CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
submitted by Wayne E. Davis

Meeters and Greeters
Closer and closer to train time! Very soon we'll be looking for "Meeters and Greeters" for the new Portland/Dover/Boston trains. We envision having volunteers TNE members acting as "hosts" on some of the trains. Once the train schedule is determined, we'll work out a schedule for volunteers to "adopt a train." For instance, one might make a 10 AM run every Tuesday—down to and back from Boston or from Boston to Portland and return, etc. This will take people who are customer oriented and who enjoy riding on trains to assure that everything runs smoothly, to answer questions and to be generally helpful to the passengers and the crew. We want to do everything possible to assure that the service is the best that it can possibly be. Once the program is assembled, we'll do a special mailing to all of our members asking those interested to contact us. In the meantime, give it some thought.

NATIONAL RAIL NEWS

AMTRAK BEGINS ACELA SERVICE TO BOSTON

The unheralded arrival in Boston of Northeast Direct Train 12, the mail train, on Friday, January 28, 2000, marked the beginning of electrically powered service east of New Haven. It was the first revenue train to travel behind electric power all the way from Washington. A diesel locomotive was added at New Haven in case of trouble with the newly energized catenary; it wasn't needed.

Acela Regional Service, using electric power and extensively refurbished Amfleet equipment, began on Monday, January 31st with the 5:00 am departure of Train 130 from Washington and the 6:15 am departure of Train 131 from Boston. Train 132 leaves Washington at 1:10 pm while Train 133 departs Boston at 5:00 pm. Scheduled time between Boston and NYC (Penn Station) is just under four hours.

Wayne Davis and your editor joined the throng at Boston's South Station on January 31st for the Acela Regional Celebration Train. Following speeches and a buffet breakfast at the station, the train departed behind two electric "motors" for Back Bay, where additional passengers were boarded. At Route 128, the new service and the brand spanking new station were dedicated by a high school band and brief speeches. The trip from RTE, 128 to Providence was uneventful, except for a brief interruption in power as the two motors accelerated and tripped an overload at a nearby substation. Providence had the biggest celebration, other than Boston, and the train then proceeded to New London, where Wayne and I left the train to await our connecting train back to South Station.

The refurbished cars were tastefully done

Jonathan Carter, Wayne Davis, Kevin Sullivan and Mike Murray aboard the inaugural Acela Regional Train.

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CAPITAL BILL
COULD FUND
HIGH SPEED RAIL

Representative Amo Houghton (R-NY), a senior member of the Ways and Means Committee, and Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN), the ranking Democrat on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, introduced H.R. 3700, "The High-Speed Rail Investment Act." Co-sponsored by 15 House members, this bill is the House companion to S. 1900 introduced in November 1999 by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and co-sponsored by 33 senators from both parties.

Amtrak President George Warrington said, "...I think American travelers are going to thank (Representatives Houghton and Oberstar) when high-speed rail begins to loosen the grip of transportation gridlock in various regions of the country...This creative, bipartisan legislation demonstrates that rail travel is finally being broadly recognized around the country as an efficient, cost-effective alternative to congested highways and airports."

Amtrak Vice-Chairman Gov. Michael Dukakis said, "This year we will usher in America's rail renaissance with the introduction of Acela Express in the Northeast. This bill will help speed the delivery of high-speed rail service to other corridors nationwide."

—Friends of Amtrak Update, March 20, 2000

HEARTLAND FLYER
AMTRAK SUCCESS
IN OKLAHOMA

The Heartland Flyer Coalition reported its February 15th meeting that the train was 100% on time in January. Amtrak's new Heartland Flyer carried 45,648 passengers between June 15, 1999, and January 31, 2000. The station at Norman, OK, has had a $480,000 renovation contract approved by the city council. Oklahoma City has prepared plans for renovation of its station. Other stations have renovations completed or in the planning stages. Ft. Worth, TX, has set aside $2.5 million to renovate the former Santa Fe Ry. station.

—Rail Travel News, February 16, 2000

REGIONAL RAIL

BOSTON-PORTLAND
CONSTRUCTION—PROGRESS
REPORT

Guilford Rail System maintenance crews began the new construction season the week of March 12, 2000. A two mile runaround track, allowing passenger trains to bypass Rigby Yard in South Portland, is about half completed. All track and signal work are to be completed by December of this year. The reconstructed rail line will be one of the best Amtrak operates over in the U.S.

Governor King's $280 million supplemental budget contains $10.5 million to extend passenger rail service beyond Portland. Much of this money would go to construct a new trestle across the entrance to Back Cove to connect the former Union Branch with the St. Lawrence & Atlantic in Deering. A new intermodal terminal would be located adjacent to I-295 in Portland's Bayside section. Planning is continuing for a terminal at Sewall Street to contain a layover facility for Amtrak trains from Boston and would be used even if the new station is built in Bayside.

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. The site plan will go to the Wells Planning Board for review shortly.

At the site of the Saco station, the city has purchased about two acres of land and has plans to acquire another two acres. Engineering work is underway. 180 parking spaces are anticipated. The Biddeford-Saco Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Corporation are anticipated as tenants of the building and may manage the station. A budget of about $1.5 to $1.8 million is projected, with about $800,000 in federal funds.

Meanwhile, Amtrak shops in Beech Grove, Indiana. are converting three former F40PH locomotives to cab-baggage cars for Boston-Portland service. Control cabs provide additional baggage space and better protection for crews in the event of an accident.

—Mike Murray, Director, NNEPRA; presentation at Maine Rail Group meeting, Brunswick; March 13, 2000

Personal communication, John D. Roberts, Right of Way Manager, Maine Turnpike Authority, March 21; Personal communication, Peter Morelli, Economic Development Director, Saco, March 21;
The 470, February 2000; Railpace News magazine, February 2000

MBTA ACTIVITIES

Construction of stations at Ashland, Southborough and Westborough on the Boston/Worcester line have been delayed by cost overruns on Boston's "Big Dig." The North Grafton station opened on February 26, 2000. Construction is underway on the relocated Framingham station, which is being moved 700 feet west to avoid blocking a busy grade crossing in the downtown.

Worcester city officials are asking the MBTA to make good on promised increases in service. They want ten trains each way per weekday, instead of the five they have had since service was re-established in 1994. The MBTA claims the service will not be expanded until the stations, mentioned above, are constructed.

The new Route 128 station, shared with Amtrak, officially opened on January 31, 2000. Two 1,050 foot long high-level platforms reached by elevators and escalators from the enclosed pedestrian bridge over the tracks, currently serve two tracks. Four tracks are planned for the future, once a new bridge is constructed for Route 128 over tracks north of the station. The 27,000 square foot station is attached to a 2,700 car parking garage with 550 spaces dedicated to long-term Amtrak parking.

—Railpace News magazine, January, March 2000; Northeast Corridor on Track, Amtrak, January 28, 2000; personal communication, MBTA offices, March 20, 2000
**TRAINRIDER ACTIVITIES**

Much of TrainRiders/Northeast’s activities are carried out by our Chairman, Wayne E. Davis, who has devoted twelve years to the cause of bringing rail passenger service back to northern New England. TrainRiders has been effective in turning the attention of state and national leaders to the need for rail passenger transportation, often by simply reminding them, again and again, that the public needs more than highways and airlines for some of its travels. Yet, hardly a week goes by that does not bring out yet another anti-rail letter to the editor, talk show host or editorial position by various print media. However, they often respond positively to TrainRiders’ positions and many are now either unopposed or genuinely supportive of rail passenger service.

Thus, it must have been pleasing for Wayne to listen to speaker after speaker at the recent Maine Rail Group annual meeting in Brunswick, ME, outline railroad developments which, whether passenger-related or not, bode well for the future of railroads.

Richard Willy, Vice President, Marketing, Guilford Rail Systems, spoke of increased freight service to the Maine Coast Railroad, of close cooperation with CSX and of recent inquiries to move potatoes by rail from northern Maine to New York City. Clearly, the improvement being carried out on their main line between the New Hampshire/Massachusetts border and Portland to allow passenger service place Guilford in a better position to compete for freight traffic.

David Dufault of CSX Transportation, who recently moved to Maine to forward CSX’s interests here, spoke of massive investments in physical improvements following the takeover of part of Conrail’s network. They are also improving car utilization and working with local economic development organizations to foster rail-served industries, either on-line or served by intermodal terminals. While both CSX and Norfolk Southern have experienced difficulties following their takeover of Conrail, which have adversely affected Amtrak’s services, many of the planned improvements will ultimately allow better passenger service to co-exist with improved freight service.

Rob Elder, Maine DOT’s Director of Freight Transportation, outlined the state’s participation in three intermodal freight terminals and cited the safety benefits of getting more trucks off the highways. Maine highways now carry 89% of freight, one of the highest rates in the U.S. The 1999 transportation bond issue was the first ever in Maine with more state money for railroads than for highways! A short line operator is being sought for the Calais Branch, a part of which is to be improved for passenger service.

Michael Murray, Executive Director, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, recounted recent progress in reconstructing the rail line between Portland and Massachusetts.

Ron Roy, MDOT’s Director of Passenger Transportation, ran through a long list of recent activities including plans for the new passenger station in Portland, a survey underway to determine the market for weekend service between Montreal (3 million population) and Old Orchard Beach, the ongoing planning for a rail-ship terminal in Rockland (forming a possible link between the Montreal market and Acadia National Park) and the planning for intermodal passenger terminals at Auburn-Rewstow Airport, Portland and Bangor International Airport. The latter would be joined by rail to Hancock County Airport in Trenton, near Ellsworth, where Acadia National Park (ANP) is considering a new Visitors’ Center as part of the intermodal terminal. He cited the enormous success of the ANP propane-powered buses which, in their first year (1999), with seven buses, carried 140,000 riders. Seventeen buses are on order for 2000.

Donald Gerrish, Brunswick Town Manager, reported that the town has purchased land for a station, in anticipation of the extension of Amtrak service beyond Portland.

Wayne’s brief remarks praised those political leaders who have seen the value in passenger rail transportation, often changing long-held anti-rail positions. He noted John Melrose, MDOT Commissioner, who has strongly advocated balance among all modes of transportation, for his wide-ranging vision regarding the future of rail in Maine.

So, when people ask what TrainRiders is doing, we can say it is doing its usual thing, and doing it very well, thank you!

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**REGIONAL RAIL NEWS**

**RHODE ISLAND RAIL PROGRESS**

The Acela Regional Celebration Train was warmly greeted on January 31, 2000, with a well-attended reception in the Providence Station. Speakers included Governor Almond, Providence Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., and Amtrak Chairman Michael Dukakis, former Governor of Massachusetts. Mayor Cianci, while noting that the new Acela was not the first high speed train to operate through Providence, presented a plaque to Arthur Vaindais, of Smithfield, RI, a former mechanic on the Comet, which ran between Boston and Providence in the 1930s at up to 110 mph.

Moving at considerably less speed, the City of Warwick’s plans for a new station connected with T.F. Green Airport by a peoplemover were leaked to the Providence Journal, which published them on February 29th. Three potential development teams presented proposals for the continued on page 4
...RHODE ISLAND RAIL PROGRESS
(continued from page 3)

70-acre site astride the Amtrak main line.
Two plans had the Warwick City Hall relocated to the site, a move quickly
ruled out by the city administration. The public portions of the developments,
without city hall, ranged between $20
and $113 million, not including purchase
of the land. The 1400 foot enclosed hori-

tzontal sidewalk connecting the airport and
the station are anticipated to cost about $28
million, leaving only $4 million
for the proposed station. The public
strongly favors the moving sidewalk
instead of a “horizontal elevator.” The
planning effort may be going “back to
the drawing board.”

—The Providence Journal,
February 8, 2000;
The Providence Sunday Journal,
March 5, 2000;
Warwick Beacon, March 2, 2000

VERMONT RAIL NEWS

The Vermont Agency of Transportation
and Guilford Rail Services (GRS) signed an agreement
February 25, 2000, to use GRS tracks between Schen-
cetady, NY, and Hoosick Jct., NY, in
order to re-route the Ethan Allen Express via north Bennington and Manchester
on its way to Rutland. The route is ex-
pected to save about 30 minutes travel

time as compared with the current Ethan
Allen Express via Whitehall, NY. Amtrak
is preparing a capital improvement plan
for the route, due in August 2000. Gov-
ernor Howard Dean, while supportive of
the project, indicated that it must com-
pete with other rail projects in Vermont’s
capital budget. If all improvements are
completed, the re-route could be by winter 2000-2001. A January 11th vote
by the budget committee of the Vermont
House of Representatives approved
$825,000 to purchase relay rail and repair
bridges to upgrade the state-owned
Vermont Railway between Bennington
and the New York State line.

The Vermont Agency of Transpor-
tation has received indications of interest
from six railroads to operate the White
River Jct. to Wells River line purchased
from Guilford Rail Systems in December
1999. The Northern Vermont Railroad, a
subsidiary of the Bangor and Aroostook,
itsself a subsidiary of Iron Road Railways
of Alexandria, VA, has proposed what is
essentially an extension of its service
between Montreal and Wells River. In
their February 15th presentation to the
Vermont Legislature, they proposed
operating passenger service between
White River Jct. and Montreal without
state subsidy. This could replace the
Amtrak operated Vermonter, at least
north of White River Jct., and would re-
connect that service with Montreal, a
link severed in 1995 when Amtrak dis-
continued the Montreailer. The Vermonter,
hampers by a backup move and longer
route via Palmer, MA, has seen a slight
decline in ridership during the last three
years. It operates to St. Albans, VT, with
bus connections to Montreal.

Green Mountain Railroad, part of the
Vermont Rail System, has also submit-
ted a proposal to operate the line,
though without passenger trains other
than for excursions. Green Mountain
has trackage rights to operate over the
Connecticut River line between White
River Jct. and Bellows Falls. Green
Mountain, named as interim operator,
has rehabilitated and re-opened the
track from White River Jct. to Wells
River and is prepared to operate it for
freight during March. The Boston &
Maine, the line’s former owner, also
planned to submit an operating propos-
al by the March 14, 2000, deadline.

Both Burlington and Rutland want
the rail freight yards in their cities relo-
cated. The Burlington yard occupies
prime lakefront real estate. A proposed
new yard in Rutland, on a 77-acre state-
owned site, is estimated to cost $35
million, an amount the Vermont Railway
System feels it cannot afford. If the yard
is constructed, a combination of public
and private financing is anticipated.

—Valley News, February 26, March 13, 2000;
Rail Travel News, January 16, February 16, 2000;
Railpace Newsmagazine, March 2000

TRAIN RIDES

It has been some time since we have had a train ride featured in this column. Perhaps a
look at Maine’s past will show some of the potential available in a state which has an
extensive rail network suitable for operation of passenger trains. The first installment of
the itinerary described the trip from Portland to Belfast, via Bath and Rockland. The second
 installment described the trip from Belfast to Calais, via Eastport. The following is from the
Portland Board of Trade’s second tour of Maine, held in 1912:

Portland Board of Trade’s 1000 Mile Tour of Maine

“This year the tour will embrace the coast cities and towns along the Knox and
Lincoln and Washington county railroads taking in Bath, Thomaston,
Rockland, Waldoboro, Newcastle and Damariscotta, Wiscasset, Belfast,
Ellsworth, Cherryfield, Machias, Eastport, Ayer’s Junction, Calais and imme-
diate points, thence into the province of New Brunswick going as far as St.
John and home to Portland by way of Vanceboro.

THE ITINERARY

“Saturday, May 25 — Leave Calais 12
midnight (sleeping car berths ready for
occupancy 9 p.m.). Train delivered to
Canadian Pacific railway in Calais yard.
Crosses bounding river to St.
Stephen, N.B., now thirty-four miles to
the main line of the Canadian Pacific
railway at McAdam Junction. Total
mileage Calais to St. John, N.B., 119
miles. Arrive St. John, N.B., 6 a.m. (5
a.m. our time), train parked at sta-
tion. Breakfast served in dining car, 6
to 8 a.m. (5 to 7 a.m. our time).
Spend day at St. John. N.B. Chief
commercial city of the Province of

continued on page 5
NEW HAMPSHIRE REPORT

Wayne Davis attended a meeting of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission and spoke of various rail-related developments which could affect the Nashua region. The state has voted money for an engineering study of an extension of MBTA’s Lowell commuter rail service to Nashua.

Guilford Rail System construction crews have already started work on the line in New Hampshire. Much cleanup of used railroad ties, old rail and other construction debris has greatly improved the looks of the right of way near Exeter.

The Claremont Concord Railroad has been named as the operator of the newly state-purchased trackage connecting White River Jct., VT, with Lebanon, NH. This approximately three mile section is a portion of the former Northern line between Concord and White River Jct. The Northern once formed part of a through route between Boston and Montreal.

—Robert Hall, Board Meeting, March 16, 2000; Railspire News Magazine, March 2000

MAINE TRANSPORTATION NEWS

Rails Along the Kennebec

Despite recent anti-rail letters and op-ed pieces which have been appearing in the Kennebec Journal, freight trains have once again returned to the east side of the Kennebec River. On February 7th, following removal of gravel over the tracks at a parking lot near the site of the Augusta station and repairs to the bridge over the river, industries on the city's east side were again being offered rail service. Cars are interchange with Guilford Rail System at Brunswick five days per week and hauled to Augusta by the Maine Coast Railroad. The former Long Island Railroad commuter coach, seating 123 passengers, has been received by the railroad; two more have been purchased. Ron Roy, Director, Passenger Transport, MDOT, said MDOT has a survey underway to determine the market for Augusta area rail commuters.

—Annual Meeting, Down East Rail/Maine Rail Group, Brunswick, ME, March 11, 2000

Rockland Branch Developments

The Maine Department of Transportation expects contracts for the rehabilitation of the Carlton Bridge, which now carries U.S. Route One and the Maine Coast Railroad between Bath and Woolwich, to go to bid this summer. Plans anticipate removal of the highway from the span once the new four lane highway bridge over the Kennebec is completed, expected to be by Memorial Day 2000. The lift span will then remain in the “up” position except when trains are due, thereby permitting vessels to travel the Kennebec limited only by the height of the new bridge.

—George Poirier, FHWA, Maine Rail Group meeting, Brunswick, ME, March 11, 2000

NORTH OF THE BORDER

Transport 2000, the Canadian equivalent to the National Association of Railroad Passengers, is continuing efforts to restore regular passenger service to Cape Breton Island and on the route of the Atlantic Limited between St. John and Fredericton, N.B., through Maine points to Montreal. Following successful test trains on October 5 and 12, 1999, tourist trains will operate between Halifax, N.S., and Sydney on Cape Breton between May 9 and October 18, 2000.

In Gaspé, federal and provincial governments are looking with favor on subsidizing the Baie des Chaleurs Railway, operator of the publicly owned Chemin de Fer de la Gaspésie. The closure of the Gaspésia Paper Mill in October 1999, along with the cessation of mining at a copper mine near Gaspé, has removed virtually all freight east of New Carlisle. Regional economic leaders fear that without the railway any meaningful industrial development will not occur.

THE MAN WHO WILL BE IN CHARGE

If anybody should ask you "Who's in charge of running Amtrak trains in our corner of America?" tell him STAN BAGLEY. He's the man responsible for Amtrak's Northeast Corridor business and operations, and that will soon include Amtrak service between Boston and Portland.

Twenty-five years with Amtrak, Mr. Bagley is in charge of planning and policy, finance, commercial development, engineering, marketing and communications, and the police department for the national Amtrak system. His workforce of more than 12,000 employees already serves nearly 13 million customers annually and controls the safe and on-time operation of 17,000 trains on the Corridor.

He was appointed President of the Northeast Corridor (NEC) in 1999, after having been Acting President from 1997. Under his leadership, the Corridor experienced an unprecedented ridership increase of seven percent and a similar gain in ticket revenues. The Metroliner and other lines either set new ridership records or realized significant ridership growth. The NEC topped its previous year's customer satisfaction rating and decreased injuries by 15 percent.

Launch of the first ever high-speed rail service in the U.S. is being developed under Mr. Bagley's supervision. He helped conceive and now leads the Transportation 2000 initiative, which entails manufacturing 20 new trains, massive infrastructure improvements, new station construction and enhancements, and new service standards to ensure every passenger a world-class travel experience.

TrainRiders is happy knowing Mr. Bagley will be in charge of our new Boston-Portland service (and beyond!). We welcome him, and look forward to a long and successful relationship.