

MRG, Inc. (Maine Rail Group)
P.O. Box 5494, Augusta, Maine 04332
<http://mainerailgroup.org>
A non-profit group working to enhance rail service in Maine

May / June 2013

Greetings Members and Friends:

Membership

Welcome aboard to new member Deborah Hill of Center Conway, NH.

President's Message

During my first year as president Maine Rail Group was represented at the Amherst Railway Society show in January, the Great Falls Model Club's shows last November and this April and at the Maine Transportation Conference last December. We recently sponsored a trip for Augusta/Waterville area business and community leaders to experience the new *Downeaster* service to Freeport and Brunswick, and to discuss the economic implications of bringing scheduled passenger rail service to those localities.

I look forward to closing out this year by seeing you on our 25th Anniversary train trip June 16th, and to making next year even better. Dave Potter

Last Call for 25th Anniversary Trip June 16th

Arrangements are set for our trip on Conway Scenic Railroad on Father's Day, Sunday, June 16th. This is our last newsletter beforehand. Please see the accompanying announcement for details and reservations. We hope to see you that day, and we thank those already signed up. Confirmations will be mailed in early June to those who sent return envelopes.

Sorry - dome level seats are now sold out.

Our special train leaves the North Conway Station at 10 am and returns about 5 pm. Boarding begins at 9:30 am, with open house for coffee and snacks in dining car *Hattie Evans* during boarding and early into the trip. The consist will include dome car *Dorthea Mae*, 1st class car *Carroll P. Reed*, coach(es) and an open air car for viewing the spectacular scenery en route to Crawford Notch.

Early and later lunch servings in *Hattie Evans* are offered on the outbound and return trip legs, by advance reservation. Seating is limited - first come first served. There will be photo run-bys going and coming.

A brief annual meeting of Maine Rail Group will take place on board.

This trip covers CSRR's ex-Maine Central Mountain Division line from Intervale to Whitefield (Hazen's), including the 12 miles of less-traveled track beyond Faybans to CSRR's connection with New Hampshire Central Railroad. It's an opportunity to experience what's now happening on this once-idle railroad, and should be of special interest to those concerned with its history and with the future of Maine's inactive Mountain Division segment.

We look forward to welcoming as many members, friends and others interested in Maine Rail Group as possible on this special trip. Please reserve now.

Maine Rail Group 2013 Annual Meeting

This is official notice that Maine Rail Group's 2013 Annual Meeting will be held on the June 16th special train described above. The following directors will stand for re-election. Nominations will be accepted from the floor:

- Russell Barber, Belfast, Maine (Vice President)
- Arthur Emanuelson, Waldoboro, Maine
- Edward Hanscom, Gardiner, Maine (Treasurer)
- Robert Holland, Rockland, Maine (Secretary)
- Stanley Koski, Augusta, Maine
- David Potter, South Gardiner, Maine (President)
- Jack Sutton, Belgrade, Maine
- Mark Walker, Hallowell, Maine (Clerk)

National Train Day

National Train Day will be celebrated Saturday, May 11, with events at these locations:

Brunswick Amtrak station/visitor center on Station Avenue - 11:00am-4:00pm. The *Downeaster* arrives at 12:30pm and tours of the train will be available at the station, including café samples, kids' activities, travel ideas, exhibits, ticket giveaways and more. At least two operating model layouts are expected, along with tourist line displays and Operation Lifesaver's rail safety exhibit. *Downeaster* train rides are \$5 between Haverhill, MA and Brunswick on May 4-5 and May 11-12.

Bangor Airport Mall - 10:00am-2:00pm. At least two operating model layouts, tourist line displays and the Operation Lifesaver rail safety exhibit are planned.

Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad in Portland (off Commercial Street) - 10:00am-4:00pm. Demonstrations of hand and whistle signals, coupling

the train, and throwing switches. Also featured are rides on the Fairmont car and pump car and an Operation Lifesaver rail safety display.

Contact Fred Hirsch at 207-495-6878, or maineol@roadrunner.com for more information.

In Vermont this year's Train Day events will celebrate the new higher speeds of Amtrak's *Vermont*, now achieved by completion of ARRA funded infrastructure improvements – welded rail, track and signal improvements that have raised the top speed to 79 mph and made the trip 28 minutes shorter.

The day's activities will include a free ride on Amtrak's *Vermont* from White River Junction (WRJ) to Bellow's Falls, Riders can return aboard historic Green Mountain Railroad equipment, for passengers who reserve by May 6th. The *Vermont* leaves St. Albans at 8:48am and from White River Junction at 11:48 am with intermediate stops. The White River Flyer is scheduled to arrive back at WRJ at 1:30pm for activities and displays until 3:00pm, when motor coaches will be available to return participants with reservations to their stations of embarkation north of WRJ. Alternatively, they can return from WRJ at 6:22pm on the northbound *Vermont* for \$12 (\$6 for children). To register go to: <http://rail.vermont.gov/sites/railroads/files/OnlineRegistrationForm.pdf>, or by mailing Bib Atchison in the rail section at Robert.Atchison@state.vt.us. Telephone (as a last resort only!) is (802) 828-5993. All registrations must be made by midnight, May 6th as seating is limited and food must be ordered ahead. (Christopher Parker, VRAN)

Maine Eastern Railroad - Rockland Branch

According to Gordon Page, MERR VP for Passenger Operations, tentative plans (as of April 29) are for this season's passenger trains to begin on June 26 with one round trip per day Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat. The train departs Brunswick at 10:00am, stopping at Bath and Wiscasset and arriving at Rockland at 11:55am. The train remains in Rockland until 3:00pm for return to Brunswick via Wiscasset and Bath with scheduled arrival in Brunswick at 4:55 pm. Page adds that a private charter train is scheduled for May 30 for Bowdoin College Alumni weekend..

Branch line reconstruction project begins in Maine

(Edited from Progressive Railroading Daily News, 4/24/13)

A project is under way to re-establish freight rail service to the City of Auburn and Town of Poland, Maine.

The Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG), Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council, City of Auburn, Lewiston and Auburn Railroad Co. (LARC) and St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad Co. (SLR) worked closely with members of a Lewiston-Auburn

delegation to secure \$3 million in general bond funds to reconstruct the former Rangeley Branch of Maine Central Railroad running from Auburn to Poland,

The project calls for restoring about 6,600 linear feet of the former line between a LARC line and an existing SLR siding; building about 400 linear feet of new track for a spur line leading from the midpoint of the mainline to an abutting commercial property; and adding 1,500 linear feet of double-ended siding.

The line will help alleviate congestion on an existing mainline serving the Maine Intermodal Transportation Facility, providing an alternate route for waiting trains that will be assembled and/or disassembled. In addition, the line will provide existing and future industrial facilities in the area with rail service.

"After working on this project for over 10 years, to see re-establishment of this rail line serves as welcome news due to the long-term strategic transportation benefits for the State of Maine," said Bob Thompson, executive director of AVCOG, in a press release. "The implementation of this project to open hundreds of acres for rail-related development is a major step towards attracting businesses, creating jobs and facilitating strong economic opportunities for many years to come."

AVCOG sought bids for the project in November 2012 and awarded the contract to Gendron & Gendron Inc. in February 2013. Construction of the project's first phase is slated for completion in November.

USDOT TIGER V Grant Funds Announced 4/19/13

The fifth round of TIGER (Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery) grants will make \$474 million in federal funding available, with a statutory deadline of September 30, 2014 for obligating these funds. Applications must be submitted by June 3, 2013.

This TIGER round is focused on "rural areas", as defined by an area not identified "urbanized" by U.S. Census Bureau maps. As with previous rounds of TIGER, funds for the FY 2013 TIGER V program will be awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant impact on the Nation, a metropolitan area or a region.

"Eligible applicants" for TIGER grants are State, local and tribal governments, transit agencies, port authorities, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), other political subdivisions of State or local governments, and multi-State or multi-jurisdictional groups applying through a single lead applicant (provided all group members are otherwise eligible).

Projects eligible for TIGER Discretionary Grant funding:

- Highway or bridge projects eligible under title 23. United States Code;
- Public transportation projects eligible under chapter 53, title 40, U.S. Code;
- Freight rail projects;
- Port infrastructure investments.

Federal wage rate requirements included in subchapter IV of chapter 31, title 40, U.S. code apply to all grants.

Primary Selection Criteria

Priority will be given to projects that have a significant impact on desirable long-term outcomes for the Nation, a metropolitan area, or a region, as follows:

- State of good repair: Improving the condition of existing transportation facilities and systems, with particular emphasis on projects that minimize life-cycle costs.
- Economic competitiveness: Contributing to the long-term U.S. economic competitiveness.
- Livability: Fostering livable communities through placed-based policies and investments that increase transportation choices and access to transportation services for people in communities across the U.S.
- Environmental Sustainability: Improving energy efficiency, reducing dependence on oil, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and benefitting the environment.
- Safety: Improving the safety of U.S. transportation facilities and systems.

Job Creation and Economic Stimulus

While the TIGER Discretionary Grant program is not a Recovery Act program, job creation and economic stimulus remain a top Administration priority; therefore. DOT will give priority to projects that are expected to quickly create and preserve jobs and stimulate rapid increases in economic activity, particularly jobs and activity that benefits economically distressed areas.

Secondary Selection Criteria:

- Innovation: DOT will give priority to projects that use innovative strategies to pursue the long-term outcomes outlined above.
- Partnership: DOT will give priority to projects that demonstrate strong collaboration among a broad range of participants and/or integration of transportation with other public service efforts.

DOT will give more weight to the Long Term Outcomes and Job Creation & Economic Stimulus criteria than to the Innovation and Partnership criteria. Projects that are unable to demonstrate a likelihood of significant long-term benefits in any of the five long-term outcomes will

not proceed in the evaluation process. For the Jobs Creation & Economic Stimulus criterion, a project that is not ready to proceed quickly is less likely to be successful.

Previous TIGER rounds were heavily oversubscribed and this round is likely to follow suit. The brief time window for response and the review template outlined above, suggest that proposals that are already well prepared and supported have most chance of success.

AAR Weekly Rail Traffic Report

The appended report by Association of American Railroads for U.S. Class I Rail Traffic weekly carloads and intermodal units dated W/E 4/13, is reproduced here to illustrate AAR's revised report format starting in 2013. Noted below are a few observations from this report:

Total carloads

- Coal: By far the largest single commodity group, is down 7.0% from 2012 year-to-date
- Grain: 15.6% down from 2012
- Metallic Ores and Metals: 7.0% down from 2012
- Forest Products: 3.5% up from 2012
- Motor Vehicles & Parts: 3.1% up
- Non-metallic Minerals & Products: 6.2% up
- Petroleum & Petroleum Products: 56.4% up

Intermodal Units

- At 3,558,668 units 2013 to date this category represents 46% of total traffic and is up 4.9% year over year with a continual rising trend.

These weekly reports for U.S., Canadian, Mexican railroads, and their combined North American totals can be found on the AAR website. (bar chart pairs are Upper-this week; Lower-year-to-date)

The Wall Street Journal, March 27, 2013, ***Boom Times on the Tracks: Rail Capacity. Spending Soar*** highlights the turnabout that has taken place in the railroad industry in recent years, with emphasis on crude oil transportation and intermodal shipments.

Mark Your Calendars

- **National Train Day, May 11, Brunswick, Bangor & Portland**
- **MRG, Inc. Meeting, May 31, 6:30pm Gardiner City Hall Council Chamber**
- **MRG, Inc. 25th Anniversary Train Ride & Annual Meeting, Conway Scenic Railroad, June 16.**

Jack Sutton

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.

U.S. Rail Traffic¹

Week 15, 2013 – Ended April 13, 2013

	This Week		Year-To-Date		
	Cars	vs 2012	Cumulative	Avg/wk ²	vs 2012
Total Carloads	275,675	-0.6%	4,127,296	275,153	-2.4%
Chemicals	29,609	-5.7%	447,998	29,868	-1.3%
Coal	104,028	-2.7%	1,646,722	109,781	-7.0%
Farm and Food Products, Excluding Grain	16,449	-0.7%	248,180	16,545	-1.3%
Forest Products	11,198	5.1%	165,276	11,018	3.5%
Grain	17,150	-12.1%	263,045	17,598	-15.6%
Metallic Ores and Metals	23,323	-13.8%	354,755	23,650	-7.0%
Motor Vehicles and Parts	17,913	10.9%	242,622	16,175	3.1%
Nonmetallic Minerals and Products	34,959	9.5%	444,437	29,629	6.2%
Petroleum and Petroleum Products	14,252	51.2%	202,173	13,478	56.4%
Other	6,794	-11.7%	111,190	7,413	-2.8%
Intermodal Units	241,987	3.3%	3,558,668	237,245	4.9%
Total Traffic	517,662	1.2%	7,685,964	512,398	0.8%

¹ Excludes U.S. operations of CN and Canadian Pacific.

² Average per week figures may not sum to totals as a result of independent rounding.

Trends, 2013 vs 2012

United States

