



## AND NOW, OUR STORY CONTINUES...

### TRAINRIDERS HIRES ITS FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*The Times Record:* Portland —

Rail advocacy group TrainRiders Northeast has hired George O’Keefe, Jr., of Winthrop as its first executive director.

O’Keefe is a Master’s Degree candidate in the Policy, Planning, and Management Program, with a concentration in Organizational Leadership and Management, at the Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

O’Keefe will work with TrainRiders’ chairman Wayne E. Davis to help the organization expand its mission of bringing modern and efficient passenger rail service to the Northeast.

“A balanced transportation system is what we need in order to provide for sustainable economic opportunities that will last for generations,” said O’Keefe.

A member of the Maine Army National Guard’s 133rd Engineer Battalion, deployed twice to Afghanistan, O’Keefe became interested in transportation policy while working as a freelance writer for railroad.net. He has since helped build partnerships between NNEPRA and a variety of community groups that focus on veterans and youth.

“We’ve been waiting a long time for the right person to come along to help us expand our original goals set out in 1989,” said Davis. “We look to exciting times as we move along to our next accomplishments.”

In 1991, TrainRiders, through its political action committee, RailVision, spearheaded the passage of Maine’s Passenger Rail Service Act, the first citizen initiated bill ever approved by the Maine Legislature, leading to the creation of Amtrak’s Downeaster passenger rail service. ■



**George O’Keefe, Jr.**

### CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

29 Years ago, three people came together to discuss what it would take to have Amtrak extend its passenger rail service from Boston to Portland. This led to an initial gathering of 21 interested citizens, growing to 1300 Trainriders members representing the close to 90,000 Maine voters who requested passage of Maine’s Passenger Rail Service Act in 1991. That act directed the Maine DOT to bring Amtrak to Maine and became the first citizen initiated bill ever to be adopted by the Maine legislature. The people had spoken—and our elected officials acted!

The driving force behind the passenger rail initiative, in New Hampshire as well as Maine, has always been a growing group of plain, everyday citizens—it was TrainRiders/Northeast (TNE) who arranged the initial meeting between state, federal, and Amtrak officials. It was not governors or federal or state officials, nor was it paid lobbyists who appeared before Congress and state assemblies—it was, and continues to be, plain citizens requesting more transportation choices. The people continue to speak and officials—we hope—will continue to act.

Today, as we recap some of our accomplishments, we are delighted to call attention to the fact that our TNE Board and general membership can stop worrying about our future as a strong voice for rail advocacy. Recently, it was my pleasure to meet George O’Keefe who simply called me on the phone to “talk about things...” Well, nearly four hours later we were still talking and I was setting up a meeting with our legal counsel and several long-time board members to announce that we’d found someone to be the first executive director of TNE, someone to work beside me for the foreseeable future to ultimately take over the management of TrainRiders/Northeast.

As a membership organization we must maintain our efforts going forward.

In the past, your generosity has been important to achieving our goals, and we hope that you will continue to support us through your donations and specific bequests. — *Wayne Davis*

# It All Came Together

The Brunswick Layover Facility (BLF) has been completed at long last. Three sets of tracks were laid through its main bay. These connect outdoors to the freight siding used by PanAm Railways to store freight cars and to the control siding that runs to Brunswick Station.

The indoor tracks are set off from the floor of the building by about 10 inches (to the top of the rail), allowing the layover crews to easily run a mechanic's creeper under the cars and locomotives to check the brake pads on each wheel.

Next, six sets of overhead rollup doors, three at each end of the building were installed. Each door actually

consists of an inner and an outer door operating in tandem. The roughly 1-foot space between the inner and outer doors creates a baffle that augments the sound-proofing capability of the building, in addition to the insulation in the ceiling and walls.

Personnel safety is clearly a top priority within the facility. A train warning system is at the primary entrance to the main bay of the BLF. This system provides visual and audible signals whenever a train is moving into or out of the building. Air-quality monitors are located up and down each of the three sets of tracks as are eye-washing stations for the crew's protection.

All parking areas and access roads

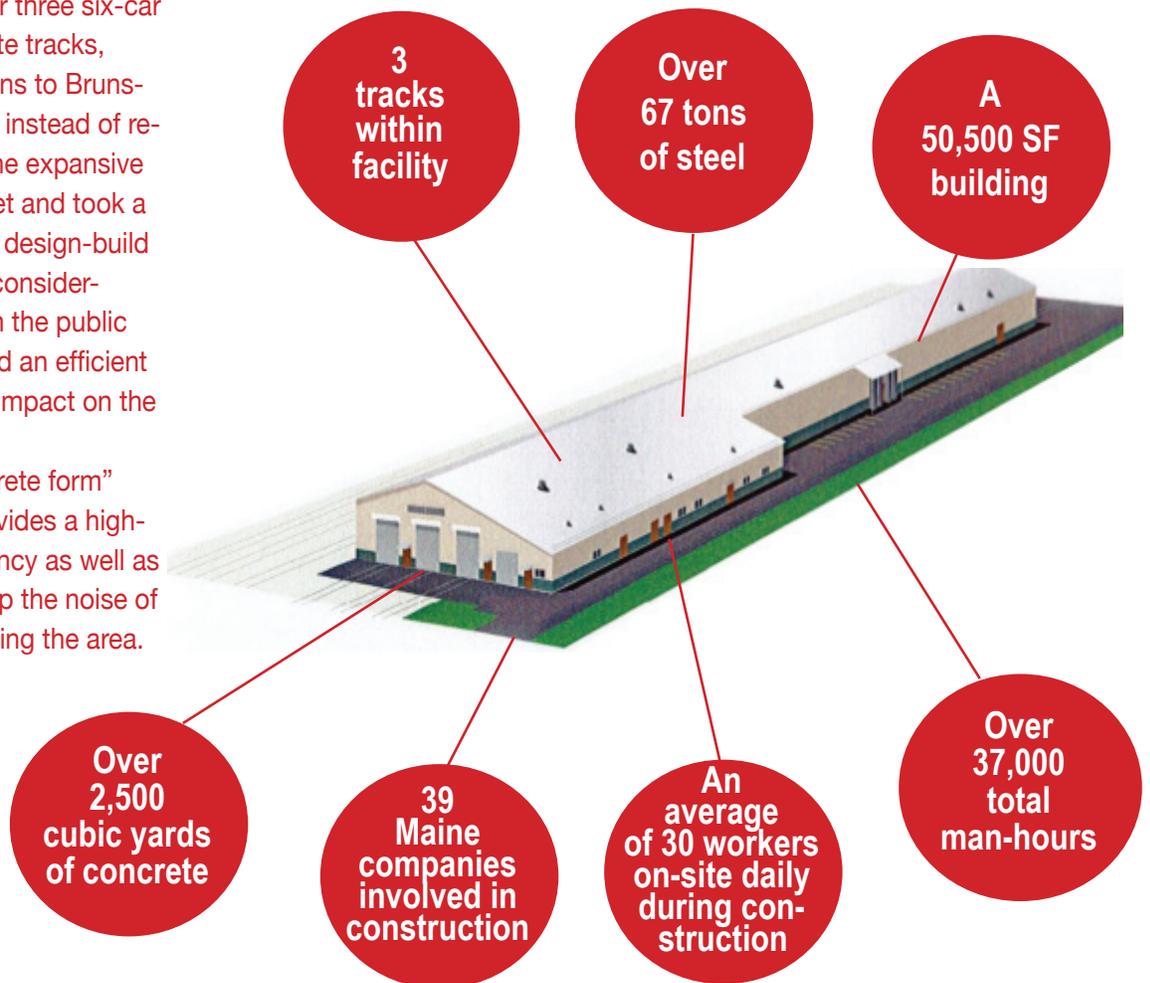
are paved with reclaimed pavement.

The air-handling system is comprised of four massive "make-up air units." Each unit pulls fresh air from the outdoors into the main bay where it circulates into the duct work that runs the length of the building. The make-up air units have the capacity to heat the air they are drawing into the BLF during colder weather.

It took a long time, and hard frustrating work by NNEPRA, TrainRiders Northeast, and others, but the state-of-the-art facility will easily handle the projected five scheduled daily round-trips.

This facility can shelter three six-car trains on three separate tracks, allowing late-night trains to Brunswick to stay overnight instead of returning to Portland. The expansive building spans 655 feet and took a year to complete. The design-build effort, managed with considerable participation from the public and neighbors, created an efficient building with minimal impact on the area.

The "insulated concrete form" (ICF) construction provides a high-level of thermal efficiency as well as a sound barrier to keep the noise of the trains from disturbing the area.



## Amtrak's Museum Train Visits Brunswick's Station

The 2016 summer season began a little early for Brunswick when Amtrak's popular Museum Train opened to crowds of curious Mainers and tourists at Brunswick's train station. Young and old alike had an opportunity to view conductor uniforms, rail memorabilia ... and a time line of Amtrak historical events.



## Main Street (Dover, NH) and TrainRiders/Northeast Join Forces

The annual Dover Pride Cleanup takes place May 6th. 2017, bringing together about 250 volunteers to weed, edge, rake, sweep, and spread bark mulch at 14 downtown locations. This special Cleanup Day, organized by Dover Main Street (DMS) has been taking place every spring to not only beautify the city, but also to help the Public Works Department address priority work in a timely manner.



The Dover Transportation Center was identified as one of the fourteen "clean up" locations in recognition of its visibility to the tens of thousands of train passengers who come to the city each year and also in recognition of the hundreds of thousands of passengers who remain on the train. DMS believes that a clean, attractive city encourages visitors and their willingness to spend time at the fine downtown shops, restaurants, and museums.

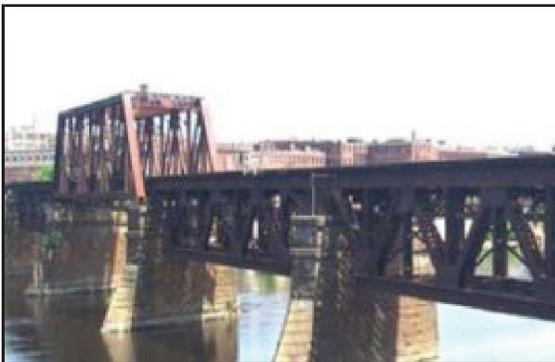
TrainRiders/Northeast and Dover Main Street have developed a strong synergy working together to show how community promotion and transportation complement each other. The train brings visitors to the city and these visitors participate in Maine Street events such as Restaurant Week, the Run B4 You Crawl 5K race/pub crawl, downtown Halloween events and other holiday festivities...all sponsored by TrainRiders/Northeast.

And perhaps some of those passengers "passing through" will look out the window at the welcoming Transportation Center, read of the many local activities and think about riding again to stop and visit. Dover Main Street can be found at >[www.dovermainstreet.org](http://www.dovermainstreet.org)< or on Facebook.



## MASSACHUSETTS BAY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY REHABILITATES BRIDGES OVER THE MERRIMAC

The Downeaster crosses the river 10 times a day, so you may have noticed that the bridges are undergoing repair. They were constructed between the late 1800s and 1920s. Work consists of repairing or replacing steel, bearings, rivets, and substructures, and painting. Trackwork includes new ties and replacing jointed rails with continuous welded rail. The project will be completed by this summer.



— Referenced from *RT&S*, Sep. 2016

In February, the *Downeaster* was featured in *Amtrak Ink*, the monthly publication for and by Amtrak employees. Below are excerpts from two articles:

## On Board the *Downeaster*

As daily commuters board the *Downeaster* in Boston's North Station, several of them call out a hello and offer a handshake to Conductor Rory O'Connor, a former fisherman who has worked on the route since it started 15 years ago.

The *Downeaster* is a state-supported route funded by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA). It travels 145 miles through Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine and links 12 communities. Its five-car Amfleet consists, which include Business Class, make five daily round trips between Boston and Portland. With the recent opening of a new layover facility in Brunswick, Maine, three additional round trips were added north to Freeport and Brunswick.

Since 2005, the *Downeaster* has more than doubled ridership and averages a half million customers annually with ridership continuing to grow.

That success is impacting the overall business as the *Downeaster* in recent years has become a testing ground for new Amtrak products before they are introduced system-wide. In fact, it was the first Amtrak train to offer free WiFi service and implement e-Ticketing.

One of the unique benefits for customers on the *Downeaster* is a group of volunteers called TrainRiders Northeast. Their "hosts" ride along with the crew and help answer questions from customers about destinations and local attractions. The nonprofit group was established in 1989 to advocate for the extension of passenger rail service to Maine, and to educate the public about the importance of rail.

"Our *Downeaster* team takes ownership of the service—they go above and beyond for our customers and that is the intangible that makes them so special," said Steve Corcoran, assistant superintendent of Operations, who supervises 36 crew members.

## Economic Impact of the *Downeaster*

According to NNEPRA, the *Downeaster* transports more than 100,000 visitors to Maine, who contribute \$29 million in economic impact. This includes visitors to the popular shopping destination of Freeport, where L.L.Bean's flagship store has stood for more than a century.

In addition, NNEPRA expects the expanded service resulting from the construction of the Brunswick Layover Facility to generate \$12.4 million in regional economic output. The 60,000 square-foot facility was funded as part of a \$38.4 million High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Grant awarded to NNEPRA for improvements to the *Downeaster* passenger rail service.

## Relevant Bills Introduced to the 128th Maine Legislature

- No. 292 An Act to Authorize a General Bond Issue to Invest in Maine's Rail Infrastructure and Expand Passenger Rail Service.
- No. 315 Resolve, Directing the Department of Transportation to Apply for Funds for Rail Improvements.
- No. 435 Resolve, To Study the Feasibility and Cost of Providing Passenger Rail Service to the City of Bangor.
- No. 500 An Act to Allow the Formation of Transportation Corridor Districts.
- No. 542 An Act to Increase Railroad Freight Safety.
- No. 590 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Invest in Maine's Rail Infrastructure.

## Host Program Seeks Volunteers

The TrainRiders Northeast train host program provides volunteer hosts on board the *Downeaster*. The host program, which has been in continuous operation since the inception of *Downeaster* service 15 years ago, was originally conceived as a way to acquaint passengers unfamiliar with the ease, comfort, and convenience of traveling by train. Hosts interact with passengers to make them feel welcome. They act as good will ambassadors promoting patronage of the *Downeaster*, travel on other Amtrak routes, and rail safety. Hosts also assist passengers with information regarding services available on the train and at communities served by the *Downeaster*.

Our hosts are from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine. Participation in the program is voluntary and new applicants are always welcome. See TrainRider's website for the application process. ■

### Computer Crash

Many people lost access to our website earlier this year. Our server crashed! The problem has been fixed and all is well. Check it out! [www.trainridersne.org](http://www.trainridersne.org)

**NNEPRA REPORTS**

**RIDERSHIP & REVENUE AHEAD OF THE CURVE**

Key metrics for the first half of Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) exceeded projections and 2016 performance levels. All-time ridership in July and September and solid performance through a second quarter full of changes allowed us to hit our goals.

Service remained consistent and ridership strong through the fall 2016 tie installation project. The

opening of the new Brunswick layover facility extended a third Downeaster round trip to Freeport and Brunswick in late November and a new Café vendor was brought on board setting the stage for continued growth in 2017.

Track work and MBTA schedule conflicts continued to impact On Time Performance (OTP).

	<b>Riders</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Pass. Miles</b>	<b>OTP</b>
<b>FY17 to Date</b>	<b>263,181</b>	<b>\$4,367,950</b>	<b>20,602,608</b>	<b>64%</b>
FY16 to Date	243,652	4,171,016	19,498,169	65%
<b>FY17 vs FY16</b>	<b>+ 8%</b>	<b>+ 5%</b>	<b>+ 6%</b>	<b>-2%</b>

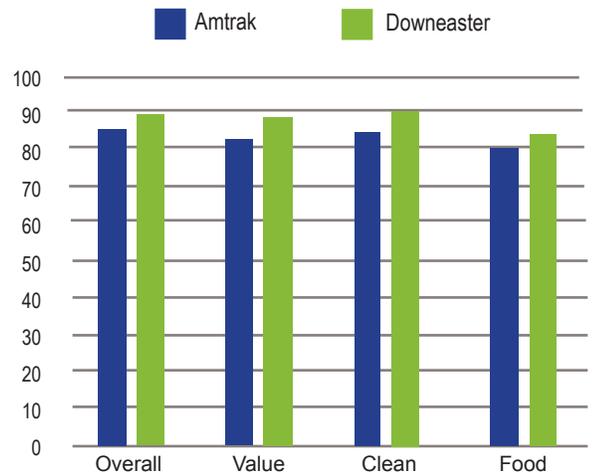
**Downeaster FY17 to Date:**

Avg. Daily Ridership	1,438	Avg. Passenger Fare	\$16.60	Avg. Miles per Passenger	78
Avg. Weekday Ridership	1,361	Avg. Weekday Fare	\$16.50	Avg. Weekday Mi/Psgr.	77
Avg. Weekend Ridership	1,508	Avg. Weekend Fare	\$17.61	Avg. Weekend Mi/Psgr.	89



On March 9th, the Downeaster carried several Boothbay Region High School students to the University of New Hampshire in Durham to check out the campus. The trip was funded through the school's Maine Education Loan Marketing Corporation (MELMAC) Education Foundation grant, which prepares students for life after high school by providing opportunities for on-site visits to colleges, technical schools, workplaces, military organizations, or other post-secondary options. Students receive assistance and are continually mentored from the application process through acceptance. They're encouraged to fill out FASA forms for college, are coached for SATs and college essays, and meet with BRHS graduates who return to tell students about their experiences. They've traveled to many campuses throughout Maine and New England. This was the first visit to the Durham campus.

**FY17 Customer Satisfaction**



**Since December 2001, the Downeaster has transported more than 6.3 million riders more than a half billion passenger miles and has generated more than \$92 million in revenue.**

**THE TRAINRIDER**

Box 4869, Downtown Station  
Portland, Maine 04112

(207) TRY-RAIL (879-7245)

Return Service  
Requested

**Membership, Donations, Bequests**

Join TrainRiders/Northeast or renew a membership by filling out this form and mailing it to TrainRiders/Northeast, Box 4869, Portland, ME 04112-4869, or use our website at [www.trainridersne.org](http://www.trainridersne.org)

- Renew a membership
- I'd like to become a new member

Please check a membership category:

- \$20.00 Student Member (with proof)
- \$40.00 Individual Member
- \$60.00 Family Member
- \$100.00 Sponsoring Member
- \$250.00 Supporting Member
- \$500.00 Endorsing Member
- \$1000.00 Sustaining Member
- Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ membership(s)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

**NEWS BITS FROM THE PAST**



**New Hampshire says "NO"**

Even though former Governor Maggie Hassan during her last term (she's now U.S. Senator from NH) placed \$4 million in the 10-year Highway Transportation Plan for the next phase of engineering for the New Hampshire Capitol Corridor – the Legislature removed it.

The NH Rail Transit Authority led a campaign both in the House and Senate, but both legislative bodies failed to restore the funding, which then placed the return of rail passenger service to NH back into the dream category. While all other New England States and many states around the nation are planning and building rail passenger services, New Hampshire is still in the 1950's mentality of paving our state over into the future. And now we hear that the new governor of NH and the Legislative Council have introduced a bill to abolish the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority. Go figure.

**Peter Griffin too biased to be on NH Rail Transit Advisory Board**

New Hampshire's Executive Council by a 3-2 vote approved two of the three nominees for the Advisory Board, however longtime rail passenger advocate Peter Griffin of Windham was denied. Peter has been a passenger rail advocate in New Hampshire for years as President of the New Hampshire Railroad Revitalization Association and has championed restoration of rail passenger service to New Hampshire's Merrimack Valley. Reason given for denying Peter to the Board? He's too biased!

Thank you Peter for being biased for passenger rail service in New Hampshire. We wish more elected officials shared your bias.

**TrainRiders Northeast Board of Directors**

Wayne Davis ME (Chair)	Andrew Hyland ME (Vice Chair)	George O'Keefe, Jr. (Executive Director)
Don Briselden (at large)	Robert Hall NH	James Oikle ME
Elizabeth Buckley ME	Valarie Lamont ME	George O'Keefe, Jr. ME
Mike Duprey (at large)	William Lord ME	Christopher Parker VT
Ellen Fogg ME	Janet Brown CA (at large)	Stephen Piper NH
		Nicholas Catoggio MA
		Robert Rodman (at large)
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		Fred Smith MA
		F. Bruce Sleeper (Clerk/Counsel)