

**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*

**July / August, 2012**

**Greetings Members and Friends:**

**2012 Annual Meeting**

Maine Rail Group's annual meeting was held at the Belfast Comfort Inn on Saturday, June 2. The membership elected the following slate of directors, who elected the officers as noted:

<u>Board of Directors</u>		<u>Office</u>
Russell Barber	Belfast	Vice President
Arthur Emanuelson	Waldoboro	
Edward Hanscom	Gardiner	Treasurer
Robert Holland	Rockland	Secretary
Stanley Koski	Augusta,	
David Potter	South Gardiner	President
Jack Sutton	Belgrade	
Mark Walker	Hallowell	Clerk

Guy F. "Bill" Hunter, of Winterport retired from the Board. We thank him for his many years of service. Everett Barnard has also retired from the Board this year as reported in our May/June newsletter. As directors, both contributed much to Maine Rail Group during their many years of service. We look forward to their continuing membership and active participation with the group.

Bruce Bierce distributed the latest draft of Maine Rail Group's new brochure for review and discussion. It will now be printed for general use. Many thanks to Bruce for his hard and patient work in completing this project

Dave Potter assumed the presidency following Jack Sutton, who retires from that position but remains on the Board and edits this newsletter for the present.

Potter stressed the Board's interest in membership development. An approach will be to make Maine Rail Group's regular meetings more attractive to membership and guests by adding bimonthly presentations of more general rail interests, with separate sessions for directors and officers to conduct the necessary business.

Dave introduced Jane Hall of *Save the Depot* at Greenville Junction, Maine, who explained the goals of that non-profit organization and their fundraising efforts to move the station from track-side and restore it for community uses. (more on this below).

After lunch Bob Gillam and Bob Holland presented an interesting illustrated talk on the history of the Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad from the days of steam to the present.

At the meeting's close the group moved to City Point in Belfast to board the waiting B&ML RR passenger train. Forecast rain held off for the long climb to Waldo, first along and across the Passagassawakeag River then along Wescot Stream. Lacking runaround track at Waldo, the train reversed direction for the reverse trip, stopping briefly at City Point Central Railroad junction near the Belfast end where that independent railroad museum offered visits to riders. The time was late and rain threatened so no one left the train. However, future opportunities for collaboration and joint promotion between B&ML and CPC were evident.

**Congress Passes Two-Year Transportation Bill**

NARP (National Association of Railroad Passengers) Hotline issued this bulletin on June 29:

*The compromise, two-year Surface Transportation Bill passed Congress today, implementing a highway-focused surface transportation policy through the end of September 2014.*

*The House led the way, passing the conference agreement by a 373-52 vote, with the Senate following suit minutes later with a 74-19 vote. All of the "nay" votes were cast by Republicans in both chambers.*

*Train advocates were working for a truly multi-modal transportation bill, but partisan gridlock resulted in yet another highway bill that focuses heavily on roads, automobiles and trucks. Congress failed even to address lagging revenues flowing into the Highway Trust Fund – the gas tax hasn't been raised since 1993 – and instead chose to subsidize highway construction by almost \$17 billion over the next two years.*

*The only good news for passenger trains comes in the elimination of a provision that would've eliminated 75 percent of the Alaska Railroad Corporation's funding, and \$6 million in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding for the popular Amtrak Downeaster train. (emphasis added)*

**More Downeaster News**

On May 14 ribbon cutting ceremonies including Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo, MaineDOT

Commissioner David Bernhardt, NNEPRA Executive Director Patricia Quinn, local and railroad officials were held in Freeport and Brunswick celebrating completion of the raised station platforms and shelters. Each event began with the arrival at the platform of a special Amtrak train, concluding at Brunswick with a tour of the train and light refreshments. Regular *Downeaster* service to Freeport and Brunswick is expected to begin later this fall.

On June 15 the Portland Press Herald reported that higher-than-expected construction bids ranging from \$12.2 to nearly \$20 million for the proposed train layover and maintenance facility in Brunswick are forcing NNEPRA to seek more funds or change plans for the facility.

(Ed. Maine Rail Group was originally formed to save the rail line between Brunswick and Augusta. Wouldn't this be a good time to consider extending passenger service to Augusta, and possibly northward, and move the layover facility accordingly?)

#### **Florida Ponders Private Passenger Rail Project**

Florida East Coast Industries (FECI) recently announced its \$1 billion *All Aboard Florida* project to connect the cities of Orlando and Miami with a passenger rail line. The 240 mile route would utilize 200 miles of upgraded existing railroad between Miami and Cocoa, with 40 miles of new track from there to Orlando. More recently it is proposed to connect directly with the Orlando airport and a major real estate development at a station location in downtown Miami.

According to the FECI website the *All Aboard Florida* system will be operational in 2014 and potentially extend to Tampa and Jacksonville in the future. It further states: *Frequent, regularly scheduled trains traveling daily from South Florida to Orlando in approximately three hours and offering amenities like Wi-Fi will make the time productive for passengers...The rail system will remove up to three million cars from our roadways annually, mitigating traffic congestion and lowering carbon emissions. And since 200 of the 240 miles of the project already exist, impacts to the environment will be limited...*

*In addition to better connecting Florida's two largest metropolitan markets, the economic opportunities are terrific for Floridians, from creating jobs to stimulating local economies and reducing tax burdens, the benefits of a new Florida passenger rail system extend well beyond the rail's destination points. Examples:*

- *Project construction will create more than 6,000 new jobs for Floridians*
- *Rail operations represent another 1,000 permanent job opportunities, not counting additional jobs from*

*property development around the rail system that could create even more employment opportunities*

- *With fewer cars on the road, the State and taxpayers can also save significantly on reduced highway maintenance costs*
- *Increased tax revenues from rising property values near stations can be applied towards local needs (e.g. schools, parks, public works, police and fire protection), not to mention the economic benefits for businesses and workers in proximity of train operations.*

(Ed. Worth watching for Maine "snow birds" and those interested in the long-term financing of *Downeaster* operations).

#### **Crude Oil Rides the Rails Through Maine**

During June two unit trains of 104 cars each originating at a terminal in the Bakken shale region of North Dakota arrived in Waterville via Pan Am Railways, where they were broken into smaller trains for movement to their final destination at the J.D. Irving refinery in St. John, NB. Elsewhere it was reported that each car contained roughly 30,000 gallons or 700 barrels of crude oil – about 72,800 bbl per train. Similar shipments have been reported on the Montreal Maine & Atlantic / New Brunswick Southern route across northern Maine and the Canadian National route that skirts northern Maine, evidence of serious interest and testing moves of large volumes of western crude oil to this destination by rail. Why?

- A major sustained oil boom exists in the upper U.S. mid west and nearby Canadian provinces. Pipeline capacity from there to gulf coast refineries is inadequate and non-existent between Montreal and St. John.
- Landed cost of western North American crude oil delivered to St. John by rail is reportedly less than crude delivered from overseas sources.
- Railroads can move large quantities of crude quickly, limited principally by terminal capacities at origins and destinations, and by tank car availability. Major expansions are now reported in these areas.
- With adequate terminal and tank car facilities, railroads have the flexibility to respond quickly to increased and shifting demands, relative to point-to-point rigidity, capacity, fixed cost and permitting constraints inherent to pipelines.
- While coal remains by far the largest single commodity carried by U.S. Class 1 railroads, coal volume weakened significantly during the past year, attributed to mild weather and shifts to natural gas by utilities driven by cost savings and environmental issues.

It's logical to assume that concerns over coal's future drive railroads to explore opportunities for petroleum. The Association of American Railroads report Weekly Traffic of Major U.S. Railroads, W/E 6/23/2012, indicates 10,180 carloads of petroleum products originated through June 23, 2012, a 51.4 % increase over the corresponding period in 2011.

### **Greenville Junction Railroad Depot**

The Greenville Junction depot was built by the Canadian Pacific Railroad in 1889. It's rounded "witches hat" roofed ladies waiting room was added sometime between 1901 and 1910. The junction connected CP with the original Bangor & Piscataquis Railroad that was acquired by Bangor & Aroostook Railroad in 1891 and abandoned it in 1962. Today, the depot's trackside location is unacceptable to Montreal Maine & Atlantic, which intends to remove it for liability reasons. Greenville Junction Depot Friends, a 501(c)(3) organization, is working to raise the funds to relocate it to a nearby state-owned site on Rt. 15, across from its present location, on the Moosehead Scenic Byway between Jackman and Greenville.

Greenville Junction Depot Friends held their first Annual Railroad Workers Reunion at the site on August 20, 2011 attended by 500 people, raising \$4000. The second reunion is scheduled for August 18, 2012. More information is available at [info@greenvilledepot.org](mailto:info@greenvilledepot.org). Grant applications are being made for project funding and general matching donations are sought. Contact Jane Hall (207) 691-0731.

### **TIGER IV Grant for Rail in Northern Vermont**

The latest round of TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grants included \$7.9 million to help fund upgrade of New England Central Railroad tracks between St. Albans, VT and the Canadian border. Together with \$3 million from the railroad this grant will help fund new welded rail, ties and ballast on 19 miles of track, bridge upgrades to FRA Class 3 passenger and freight speeds and weight limit increase to 286,000 lbs. per car. It's a significant step toward the goal of restoring passenger rail service to Montreal. Amtrak's *Vermont* connecting Washington, D.C., New York City and Vermont now terminates at St. Albans.

Another major step toward returning passenger rail service between Vermont and Montreal is the "Beyond the Borders" agreement between the U.S. and Canada for a pre-clearance facility in Montreal's Gare Central for customs and immigration checks. (VRAN newsletter 6/1/12). A joint letter from four U.S. Senators from States of New York and Vermont says "Approval for pre-clearance in Montreal would lay the groundwork for a

dramatic improvement of service on Amtrak's *Adirondack* line, mark the first crucial step in bringing Amtrak's *Vermont* back to Montreal and, more generally, help increase ridership on the Northeast Corridor". (railwayage.com 5/29/12).

### **Mass Bay RRE Covers Conway Scenic RR 7/29/12**

On Sunday, July 29 Mass Bay Rail Road Enthusiasts will charter a special all-day train that will cover the Conway Scenic Railroad from North Conway to Crawford Notch and beyond, including the "Redstone Branch" and track between Fabyans and Hazens that is not regularly operated. The consist will include former MRG, Inc's ex N&W dining car # 492, elegantly refurbished for full onboard dining service by Conway Scenic Railroad as their "Hattie Evans".

MBRRE member prices range from \$65 for coach seating with \$13 for box lunch, through \$85 for first class with snacks, \$115 for upper dome car seating with snacks, \$110 for first class and deluxe dining and \$140 for upper dome seating with deluxe dining. Non-member seat prices are \$10 additional throughout.

Details are available at [www.massbayrre.org](http://www.massbayrre.org), [trips@massbayrre.org](mailto:trips@massbayrre.org) and 978-470-2066

### **Tahawas Rail Line to Reopen**

The 12-mile Tahawas rail line extends northward from Iowa Pacific Holding's (IPH) North Creek & Saratoga Railroad terminus at North Creek to Newcomb, in Adirondack State Park in eastern New York State. It was built during World War II to serve National Lead Company's titanium mines in that region and idled when the mines closed in 1989. IPH sought and gained Federal Surface Transportation Board approval to reopen the Tahawas line over environmental protests.

National Lead says it will move mine tailings to companies that will refine them for rare-earth elements used by high-tech and manufacturing companies, according to pressrepublican.com, 5/15/12. According to this report IPH also says 15 to 20 people would be employed during reconstruction of the track and the completed rail line would bring at least \$160,000 into the local economy each year. The company anticipates hauling 100 million tons of material and tailings from the Tahawas mines."

IPH owns four tourist railroads: Saratoga North Creek Railway, Rio Grande Scenic Railroad, Mt. Hood Railroad and Machu Picchu Train in Peru. IPH's freight operations include: Chicago Terminal Railroad, Texas-New Mexico Railroad and West Texas & Lubbock Railway.

### **FRA Requires Telephone Postings at Crossings**

As reported by [progressiverailroading.com](http://progressiverailroading.com) 6/13/2012: FRA announced new rules that require railroads to install signs at grade and pathway crossings that include toll-free telephone numbers the public can call to report unsafe conditions.

Railroads must establish an Emergency Notification System (ENS) by installing "clear and readable signs" with telephone numbers so they can respond to public reports about malfunctioning warning signals, vehicles stalled on tracks or other emergency situations, FRA said in a prepared statement. Calls can be received through a 24-hour call center, an automated answering system of third party telephone service.

If a call is received, the dispatching railroad is required to contact all trains authorized to operate through the crossing, inform local law enforcement to assist in directing traffic, investigate the report or request that the railroad with crossing maintenance responsibility investigate it. If a report is substantiated, the railroad is required to take certain actions to remedy the situation.

"The signs will help reduce the risk of certain highway-rail crossing collisions" said Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo.

Based on comments the FRA received in response to a proposed rulemaking, railroads without an existing ENS will be required to establish one by July 2015. Railroads that currently have an ENS might be able to retain existing signs or replace signs by July 2015 or July 2017, depending on several factors, FRA officials said.

A regulatory impact analysis shows the rules' cost to railroads will total about \$15.6 million, which is expected to be offset by estimated accident and casualty reduction benefits of \$57.8 million over a 15-year period they said.

(Ed. These regulations include exemptions for tourist and excursion railroads that appear trumped if highway-rail crossings or public pathway crossings are involved.)

### **"World's Largest Railroad Car"**

The following article from *Railway Age*, 6/15/12 recalls recent moves of large transformers in northern New England.

#### **Kasgro builds World's Largest Railroad Car**

A newly manufactured Schnabel Car, WECX 801, built by Kasgro Railcar, Newcastle, Pa., is being called the

"World's Largest Railroad Car". The 231-foot, 400-ton, 36-axle behemoth rises 18 feet above top-of-rail and has a load limit of more than 1,000 tons. It's larger than its sister car, CEBX 800, which was built by Krupp of Germany in 1980 for ABB for U.S. service. WECX 801 is Kasgro's largest railcar to date, according to President and CEO Joe Crawford. "Normally our biggest car would be a 20-axle Schnabel Car", he told WYTV News. "This is a 36-axle Schnabel Car. It's the biggest car ever built in North America. We had to replicate all the [CEBX 800] drawings and redo them to U.S. AAR standards. We've been building this car for a year". Kasgro hired 15 additional employees to construct the car.

A Schnabel Car is a specialized type of railcar designed to transport heavy and oversized loads, where the load itself becomes part of the car. The load is suspended between the two ends of the car's two units by lifting arms; the lifting arms are connected to a pivot above an assembly of pivots and frames that carry the weight of the load and lifting arm. When a Schnabel Car is empty, the two lifting arms are connected, and the car can usually operate at speeds up to 215 mph. The word Schnabel is from the German word "Tragschnabelwagen", meaning carrying-beak wagon, because of the tapered shape of the lifting arms, which resembles a bird's beak.

Some Schnabel Cars include hydraulic equipment that will either lift or horizontally shift the load while in transit at low speeds (no more than 15 mph) to clear obstructions along the car's route. WECX 801 can shift up to 40 inches laterally and 44 inches vertically... There are 31 Schnabel cars in Europe, 30 in North America, 25 in Asia, and one in Australia.

(Ed. Another function of the Schnabel Car is to equalize the load of over-weight cargo to within allowable axle loads of rolling stock, track and bridges. For example, this car at 1,400 tons gross weight and 36 axles applies 78,800 lbs./axle static load. A standard four-axle car rated at 286,000 gross weight applies 71,500 lbs / axle.)

### **Mark Your Calendars**

- **Maine Rail Group meeting, Friday July 27, 6:30-8:30 pm, Gardiner, Maine City Hall**
- **Maine Rail Group meeting, Friday Sept. 28, 6:30-8:30 pm, Hallowell City Hall**

Please check our website for updates.

**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.**

