

MRG, Inc. (Maine Rail Group)
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<http://mainerailgroup.org>
A non-profit group working to enhance rail service in Maine

January / February 2013

Greetings Members and Friends:

The Maine Rail Group **Board** wishes all our members and readers a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

Membership

We're pleased to welcome new members Peter Kemble and Julius Stuck, who joined Maine Rail Group in December. Hearty thanks to the many members who have already renewed memberships for 2013, and especially to those who added gift contributions.

Future Passenger Service to Augusta? Waterville?

On Friday, November 16 Maine Rail Group sponsored an event to introduce civic and business leaders from the Augusta / Waterville region of central Maine to the new Downeaster service to Freeport and Brunswick. The goal was to explore interest in extending passenger rail service from Brunswick to Augusta and possibly beyond, via the so-called "Lower Road" along the Kennebec River.

The invited group left the Augusta Civic Center Park & Ride lot for Portland aboard a chartered V.I.P. coach, with brief stops in Brunswick and Freeport, to board Downeaster Train # 681 bound for Brunswick. An entire train car was reserved for the group, courtesy of Patricia Quinn, Executive Director, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA). We left the train after the half-hour ride to Freeport for light lunch and meeting at the nearby Hilton Garden Inn. Meeting facilities at the Brunswick Station Inn were unavailable.

President Dave Potter opened the meeting and introduced Patricia Quinn, whose presentation covered Downeaster operations, growth, funding, the Brunswick extension, and the critical need to be ready with firm proposals and business plans when funding opportunities arise.

Michael Lyne, representing JHR Development of Maine, LLC outlined the real estate and business development that has already occurred around the Brunswick Station in anticipation of Downeaster service and visions for the future. Mike kindly narrated a short coach stop in Brunswick on the group's return trip to Augusta.

Edward Bonney, retired president of Freeport Economic Development Corporation, outlined Freeport's economic

development history, "from a dying shoe manufacturing town to a vibrant village retail center that is now the number-one tourist attraction in Maine", including the Downeaster's role – present and future. Bonney's full report is posted on the Maine Rail Group web site.

We thank Augusta City Manager William Bridgeo for his loan of conceptual views of the City-owned former Statler development site that is bounded by the railroad tracks and Kennebec River in East Augusta. We visualize the north end of this site, with connecting access to highways, as an excellent location for a regional rail-served transportation center with ample parking to serve Augusta and a wide surrounding region. Passenger trains can make touch-and-go stops in downtown Augusta – avoiding the issues of traffic access and long-term parking inherent with a principal downtown Augusta station. Experience at the Portland Transportation Center teaches that adequate long term parking is a key ingredient for successful passenger rail transportation. Availability of passenger rail at the site can influence and aid considerably in its redevelopment.

What's Next?

The "Lower Road" between Brunswick and Augusta holds special meaning for Maine Rail Group because our organization was formed nearly 25 years ago to help preserve that line from extinction after its abandonment. During these years we advocated keeping the tracks in place, to keep the Augusta-Gardiner rail/trail located away from the tracks and to replace tracks removed for sewer line installation in Augusta. Our 2008 annual meeting in Hallowell featured a chartered Maine Eastern Railroad train from Brunswick to Augusta. We adhere to the original TrainRiders Northeast vision for passenger service to Augusta and beyond, viewing the new service to Brunswick as a key step toward that reality. At the same time, we recognize fundamental hurdles toward reaching that vision, including:

- Continuing success, growth and public support for established Downeaster operations
- Strong, sustained public interest and advocacy
- Credible forecasts of ridership, revenue and growth
- Synergy and coordination with local development interests
- Operating plans for infrastructure, equipment, schedules, costs, revenues and funding
- Agreements as needed with private owners of corridor and track east of Kennebec River.

Meanwhile, strong interests in the Auburn region are advocating for passenger rail service to that area. We respect these interests, and urge that they be viewed in parallel with those of the Augusta region – not in competition. The services envisioned are directed to separate market areas and there is overriding value in coordinating in many aspects of rail infrastructure, operations and administration.

The Portland Transportation Center, in its present location or at a future site, is the logical hub for passenger rail transportation in Maine. NNEPRA and MaineDOT should coordinate the development of phased long-range expansion plans for this hub to accommodate efficient transit or transfer of passengers through it and with potential connecting lines, e.g. Rockland, Augusta, Auburn, Fryeburg/North Conway, as well as with intermodal connections. The effectiveness of future passenger rail extensions in Maine depends upon the efficiency of this hub to assure an integrated transportation system that encourages broad public use through reliability, flexibility, and is competitive in travel times and costs.

If serious interest and opportunity arises for passenger rail extension to or through Augusta in the foreseeable future, relocation of the layover facility now proposed for Brunswick to the end of the proposed service should be considered for train scheduling and operational advantages.

Any extension of passenger rail service will be enhanced by strong, sustained community leadership and advocacy, forecasts for related economic development, and credible prospects for capital and operational funding.

We hope November 16th event was a useful step in this direction and we look forward to community follow-up.

Oil Tanker Bound for St. John Grounds Near Albany

To supplement Bakken shale oil deliveries solely by rail from North Dakota, J.D. Irving has arranged for delivery by rail of some of its crude to the Buckeye Terminal on the Hudson River near Albany for transfer by ship to its refinery in John, N.B., thus by-passing rail in New England.

The 600 ft. long British flagged tanker Stena Primorsk, loaded with some 11.7 million barrels of Bakken oil for St. John ran aground in the Hudson River just south of Albany on the morning of December 20th, reportedly due to steering gear failure. This tanker is of double hull design, a legacy of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Only the outer hull was penetrated with no oil lost. Oil was

pumped from the ship prior to its movement to a repair facility.

It remains to be seen what effect marine delivery from Albany will have on oil train movements through New England. The St. John refinery capacity is assumed at 350,000 barrels per day. The tanker, at 11.7 million bbl load and 8 days round trip, could supply roughly 10 percent of assumed refinery demand, leaving plenty of room for rail delivery via New England.

However, with tank cars in short supply nationally, tank car capacity is effectively gained by shortening the rail haul to Albany, thus turning cars faster, by added ship capacity. Ships may be more readily available. Will more ships be added for this service?

The Stena Primorsk has a reported deadweight capacity of 65,000 tonnes at a salt water draft of 37 ft., but loads only 40,000 tons at Albany due to draft and fresh water constraints in the Hudson River. Will oil barges be stationed in New York Bay to “top-off” ship(s) reaching salt water to increase their delivery capacity? Stay tuned.

Maine Transportation Conference

J.D. Irving Co. Presentation by Ian Simpson The 62nd Maine Transportation Conference took place at the Augusta Civic Center on December 6, with some 600 participants and over 50 exhibitors, including Maine Rail Group. The lead policy track session, moderated by Dana Connors, President Maine State Chamber of Commerce, featured Ian Simpson, General Manager of J.D. Irving's (JDI) railroad system comprising Eastern Maine Railway (EMRY), Maine Northern Railroad (MNR) and New Brunswick Southern Railway (NBSR).

Simpson has been in the transportation business for over twenty-five years in a number of leadership roles in the truckload, LTL, courier, intermodal, logistics and rail segments of the industry. While with the Irving Group he transferred from the trucking division eight years ago to become General Manager of the J.D.I. railways.

Simpson introduced JDI's Transportation Division, encompassing road, rail and water with worldwide logistics coordination; one of seven company divisions that include forestry & forestry products, shipbuilding & industrial fabrication, retail & distribution, consumer products, industrial equipment & construction and specialty printing. He focused on his area of rail transportation, highlighting the following:

- Since MNR's takeover of state-owned lines in Aroostook County in mid-2011 revenue carloads have risen from 100 to over 200 per week through November, 2012, with higher rates anticipated for 2013 and 400 c/w foreseeable.

- Extensive track maintenance enables faster train speeds, markedly reducing needs to stop trains for crew changes at inconvenient locations at the mandatory 12-hour on duty limit, thereby cutting costs and improving customer service.
- Some 20,000 feet of new sidings have been installed, notably at Masardis for lumber and chips, and for fertilizer ingredients at the new Cavendish facility in Ft. Fairfield.
- MNR needs more high-capacity chip cars and seeks serviceable used units that can be turned quickly on its own line.
- EMR is now installing a new cut-off connection with Montreal Maine & Atlantic near Brownville Junction. This will eliminate time-consuming legs to Brownville and return to Brownville Junction for southbound MNR trains bound eastward to connect with Pan Am Railways (PAR) at Mattawamkeag and those continuing into New Brunswick.
- PAR has done significant work on its line to Mattawamkeag and its trains to and from there have risen from 3 to as many as 14 per week.
- MSR employment has risen from 32 to 56, with significant increases for EMRY and NBSR. (The latter two railroads are impacted by oil trains, Ed.)
- Its St. John location and competitive service won Kia and auto deliveries for NBSR.
- NBSR now serves the Woodland Pulp LLC mill, replacing PAR's isolated service between Calais and Woodland (Baileyville). Chips formerly delivered to Woodland and to the JDI mill in St. John by truck now move by rail.

Simpson's presentation represented a positive report on results to-date from Maine's \$20 million investment to acquire the rail lines now operated by MNR, and the \$10.5 million federal grant to rehabilitate those lines.

ASCE Report Card on Rail

The Maine Chapter of American Society of Civil Engineers presented its Report Card for Maine's Infrastructure at the Dec. 6th Transportation Conference. Maine's railroads received a "C" grade as in 2008, but this time with a positive trend and the following comment: *Maine has 1,154 miles of active railroad and several intermodal facilities, primarily servicing the pulp and paper industry. Recent capital projects included track repairs, customer rail sidings and interchange improvements. Rail infrastructure in Maine has improved slightly and MaineDOT's ownership of active railroad in Maine rose from 6% to 30% since 2008.*

For passenger rail transportation ASCE's grade was C minus with downward trend, noting: *Passenger rail continues to expand, yet long term sustainable funding remains unidentified.*

Amherst Railway Society Show, Jan. 26 & 27

Once again this year Maine Rail Group will go to the ARS show at the "Big E" in West Springfield, Massachusetts (Young Building, Sec. 83, tables A & N) where we display and offer our maps, books and information on Maine railroads to the public. We also welcome opportunities the show offers for personal contacts with group members and friends, as well as to seek new memberships.

As always, we ask readers for donations of railroad-related and easily transportable memorabilia, especially books or models that can be sold to raise funds for the group. Please contact President Dave Potter (207-458-1496) or Jack Sutton (207-495-3498) before Friday, January 18 to arrange transfer if you wish to donate such material. Thanks!.

Amtrak Plans New NEC Trains Sets

Amtrak posted this news release on Dec. 13, 2012.

*AMTRAK ADVANCES PLANS TO ACQUIRE NEW HIGH SPEED TRAIN SETS FOR NORTHEAST CORRIDOR
Next-generation equipment best option to meet growing ridership demand*

WASHINGTON – In order to meet strong and growing demand on the Northeast Corridor (NEC), Amtrak is advancing plans to acquire new next-generation high-speed train sets and ending its plans to purchase 40 additional high-speed passenger cars to add to the existing Acela Express fleet.

In early 2013, Amtrak will issue a Request for Information (RFI) to formally start the process that will replace the existing 20 Acela Express train sets and add additional train sets to expand seating capacity and provide for more frequent high-speed service on the NEC.

"Moving directly to new high-speed train sets is the best option to create more seating capacity, permit higher speeds, and maximize customer comfort all while improving equipment reliability and reducing operator costs, said President and CEO Joe Boardman.

He explained that the plan to add 40 new passenger cars with newer technology to the older

Acela train sets was a stop-gap measure, posed technical challenges and was determined not to be cost effective and insufficient to handle new ridership growth projections.

Boardman made the announcement before a Congressional committee saying that in the past two years Amtrak has moved forward a number of proposals designed to address the growth and development needs.

The proposals are included in the Amtrak for the Northeast 2012 Update Report. First, is the NEC Upgrade Program to bring the corridor up to a state of good repair, add additional capacity to allow limited service growth, and make targeted trip-time improvements for all existing intercity, commuter and freight services. Among the elements is the Gateway Program to build vital track, tunnel and station capacity into the heart of Manhattan to support Amtrak and commuter rail growth.

Second, is the next-generation high-speed rail program to provide America's economic, political and cultural capitals in the Northeast with the world-class 220 mph high-speed service the region deserves. With possible operating profits over a billion dollars annually and ridership well in to 40 million riders a year on full build-out, Amtrak expects that private capital, probably in the form of a public-private partnership, could play a significant role in this project.

Boardman said that the international experience with high-speed rail projects is that "Only after the public sector has allocated significant funding and committed itself to a project of this magnitude that the private sector is willing to enter the deal and deliver value for money," Adding that "Once these services are generating revenue streams, these projects can and will attract private funding that can help repay initial capital costs."

He went on to say that Amtrak has been a good steward of the NEC noting that he is "confident that we have mapped out a workable plan, and that our search for a truly regional solution to the challenges of capacity will be successful".

In FY 2012 Amtrak set a national ridership record of 31.2 million passengers, including a new record of 11.4 million riders on its Northeast Corridor services. In addition, the introduction of high-speed Acela Express service in 2000 has transformed the air-rail market in the Northeast. Today, Amtrak carries three passengers for every one airline between New York and Washington, and carries more passengers between New York and Boston than all the airlines combined – making Amtrak not simply an alternative, but a preferred choice.

Locomotive 470 at Waterville

Former Maine Central Railroad 4-6-2 Pacific type Alco (Schenectady) steam locomotive was built in 1924. It has been publicly displayed at a site near the south end of the Waterville freight yard since MEC gave it to the City after its retirement from service in 1960. Time, weather and vandalism have taken their toll on the engine .The City has now determined that it must be restored to respectable condition for display and protected - or removed. The City sought proposals for the engine and has so far received responses from those who seek to relocate it elsewhere in Maine or out of state, for cosmetic restoration or return to serviceable condition.

Recognizing the 470's strong historical affiliation with the City of Waterville, officials favor keeping it, provided ways are found and funded for cosmetic restoration and protection. The former B&M Railroad steam locomotive permanently within an open shelter at the White River Jct., Vermont Amtrak station is an attractive example.

Mark Your Calendars

- **MRG, Inc. Meeting, Friday, Jan. 18, 6:00pm, Gardiner City Hall**
- **Amherst Railroad Society Show, West Springfield, MA, Jan. 26 & 27**
- **New England Railroad Club Conference & Expo, DCU Center, Worcester, MA Apr. 16-18**

MRG, Inc. is a non-profit corporation dedicated to railroad education and enhanced rail services in Maine and New England. Membership is open to everyone who shares our goals and interests. Annual dues are \$25. Regular meetings are bi-monthly. Inquiries are welcome.