



TRAINRIDERS / *Northeast*

Advocating for Passenger Rail in the Northeast



TrainRiders/Northeast appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Downeaster Service Development Plan now being created by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA). TrainRiders would ask that the Plan include the following:

1. **Increased Number of Trips.** In the initial planning for today's Downeaster, TrainRiders recommended 8 daily round trips between Boston and Portland. Amtrak and State officials recommended 3 round trips. TrainRiders negotiated 4 round trips to start the service. Two years later, NNEPRA added a 5th round trip. Today, TrainRiders recommends a minimum of 7 round trips per day.
2. **Increased Number of Tracks.** The original right-of-way between Boston and Portland was double tracked. While the 2nd track no longer exists, the roadbed to reconstruct a 2nd track still exists. TrainRiders recommends, that the 2nd track be completely restored to permit higher speeds and to alleviate any congestion which might result from increasing the daily number of round trips.
3. **Increased Speed.** Starting in 1988, TrainRiders advocated for 79mph trains throughout the route between Portland and Boston. Currently, only certain portions of the track are now able to accommodate that speed. TrainRiders was instrumental in having Maine designated one of eleven high-speed corridors in the US. That designation permits speeds from 110mph and higher. TrainRiders recommends that 110 be the starting point for future service.
4. **Equipment Upgrades.** With increasing ridership, the Downeaster equipment is in need of replacement and upgrade. During initial negotiations with AMTRAK, the then President of Amtrak, W. Graham Claytor, Jr. promised that the best equipment available would be used for Downeaster service. With that in mind, TrainRiders recommends that the newest equipment or the next class of equipment acquired by Amtrak be assigned to the Downeaster. NNEPRA should also evaluate the advantages of acquiring its own rolling stock.
5. **Expansion.** TrainRiders original goals included expansion to Bangor, via Freeport, Brunswick, Augusta, and Waterville and via Auburn/Lewiston and Waterville as well, routes which are presently being pursued by several private organizations. With this in mind, Trainriders' Board of Directors has voted to pursue its final original goal; through service to New York via Worcester, Massachusetts. TrainRiders recommends that the NNEPRA explore this service to New York cooperatively with affected state DOT's in the region.
6. **Improve transportation structure.** Improved transportation structure leads to increased capacity of the entire system. Specific recommendations include improvements to bridges, passing tracks, crossing protection, and weatherproofed signal systems.

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