is unchanged from e-bulletin.  

**REGIONAL ISSUES**

CSX: Expressrail NJ-Worcester 15,000 lifts/year.
NECR: Traffic steady despite loss of Stora paper.
Coal: Some perspective on Guilford problems.
Guilford: Presidential letter explaining switch of name to Pan Am. More on change to Pan Am.
Pan Am: Hanscom to Dulles and Pittsburgh.
NYNJ barge to Albany: Ended in February.
Providence/Fall River LNG: More frequent delivery by smaller ships proposed for Fall River terminal.

**CONNECTICUT**

Bridgeport: Feeder needs own terminal in NJ.

**MAINE**

BML: Excursion service starts in June.
Calais Branch: Legislature pondering trail.

**MASSACHUSETTS**

CSXT: Update on auto terminals in Framingham, East Brookfield, and Selkirk.
GRS/MBCR: Bidirectional running between Plaistow and Lawrence.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

PSNH: Wood-fired boilers north and south.

**RHODE ISLAND**

Providence East Side Tunnel: No news on developer’s plan to reopen.

**VERMONT**

Vermont legislature: Status of rail bills; SLR exempt from block-crossing statute?
VAOT: State rail plan delayed six weeks.
Vermont Rail Authority: VAOT still opposes.
University of Vermont: Transportation center.
NECR/VRS: Gateway corridor improvement project.
NECR: Bellows Falls gets 20'6" clearance.
VRS: Weekly Cargill salt trains.

**MARITIMES/QUÉBEC**

CBNS: Stora Enso looking for break on power prices, property taxes, and wages.
Halifax: CN withdraws from Halterm management.  

**RAIL SHIPPERS/RECEIVERS**

A cross-reference to companies mentioned here.

**PEOPLE, POSITIONS, EVENTS**

Positions: No decision on manager of rail section.

**EDITORIAL**

Amtrak and group ticketing managers.

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**FROM THE PUBLISHER**

Great Expo in Worcester 28 March
My hat is off to the New England Railroad Club. The Expo this year topped the previous two years. I must have met half my subscribers there!

Now for NEARS 20-21 April
Newport again hosts the North East Association of Rail Shippers, always a source of new information and a rich networking opportunity.
-Chop Hardenbergh  

Next issue: 1 May
REGIONAL ISSUES

NECR: TRAFFIC UPDATE
28 March, Worcester. TRAFFIC HAS HELD FAIRLY STEADY, reported Charlie Moore, regional vice-president, Atlantic lines of RailAmerica. The loss of paper from Stora Enso’s plant in Port Hawkesbury [see 06#02B] is a major blow; the paper was moving to transloads in Massachusetts. Because companies still need paper, other suppliers’ traffic has somewhat made up for the Stora loss.

In addition, NECR had the coal overhead traffic for Johnson City, Pennsylvania [see 31 January issue]. {ANR&P interview at New England Railroad Club Expo}

PROVIDENCE/FALL RIVER
27 March. WEAVER’S COVE OFFERED SMALLER LNG TANKERS to serve a proposed LNG terminal in Fall River, in response to US Coast Guard concern about larger vessels navigating the Taunton River and two intervening bridges [see 06#01B Regional]. Because the Providence terminal was not approved by FERC in January and that LNG will arrive in Fall River, and because of the smaller ships to provide the LNG, more tankers and therefore more bridge openings will be required, Weaver’s Cove LNG (a Hess subsidiary) wrote in a letter this day. {Joseph R. LaPlante in New Bedford Standard-Times 6.Apr.06}

COAL: GUILFORD NOT ALONE
7 April. COAL RECEIVERS ON NS AND CSXT ALSO ARE NOT PLEASED WITH RAIL SERVICE. Shippers ‘say their problems seem to stem from a lack of crews and equipment [rather than congestion and capacity]. “They’ve always got excuses,” said an NS customer. “I don’t know exactly what [the delay] is. They claim lack of locomotives, lack of cars....’ [Similar to Guilford. See 15 March issue.]

“A CSXT customer said first-quarter deliveries were below expectations despite the fact that the utility had already reduced demand due to maintenance outages. The railroad is pressuring the utility to add more private equipment to its service as a way to add more capacity. “We’re looking at it,” the Southeastern coal shipper said. “We’re trying to wait for prices [of railcars] to go down.”

“We’ve been having very good performance from NS,” said an Eastern shipper who noted that his utility owns its cars, which seems to eliminate a lot of problems. “We’ve been successful with that.” {Argus Rail Business 10.Apr.06}

GRS: MORE ON NAME CHANGE
5 April. FINK AND ANTHONY HATCH COMMENTED ON THE NAME CHANGE to Pan Am Railways [see 27 March issue]. “It was something that had been planned for a great deal of time,” said David Fink, president of Pan Am Systems [formerly Guilford Transportation Industries]. “(Pan Am) is one of the five most-recognized names in the world.”

Pan Am Railways is adding more business in Mexico and Canada; Fink thinks the famous Pan Am brand will give the company a competitive edge. While day-to-day operations are not affected by the change, much painting remains. Fink said about 400 Guilford cars have been switched over to Pan Am, out of several thousand.

Anthony Hatch, an independent railroad analyst in New York City, said it may not be that easy. “(Pan Am) is obviously a venerable transportation name, but I don't know how it translates to rail sales. What's going to help them is providing good rail service in a timely way.” The only potential benefits of the move would be re-energizing the company's work force, or rehabilitating the company's reputation.

A odd note
The parent company's air-travel business now operates under the name of a defunct railroad company (Boston & Maine), while its railroad business will now adopt the name of an old airline (Pan Am). {Tom Spoth in Lowell Sun 5.Apr.06}

CONTAINERS FOR NY/NJ
28 March, Worcester. CSXT RAILS ABOUT 15,000 CONTAINERS A YEAR BETWEEN HERE AND NEW JERSEY, said Paul Gessner, senior freight specialist in the intermodal development unit of the Capital Programs Division, Port Commerce Department, Port Authority of NY & NJ (PANYNJ) [whew!]. While the locus of handling for the New England containers has varied among different terminals, at this point CSXT is draying them all to its South Kearny facility for loading
Letter to Guilford customers and workers. Note that the name change ‘will have no impact on the services that you currently receive.’
according to the prognosticators at the Port Authority, rail will account for 1.6 million lifts and 25% of the market share. [If the Worcester lane continues its same share of the rail market, about 5%, then by 2030 it would handle at least 75,000 boxes. Editor] “In addition to the expansion of on-dock or near-dock infrastructure to serve the port, various transportation entities, including terminal operators, are studying how short-haul rail could serve nearby clusters of demand such as warehouses and distribution centers,” in part using technologies such as RailRunner. [A method of easy truck-rail transfer. Editor]

PANYNJ’s Port Inland Distribution Network not only looks at barge moves [see below] but also rail moves to Buffalo and Pennsylvania, as well as Worcester. Said Gessner, “We recognize that Worcester is the shortest distance market we currently serve by rail, and hope that eventually, markets at even shorter distances from the port can be served.”

**Direct ship-rail moves**

To handle the volume growth, the port has completed several significant projects creating more space for trains and container handling. Asked how the terminal operators move the containers between the ship and rail, Gessner said using packers or stackers, but not chassis. The packer loads the box either directly onto a railcar, or grounded nearby. Going to grounded movement, rather than wheeled storage, has increased the capacity and velocity of throughput; the drayage companies use a location within the port, but remote from the docks, to store chassis. **{ANR&P coverage}**

**NY/NJ BARGE FEEDER SERVICE**

February. *THE PORT AUTHORITY ENDED ITS SUBSIDY FOR THE FEEDER BARGE TO ALBANY*, a service operated by Columbia Coastal Transport since early 2003 [see 03#07A]. The service was recently hauling 400 containers a week, but apparently was still not economical. It ended in February, when a federal grant to the Port Authority to subsidize the operation ran out. How the demise of this first element of the inland distribution network may affect other plans in the works, like container barges between New Jersey terminals and Bridgeport, CT, is unknown.

Meanwhile, the Port Authority reported that Expressrail, the port-related rail terminal network in New Jersey, attained a new record, handling 303,032 containers in 2005, nearly 7% more than in 2004. **{Journal of Commerce}**

**PAN AM**

22 March, Bedford MA. *PAN AM PROPOSES TO FLY TO DULLES FROM THE AIRPORT HERE* beginning mid-May, and to Pittsburgh by the end of June. Portsmouth, N.H.-based Pan Am Clipper service, operated by Boston-Maine Airways, flown Hanscom to Trenton NJ since March 2004. “Positive input” from business travellers throughout the suburbs served by Hanscom prompted the small airline to expand its service, Boston-Maine Chief Executive David Fink said in a telephone interview 22 March.

Approval by the Federal Aviation Administration will be required before the airline can increase operations. Airport opponents were disheartened. “We have fought commercial service [at Hanscom Field],” said Sarah Lazarus of Concord, board member of the Safeguarding the Historic Hanscom Area’s Irreplaceable Resources group.

Fink put one-way fares from $90 to $135. The airline’s fleet of 19-seat JetStream turboprop aircraft will be used for Dulles and Pittsburgh operations.

Boston-Maine has had a checkered experience at Hanscom Field. It inaugurated service to Martha's Vineyard in July 2002, but subsequent operations to other destinations, including Nantucket, Bangor, White Plains, and Saint John did not provide enough passengers. Boston-Maine withdrew from Hanscom in April 2003, only to return 11 months later with its service to Trenton. In 2005, Boston-Maine operated 3,627 flights there carrying 17,457 passengers, according to Massport, which owns the airport. **{Davis Bushnell in Sunday Globe 26.mar.06}**
Not a venue for the airline pilots
The Air Line Pilots Association, which opposes certification of Boston-Maine to fly wide-body aircraft, cannot oppose the airline’s move, according to ALPA counsel Jerry Anker. \{ANR&P discussion 4.Apr.06\}

CONNECTICUT

BRIDGEPORT FEEDER SERVICE
6 April. **BRIDGEPORT HAS STILL NOT BEGUN FEEDER SERVICE FOR NEW YORK.** Steve Coleman, spokesperson for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ), said that the Authority’s offer to subsidize the barge movement still stands: $200,000 in start-up costs and $25/loaded container, up to $1 million. \{ANR&P discussion 6.Apr.06\}

New York terminal
Bridgeport still likes RO-RO (roll-on, roll-off), but the terminal operators in New York do not; they want LO-LO (load-on, load-off) [see 05#08A]. As a result, Bridgeport sought its own terminal at PANYNJ, said Joe Riccio, executive director of the Bridgeport Port Authority. It is deciding among three sites, each of which has about three acres for its own RO-RO terminal.

From all the overseas terminals, truckers will dray boxes destined for Bridgeport to the barge terminal. “We were overly optimistic about how soon we could start,” said Riccio. “This kind of operation is done so rarely” that the stakeholders are learning as they go.

Barge and tug service
Bridgeport had new bids for the barge and for the tug in August 2005. [See 05#08A.] Riccio said the Port Authority had conditionally awarded the barge contract to Trailerbridge, and the tug contract to Dann Ocean Towing, based in Florida. \{ANR&P discussion 10.Apr.06\}

MAINE

BELFAST & MOOSEHEAD LAKE
9 April, Unity. **THE REVIVED EXCURSION TRAIN WILL BEGIN 17 JUNE,** said Bob Lamontagne, who is handling the property for the Belfast & Moosehead Lake Preservation Society [see 06#01A]. The society is renovating the station house and platform, necessitating a later start than usual. \{ANR&P discussion\}

CALAIS: LEGISLATIVE MEETING
6 April, Augusta. **THE JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE QUESTIONED THE PROPOSAL OF MDOT TO LIFT THE RAILS** between Washington Junction and Ayers Junction [see 27 March issue]. According to Jack Sutton of MGR/Downeast Rail which opposes the lifting, MDOT Commissioner David Cole and Pedestrian/Bicycle Coordinator Dan Stewart made the presentation.

Members of the committee questioned whether, once lifted, MDOT would permit the tracks to be relaid, and if so, what would trigger that event.

Next step
MDOT can argue that the relevant legislation, 23 MRSA subchapter 7101, requires only that the department present the plan to the Committee, not that the committee approve the plan. But, said Sutton, the meeting had no announced conclusion. Co-chair Senator Dennis Damon (D, Hancock County) seemed to promise the committee would look further into the matter. \{ANR&P discussion 9.Apr.06\}

House Co-chair Boyd Marley said on 9 April that even though the public was not permitted to speak [contrary to the initial announcement from MDOT], the meeting was well-attended. He agreed with the MDOT interpretation of the statute, noting that in the last session, he and others had sought to amend the legislation to require the permission of the Legislature
to lift track [see 05#03B], but that bill failed. “I was very supportive, and it would have been a help in situations like this.”

Now, Marley said, “we can review the proposed action, and give feedback to the department. They can act accordingly, or choose not to.” He affirmed that the committee had not yet taken a position. “We still have another session to be heard, this week or next.”

Dan Stewart said 9 April that the Department wants the Committee to “concur that this is a good thing.” {ANR&P discussions}

**MASSACHUSETTS**

**BCLR: IMPROVED WESTERN**
29 March. *WORK TO PERMIT BI-DIRECTIONAL RUNNING ON BOTH TRACKS* began in Lawrence. While the line is double-tracked between Plaistow and Lawrence, with current signalling trains on the eastern track (No. 2 Track) can run only north, and trains on the western track (No. 1 track) can run only south. Operations will considerably improve if trains can run both ways on both tracks (called Rule 261 running).

Scott Farmelant, spokesperson for MBCR, put November as the estimated completion date. {e-mail to ANR&P}

Still single track

However, the T is still single-tracked between Lawrence (CPF-AS, standing for Andover Street) and Andover’s CPF-LJ (Lowell Junction), a distance of six miles presenting a significant bottleneck. {Employee Timetable}

**CSXT: AUTO TERMINALS**

Two sources connected to the auto operations in Massachusetts provided this information:

**East Brookfield**
In December 2005, Northeast Vehicle Services in East Brookfield completed the second phase of construction on the CSX-owned site [see 04#10B and our Directory #357] adding 17 acres of auto parking space. Since then, it has received and unloaded 80-85 autoracks per day (capacity 117/day), working 24/7. That would place its volume this year at about 30,000 carloads.

**Framingham**
The auto terminal in Framingham [our Directory #323], moribund until Ford moved there last month [see 14 February issue] from Ayer, is “going gangbusters” probably producing a volume around 10,000 railcars. CSXT workers operate the terminal directly [see 03#03B], represented by TCU.

**Selkirk**
This CSX yard has an auto terminal handling about 30,000 carloads a year. {ANR&P discussions}

**PW: RVJ AT SOUTHBRIDGE**

4 April, Leominster. *LAST YEAR, A MAJOR PLASTICS TRANSLOADER INITIATED A THIRD FACILITY, IN WORCESTER.* David Johansson, one of the principals of the company RVJ Inc, explained that too many shippers wanted to use rail lines with 286,000-pound capability, and his Guilford-served facilities did not have that capacity. RVJ takes plastic pellets out of railcars and delivers them to end-users.

RVJ has leased a 10-car track in the PW Southbridge railyard, at the old container site. Johansson said that RVJ at one time was using that entire site, when Guilford was on strike in the late 1980s. This year, he expects he will do about 100 cars there.

**Guilford sites**
RVJ operates its main rail-to-truck site [our Directory #142] in Leominster/Lunenburg, GRS’ Fitchburg East Yard. Johansson
said he has 200 car spots. At the original operation on Nashua Street in Leominster [our Directory #139] he has about 25 car spots. Total for the two, his company handles about 1200 cars there a year. {ANR&P discussion 4.Apr.06}

**PW: NEW SIDING, BUT NO ACCOUNT**

4 April, Oxford. **R&M LEASING HAS A NEWLY-BUILT SIDING, BUT NO RAIL ACCOUNT**, explained Ron Perry, president and owner of the warehousing company. About one year ago, it acquired a three-level warehouse in Oxford with a dilapidated siding. PW, knowing about a customer which was seeking a warehouse in New England for a transload of about 500 railcars a year, contacted R&M.

In anticipation of the account, R&M hired Ellis Crowley Construction to build a new covered platform, and DeAngelis Railroad Contractors to rebuild the siding by lowering the surface, supplying a new bed, and laying the track. The siding will now hold six cars, with three unloading spots.

**Disappointment**

Unfortunately, at that point the customer found that it could use a warehouse on CSXT for a lower rail rate than the combined PW-CSXT rate, so that R&M lost the contract.

That leaves Perry with the rail-served warehouse at 430 Main Street and Dana Road. He is now trucking in and trucking out of that facility, plus his other warehouse at 37 Town Forest Road. {ANR&P discussion}

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**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**SLR/GRS: PSNH WOOD BOILERS**

*Note: while in general roundwood moves to pulp mills by truck, some does move by rail. A new pulpwood-fired generating station in Berlin might receive roundwood by rail. However, it would not replace the considerable outbound rail traffic moving the extra pulp produced by the Berlin mill to market, perhaps as many as 1300 cars a year. [See 15 March issue.]*

5 April, Manchester. **THE COMPANY IS CONSIDERING THE BERLIN PULP MILL AS A SITE FOR A WOOD-FIRED GENERATING PLANT**, its second in the state. Martin Murray, spokesperson for Public Service of New Hampshire, explained that as soon as Fraser announced it would shutter the mill [see 15 March issue], some asked whether PSNH might make use of it. PSNH was already internally discussing siting a power plant somewhere in Coos County. The company is now actively pursuing the possibility.

**The boiler in Portsmouth**

PSNH contractors have completed about 85% of the 50MW wood-fired boiler at Schiller Station on the bank of the Piscataquis River in Portsmouth, including the wood shed and a conveyor to move the wood over the Guilford tracks [see 05#07A]. This ‘Northern Wood Power Project’ will replace one coal-fired boiler. A small amount of wood recently passed through the conveying system as a test. Murray expected the boiler on-line and connected to the generator by September.

**The need for additional power**

PSNH, Murray said, owned and operated plants creating about 70-75% of its total need, and purchases the balance in the market place, historically more expensive. Building its own plant could cost less, and use renewable fuel.

As part of a feasibility study, the company will meet with Fraser Paper, owner of the Berlin mill, to learn whether any part of the pulp mill could help with a power generating system. If not, PSNH might look elsewhere: “We don’t need to operate at the site of the mill.”

**Wood supply**

The Berlin pulp mill consumed one million tons of pulpwood a year. But the Portsmouth boiler will burn only 400,000 tons, so the north country can make available an additional 600,000 tons of pulpwood.

**The need for legislation**

However, New Hampshire would have to reverse its requirement that PSNH build no new plants, a stipulation put into effect by state law to deregulate the utility industry. Certainly, acknowledged Murray, an independent company could step forward,
build the plant, and sell the power to PSNH. “But no one has stepped up to do that.”

If PSNH owned the plant, it could put the capital cost into the rate base, and pay it down over time. It would, said Murray, “provide a savings to customers.” State legislators are considering such legislation for this session. {ANR&P discussion}

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**RHODE ISLAND**

**PROVIDENCE EAST SIDE TUNNEL**

17 March, Providence. The idea of re-opening the rail tunnel under Providence remains alive, said Jean Boyle, director of the planning department for the City of East Providence. The developer of the idea is proposing a tram between housing in East Providence and Providence Union Station. “No one has developed a cost estimate.” She believed the project has a “five to ten year horizon.” {ANR&P discussion}

Waterfront Redevelopment District

Three East Providence projects were underway as of 2004. Geonova, primarily residential development, would have some retail and office space (remediation stage). Roscommon, a 54-unit condominium development, is sited on an existing brownfields site. The East Providence Waterfront Commission approved the redevelopment as well as of the Chevron parcel 25-acre site, for primarily residential use.

The Economic Development Commission also is working with a private developer seeking to reopen and use the old rail tunnel for intermodal purposes connecting Providence and East Providence. {Summary for Sept. 10, 2004 Policy Council Retreat}

Crook Point

Developer Richard Manchester of Burlington, Vermont proposes to develop Crook Point, the stretch of shoreline between Washington Bridge (I-195) and Henderson Bridge (at the end of Angell Street). The proposal for the site, made public in 2003, includes 400 housing units, 1,400 units of parking, and open green space. Plus, if all goes as envisioned, a bus or tram would run across the old railway bridge, through the connecting tunnel, and come out on the East Side of Providence.

The tunnel was built in 1908, when the New Haven Railroad operated the tracks, permitting direct access by electric trains between Union Station and Fall River. The tunnel was acquired by RIDOT in 1981, and freight service ended soon thereafter.

The ends of the tunnel remain visible: west end on South Main Street north of Angell Street; east end off Gano Street, north of Washington bridge. {Jenny Asarnow in College Independent 2004}

[See map (does not show tunnel) in 05#07A.]

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**VERMONT**

**VERMONT GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

4 April. Status of rail bills in the General Assembly:

**TRANSPORTATION BILL, H 869**

Passed by the House, this was sent to the Senate Transportation Committee on 21 March. Relevant sections:

Selling parcels to abutters

Under section 19, VAOT would sell 11 parcels along the WACR-operated line between White River Junction and Newport, as well as three parcels on the former Lamoille Valley Railroad between St.Johnsbury and Swanton.

Under section 21, VAOT will create a procedure to sell further parcels.

Blocking crossings: SLR relief in Norton

SLR will get relief from the crossing-blocking penalty under the bill now in the Senate. John Dunleavy, assistant attorney general, pointed out that ‘Vermont's prohibition against a train's blocking a highway or farm crossing for more than five
minutes (5 V.S.A. Section 3587)’ dates back to the 19th century. The change proposed in Section 3587(b)(1) would give the SLR an exemption allowing it to block Gagnon Road (TH #12) in Norton, Vermont.’

The SLR requested the exemption, wrote Dunleavy, ‘because its trains now frequently have extended stops at this location, [about two miles] south of the U.S./Canada border, while they await clearance by U.S. Customs. Because TH #12 has little traffic, the Norton selectmen have concurred in the railroad's request.’

Enforcement of the statute. Dunleavy remarked: ‘My impression is that the railroads do make an earnest effort to comply with the five-minute rule. However, I don't recall any actual prosecutions under the statute. The fine ($5.00 - $50.00) hasn't been raised since the 19th century. Moreover, the offense has never been integrated into the modern traffic ticket system, so a violation would have to be prosecuted as a misdemeanor, which is just too cumbersome for a relatively minor offense (citation, information, affidavit of probable cause, right to jury trial, etc.).’

Vermont Rail Authority
Under section 23, the members of the rail authority study committee established in 2005 [see 05#07B] ‘shall reconvene in August 2006 and January 2007 to review the state’s rail program.... The agency of transportation should engage in a dialogue with the University of Vermont transportation center to assess further review of a rail authority in Vermont and other possible structures.’

Completing projects
Under section 24, the ‘agency of transportation shall, by January 15 of each year, submit a rail report to the members of the house and senate committees on transportation. The report shall include the status of projects programmed for delivery during the previous calendar year and a summary of any changes to the agency’s organizational structure which may affect project delivery.’

THE GENERAL BUDGET BILL, H 881
In the budget bill, section 244 states the budget for Transportation - rail:

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<td>Grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Source of funds

<table>
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<td>Federal funds</td>
<td>13,119,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In 2005-2006, the agency budget contained $10,547,000; the new budget, if approved, would mark a 110% increase. {text of bill from legislature’s website}

Much of the increase consists of federal pass-through funds from the earmarks [see above], said Dick Hosking, interim manager of the rail section. {ANR&P discussion}
VAOT STATE RAIL PLAN
3 April, Montpelier. *THE PROJECT TO COMPLETE A POLICY PLAN HAS BEEN DELAYED* to accommodate internal review of a draft summary of the policy plan components (vision, mission, goals, performance measures, and a revised capital prioritization process.) We hope to be able to present this information to the Rail Advisory Council on the 12th.* {e-mail to ANR&P from VAOT’s Scott Bascom}

According to the initial schedule, consultant Parsons Brinckerhoff would complete the policy plan by the end of February for presentation to the public [see 28 February issue].

VERMONT RAIL AUTHORITY
3 April. *THE SUMMER STUDY COMMITTEE ON A RAIL AUTHORITY HELD SEVEN MEETINGS* and ended up concluding that VAOT could do anything a putative Rail Authority could do, according to an account of the summer study group from Matthew Sternberg, executive director of the Rutland Redevelopment Authority.

“The agency [VAOT] did not want to look at the proposal for an independent entity. It worked around the concept but did not address how rail work would be structured under the authority format. They did present a plan for work to be done within the agency–a plan which included the schedule for bridge work [see below] and they have re-organized staff to try to deliver projects more efficiently.

“The upshot was that the agency did not want to engage in debate on the concept, leaving some legislators on the committee not happy.” They decided to reconvene the study committee next August to look at the progress made by VAOT over course of the year, to find out whether it had accomplished what said it will.

“I am skeptical that it will do that,” commented Sternberg. The agency needs a mechanism to speed up the delivery of projects. For example, “the '06 budget has funds for one major rail bridge, the ‘07 two bridges, the ‘08 two.” But the list of bridges to be done to handle 286,000-pound rail cars has 54 bridges on the west side. At the rate proposed by VAOT, “we won’t get there.” {ANR&P discussion}

UVM TRANSPORTATION CENTER
7 April, Burlington. *THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT IS ORGANIZING A TRANSPORTATION CENTER*, using federal dollars from the federal transportation authorization bill, SAFETEA-LU of 2005. Section 5506 of the bill stated that ‘the secretary of transportation shall grant funds to universities’ under three different groups:

- regional university transportation centers (10 of them, one in each of the ten federal regions).

- Tier I university transportation centers (10 of them).

- Tier II university transportation centers (22 of them). The bill named the Tier II centers, which include, in the Atlantic Northeast, the University of Connecticut, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the University of Rhode Island, and the University of Vermont. {text from Library of Congress site}

More from UVM
A press release from the university stated: ‘The designation authorized [US DOT] to invest $16 million in federal funds over five years (2005-2009) to allow UVM to build its core faculty, programs, and technologies in service of the multi-disciplinary transportation sector. The University of Vermont and collaborative partners will match the grant funds for a total program investment of $32 million...

‘The program “theme” for the University of Vermont National University Transportation Center is “Sustainable Systems and Advanced Technologies for Northern Communities.” [UVM can] integrate and analyze the social, economic, and environmental challenges of transportation investments in northern communities. Examples could include designing sustainable economic development corridors in rural areas (for commerce, tourism, and public service delivery), optimizing successful alternative fuel technologies and uses in cold climates, and integrating sustainable environmental and economic development in community transportation planning...

UVM is currently drafting its formal strategic plan, and seeking a center director. The university expects to open the transportation center in summer 2006. {text of press release}
Rail cooperation
Melody Burkins, special projects director/federal relations liaison for the University of Vermont, wrote that when the center ‘is officially opened, the UVM National UTC will be taking on specific projects through a Request for Proposals process this fall where incoming proposals for Center resources will be peer-reviewed and awarded funding based on scientific merit and key criteria ensuring the relevance of the study to the UVM theme and transportation interests. UVM continues communication with public and private transportation interests throughout the State of Vermont, regionally, and nationally. We are extremely pleased by the early interest in our developing program from so many different transportation sectors, rail included.’ {e-mail to ANR&P 7.Apr.06}

That interest includes the proposal that the summer study committee on the Vermont Rail Authority work with the nascent Center [see language about summer study committee on Vermont Rail Authority above].

NECR: BELLOWS FALLS TUNNEL
5 April, Montpelier. VAOT WILL USE A FORCE ACCOUNT TO CREATE FULL DOUBLESTACK CLEARANCE of the tunnel. Dick Hosking, interim manager of the agency’s rail division, said if the state hired an outside contractor, the question of penalty clauses for delaying NECR and Guilford trains would become “horrendous. This way, the railroad will be holding up its own trains.”

He estimated the cost at $2 million, with the railroad probably hiring a subcontractor to blast out the bed of the tunnel. VAOT, Ron O’Blenis of engineers Parsons Brinckerhoff, and NECR have agreed that “the estimate is really close. We will have a maximum limiting amount,” which will change only with unanticipated costs, which would not include a delay in work completion.

Height and date
Hosking confirmed O’Blenis’ remark that the parties had decided to make the clearance 20’6”, enough for full doublestack, rather than the earlier planned 19’6” [see 05#09A]. O’Blenis said on 28 March that the additional work cost relatively little.

NECR would like the tunnel done by 1 September, said Hosking. Workers will start this summer, and Hosking believes they will complete the project by 1 October.

Excitement on the east side
Hosking reported that railroads using the Conn River are “ecstatic”, even if no Vermont shippers will go to containers or use autoracks immediately. The additional revenue for NECR overhead traffic will keep the line viable; the railroad may not have enough traffic generated by Vermont to justify keeping the line open. [In 1999, about 75% of the railroad’s traffic was generated between Belchertown, Massachusetts and New London. Atlantic Northeast Rail and Marine Transport Review 1999] That helps existing and new Vermont shippers.

Moreover, if the container or autorack traffic moves over VRS, the state earns more income. {ANR&P discussion 5.Apr.06; ANR&P interview with O’Blenis 28.Mar.06}

VRS: GATEWAY IMPROVEMENT
3 April, Rutland. A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION WAS FORMED IN NOVEMBER TO IMPLEMENT THE FEDERAL RAIL AUTHORIZATION passed in 2005 [see 05#08A both Regional and Vermont]. The SAFETEA-LU transportation authorization bill contained this section:

SEC. 1946. GATEWAY RURAL IMPROVEMENT PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) In General.—The Secretary shall establish a pilot program in the State of Vermont to be known as the ‘Gateway Rural Improvement Pilot Program’ (referred to in this section as the ‘program’) to demonstrate the benefits to a rural rail corridor of a freight transportation gateway program.

(b) Eligible Activities.—Under the program—

(1) funding preference shall be given to selecting a corridor in the State of Vermont that includes a border crossing; and

(2) individual projects shall provide community and highway benefits by addressing economic, congestion, security, safety, and environmental issues.

State or local funds must pay 20% of the cost of the projects. The statute permits ‘project user fees’ to pay part or all of the match. {text of bill from Library of Congress}

The bill in section 1934 also earmarked $30 million in federal funds for the Gateway.
Four projects for corridor
The conference report from Congress contained two descriptive sections:

WESTERN RAIL CORRIDOR
Of the amounts appropriated in Section 1934 for item #413 to the State of Vermont for improvements to the Western Rail Corridor between Alburg, St.Albans, Burlington, Middlebury, Rutland, Manchester, Bennington, and west to Hoosick Junction, New York, priority shall be given to completing the Middlebury Rail Spur, upgrading the line for passenger rail service between Manchester, Rutland, and Charlotte, and improving the movement of freight rail through major cities, including Rutland.

GATEWAY RURAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
Section 1946 authorizes a new Gateway Rural Improvement Program in Vermont to demonstrate the impact of a freight transportation gateway program on a rural rail corridor. Funding preferences shall be given to a corridor in western Vermont that includes, but is not limited to, the Middlebury Rail Spur, Rutland rail improvements, St.Albans intermodal facilities, and the Albany, Bennington, Rutland, Burlington & Essex rail upgrades. User fees may be used to provide part or all of the cost of a project under this section.

Matthew Sternberg [see above] named Lee Khan, a consultant for OMYA on the Middlebury spur project [see 03#02A], as his main collaborator on the successful federal authorization. US Senator James Jeffords and his staff, wrote Sternberg, ‘have been big supporters of the GRIP project. In fact, it was through the Senator's efforts that the pilot and earmark made it into the authorization bill.’ Moreover, VRS chief ‘Dave Wulfson has also been a big supporter right from the beginning.’

The stakeholders had four projects in mind [reflected in the conference report] plus a freight software system, reported Sternberg. These four projects were coordinated to get the rail line in shape to provide a market for economic development. In all, they would cost $170 million. “We got the authorization and the earmark,” but authorization does not of course mean appropriated funds, he underscored. Proponents can seek more federal funding in appropriations, which is still a “very competitive” process.

The Lockheed Martin project: visibility and security
A fifth, non-rail element of the pilot project will test a freight mobility and security system developed by Lockheed Martin [the company descends from the great aircraft companies Lockheed and Martin, but no longer manufactures aircraft—see website] to improve tracking of freight through a transportation system. Per Sternberg, ‘the product uses a variety of readily available technologies and coordinates them into a mechanism to help reduce shipping costs and improve security.’

VAOT unable to focus on corridor
While VAOT might have served as the locus to work on these four projects, Sternberg characterized it as “focused on how to get through the next year. It has a backlog of projects. The highway stack is even higher than the rail stack. The agency is stretched to the limit. Rail is treated as an adjunct, because each year it is trying to deal with the budget.”

The 286 goal
Sternberg added that when ‘we talk about upgrades to the rail line, the main issue is the bridges. Rail and ballast are important, but the biggest hurdle, as I see it anyway, is the bridges’ to handling 286,000-pound cars [see Rail Authority, above]. [OMYA must light-load its cars—see 05#05A State Rail Plan excerpts.]

‘The overlap of interests is a large part of what's behind the pilot project. In terms of economic development potential, the rail system is only as good as its weakest bridge. If projects like Rutland and Middlebury are built without consideration of the condition of the rest of the rail system that connects them to the outside world, we will not realize the full potential of the improvements. We have to look at the whole thing as an integrated system. And this allows us to also consider how the rail system related to the highway system, and start to define where more efficiencies similar to Middlebury could be found throughout the corridor.’

Create a corridor entity
To push ahead for federal and local funds, Sternberg and others created the non-profit ‘Gateway Rural Improvement Pilot Association, Inc’ (GRIP). It has five board members:

Frank Heald, of Rutland, Ludlow town manager.
Tom Huebner, president of Rutland Regional Medical Center.  
Craig Newton, of Middlebury, who recently sold his feed company which was rail-served.  
Melinda Moulton, of Burlington and the Vermont Rail Advocacy Network, head of Main Street Landing.  
Bill Cioffi, of St. Albans, former city manager, now chair of the Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation.  

Many of the board, Sternberg said, have had experience dealing with railroads from the business and economic development perspective. GRIP must find ways of closing the gap between the rail improvement process and the involvement of the end user, to “get the goal from fixing the track to using rail to promote economic development, in the course of which one must fix the track.”

GRIP will look to the private sector for funds. For example, Sternberg noted, OMYA has agreed to pay a user fee for the Middlebury spur. If the state agrees to pass those fees through a non-profit, then the $11 million to $22 million in fees would serve as local match.

**Next step**

At the beginning of April, GRIP met with VAOT Secretary Dawn Terrill to “develop a working partnership,” said Sternberg. It needs nothing from the legislature at this time. 

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**VRS: VERMONT SALT TRAINS**

March. *A FULL TRAIN OF CARGILL SALT COMES OFF THE D&H AT WHITEHALL WEEKLY*, of about 70 cars. Forty cars usually move over GMRC with four or five locomotives to Chester on Sundays. The Bellows Falls switcher picks up the train, with the extra units helping to make the interchange onto NECR at Bellows Falls, whence 20 go north for White River Junction (10) and Ely (10). {Scott Whitney in Bridge Line Historical Society Bulletin 4.06}

The salt originates in Ludlowville, NY, or Cleveland Ohio. [See 05#07B for salt awards and 01#12B for company description.]

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**QUEBEC/MARITIMES**

**HALTERM: CN WITHDRAWS**

31 March. *CN WITHDREW FROM THE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT* under which it and Clarke jointly served as managers of the South End intermodal terminal. Clarke will continue as sole manager. The two CN officers sitting on Halterm’s board will serve out their terms, but not stand for re-election. {Halterm press release} The press release contained a statement from CN’s Jim Foote, who serves on the Halterm board, but that only wished Halterm fair winds. No reason was stated for the withdrawal.

**View of Halterm**

Doug Rose, president of Halterm, said CN was withdrawing because it wanted to concentrate on running its railway. “It’s as simple as that.”

CN had stayed on the board when Halterm became an income trust in 1997, and remained on during the difficult years beginning about four years ago. Now that prospects look much better with the addition of the China Shipping and the Maersk call, Rose called it “a good time to move on.”

**CN rail service**

Rose said that rail service for imports is “pretty good, we have a steady supply of cars.” {ANR&P discussion 4.Apr.06}

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**CBNS: STORA UPDATE**

28 March, Halifax. *THE FUTURE OF THE PORT HAWKESBURY MILL* was discussed by Stora board members at their annual general meeting. Afterward, Stora Enso’s chair of the board described a bleak future for the plant outside Port Hawkesbury. “The mill has not returned a profit to shareholders for eight of 10 years. In fact, the mill has been losing money. We are a business and we can’t continue to absorb losses,” said Bernd Rettig. “Our parent company has given notice that we have a very short window in which to develop a business case for continued commitment in Nova Scotia.”

Tor Suther, president of Stora Enso Port Hawkesbury, said there are two options: make the plant profitable or shut it
down. “By working together with all partners we have a chance, maybe, to save the mill. But the time is really running out,” said Suther.

Stora's conditions to keep the plant open: a collective agreement with its 600 unionized workers; money from the province to reduce power bills over next 3 to 5 years (increase alone amounts to $11 million); and tax concessions from Richmond County and the province worth up to $5 million a year

Stephen Atkinson, a consultant with BMO Nesbitt Burns, cites the case of a mill owned by forestry giant United Paper Mills in Miramichi, NB, as a good parallel. “They've shut the mill down indefinitely because what they've found is that they can make the product more cheaply in Europe and ship it over to North America, so there's no need to run the mill at all.”

{CBC webposted 28.Mar.06}

[For effect of Stora shutdown on NECR, see Regional.]

**RAIL SHIPPERS**

Cargill (VRS, Vermont)
CSXT auto terminals (Massachusetts, #357, 323)
Intransit Containers (PW, (see Regional), #s443, 447)
RVJ (Massachusetts, GRS #s 139, 142
Stora Enso (CBNS, Nova Scotia)

Described in this issue.

*Our Directory of Rail Shippers & Receivers in Southern New England has more information on the companies denoted with their directory number.*

**PEOPLE**

**POSITIONS**

**Vermont Agency of Transportation** is closing its solicitation for people to run the rail section, succeeding Charlie Miller. John Zicconi, director of communications for the agency, said the agency will contact those who applied in the first half of April, and do interviews in the second half of April.

Reportedly Dick Hosking, who holds the job on an interim basis, has applied.

**EDITORIAL**

**AMTRAK TICKETING IDIOCY**

I may have reached the tipping point in my attitude toward Amtrak on Tuesday, 28 March. At the Worcester Union Station, I purchased a group ticket. Yes, group tickets will take longer than an individual ticket. But I had the reservation number, I had earlier sent the names of all the travellers (my daughter’s seventh grade class, going to Boston), and I had a little time.

At the ticket window I stood when the ticket agent opened at 11AM. First in line. After five minutes, I discovered that the Amtrak ticketing procedure did not simply permit her to print out the ticket. At 1135AM, exasperated, I asked her if she would phone me when the ticket was prepared.

At 120PM, she nicely called me on my cel to say the ticket was ready. (Thank you!) That means Amtrak required two hours and twenty minutes to write me the group ticket. That’s right, two hours and twenty minutes of the agent sitting patiently on the phone waiting for DC to tell her what to do.

Why so long? No training. The ticket agent had no training, the person in DC whom she called had no training, no one seemed to know what to do. Sure, Amtrak had just put into force a new group ticket procedure. But so what?

Why, for example, did the person in DC, as the ticket agent told me, have to call yet another person to find out where on the ticket she should enter my credit card number? Why could not Amtrak have a simple form which pops up on the ticket agent’s computer screen, showing her how to fill out the group ticket? Origin goes here, destination here, credit card # there, etc, etc.
Joe Boardman and Amtrak reform
In Worcester on this very same day, Joe Boardman, the new FRA administrator, spoke to the New England Railroad Club dinner. I think he put his finger on the problem I was encountering: Amtrak is not private. If it were profit-making, it could not afford to pay a ticket agent two and half hours to fill out a ticket form. Amtrak is not public. If it were, it would have budget discipline, and (one would hope) managers who would not want to use up the budget by paying ticket agents to sit on the phone for two and 20 minutes.

I am not asking Amtrak to make a profit. As Boardman said, no passenger transportation mode is profitable. I am asking it to function in a reasonable manner. I would fire the person in charge of group ticketing procedures, and perhaps the person above her (or him), immediately. Clearly, the ticketing bureaucracy is not functioning well; and the managers, not the agents, must shoulder the blame.

“You need training,” I told the ticket agent. She shook my hand and said, “I completely agree with you. Write a letter about this.” Here it is.
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Purpose
Atlantic Northeast Rails & Ports, née Maine RailWatch (1994-1997) and later Atlantic RailWatch (1998-1999), is dedicated to the preservation and extension of the regional rail network. The editor believes that publishing news on railroads and ports spotlights needed action to preserve the rail network. The publication also imbibes the region with a sense of an interdependent community, employing the network to move rail and port traffic. ‘No railroad is an island, entire onto itself.’