

# TRAINRIDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF TRAINRIDERS/NORTHEAST



## NATIONAL RAIL NEWS

### Acela Express Startup Scheduled—Again

**O**n October 18, 2000, Amtrak announced the beginning of revenue service for the Acela Express on December 11, 2000. The first trainset, consisting of six cars and electric locomotives at each end, was accepted by Amtrak on the same day. The 304 passenger sets will provide a 6 hour, 31 minute schedule between Washington, DC, and Boston. The initial service will consist of one round trip per day, leaving Washington at 5:00 AM and arriving in Boston at 11:31 AM. The return trip departs Boston at 5:12 PM and arrives in Washington at 11:43 PM. The one way, business class fare from Boston to New York City is \$120, with the round trip fare at \$240. Current air fares are \$405 round trip from Boston to New York.

#### AMTRAK NEWS ITEMS

In January 2001, Amtrak intends adding a second round trip between Boston and New York and a non-stop round trip between Washington and New York. The Boston-New York service will stop at Stamford, New Haven, Providence, Route 128, Back Bay and South Station, Boston. A stop in New London will be added once high-level platforms are completed there.

An inaugural run was made November 16th. Travel times between Boston and New York are scheduled at 3 hours, 27 minutes, a saving of 28 minutes from the current fastest schedules. Amtrak training runs are now

being operated. Russell Garland, a reporter for the *Providence Journal*, on a November 1st run, found the ride to be very smooth and much quieter than older Amtrak equipment. He was aboard a trip intended mostly to familiarize Amtrak employees, including sales, financial and ticket agents, as well as operating personnel, with the new equipment and service. He also appreciated the larger windows. Speeds of 150 mph were reached in southern Rhode Island on one of the few straight stretches of track between Boston and New York.

Beginning with the October 29th schedule change, there are now three round trips daily of the Acela Regional trains between Boston and New York City. The 6:15 AM departure arrives at 10:14 AM in New York, while the 3:20 PM train takes only three hours, 55 minutes, for an arrival at 7:15 PM. A 5:00 PM departure from Boston arrives in New York at 8:59 PM. The scheduled average speed, including all stops, is 58 mph.

—*Providence Journal*, October 19, November 2, 2000;  
Amtrak Reservation Operator,  
November 2, 2000

### Last Whistle—John R. Martin, 1936-2000

John R. "Jack" Martin, President of the National Association of Railroad Passengers since April 1979, died in Atlanta September 1, 2000. He is survived by his wife, Faye, two sons, Mark and Matthew, of Atlanta, and a daughter, Mimi Addy, of Chicago.

A tireless worker for passenger rail, particularly since his retirement from the Coca-Cola Company in 1995, he had devoted uncounted hours of volunteer time. He had the knack of running meetings when contentious issues made for potentially unproductive sessions. His wide ranging appreciation of the railroad passenger business allowed him to productively affect many issues involving Amtrak.

Jack Martin made many trips to Maine, greatly assisting TrainRiders/Northeast in our efforts to bring passenger rail to northern New England. He was an entertaining speaker who left no doubts where he stood.

Amtrak honored him with a 5:00 PM whistle salute by locomotives, nationwide, during his memorial service in Atlanta on September 3rd. His family has requested that contributions in his memory be made to the National Association of Railroad Passengers and/or the Atlanta Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, P. O. Box 1267, Duluth, GA 30096-0023.

—*CAPT Newsletter*, Carolinas Association for Passenger Trains, July-August 2000



## Amtrak Ridership Up—Timekeeping Down

**A**mrak experienced its highest revenue month ever in August, with ticket sales of \$108.4 million. Ridership, 2,097,471 passengers, increased 7.6% compared with August 1999. Intercity ridership increased 1.8%, Western was up 6.6% and the Northeast Corridor up 10.9%. In the Northeast, the *Ethan Allen Express* improved by 17.8% while the *Vermont* fell by 2.5%. Northeast Direct services (New York-Boston) rose by a healthy 11.7%. New York's state-sponsored Empire Services increased by 3.5% while the *Adirondack* rose 9.1%.

Regrettably, On Time statistics for the period August 1-26, 2000, reveal many problems outside the Amtrak-owned Northeast Corridor. The Atlantic Coast services were only 42.6% on time, with the New York-Florida *Silver Meteor*, *Silver Palm* and *Silver Star* averaging only 37.0% on time. The Lorton, VA-Orlando, FL, *Auto Train*, listed with Eastern Services, averaged only 26.0% on time, while the *Cardinal* turned an abysmal 13.6% on time performance. The Gulf Coast and Midwest Services had on

average of 46.4% on time.

Amtrak's lack of on-time service contrasts sharply with such commuter agencies as Metro-North (New York Metropolitan Area) which regularly posts on time performances above 95%. Metro North is planning to place a third track in southern Westchester County on its Harlem Line to allow expresses to pass local trains. The track is to be placed in service in 2005. Service on the Harlem Line was extended six miles from Dover Plains, NY, to Wassaic on July 9, 2000. The service now extends about 82 miles from Grand Central Terminal.

Many commuter lines are owned or controlled by the regional authorities which operate the trains, unlike Amtrak, which operates over privately-owned railroads on most of its routes outside the Northeast Corridor. Some delays are due to factors beyond Amtrak's control, such as track maintenance on single track routes. This was apparently the case this summer on the route of the *Adirondack* north of Albany-Rensselaer, NY. Since the start of Amtrak's guaranteed service plan on July 6, the *Adirondack* generated more refund requests than any other Empire Service train. Two thirds of the 353 requests were based on lateness.

—*Rail Travel News*, September 15, 2000;  
*Railpace Newsmagazine*,  
September, October, November 2000

## Amtrak Hiring Crews for Boston-Portland Run

**O**n Labor Day Weekend, the *Maine Sunday Telegram* carried an Amtrak advertisement for assistant passenger conductors for the Boston-Portland service. The lead time between September and the planned startup of service in April 2001 gives the personnel time to learn the route and become familiar

with the equipment and emergency procedures. Twenty-one persons are currently training for this service, seven engineers, seven conductors and seven assistant conductors.

—*Portland Press Herald*,  
September 6, 2000;  
Victor Salemme, Amtrak,  
personal communication  
November 6, 2000

REGIONAL  
AMTRAK  
NEWS  
ITEM

## Wells Transportation Center Groundbreaking

**G**round was broken at noon, October 26th for the intermodal transportation center in Wells, ME. The center, occupying a 25-acre site directly across from Maine Turnpike Exit 2 on Routes 9 and 109, will accommodate taxis, vans, buses, trolleys, and bicycles. There will be parking for 201 vehicles: 96 spaces for travelers leaving vehicles longer than 24 hours, 96 for Park and Ride users, and 6 spaces for buses and recreational vehicles.

Railroad facilities will include a 4,200 square foot handicapped accessible platform and a 2,600 square foot station building, which will have a waiting room, ticket office, rest rooms and vending machines. The Town of Wells intends to have the station staffed, at least during the times when trains are due. Security will be provided by State Police, Wells Police and video surveillance cameras.

The Center will cost \$1.9 million, \$700,000 from the Maine Turnpike to match \$1.2 million in federal CMAQ funds. Planning for the Center began in 1993 when Jonathan Carter, Town Manager, saw an opportunity to do more than just replace an existing 37 vehicle Park and Ride lot. Parking lots and passenger platform are to be completed this spring, in time for the first Amtrak trains. The station building will be completed by fall 2001.

TrainRiders was represented at the groundbreaking by Vice-Chair Cynthia Garfield and her two daughters. The cake was decorated with an F40PH featuring *The Downeaster* name of the Maine service.





## TrainRiders Promotes Rail Alternative in Damariscotta

On October 12, 2000, TrainRiders sponsored a public meeting in Damariscotta to inform citizens about the rail alternative in the Route One Corridor. Featured speaker was MDOT Commissioner John Melrose, who addressed an audience of close to 100 persons in the gymnasium of the Great Salt Bay Elementary School.

Wayne Davis opened the meeting with an overview of passenger rail travel in the U.S., concluding with the showing of Amtrak's video on the Acela Regional trains between Boston and New York City. He urged citizens to support passenger rail service as an alternative to further highway and airline congestion, and to let state and federal politicians know they support rail.

Mr. Melrose thanked TrainRiders for its efforts in promoting passenger rail service. He noted that because the State owns both Route One and the Rockland Branch, the corridor between Brunswick and Rockland is an ideal opportunity to improve mobility by coordinating highway and rail modes.

He provided an update on the Portland-Boston Amtrak service, scheduled to start in April 2001. The next extension of passenger rail service will bring trains to Freeport and Brunswick, following construction of a new intermodal station in Portland's Bayside

neighborhood and a trestle across the water to the tracks of the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad near the Burnham & Morrill plant. Brunswick has already purchased its station site and Freeport, Maine's Number One tourist destination, is looking forward to having a station. The new "High Speed Rail" designation for the Portland-Boston line and the Portland-Lewiston/Auburn line will bring increased federal funding for grade crossing improvement and elimination, making it possible to increase speed and safety. Passenger projections on the Portland-Boston line are 315,000 the first year and a recent study has projected 276,000 visitors by rail per year to Portland from Montreal once that rail link is re-established. Connectivity with the entire Amtrak network will permit Maine citizens and residents to reach many destinations.

Maine DOT's new "Explore Maine" video was shown, which emphasized the ability of rail, bus and waterborne transportation to be coordinated and to better accommodate peak loads typical of Maine's seasonal tourism.

The Commissioner spoke in detail about the Rockland Branch, outlining the possibilities for both tourist-oriented and commuter rail services, in addition to improvements to rail freight. The State has budgeted \$33 million to

improve the 57 mile branch. However, due to the physical characteristics of the line, constructed in 1870-71, passenger train speeds will be limited to 40 mph between Rockland and Bath. The possibility exists that from Bath to Brunswick some of the line would be straightened when the highway is reconstructed west of the new Sagadahoc Bridge over the Kennebec River.

A connection with proposed high speed ferries in Rockland was also discussed, though detailed planning is still underway. Possible station locations were suggested by audience members, and Mr. Melrose encouraged their participation in the planning process to help determine those locations and the services available.

Other questions concerned the recently announced end of service by the Maine Coast Railroad, which has been providing freight and seasonal tourist service on the Branch since 1990. The MDOT had already been seeking a temporary operator and no interruption of service was anticipated.

The commissioner's encyclopedic knowledge of transportation, within and beyond Maine's borders, enabled him to answer broad-ranging questions from the audience. His replies highlighted the fact that there is more to transportation than just highways. ■

## Canadian Connection

Bruce Sleeper, TrainRiders' Counsel, was keynote speaker at a meeting of local politicians and citizens in Saint John, New Brunswick, October 13th. The meeting was arranged by Transport 2000, Canada's counterpart to our National Association of Rail Passengers, to discuss ways to restore passenger rail service between Saint John and Montreal. The service was discontinued in 1994 when the Canadian government cut subsidies.

The keynote speech was preceded by brief comments in support of restoring service made by Saint John Mayor Shirley McAlary, Member of Parliament Elsie Wayne, and provincial Transportation

Minister Margaret-Ann Blaney.

Attorney Sleeper related in detail TrainRiders' arduous twelve-year effort to bring passenger trains back to Maine. He said it may also take a long time in Canada, but he encouraged the audience to keep plugging. His talk was "a primer on getting passenger rail service back on track," reported the *Saint John Times Globe*.

"Perseverance is the key," Mr. Sleeper said. "If we didn't have Wayne Davis giving up his life for ten years, we wouldn't be here. An organizer knocking on doors all the time is critical."

—*Saint John Times Globe*, October 16, 2000



Attorney F. Bruce Sleeper told TrainRiders' story to a Canadian audience.



## Maine Transportation News

### Strategic Passenger Plan

Negotiations between the State and Guilford Rail System are proceeding well on the proposed sale of the Union Branch to the State. Maine will be able to use the money spent to purchase the branch as part of its match for further federal funding to improve the branch and construct the intermodal station and Back Cove trestle at Bayside.

The Libra Foundation is "very interested" in commuter service on the Portland-Auburn route of the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad. The Foundation is developing an office-commercial park in the former Pineland Center in Pownal. They envision frequent, self-propelled rail cars shuttling between the site and Auburn and Portland. Although commuter service could benefit from the High Speed designation recently awarded that route, such service could start even before completion of the Bayside station and Back Cove trestle in Portland if there were bus connections in East Deering.

At an October 4th meeting of the Maine Rail Passenger Corridor Committee in Bangor, rail access to Bangor International Airport was discussed.

Airport terminal buildings are on the east side of the airport property, near I-95 access. Guilford Rail System (GRS) track enters the airport from the south and runs along the east side to within a half mile of the terminal. The Bangor & Aroostook (BAR) runs west of the airport. Among ideas discussed was one offering GRS a bridge over the Penobscot River, replacing their aging bridge serving the GRS line to Bucksport and the State-owned Calais Branch, in return for trackage rights permitting BAR to use GRS tracks to reach the airport. Presumably, a new bridge would eliminate the time-consuming backup moves necessary to reach the Bucksport and Calais Branches.

The Maine Rail Passenger Corridor Committee was formed to promote passenger service connecting Brunswick with Bangor, a missing link in the MDOT's current long range plan. Public meetings on the MDOT proposal to link Bangor International Airport and Trenton Airport (serving Bar Harbor) by rail are anticipated early in 2001.

—Atlantic Northeast Rails & Ports, 6 October 2000;  
Ron Roy, MDOT, personal communication,  
November 3, 2000

### Rockland Branch Developments

On October 27, 2000, the Maine DOT awarded a construction contract to Atlas Railroad Construction of Pennsylvania. The \$22.6 million bid came in below MDOT estimates. The work is to begin in the spring of 2001 and be completed by 2002. The work includes replacement or repair of culverts, raising of the entire line by six inches with new ballast, replacement of about 40% of the ties, and replacement of the 85# jointed rail with about 36 miles of new 115# continuous welded rail (CWR). Other rail is to be replaced with No. 1, 100# relay rail. All public crossings will have CWR to improve their surface but will not be upgraded with signals at this time. The contract does not include bridge repairs or rehabilitation of the Carlton Bridge over the Kennebec River, which are being done under separate contracts.

On November 3, 2000, the Maine DOT awarded Safe Handling, of Auburn, ME, a six month interim contract to operate the Rockland Branch and the service on the "Lower Road"

*continued on the next page*

### ... Vermont Rail News

*—continued from page 4*

Upgrading of the 166 miles from near Schenectady, NY, to Burlington for passenger service is expected to cost \$70 million and require five years to complete. During the summer, Vermont Railway crews have replaced ties and ballast on the 7 miles of State of Vermont owned track between Hoosick Jct., NY, and North Bennington. Welded rail, 127# from Metro-North, has been placed alongside the track from Hoosick Jct. north to Arlington, VT, but will not be

installed until warm weather next year.

Vermont and Amtrak want to improve the speed of the *Vermont*. Recommendations include re-routing the train north from Springfield, MA, over Guilford Rail System (GRS) track, thereby avoiding the detour to Palmer, MA, which requires a backup move. The re-routing would save one hour. Another half hour would be saved by eliminating the baggage car, which is limited to lower speeds than are allowed on the Northeast Corridor and by dropping some stops in Connecticut. There are also slow orders on some sections of the New England Central line used by the *Vermont*.

Since the reason for the re-routing through Palmer, MA, was to get the train off GRS track, which did not allow adequate speeds, there may be significant investment required to use GRS tracks north of Springfield. The baggage car was added to allow skis and other bulky recreational equipment, in addition to some package express, etc., to be carried, making the train more attractive to recreational users. It would seem that some better solution could be found to the baggage car speed limit problem.

—Maine Sunday Telegram, October 22, 2000;  
Atlantic Northeast Rails & Ports, 15 Sept 2000;  
Railpace Newsmagazine, October 2000



### ... Rockland Branch

*continued from the preceding page*

between Brunswick and Augusta. They will take over from Maine Coast Railroad on December 6, 2000. Maine DOT intends to seek a long-term operator for these services in the spring of 2001.

—*The Courier-Gazette*, November 2, 2000;  
Russell Spinney, MDOT, Robert Elder, MDOT,  
personal communication,  
November 3, November 6, 2000

### North of the Border

The modest increase of CDN\$400 million in capital funding for VIA Rail Canada has created competition for increases in service and/or beginning new routes within eastern Canada. Campbellton, Bathurst and Miramichi, NB, are concerned that service through their communities would be scaled back if a new VIA route is established on Canadian National between Moncton and Edmundston. While not opposing the additional service, they have urged an upgrade of existing VIA service between Halifax, NS, and Montreal, PQ.

OC Transpo, Ottawa's bus operator,

has leased three *Talent* rail diesel cars from Bombardier subsidiary, Talbot, of Aachen, Germany. The modern cars, designed in 1996, have been well received in Germany and France. Delivery is anticipated in mid 2001. The cars will be used in a light rail demonstration project on a Canadian Pacific line west of Ottawa.

In August, VIA Rail tested former *Nightstar* equipment for possible use in Canadian service. The cars were designed for a never-started overnight service between London and various northern European cities. Built to the restricted size of British railways, the cars have several drawbacks, including lack of luggage space, reduced handicapped accessibility and short beds in the sleeping car. Although 43 cars are available in England, many observers believe the extensive modifications needed to suit them for North American operation would be uneconomical.

Meanwhile, the *Bras d'Or* tourist trains which operated between Halifax, NS, and Sydney on Cape Breton Island until October 18, 2000, had disappointingly light passenger loads. Some trips

carried as few as 20 passengers. Perhaps the CDN\$210 ticket price and the limited schedule, departing Halifax every Tuesday and returning from Sydney on Wednesday, made it less attractive to travelers despite its very scenic route.

—*Railpace Newsmagazine*, September, October, November 2000; *Trains*, November 2000.

### TrainRiders Welcomes New Members

Dr. Newell Augur, Portland, ME  
Mrs. Newell Augur, Clayton, MO  
Tony Barrett, Harpswell, ME  
Ray Bergendoff, Bowdoinham, ME  
Glynrose Friedlander, Brunswick, ME  
David Glaser, Portland, ME  
Mrs. Robert F. Hall, Exeter, NH  
John R. Howard, So. Easton, MA  
Tim McCauley, Biddeford, ME  
Capt. & Mrs. Charles Mull, Brunswick, ME  
Herbert Pence, Manchester, NH  
Mike Relac, Limington, ME  
Michael B. Skinner, Auburndale, MA  
Mrs. Warren L. Smith, Albuquerque, NM  
Ron Spicer, St. Peters, MO  
Ellie Swanson, Brunswick, ME  
J. Michael Taylor, Portland, ME  
Ken Zirkel, Lewiston, ME

### ... Boston-Portland Progress Report

*(continued from page 5)*

All 23 public grade crossings have been rehabilitated. One additional public crossing in New Hampshire is being repaved.

Signalling, which is being installed at all public crossings, is about 87% complete in New Hampshire and about 50% complete in Maine. Four of 17 private crossings, mostly serving farms, have been installed.

Wayside signals, controlling and assuring safety of trains, are about 92% complete, including necessary changes to the dispatcher's computer system.

Undercutting of 13 overhead bridges is required to accommodate 79 mph passenger service. Seven locations in New Hampshire have been completed, including necessary ditching for drainage. This task is about 65% complete. Drainage work, other than ditching, will have to be done at Summer Street in Kennebunk, ME.

Work on the six passing sidings is about 64% complete. No work has been done at North Berwick, ME.

Track has been realigned at three locations to accommodate 79 mph passenger service: Exeter, NH, and South

Berwick and Berwick, ME. This task was completed August 10, 2000, including distribution of stone ballast.

A site for the Portland layover facility, to be constructed by a private contractor, with Guilford doing the track work, has not yet been chosen.

Work on the passenger service runaround track, allowing passenger trains to bypass Rigby Yard in South Portland, is about 78% complete, including signal work. Some freight trackage has been reconfigured.

—Mike Murray, Director, NNEPRA,  
Project Status Report, November 9, 2000



The ad to the left has been suggested by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority to appear in the new Amtrak timetable this winter. I'm certainly excited about this and I hope that you are too.

We've certainly come a very long way from our initial press conference back in 1989 that announced the intention of a few of us to work with state and federal officials to explore the feasibility of restoring passenger rail service to Maine and New Hampshire. Today, after nearly 13 years, that "few" has grown to nearly 1,300, and we're about to realize our first goal. Such success would not have been possible without your support for our efforts.

As we move closer to "train time" it's imperative that you continue your support—both financially and publicly. We are still an all-volunteer organization with expenses for rent, phones, supplies, postage, etc., that depend on membership dues alone to meet those obligations. Remember, there is no other entity in Northern New England to do what we do. If TrainRiders doesn't do it, who will? Stay with us—this is a critical time.

**CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**  
submitted by Wayne E. Davis

**THE TRAINRIDER**  
Box 4869, Downtown Station  
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