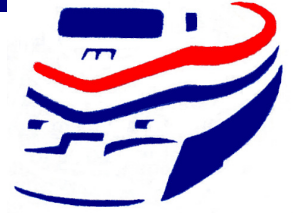


TRAINRIDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF TRAINRIDERS/NORTHEAST



R. Colwell Photo

Fiscal Year
Ridership Exceeds
½ Million!



S. Pesci Photo

During our 12 years of train service conceptual development beginning in 1989, the answer to one question was always elusive - just how many people would ride a train between Portland and Boston? We always knew it would be a number clearly justifying its existence, but what exactly would it be? Tens of thousands? Hundreds of thousands? No one could answer, but we knew it would be well worth the investment. Advocating at every opportunity, thwarting off nay-sayers at every turn, pushing for legislation whenever possible, it all came to fruition on December 15, 2001 when the first revenue train rolled down the newly rebuilt corridor on its debut trip.

Passengers lauded the return of train service - gone since 1967. Word spread like wildfire about what a great train we now could enjoy. Relaxing, safe, comfortable, reliable, environmentally friendly and affordable. Why would *anyone* drive if a train going to the same place at the same time could take them there? The numbers of people getting on board shot up immediately. Of course, the nay-sayers attributed this to the train's "novelty", with ridership sure to plummet in the early months thus proving their pessimistic outlook. But high gas prices, cheap fares for commuting, convenient times to sporting and other events and the simple fact that people would rather ride have made the Downeaster one of Amtrak's most successful services.

Naysayers were shocked! Ridership continued to increase prompting several adjustments necessary to accommodate the demand. An extra coach was added to each trainset as the initial three almost immediately proved to be insufficient, Durham service increased from weekend only to daily service, additional corridor enhancements were built to allow for a fifth round trip, trip times were decreased, additional coaches were put on again to handle seasonal, holiday and special event demands, and now an extension to Freeport and Brunswick is well underway to enhance reach and provide more people with a better travel option.

With just under 10 years of service under our belt, we've seen the train's ridership increase from its first full fiscal year total of 262,691 to almost doubling to this year's 509,986! Credit must be given where credit is due. The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority works tirelessly to keep things moving ahead efficiently, the dispatchers at Pan-Am Railways and MBTA keep our trains on time, the Drummack folks keep the trains clean and ready, the Amtrak employees make the service pleasant and professional and our on-board volunteer Train Hosts and our Station Hosts have become a unique feature of the Downeaster service. This is why more and more people are riding. We look forward to another 10 years of upward success!

Volume 20, Number 2, Summer 2011 ♦ Stephen R. Piper, Editor, e-mail: make_tracks@comcast.net

TrainRiders/Northeast, Box 4869, Downtown Station, Portland, ME 04112-4869 ♦ (207) TRY-RAIL ♦ info@trainridersne.org ♦ www.trainridersne.org

Chairman's Update



We're still here –still doing what we've been doing successfully for two decades, though after being in one office location for over 12

years, our two moves in a six month period led to delays in almost everything that we do.

By now probably every rail advocate in the world has heard of the 2012 budget recommendation from the U.S. House of Representatives that would eliminate all Federal assistance to state supported Amtrak service. The proposed budget would mean that not just our Downeaster service, but service in Vermont, New Hampshire and twelve other states would end.

Once again, as we've done for over two decades, TrainRiders/Northeast drew on its resources and contacted our membership. However, this time we also had our volunteers leaflet riders on Amtrak's Downeaster service. Over 800 flyers were created and distributed on board the Downeaster trains and at all stations along the route requesting that everyone contact their members of Congress in ME, NH, VT and MA. At the end of the first day we are pleased to report that the Senate version of the budget did not include that ridiculous provision. Once again, the trains continue to run because both houses agreed to extend the current transportation bill to November 18th. Nevertheless, when Congress returns to reconcile this issue, we fully expect great differences between House & Senate versions.

Our Job? To convince our Congressional delegations to stop promoting "kill Amtrak" budgets.

Accordingly, we ask once again that you support our ongoing efforts by *renewing your annual dues at TNE*. You are our only means of support – and with the economic slump we've all encountered for the past three years – *we desperately need your support now*.

Dues renewal and new members are the life blood of TrainRiders/Northeast so please, if your dues are due – please bring them current. If your dues are current, please think of a special contribution to help us continue to complete our goals first set out in 1989. Don't forget that dues and contributions may be made by credit card through our PayPal connection on our website.

Brunswick Extension Continues



Platform work in Brunswick is a major undertaking with H-Pile supports necessary to eliminate settlement.

Platform construction is underway at the new Brunswick station! D&C Construction and HB Fleming (both Portland area contractors) have been hired to

build the 10' x 400' elevated platform at "Maine Street Station", intending to serve both Amtrak's Downeaster and Maine Eastern's excursion train to Rockland. The new platform will be fully ADA compliant and have an overhead canopy, lights, and heating elements to melt snow and ice. This platform project is scheduled to be completed before this winter.

On another note, Mid Coast Health Services has now opened their walk-in clinic and primary care practice in the 2nd building completed at the station.

In Freeport, platform construction has started in the area of the "Tower" information center, which is located right at Depot Street and within short walking distance to Main Street with its abundant shopping and restaurants.

With most of the continuously welded rail now in place along the corridor, the reconstruction of grade crossings, gates and signals has been the focus of this year's efforts.



L. Mulligan Photo

Congress Street in Portland complete with new tracks, gates and crossbucks.

Work will continue through the rest of this season and into next year. It's clearly evident that the communities of Freeport and Brunswick are very anxiously awaiting the arrival of the Downeaster!

Amtrak's 40th Anniversary Train visits Freeport



August 13 & 14 brought the first ever Amtrak train to stop in Freeport, even though it was unfortunately not to take passengers into Boston. The train is a special "museum on wheels", created entirely by the employees to traverse the country and commemorate Amtrak's first 40 years of service.



The trainset is made up of engines and baggage cars beautifully painted in early Amtrak color schemes that house memorabilia of eras gone by. Mannequins display vintage uniforms and sit at replicas of dining car tables sporting original china and silverware. Period advertisements and photographs, an old engine control stand, scale models, an interactive display of the various horns used over the years and an Acela café attendant are all part of the experience.



What is truly amazing is the amount of archived artifacts that were pulled out of various storage sources to complete this chronology. Clothing, bolts of seat fabrics, menus and timetables have all been luckily preserved. It's truly unique and well worth the admission price which, by the way, is free.



NNEPRA and the Amtrak Downeaster, Amtrak, the Maine Eastern Railroad, Pan Am Railways, Operation Lifesaver and TrainRiders/Northeast all manned information booths while TrainRiders also manned the NARP information booth and acted as docents on board the train both Saturday and Sunday. Everyone helped to make the event a true success and experience one of the largest number of visitors. Other stops for the anniversary train include Burlington, VT; Albany, NY; Steamtown in Scranton, PA; St Louis, MO; Galesburg, IL; Chicago; Jackson, MI; Milwaukee, WI; Seattle, WA and finally Portland OR.

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The Board of Directors of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority voted unanimously on Monday, August 22 to build their \$4 million dollar passenger train maintenance facility on an 8-acre parcel near Bouchard Drive in Brunswick. The consulting group hired by the Authority to evaluate 3 potential sites made their recommendations, suggesting the Bouchard Drive property as their first choice because of its previous use as a rail yard for many years, its proximity to Maine Street Station and its cost effectiveness.

Patricia Quinn, Executive Director of the Rail Authority, told reporters that she plans to create an advisory group to guide the design of the facility that would include the Consultants, NNEPRA staff, the Brunswick municipal planner and a member of the Board of Selectmen and several property owners living adjacent to the proposed facility.

The proposed 60,000 square-foot building will allow Amtrak to perform indoor maintenance and refueling work on the three train sets that will operate the daily service. The trains are expected to begin service between Brunswick, Portland and Boston next autumn.

*WE Davis*



**From the Archives...**

It seems like just yesterday, but 21 years ago Maine, TrainRiders Northeast, and its "RailVision" were promoting the return of passenger rail service to NH and Maine. The "high" gas prices, as shown in the photo, had residents already seeking an alternative that would be cheaper, more efficient and environmentally friendly even back then. Now well into our 9<sup>th</sup> year, more and more people are continuing to get on board with Amtrak and our Downeaster - to which our cover story certainly attests.



L. Ferriss Photo

|                                                                                                                     |                                                                                 |      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| <h2 style="margin: 0;">Keep Maine on Track, Vote For Rail</h2> <h3 style="margin: 0;">Vote Yes On Question # 2</h3> |                                                                                 |      |
| Fall                                                                                                                | Paid for by <b>RAILVISION</b> , P.O. Box 4338, Station A, Portland, Maine 04101 | 1990 |

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 Box 4869, Downtown Station  
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