, 1999; The Boston Globe, December 13, 1999.

ROCKLAND BRANCH DEVELOPMENTS (continued from page 6)

Brunswick, expected to begin within a year of the start of Amtrak service to Portland, now anticipated in fall 2000. Rockland will be the site of a terminal for ferry services connecting with Acadia National Park. Scheduled passenger service on the Rockland Branch was ended in

1959. Track, bridge, culvert and drainage improvements are contemplated, in addition to safety concerns related to the 79 grade crossings on the route. Two new stations are planned.

—The Courier/Gazette, Rockland, ME, November 27, 1999.

Have you thought of using TrainRiders/Northeast as part of your estate plan?

NORTH OF THE BORDER

Transport 2000, the Canadian equivalent to the National Association of Railroad Passengers, paints a bleak future for VIA Rail Canada if present trends are continued. Like Amtrak, VIA has been forced by government cutbacks to reduce operation expenses. Despite a 21% reduction in operating expenses between 1992 and 1998, coupled with a 28% increase in revenues, a 56% reduction in government funding has left them with a shortfall of \$34 million. Passenger travel has held steady at about 3.6 million annually, despite a 29% average increase in fares paid per passenger. On-time performance, 90% in 1992, fell to 81% by 1998. The value of their capital assets fell by 27% during the period, reflecting shoddy condition of the interiors of transcontinental trains and poorly maintained locomotives and rail diesel cars. Money from the sale of equipment (surplus after a major cutback in 1990) which was to have been used to purchase new equipment, has, instead, gone for operational needs.

Transport 2000 has urged that government funding be increased by \$200 million per year to continue existing service levels. Like Amtrak, VIA has had problems with delayed trains and high user fees on track owned by freight railroads, in this case, Canadian National. As in the U.S., freight railroads faced with a lack of capacity to move trains are reluctant to give priority to passenger trains.

In Gaspé, the closure of the Gaspesia Paper Mill on October 28, along with the cessation of mining at a copper mine near Gaspé, has removed virtually all freight east of New Carlisle. Thus the Baie des Chaleurs Railway, the route of VIA's *Chaleur* was one of two trains featured in the October 1999 issue of *VIA Magazine* in an article entitled, "Eastern Canada at its Atlantic best!"

—The Fate of VIA Rail Canada Briefing Paper, Transport 2000 Ottawa, September 1999 (updated October 1999); Railpace Newsmagazine, December 1999; VIA Magazine, October 1999.

L A T E - B R E A K I N G N E W S

■ THE MAINE DOT IS PROPOSING THE EXTENSION OF AMTRAK SERVICE TO PORTLAND OVER THE UNUSED UNION BRANCH OF THE MAINE CENTRAL RR, RUNNING FROM THE PRESENT MAIN LINE, AROUND HADLOCK FIELD (HOME OF THE PORTLAND SEADOGS), RUNNING PARALLEL TO I-295 TO FOREST AVENUE. BEYOND FOREST AVENUE, RAIL SERVICE WOULD BE EXTENDED ON NEW TRACK IN THE EXISTING PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY ADJACENT TO I-295. A NEW TRESTLE BRIDGE WOULD BE CONSTRUCTED ACROSS BACK COVE'S MOUTH, CONNECTING TO THE ST. LAWRENCE AND ATLANTIC RAILROAD. AGAIN, RUNNING ON EXISTING TRACKS PARALLEL TO THE INTERSTATE TO YARMOUTH, TRAINS COULD CONTINUE ON TO LEWISTON-AUBURN AND MONTREAL, OR SWITCH TO THE MAINE CENTRAL LINE TO FREEPORT AND BRUNSWICK AND ONTO THE MID-COAST AREA ON STATE-OWNED ROCKLAND DIVISION.

THE DOT HAS JUST REQUESTED \$10.5 MILLION FROM THE GENERAL FUND FOR THIS PROJECT. REALIZING THAT THIS INVESTMENT WILL IMPROVE RAIL SERVICE IN MAINE AND SUPPORT ECONOMIC AND TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT IN MANY REGIONS, GOVERNOR KING HAS ENDORSED THE REQUEST AND INCLUDED IT IN HIS BUDGET PRESENTATION TO THE STATE LEGISLATURE. THE CONCEPT OF USING BAYSIDE FOR THE NEW AMTRAK STATION INSTEAD OF THOMPSON'S POINT HAS MANY BENEFITS. IT WILL REDUCE PASSENGER TRAFFIC ON GUILFORD'S MAIN LINE AND LOWER THE NUMBER OF AT GRADE HIGHWAY CROSSINGS, BENEFITING BOTH FREIGHT AND PASSENGER SERVICES. A TRAIN RUNNING PARALLEL TO THE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY WILL BE A GREAT MARKETING DEVICE FOR PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE, AS DRIVERS IN TRAFFIC WILL SEE THE TRAIN SPEEDING PAST THEM. IT WILL ALSO BE ADJACENT

TO DOWNTOWN PORTLAND AND SUPPORT MUCH TALKED ABOUT REDEVELOPMENT IN THE BAYSIDE AREA. IN ADDITION, IT WILL ALLOW FOR A RAIL LINK TO THE CITY'S NEW WATERFRONT PASSENGER MARINE FACILITY, OCEAN GATE, TO BE BUILT AT THE BATH IRON WORKS SITE. THE MANY CRUISE SHIPS THAT VISIT PORTLAND EACH YEAR, INCLUDING QE2 WILL BE USING THAT FACILITY. ALL OF THESE IMPROVEMENTS WILL ASSIST IN MAKING RAIL SERVICE AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO DRIVING AND WILL ENHANCE MAINE'S ABILITY TO BRING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DOLLARS TO RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS. ALSO, CONNECTING AMTRAK SERVICE TO THE ST. LAWRENCE AND ATLANTIC RR WOULD BENEFIT MAINE IN MANY WAYS, SUPPORTING THE DOT'S PLANS FOR AN INTERMODAL PASSENGER FACILITY IN AUBURN AND PROVIDING A PASSENGER RAIL LINK TO MONTREAL.

THE TRAINRIDER

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