

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, 2010

Dear Members and Friends:

2010 Annual Meeting

Maine Rail Group's annual meeting was held at the Amalfi Restaurant in Rockland on Saturday, May 15th with some 60 participants, followed by a chartered train ride to Wiscasset and back later that afternoon. The following board members were elected at the meeting:

Russell Barber, Belfast, Maine

Everett Barnard, Augusta, Maine

Arthur Emanuelson, Waldoboro, Maine

Edward Hanscom, Gardiner, Maine

Robert Holland, Rockland, Maine

*Guy "Bill" Hunter, Winterport, Maine

Douglas Jennings, Hallowell, Maine

*Stanley Koski, Augusta, Maine

David Potter, South Gardiner, Maine

Jack Sutton, Belgrade, Maine

*Bill Hunter and Stanley Koski have re-joined the board after earlier board service.



L to R: Ed Hanscom, Everett Barnard, Art Emanuelson, Bob Holland, Dave Potter, Russ Barber, Jack Sutton, "Bill" Hunter

Immediately following the annual meeting the board met to elect the following slate of officers for the current year:

President – Jack Sutton

Vice-president – David Potter

Secretary- Everett Barnard

Treasurer – Edward Hanscom

Clerk – Douglas Jennings**

**Following the annual meeting Doug Jennings advised of his pending retirement. Doug suggested Mark Walker, Esq. of Hallowell, Maine as his replacement. Everett, Ed, Stan and Jack then met with Mark and Doug at Mark's Hallowell office and agreed to invite Mark as Clerk, subject to formal confirmation at the next board meeting on July 30th. Meanwhile, Doug and Mark are coordinating the necessary transfer of records.

John Coughlin, Honorary Chair and charter member was unavailable for this year's meeting and was missed.

Bill Crosby of Plattsburgh, NY and South Thomaston, Maine. Bill retired from board service late last year but remains an active member. He contributed an extensive photographic record of the annual meeting, including the images in this letter. Thanks, Bill.

Ralph Werber of Pittston retired from the board this year.

Paul Hallett, Operations Manager, Conway Scenic Railroad updated the group on the extensive renovations by CSRR to MRG, Inc's former dining car - now named the "Hattie Evans". to ready it for dinner train service. We look forward to scheduling an MRG, Inc. membership event with the "Hattie Evans" on the Conway Scenic line.

Late News: Paul Hallett called on July 2 to advise that the renovated "Hattie Evans" made its first run that day, and the dining car enters regular service on a run through Crawford Notch on July 3!

David A. Fink, President, Pan AM Railways gave the keynote presentation on PAR's activities. He was joined by Michael McClellan, Vice-President Intermodal and Automotive, Norfolk Southern Corporation. Both speakers discussed aspects of the PAR/NSC Patriot Corridor partnership that is now upgrading the infrastructure and operations on former PAR lines across Massachusetts into New York State. Here are some highlights:

- PAR is recovering from recent floods in eastern Massachusetts that caused washouts and severe back-ups within its system.
- PAR is a freight railroad that operates successfully at speeds ranging from 10 to 40 mph, depending on track conditions. Where Amtrak needs to operate passenger service on its lines PAR will cooperate, provided its freight service is not impaired and the incremental

capital and operating costs for passenger service are covered.

- PAR acquires its locomotives by purchasing selected used engines, which are reconditioned as necessary at Waterville. The cost advantage of this approach is huge compared to buying new locomotives for their operations.
- The paper industry represents PAR's principal customer base in Maine and remains strong.
- PAR plans major upgrades to its freight main between Portland and Waterville this season. *Major tie replacement and surfacing activity was evident during late June at the Waterville yard and elsewhere in that area. (Ed.)*
- PAS main line track work between Ayer, Massachusetts and Mechanicville, New York is largely complete. Train speeds have improved, resulting in significant improvements in utilization of train crews and equipment. Intermodal and other business on the line is improved and growing as a result. Work is continuing on passing sidings, signals and bridges.
- Completion of the Danville Junction renovation project is expected by or before the end of this year.
- Re-opening of PAR's Waterville intermodal facility is a consideration, once other major projects are digested.



David Fink discusses PAN AM RAILWAYS operations in Maine.

We appreciate that David Fink, Michael McClellan and Michael Bostwick, PAR VP Sales & Marketing shared their time and information with us on May 15th.

Thank you!

We also recognize and thank the following sponsors, whose support helped make this annual meeting event and train ride possible:

Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad
Bowdoin College

Downeast Railroad Heritage Preservation Trust
Maine Better Transportation
Maine Eastern Railroad
Maine Tourism Association
Moose Path Consultancy, LLC
Northeast Bank
Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority
Anonymous



Mike McClellan reviews PAN AM SOUTHERN progress.



L to R: Senator Peter Mills, Gayle Finkbeiner, Gordon Page, Dennis Mohn, Mike Bostwick, and (seated foreground) Paul Hallett



Ed Hanscom counsels four Scout Railroad Merit Badge candidates

Merle L. Emmons Bequest

Early this June MRG, Inc. received a check in the amount of \$5,425, as partial distribution of the estate of Merle L. Emmons. Merle died on Jan. 27, 2009 at the age of 87, leaving a portion of his estate to “small organizations that make large impacts on communities”, according to his brother, Sidney Emmons of Cuba, N.Y., as reported in the Waterville Morning Sentinel on May 24. We saw little of Merle at MRG, Inc. functions in recent years but kept in touch with him through his long-standing membership and newsletters. It’s an honor to receive this recognition. We’re committed to use it in Merle’s memory as we believe he intended - in the spirit of thrift and community service .

Maine Approves Bond for Rail

By referendum on June 8 Maine voters approved Question 3 – the “Transportation Jobs Bond” . It included \$7 million toward state purchase of 233 miles of Montreal Maine & Atlantic Railway track slated for abandonment, leveraging additional amounts of \$7 million from Maine’s Budget Stabilization Fund and \$4 million reallocated from earlier uncommitted bond sources. Other funds may be sought from shippers who depend on rail service now provided by the threatened lines.

At this writing it is reported that negotiations between the MaineDOT and MMA have reached an impasse. The issue is referred to the Surface Transportation Board, which will hold a hearing in Presque Isle on July 7 before reaching their decision.

Meanwhile discussions with Maine’s Congressional delegation have been ongoing to identify federal assistance that may be available to restore track conditions for competitive train speeds. MaineDOT’s Nate Moulton indicates that a second-round TIGER grant proposal will be filed for those funds.

The Q.3 bond approval also included \$4 million for the Mountain Division and \$5 million for rail in the Lewiston – Auburn region. The likely use of Mountain Division funds will be to reconnect the isolated east end of State ownership to active PAR rails by replacing missing track between Westbrook and South Windham. The Lewiston – Auburn region funds will secure Maine State ownership of St. Lawrence & Atlantic track between Yarmouth and Danville Junctions. It will also be used for new track on a portion of the former Maine Central “Buckfield Branch” r-o-w between the St. Lawrence & Atlantic line and the Lewiston–Auburn Railroad. That expands opportunities for rail-dependent industry and relieves the west end of the Lewiston – Auburn Railroad for future passenger rail service to an intermodal terminal adjacent to the Auburn Airport.

Operation Lifesaver Wants “Trading Card” Photos

Maine Operation Lifesaver invites railroad photos for possible inclusion in their third printing of Maine railroad trading cards. Over 50,000 cards have so far been handed out much to the delight of schoolchildren – and adults, too. With 14 new photos to be chosen for the new printing, photographer name credit will appear on the back of thousands of trading cards along with information about the railroad pictured, a rail safety message, and other information.

Before photos are printed, a check will be made with the respective railroads for clearance. Photos of derailments, graffiti, pictures taken long ago, and the like will be rejected. On the other hand, creativity and expertise in modern Maine railroad photography is welcome. OL will choose two photos each of Pan Am Railways; Amtrak’s Downeaster, St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railway; Maine Eastern Railroad; Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway; Eastern Maine/New Brunswick Southern Railway; and one photo each of Downeast Scenic Railroad and the Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad. If possible, the railroad name should be visible in the picture. To view photos of past trading cards, and for more information, click on <http://www.maineol.org> “Trading Cards”.

Up to two photos representing each railroad may be submitted at rrphotos@roadrunner.com. Photos should suitable for reduction to 3.2”x2”, in landscape format with image size no larger than 800x600 pixels and should be in digital Jpeg of TIFF format. Photos must be free of copyright restrictions and be those of the original photographer. Each photo must be accompanied by a name, e-mail address, phone number, and approximate date and location the photo was taken. **The deadline for entries is August 15, 2010.**

OL advises: If you’re taking pictures, please use these guidelines:

- Photos must be taken in a safe and legal environment. Remember that railroad property is private property. Stay off railroad tracks, buildings, bridges, cars, etc.
- Stand at least 15 feet away from the rail filming a train.
- Only take photographs or view trains from public property.
- Cooperate fully with railroad police or other law enforcement if contacted.

Downeast Scenic Railroad Opens in July

Tom Testa, President of Downeast Scenic Railroad announces that DSR will begin operations in July, with the actual date available later this month. The boarding and ticket office is at Cadillac Mountain Sports in Ellsworth.

Quoting from Testa's letter: "In 2004 a group of volunteers came together because they believed it is important to preserve the rich rail history of Ellsworth and Downeast Maine. Many of the original lines had been abandoned. Rails had vanished or were overgrown with brush. There were no train cars or engines – they had long ago been sold, moved or abandoned. The vision was to build an excursion train that would operate for an eight mile trip from Ellsworth Falls to Washington Junction, Maine – and to restore rails for a 24-mile circuit from Ellsworth to Green Lake, Maine."

"A second and important goal of the restoration project is to help improve economic opportunities and tourism in the Downeast-Acadia region of Maine. Preliminary studies conducted to determine the financial viability of the train forecast that – once fully operational - Downeast Scenic Railroad could generate as much as \$5 million annually in direct and indirect funds for the local economy."

"In the past few years, more than 75 volunteers, supported by more than 350 members of the organization, have worked diligently at monumental tasks such as clearing tracks, laying new rails, fixing crossing signals and restoring a vintage locomotive, a caboose and passenger trains. Renovating the trains has required new carpentry and painting, the forging of new metal equipment, refurbishment of parts and the upholstery of seats. The new cars – purchased or donated and restored – include a terrific new engine, a Pullman commuter coach built in 1915 and an open-air flat car purchased from the Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad (which will offer passengers a spectacular out-of-doors riding experience)".

Calais Branch Sequel

MassTransitMag.com, 6/30/2010 relayed this article by Bill Trotter of Bangor Daily News (condensed):
Contractor Bankruptcy Won't Stop Maine Rail Trail MAINE – Despite the financial problems of the main contractor doing the work, rehabilitation of the western end of the Down East Sunrise Trail is continuing and still is expected to be completed on schedule this fall, according to a state official.

Bangor-based Vaughn Thibodeau & Sons recently defaulted on several loans issued by Machias Savings Bank, which resulted in the bank foreclosing on the contracting business. Earlier this month, the bank took possession of several Thibodeau properties in Hancock, Penobscot and Waldo counties.

Norman Baker, project manager for Maine Department of Transportation's multimodal program, said Monday the department took out a bond on the rail corridor conversion project when it hired Thibodeau, essentially insuring the project. He said the bonding company has agreed to find another contractor to finish converting the western end of the former rail line into a multiuse trail. "The bonding company has stepped up," Baker said. "They will decide who's going to do the construction."

City of Belfast to Buy Three Miles of B&ML R-O-W

Contributed by Russell Barber

BELFAST - Tuesday, June 29

The Belfast City Council held a special meeting to approve funding to purchase the three miles of railway within Belfast City. Partnering with Coastal Mountain Land Trust the Council voted 4 to 1 to sign a purchase and sale agreement with Unity Property Management for all of the right of way within city limits. The agreed price is \$200,000, of which half will be paid by Coastal Mountain Land Trust, with its board approval. In announcing the proposal to the City Council on June 15th, it was explained that the intent of the purchase is for the corridor to be used both for rail and trail. At that meeting the Council also voted to put rail access back into the Belfast waterfront development process.

The Brooks Preservation Society (BPS), d.b.a. Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railway will resume limited service to Belfast. As a result of renewed interest from the City of Belfast, BPS will return train operations on a limited basis this season. The tentative 2010 schedule envisions 6 to 10 trains running within the city, as well as Brooks-to-Belfast and pizza train runs. See the BPS website: www.brookspreservation.org for more information.

The Mass Bay Railroad Enthusiasts group plans a B&ML "tour of the line" excursion in September. Information is available by phone at 978-470-2066, e-mail at massbayrre.org or at www.massbayrre.org.

Mark Your Calendar

- MRG, Inc. meets next on Friday, July 30, 7 p.m. at Hallowell City Hall.
 - MRG, Inc. meets Sept. 24, Hallowell C. H., 7 p.m.
 - MRG, Inc. meets Nov. 19, location TBD
- Please check in advance in case of last minute changes.**

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MRG, Inc. is a non-profit corporation dedicated to railroad education and to 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.