Twice-monthly trade newsletter dedicated to the preservation and extension of the rail network in New England, the Maritimes, & eastern Québec.

(formerly Atlantic RailWatch)

operating railroads + ports, intermodal facilities, and government environment

**REGIONAL ISSUES**

**STB hearing:** four area participants.

**CONNECTICUT**

**CPTC:** ConnDOT responses.

**FTR:** No CSO-Amtrak agreement, nor rail grant release. CRA supports bills.

**MAINE**

**B&A:** Offer to haul potatoes a joke?

**MC:** East Augusta service looks like a winner!

**Union Branch:** Committee approval.

**MASSACHUSETTS**

**Cape Cod:** Update on rail issues.

**GRS:** New Ayer auto facility.

**FTR:** Westover meeting 6 March.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**GRS:** Sidings post-Amtrak work in Plaistow.

**West Lebanon:** CCRR must deal with Westboro Yard.

**RHODE ISLAND**

[No report.]

**VERMONT**

**Rail Council:** Agenda for 13 March.

**TSRD:** Possible revival.

**Wells River:** PVRR in then out.

**MARITIMES/QUÉBEC**

**CBNS:** NSDOT thumbs down on rail for the Georgia Pacific mine.

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**ATLANTIC NORTHEAST PORTS**

**Canso:** Transfer 3 March.

**Bayside:** 50% of quarry venture sold. Details on operation and ownership.

**Portsmouth:** Accepts role of serving job development off the waterfront.

**New Haven:** Container barge service? Update on rail to waterfront.

**EDITORIAL**

For shame, Nova Scotia.

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**FROM THE PUBLISHER**

The attitude of Portsmouth sends a gleam of light through the efforts of all ports. Instead of looking for the highest throughput, it’s focusing on how it can best help New Hampshire industries.

-Chop Hardenbergh

Next issue: 17 March.

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**REGIONAL ISSUES**

**STB ON FUTURE OF RAILROADS**

7-10 March, DC. **FOUR PLAYERS FROM THE REGION WILL TESTIFY** before the Surface Transportation Board during the four-day hearing on ‘major rail consolidations and the present and future structure of the North American rail industry.’ {STB press release 17.Feb.00}

**Emons Transportation** (Wednesday 8 March)

This company, parent of the SLR, generally supports the CN/BN

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Common abbreviations: **B&A** - Bangor and Aroostook System, **BCLR** - Bay Colony RR, **CFQ** - chemin de fer Québec System, **CP** - Canadian Pacific, **CSO** - Connecticut Southern RR, **EOTC** - Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Construction, **GRS** - Guilford Rail System, **FHWA** - Federal Highway Admin., **FRA** - Federal Rail Admin., **FTA** - Federal Transit Admin., **HRRC** - Housatonic RR, **MB** - Milford-Bennington RR, **MBTA** - Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, **MC** - Maine Coast RR, **MDOT** - Maine Dept. Transp., **MPO** - Metropolitan Planning Organization, **MTQ** - Québec Ministry of Transport, **NECR** - New England Central RR, **NHDOT** - NH Dept. of Transp., **NHVT** - NH & VT RR, **NNEPRA** - Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, **NSDOT** - Nova Scotia Depart. of Transp., **PW** - Providence & Worcester RR, **SLQ** - St. Lawrence & Atlantic RR (Québec), **SLR** - St. Lawrence & Atlantic RR, **VAOT** - Vermont Agency of Transportation, **VRS** - Vermont Rail System (Green Mt. + Vermont Ry + Clarendon&Pittsford)
merger as it will help the SLR and New England generally, said President Robert Grossman. He declined to describe what his testimony will state specifically.

Massachusetts EOTC (Friday 10 March)
Its written statement notes that the loss of competition will adversely affect the Port of Boston. EOTC called for time for adjustment and thoughtful planning, and a study on intermodal freight patterns and the effect of loss of competition. [text of statement]

EOTC has not yet decided who will attend the hearing.

Maine DOT (Friday 10 March)
Rob Elder, head of MDOT’s Office of Freight Transportation, said no one would actually testify, but the department had submitted a written statement. It asked that the STB ‘fully examine the potential that additional future mergers present for competitive benefits for Maine and its shippers. It is critically important that future reorganization of the rail industry preserve and enhance a stable rail situation in Maine.’ [text of statement; ANR&P discussion]

Societe de chemin de fer du Québec (Wednesday, 8 March)
This company owns four railroads: New Brunswick East Coast, chemin de fer de Baie-des-Chaleurs, chemin de fer de Matapedia, chemin de fer de Charlevoix, plus the Ottawa Valley railroad. While privately held, Railink, a Canadian public company, owns 26.7%, and Railink in turn is owned by Rail America.

President Serge Belzile said his company is testifying to support CN. He would like the review of the merger to occur on an individual basis; the STB should evaluate whether it is beneficial to the public, to shippers, and to the railroad industry. “It is difficult to predetermine other standards in advance.

“We have had a very positive experience with the CN/IC merger, and expect the same with CN/BN.” [ANR&P discussions 2-3.Mar.00]
To make up the difference, Felt “for the past couple of years” has
a week, meaning Blue Seal could unload only twelve cars a week.
only four car spots. Guilford could provide only three switches
At peak times, Blue Seal needs about 20 carloads a week, but has
Blue Seal's past arrangement

used transload in Auburn on the SLR. Grain hoppers arrive at a
trestle there, and then unload through the bottom into trucks
below the trestle.

For middlings [flour of medium fineness - Concise Oxford
Dictionary], Blue Seal needed to receive a car a day; because
GRS could not supply this, Felt went to all truck.

Blue Seal’s new arrangement
MC provides the loads and empties to the GRS track in east
Augusta, five days a week as needed. GRS crews use the MC
locomotive to switch the customers, and bring the train back to
MC.

Blue Seal has not yet needed daily switching, for seasonal
reasons. Felt explained that normal deliveries of grain take eight
to ten days. In the winter, normally he added on a week, and did
so this winter also. But because of the mild weather of early
winter, the cars arrived a lot faster than he expected, so he ended
up having 12 to 15 cars in inventory when MC began the new
arrangement.

Blue Seal has nearly worked off that inventory, and
continues to receive cars. “These arrive a day quicker” because
they come from Rigby in the morning and arrive in Augusta in
the afternoon. Felt has ended the Auburn arrangement for the
time being.

But he is still using truck to deliver middlings. A recent rail
price increase has put the rail price higher than the truck price;
Guilford is reviewing the rates. {ANR&P discussion}

Industrial Metal Recycling
This scrap metal dealer has rail-served yards in Augusta,
Oakland, and Bangor (on the B&A), as well as one in
Kennebunk not rail-served. [More in a future issue about how
well the arrangement was working for Industrial Metal
Recycling.]

Suburban Propane
According to Ken Mason, area manager, he receives two cars a
week in the winter, and one a week for the rest of the year, totally
70-80 cars a year. The changeover to service from the south has
actually improved, because the local switcher goes by his plant
every day. “So I can get a switch every day, if needed, while
before I could only get a switch three times a week.” {ANR&P discussion 2.Mar.00}

Cives Steel
Lawrence Morgan, president, said the transition to Maine Coast
service was “basically seamless” and he is getting the same
service for his steel fabrication company. He receives “a couple
hundred” carloads a year. Because of the lower price of rail, the
service is “critical” to his company.

Cives has its own siding off the line, where workers can
move the cars using a winch system. {ANR&P discussion 32.Mar.00}

MAINE RAILROADS

B&A
18 February, Northern Maine Junction. THE RAILROAD
OFFERED TO HAUL POTATOES FROM AROOSTOOK
COUNTY. Due to the high price of diesel fuel [see 18 February
issue: Regional] truckers were refusing to move the spuds to
market. {Maine Public Radio news}

Not a real offer?
Ray Kilcollins, department manager for potato sales and grains
at Maine Potato Growers, said the offer as presented to him was
a joke. The B&A would station reefer cars at Skyway Industrial
Park in Presque Isle. Trucks would bring palletized potatoes to
the Park. The pallets would be moved into the car, run south to
Bangor, and then transloaded again into trucks.

“It doesn’t make sense,” said Kilcollins. “If trucks will come
to Bangor, they’ll come to Presque Isle. Plus, the cost of
transloading would be phenomenal. If the railroad wants to offer
something else, we’ll listen.” {ANR&P discussion 3.Mar.00}

The history of rail and potatoes
The Bangor and Aroostook Railroad lost the potato traffic when
PennCentral couldn’t deliver to NY from the Worcester
interchange about 1970. GRS did try to restart service with BAR
but failed. Most of the truckers who haul potatoes out of
Aroostook County own and operate their own trucks; the
railroad has a hard time competing with them.

The major markets for Maine potatoes, as noted by the
FDA’s market reports are Atlanta, Boston, New York,
Philadelphia and Hartford. {Mike Clements in NERAIL e-mail
listserv 22.Feb.00}

MAINE COAST
1 March, Augusta. THE NEW ARRANGEMENT FOR
SWITCHING CUSTOMERS HERE “is working as they said it
would so far,” according to Robert Felt, production manager of
the Blue Seal feed mill in east Augusta.

Blue Seal’s past arrangement
At peak times, Blue Seal needs about 20 carloads a week, but has
only four car spots. Guilford could provide only three switches
a week, meaning Blue Seal could unload only twelve cars a week.
To make up the difference, Felt “for the past couple of years” has

UNION BRANCH
2 March, Augusta. THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
GAVE PRELIMINARY SUPPORT to the project to run Amtrak
to Brunswick over the SLR [see 18 February issue]. MDOT Commissioner John Melrose, who attended the session, reported a 6-2 vote in favor. The full committee will vote later on the request for $10.5 million.

Will the money suffice?
Asked about doubts that $10.5 million will pay for the entire project, Melrose said his department estimated the simple bridge would cost, “on the high side,” $8 million, with much of that “geotechnical work” to find support for the piers.

As for the purchase of the Union branch, which GRS Executive Vice-president David Fink is quoted as saying would cost in the “millions” [see 21 January issue], Melrose pointed out that the City of Portland will buy the bulk: “We’re only buying from St. John Street to Forest Avenue [about one-half mile], while the city will buy the rest of the branch [about 6/10ths of a mile plus the former rail yard].” GRS recently told him it is making progress with the appraisal, and would probably finish in a couple of months, about the time that the Legislature should pass the appropriation.

The balance of the appropriation will pay for building new track from Forest Avenue to the bridge. [ANR&P discussion]

MASSACHUSETTS RRs

CAPE COD RAIL SERVICE

Rail to the Cape is enmeshed in three issues: restarting the trash train, repairing the lift bridge, and opening commuter rail. This article discusses all three.

THE RAIL BRIDGE OVER THE CAPE COD CANAL
A brief history of the effort to get the lift bridge repaired:

1930s: Bridge built. A court case determined that the railroad operating the line to the Cape (then the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company) controlled when maintenance is done. BCLR stepped into the New Haven shoes.

1982: Bridge last painted. The steel beams that support the bridge are scarred by giant patches of rust amid peeling silver paint. Some of the steel must now be replaced, said Michael Keegan, project manager of the Army Corps of Engineers, which is responsible for maintaining the canal bridges.

1988: The Corps discussed repainting and repairs. Since BCLR by contract must deliver the trash, it would have to pay for trucking. Bay Colony Railroad asked the Corps to pay the $300,000 cost of trucking the trash for the 90 days the bridge is closed for repairs.

1990s: The Corps argued federal statutes did not allow spending money on alternate transportation. Then-US Representative Gerry Studds tried unsuccessfully to get the law changed several times. Negotiations between the Corps and the railroad continued in vain for several years.

1999: The Corps began first phase design work in the spring, after state Transportation Secretary Kevin J. Sullivan said the state would guarantee alternate transportation expenses until Congress acted.

US Representative William Delahunt persuaded Congress to add to the Water Resources Development Act a provision saying the Corps can pay for alternate transportation when the Bourne railroad bridge is closed for repairs. Congress approved the bill in late September.

With that in place, an agreement between the Army Corps, BCLR, and EOTC was signed. To prevent future costly delays, Congress also mandated the Secretary of the Army to negotiate an agreement with Bay Colony such that the Corps controls the timing of future maintenance and repairs.

The contract for the first phase, sand blasting, steel replacement, and painting, will take about 18 months.

2000: Phase 1 begins. In 1988, the Corps budgeted $8.9 million ($12.4 million in 1998 dollars) to complete the same repairs that will now cost between $25 and $30 million.

2001: Phase 2, during which the bridge will be closed, will begin. Huge ball bearings, the electrical system, control panel and the 84 cables that lift and hold the bridge all must be replaced.

Corps officials hope none of the cables or bearings fail before they can be replaced. A 1988 engineering assessment found that the cables are stretched to maximum capacity and could start failing by 2002. If the bridge became stuck in the down position, much of the maritime traffic that traverses the canal would have to be diverted. In 1997, 8,241 marine craft went through the canal carrying 12.4 million tons of freight. [Anne Brennan in Cape Cod Times 10 Dec. 99]

The trash service
Moving waste by rail from the Cape forms the mainstay of the BCLR traffic - about 3,000 of the 5,000 cars annually. The railroad runs two minitrains a day. But late last year, the tipper at the SEMASS incinerator broke. SEMASS expects to return to operation in April 2000; until then trucks are carrying the Cape’s garbage to the incinerator [see 4 February issue].

Passenger rail
Some advocates propose using the EOTC-owned tracks from Middleboro to the Cape to run Boston passenger service. State Senator Therese Murray (D, Plymouth) recently attached an amendment to the transportation bond bill [see 18 February issue] which called on the MBTA to extend the Middleboro/Lakeville commuter rail line to Wareham and Buzzards Bay. "This is something that could happen very inexpensively," said Murray, Senate vice chair of the Joint Transportation Committee. She did not propose a specific amount of money for the project, but rather attached her amendment to the $225 million line item for MBTA projects.

A 1997 MBTA study showed an estimated 1,200 riders a day would use a Buzzards Bay line each way. At most, this would
cut traffic on the Southeast Expressway by 3 percent during commuting hours, and cost $29.8 million to start up. The bulk of the MBTA's projected cost – $18.2 million – would buy additional train cars and a new engine. Murray argued the start-up costs would be lower because of platform work done in recent years at the Buzzards Bay station, and income higher. She noted the T had underestimated the ridership on the Old Colony line.

The authors of the study also considered the feasibility of bringing the commuter line across the Cape Cod Canal railroad bridge to a station in Sagamore. They concluded this would be a more convenient location for many riders and cost just an extra $2.9 million to open. At 54.6 miles, the Buzzards Bay-to-South Station route would be the longest commuter rail run in the MBTA system and take an estimated hour and 22 minutes. The proposed New Bedford run is about 60 miles. [David McPherson in Cape Cod Times 27.Feb.00]

Past experience on the Cape
The Cape Cod Central Railroad, the excursion company which has the exclusive right to operate passenger service east of Bourne, would “welcome the passenger service,” said General Manager John Kennedy. During the late 1980s, when he worked for predecessor Cape Cod and Hyannis Railroad (CCHR), it ran two passenger services. One ran east to Attleboro to meet Amtrak trains and bring them to the Cape. Another ran north as far as Braintree to the Red Line (heavy-rail transit) and bring passengers from Boston to the Cape.

“We had hundreds of thousands of people a year,” Kennedy emphasized. The state was subsidizing the service through 1988, but when the economy declined in 1989, it stopped the project. “It laid the groundwork to revive the Old Colony, when the state saw how well the service was received.”

What future for rail?
Even if passed, the amendment only authorizes borrowing money for the project. The decision whether to move forward, as on most other projects, rests with Governor Paul Cellucci’s administration. But even before the discovery of a $1.4 billion overrun, the Big Dig project in Boston had drained the state’s ability to borrow for other transportation projects.

Falmouth resistance?
Pro-rail people rhapsodize about rail coming right down to the wharf in Falmouth, whence passengers can catch the ferries to Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket. However, some Falmouth people would prefer to turn the rail line, from Falmouth to the Otis AFB switch, into a trail. An organization called Friends of Falmouth Rail is opposing the trail.

Seasonal service
One group argues for summer service to begin, before commuter. It noted that in the 1980s, over $50 million was spent to rebuild the rail lines and stops between Hyannis, Falmouth and the Northeast Corridor in Attleboro, including the installation of CWR along most of the route from the Corridor to the canal. In the 1990s, hundreds of millions of dollars were spent to rebuild the Middleborough line for commuter rail service. The existing rail structure should be more than adequate for summertime rail service to the Cape. [See http://www.gis.net/~wreidy for more on the seasonal proposal.]

Cape transportation planning
Both the Cape Cod Commission and the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority are in the process of developing regional transportation plans. Although a recent meeting held by the CCRTA did briefly mention rail, there seems to be a general resistance to specifically include any rail service recommendations, particularly by the CCC. [e-mail to ANR&P from Bill Reidy 28.Feb.00]

GRS - NEW AYER FACILITY
1 March, Ayer. THE RAILROAD IS PLANNING A NEW AUTO-UNLOADING FACILITY in Ayer, east of the current ‘Willows’ facility used by Ford. GRS owns three parcels totaling about 120 acres east of Nemco (New England Milling) Way and north of the rail line, and wants to pave 40 of them for the facility. GRS has not divulged which auto manufacturer might use the facility, but it did run auto carriers over the West End in late January [see 18 February issue].

Plans filed with the town indicate the site would have 2700 parking spaces and six rail spurs, and would serve two trains a day, bringing 2,000 vehicles. It would be open 24/7; 50-88 trucks a day would haul out the vehicles.

Opposition to the facility
When GRS bought it, the town had it zoned heavy industrial. It consisted of a gravelly, flat area, stripped of top soil to mine the sand and gravel at some past time.

At some point after the purchase, the town discovered that the area served to replenish the aquifer supplying one of the town’s two wells, and rezoned the parcel as an aquifer recharge area. Because of the new zoning, GRS’ Cynthia Scarano and the town have talked for 18 months, trying to reach agreement on how to construct the facility without posing danger to the aquifer.

A citizen organization called PACE (People of Ayer Concerned about the Environment) opposes the facility on two grounds: the railroad cannot construct a facility which, in operation, would not pose a significant danger of contaminating the aquifer; and the noise, light, fumes, and dust would affect many abutters.

PACE was formed earlier, to work on issues relating to the closure of Fort Devens. It received a grant from the state to do some of that work. It has a website: Devenswatch.org.

Planning Board award
The town’s Planning Board has awarded GRS a permit, but with 36 conditions. GRS had orally agreed to accept most of these conditions, according to Laurie Nehring, de facto leader of PACE. Nevertheless, GRS appealed the decision to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). That body will hear the appeal on 11 March.

Lawsuits filed
GRS earlier filed a suit in state court [more about the cases in a
future issue]. After the Planning Board decision, it also filed suit in federal court, arguing that federal law, specifically the ICC Termination Act of 1995, pre-empted state oversight of railroad property used in interstate commerce [see 24 September issue for Vermont consideration of same].

Some other manufacturers in Ayer
Capaia Spagna, located in the Stony Brook Industrial Park which lies between the current and the new auto facility, makes noodles. Nasoya Foods also has a facility in the Park.

Along Route 2A (aka Main Street and Littleton Road) lie a Very Fine beverage warehouse (Very Fine does bottling in Littleton); Epic Enterprises, a bottling plant for Pepsi and other beverages; and Cains (the mayonnaise company). [ANR&P discussion with Nehring and with Jennifer Gibbons, secretary of the Ayer Planning Board and Conservation Commission 1-2.Mar.00]

FOR THE RECORD: MASSACHUSETTS
THE FUTURE OF THE WESTOVER INDUSTRIAL TRACK [see 21 January issue] is the topic of a meeting on 6 March among state legislators, shippers, Mass Highway, EOTC, Westover Metropolitan Development Corporation, and GRS. [ANR&P discussion with Joe Nolan 3.Mar.00]

NH RAILROADS

GRS - NEW HAMPSHIRE
28 February, Plaistow-Haverhill. WHAT SIDINGS WILL REMAIN AFTER THE TRACKWORK FOR AMTRAK in this area? In order to improve the trip speed, Guilford is removing several switches to unused sidings, and improving others (mileposts from Mattawamkeag ME):

Milepost 275.51: GARE Industries (Haverhill MA)
This ceramics firm uses rail inbound, according to shipping manager Tom Dammer. GARE Incorporated has a siding off the main line here, and brings in clay and plastic, one or two carloads a month, every month, but ships the finished product out by truck. Dammer said service provided by Guilford was fine. [ANR&P discussion 28.Feb.00]

Milepost 273.6 No.1 track: Suburban Propane (Plaistow NH)
This company is long gone, as is the switch.

Milepost 273 No.1 track: Process Engineering (Plaistow NH)
This company occasionally ships large tanks; since Amtrak will not use the track, the switch does not need upgrading. [ANR&P e-mails from rail observer Scott Currier]

Milepost 271.8: Three Branches Lumber (Plaistow NH)
Robert Dion, mill manager, said his company milled white pine logs, brought in by truck, into 1" boards delivered by truck all over the United States. He does not use rail outbound because lumber brokers buy by the truckload, and then ask it to be delivered to two or three retail stores - easier to load the truck for the deliveries than a rail car.

The company which occupied the site previously, Sabbath York, brought in southern yellow pine by rail. But when NNEPRA asked Dion if he would use the switch, he told it he could not foresee doing so. So the switch is now removed. [ANR&P discussion 2.Mar.00]

WEST LEBANON
28 February, Concord. NH DOT HAS A TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH CCRR on operating over the branch. Kit Morgan, rail coordinator, said the railroad must still put together a specific plan for the use of the Westboro Yard, indicating what portion should be rail use, and what portion could be outside use. He expected that plan in one week, and the participation of city officials in making it final. [ANR&P discussion]

VERMONT RAILROADS

VERMONT RAIL COUNCIL
13 March. THE MEETING POSTPONED IN FEBRUARY occurs today, with the following agenda:

- Revisit Executive Order (VAOT Secretary Brian Searles and Conservation Law Foundation’s Marc Sinclair).

- Amtrak subcommittee report (Charlie Miller and Greg Maguire)

- Planning process (Barry Driscoll)

- Rail and solid waste (Marc Sinclair). {text of agenda}

TWIN STATE RAILROAD
1 March, Whitefield. THE FUTURE OF THIS RAILROAD IS UNCERTAIN. Mike Gooden, general manager, said during the first meeting with American Tissue, TSRD owner Clyde Forbes had asked for the same minimum revenue guarantee which predecessor Simpson Paper had given to TSRD. “That permitted us to get by at rock bottom,” said Gooden. But American Tissue [see 18 February issue] would not agree to any minimums.

The mill also informed TSRD that it had one car already enroute, but the railroad would not accept it. “We’re not going to open the line up for one car. We’ll wait for good weather,” Gooden said. “We’re willing to meet again.”

Earlier, American Tissue had said it wanted to use rail both inbound and outbound. Perhaps, mused Gooden, VAOT could help out with some funding [VAOT’s industrial siding fund remains untapped]. [ANR&P discussion]
Purchase of TSRD?
NHDOT and VAOT [see 18 February issue] have expressed an interest in purchasing the Guilford-owned line. Kit Morgan, NHDOT rail coordinator, said he would like to revive the discussion; “I’m hoping they might call us.” [ANR&P discussion 28.Feb.00]

WELLS RIVER
16 February, DC. THE STB ACCEPTED A VERIFIED NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FROM NHVT to abandon the trackage rights between Wells River and White River Junction. {STB Docket No. AB-475 (Sub-No. 3X), 16.Feb.00 service date} While VAOT had made this filing a condition of the purchase of the line, it decided to go through with the purchase without the filing [see 10 January issue].

29 February. FIVE POTENTIAL OPERATORS FOR THE BRANCH RODE AN INSPECTION TRAIN from White River Junction. [ANR&P discussions]

Pioneer Valley Railroad
After the bid packages were sent out, PVRR decided it wanted to consider bidding. VAOT agreed to add PVRR to the bidder list, making it six, according to PVRR General Manager Jon Lasko. But after reading the RFP, Lasko decided against bidding, because he could not make a good estimate of the revenue stream. The RFP contained no records permitting an estimate of traffic either on-line or overhead. But the RFP did ask the bidders to state a minimum level of service they would provide. “With the short due date [bids must arrive by 15 March], I did not have time to do a marketing survey,” said Lasko. {ANR&P discussion 2.Mar.00}

MARITIMES/QUÉBEC RRs

CAPE BRETON AND CNS
1 March, Halifax. GEORGIA PACIFIC MAY MOVE GYPSUM BY TRUCK from the proposed mine at Melford to Point Tupper, under a tentative NSDOT decision made in mid-February. While NSDOT took cognizance of the rail alternative via a draft study from GP’s consultant, the department recognized that GP opposed rail, and agreed to expend some funds for improvements to the haul road. [ANR&P discussion with NSDOT’s Bob Carroll]

Next step
Loren McNeill, an official with the NS Department of Environment [see 18 February issue], said he is still waiting for official word from NSDOT about its decision. One of the conditions of the permit Environment granted required GP to ‘consider the use of rail to move ore to the port.’ When McNeill receives the NSDOT decision, that will fulfill the condition. When all conditions are satisfied, Environment will release the permit to begin the quarry.

Local resistance
The Melford Concerned Citizens [see 18 February issue] commissioned studies of the effect of trucking the gravel, and submitted them to the province, according to Elaine Collins, marketing director for CBCN. Railroad officials also met with local politicians and citizens to point out the downside of the truck movement.

Port Hawkesbury Mayor Billy Joe McLean said on 29 February that citizens were not adamant against the trucks because their coming might precipitate the construction of a long-sought bypass. At this point, trucks coming from the west must drive through downtown, along the waterfront, to reach the gypsummers and the paper mill of Stora. For over ten years, the city has asked for a bypass, which would run from Route 4 at the causeway over to near the junction of Route 4 and Route 104. Trucks could then reach the harbor points through the south end of town, avoiding most of the waterfront traverse.

“We would be happy if the gypsum went by rail, but it costs a lot higher to go by rail,” said McLean. “GP is a good corporate citizen, it employs 135 people. We try to work with industry, but are reaching the end of our rope.”

McLean is concerned that the request for the bypass is being ignored. The NSDOT minister has refused to meet with him and other officials. If he gets no response by Monday, the ‘mayor and wardens committee’ composed of McLean, the mayor of Mulgrave, and the wardens of Inverness, Richmond, and Victoria County will issue a public attack on NSDOT.

“The bypass will cost a lot - $15 million. It may be cheaper to build the rail line.” He also noted that Port Hawkesbury is growing: it had only 900 people twenty years ago, and now has 5,000. “We are prosperous.”

Rail ain’t dead
Collins pointed out that despite the NSDOT decision, the local citizens may eventually oust the trucks. “This project will last 20 to 25 years. The rail option remains alive.” [ANR&P discussions 29.Feb.00]

CFQ
3 March, Montréal. Overall, the system is doing very well, said President Serge Belzile [see Regional]. But the Charlevoix line is down and the Baie des Chaleurs is suffering because of the closure of the paper mill.

Other the other hand, Matapedia, and Ottaway are doing well, and NBEC is doing very well.

Fuel costs
CFQ is suffering with the increase in diesel price, because it has no way to pass on the costs. It continues to receive the same fee per car from CN.

Belzile has asked CN to institute a fuel surcharge, to no avail. “Railroads should use the surcharge, rather than try to increase prices to specific customers.” Since the increase is viewed as temporary, a surcharge should handle it.

“Maybe the short lines should get together to put some
pressure on,” he concluded. {ANR&P discussion}

NBSR

[See Port of Bayside.]

ATLANTIC NORTHEAST PORTS

STRAIT OF CANSO

3 March. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL TURN OVER FACILITIES to the local Strait of Canso Superport Corporation. Transport Canada Minister David Collenette will come to sign the papers. {ANR&P discussion with Blaine Gillis 29.Feb.00}

BAYSIDE NB

23 February, Bayside. FLORIDA ROCK INDUSTRIES BOUGHT 50% OF THE QUARRY OPERATION. Operated as a joint venture under the name Jamer, it was formed in 1997 and opened operations in 1998 on provincial land adjacent to the port [see 28 August 1997] under a long-term agreement. Reserves controlled by the joint venture are in excess of 100 million short tons of granite. Currently the venture is shipping aggregates to the United States East Coast and Caribbean.

Commenting on the transaction, John D. Baker II, president and CEO of Florida Rock Industries (FRK), stated: "We are excited about the opportunity to expand our access to aggregate reserves. The location of the quarry gives us a shipping advantage over other Canadian ports to the United States East and Gulf Coasts. We intend to explore the possible delivery of aggregates by sea from Port Bayside to local Atlantic Coast markets in the southeastern United States, including Florida." {FRK press release}

Bayside Port Corporation ownership

Bayside is situated 11 kilometers north of St. Andrews, on Route 127. Transport Canada turned over the port to the Bayside Port Corporation on 18 June 1999 [see ANR&P 99#15], for $2.8 million which the port corporation must repay. According to Peter Frye of Bayside Food Terminals and Bayside Stevedoring, local stakeholders had initially hoped that the municipalities involved would own the corporation. But when the price rose to $2.8 million, the players had to step in to own it, resulting in the ownership and control situation described in the 26 May issue.

The stevedores

Three stevedoring companies handle the traffic. Bayside Stevedoring is owned by Peter Frye, who also owns Bayside Food Terminals, the only temperature-controlled warehouse at the port. Champlain Stevedoring was founded in 1988, and is still owned by, Maureen Worrell, who also serves as secretary of the Port Corporation.

Logistec bought Canada Enterprises, which had been doing stevedoring at the port since 1980-81. Logistec has not done work at the port recently, said Worrell. In the past it has moved paper, lumber, and fertilizer.

1999 traffic

According to Worrell, from the inception of the port corporation on 18 June 1999, until the beginning of March 2000, port traffic totalled 844,000 tonnes. This consisted of 650,000 tonnes of aggregate (handled by Champlain Stevedoring), 139,000 tonnes of gypsum (handled by self-unloading ships directly for Westroc), 16,000 tonnes of frozen food (fish and chicken, handled by Bayside Stevedoring), 26,500 tonnes of fresh potatoes (handled by both Bayside and Champlain), and 8,400 tonnes of fertilizer handled by Bayside.

Food traffic

This has dropped off. Frye attributed that to four factors. First, from the new Jamer quarry come trucks which drive across the wharf face, creating dust and dirt problems. Second, some Cuban traffic has moved to Montréal and Halifax because of congestion in Bayside.

Third, Cuban line Nexus encountered financial troubles resulting in the seizure of its ship at Bayside for several months. At the end of 1999 Nexus was dissolved, and its ships were taken over by Friomar. Frye expects the first Friomar visit in early March. It will bring Cuban seafood in, and take food products back, such as chicken, meat, and butter, mostly for the general population.

Fourth, inbound fish has slowed. Some goes to Halifax in containers and is then trucked to Bayside, where Bayside Food Terminals stores it for eventual delivery to fish processors in eastern Canada and the United States. Halifax does have cold storage, said Frye, but the container must be drayed from the pier to the cold storage site. Once on the truck, it may as well move to Bayside, much closer to the processors.

Forest products

While the port moved about 12,000 tons of pulpwood in 1996, none has moved in recent years. The laydown area for the pulpwood is now used for quarry production.

Frye had also shipped some containers of cardboard to Cuba. He explained that his 20-tonne crane could only handle light-weight containers, such as the cardboard. The buyer, a Canadian company buying for a Cuban company, initially bought cardboard in Montréal, and then switched its sourcing to Maritime Paper of Saint John to be closer to the port of exit. However, the containers of cardboard have stopped flowing through Bayside; Frye could not explain why.

Aggregate and sand shipper Jamer

Wilson Sand and Gravel (now owned by Jamer - see table) is still shipping sand (and before that gravel) out of Rollingdam [correction of name from 1997 article]. Jamer’s quarry next to the port has vastly increased the bulk traffic, to 800,000 tonnes in 1999 [compared with 234,000 tonnes in 1996] and a budgeted 900-950,000 tonnes in 2000.

While bulk thus accounts for about 80% of the tonnage, it does not, per Frye, use nearly as much of the pier time.

Gypsum shipper Westroc
Gypsum continues to arrive at Bayside and move by truck to McAdam, where Westroc transforms it into wallboard. While moving it by rail would cost less, Westroc lacks a method to dump the cars, and a conveyer to move the gypsum [see photo of Hantsport facility in 21 January issue]. Trucks can drive up to the top of the stockpile and dump. The cost of building the unloading facility would outweigh the transportation savings, according to what Frye understands.

Port finances
Frye noted that the fees earned by the port corporation from the traffic generate sufficient cash flow to make payments on the $2.8 million debt. In fact, the bulk operations alone cover most of the cash needs, even though bulk pays significantly lower fees than when Transport Canada operated the port.

Food cargo pays the same rates as when Transport Canada operated the port. Because fish and potatoes were local products, the port fees were, per Frye, kept unrealistically low.

Use of rail
According to Peter Fullarton, NBDOT’s transportation policy advisor for rail and marine freight [see People], a group composed of port representatives, NSDOT, NS Department of Economic Development, Tourism & Culture, and NBSR the department and the port in autumn 1999 proposed a study of whether rail could serve the port. They have completed a “Terms of Reference” for a feasibility study for reinstating rail service over the 22-mile line [it branches off from the line to St.Stephen at Lawrence Station] to the port and adjacent Champlain Industrial Park. FTA Consultants of Fredericton assisted the effort.

On 2 March, Fullarton said the department had not yet found funding. It has applied to the Regional Development Corporation, a provincial department which works with the federal Atlantic Canada Opportunity Agency, and he expects to hear within a couple of weeks an answer on the application.

The railroad which would operate the line, New Brunswick Southern, has said it would prefer to operate, but if that does not work out, it would like to re-use the rail elsewhere in the system. Fullerton was told that NBSR had “salvaged everything else it could.”

While NBSR at this point is not offering financial assistance for the study, it is willing to do what it can to support it.

According to Frye, NBSR estimated that to bring the spur to operating condition would require one million dollars. Projected traffic on the line, sans the Westroc gypsum, would not justify that investment, but would pay the costs to maintain the line once restored.

A further obstacle to the use of rail derives from the at-grade crossing of Route 1. The province is twinning Route 1, and is already constructing an overpass in St.Stephen for the NBSR branch leading to Woodland ME. The branch to Bayside would also require grade separation, at an additional cost of $4-$5 million. {ANR&P discussions 1-2.Mar.00}

PORTSMOUTH
16 February. CONSULTANTS NARROWED TO ONE THE PROPOSED PORT USE. at a second public hearing on the five-year master plan [see 21 January issue]. David Spillane, the lead person for the consultant Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, reviewed on 1 March the four alternatives presented at the first public hearing, and described the “new illustrative plan”:

Major port expansion. Despite the near-universal rejection of this alternative at the first hearing, this remained as a “viable future,” said Spillane, but not for the next five years.

Condo/office developments. Also rejected by most at the first hearing, VHB in tandem with the Port Authority took this alternative off the table.

Exchanging sites with Granite State Minerals. This option remains open, and the Port Authority will open discussions with Granite State. Any exchange must “continue to meet the public use” of the current facility. If that condition is met, the Port Authority is open to an exchange.

Continuation of current public mission with embellishment. This emerged from the first hearing, and consultation with the Port Authority, because of a new look at the use of the port. Discussions with current users showed that while they did not use the port frequently, its presence was either “very important” or “essential” to their operation.

Both ABB Combustion Engineering and Simplex Cable said that they had located on the river because of the proximity of the public facility. Both need to ship heavy or large items, components which can travel over the road only a short distance. Trucking product also means shipments to New Jersey and New York must go around Massachusetts and Connecticut to avoid state restrictions, while moving by sea obviously permits direct shipping.

“The Port Authority now looks at the role of the port not to create jobs at the port, but to support job creation off the waterfront,” said Spillane. “It should contribute to economic development of the state as a whole.”

This means that while the movement, say, of gravel through the port from an offshore point to a non-New Hampshire point could generate significant fees for the port, if that use conflicted with off-waterfront job creation, the port authority will not favor the gravel movement.

The embellishment will come from a flexible approach for two parts of the facility. The large paved area could be used for tourist or other seasonal activities if it did not conflict with current cargo traffic. The cove adjacent to the Isle of Shoals Steamship Company could serve charter and excursion services, again assuming it did not conflict with cargo traffic.

As for cruise ships, the plan would permit them to use the barge pier, but does not call for construction of a passenger terminal, at least for the next five years. {ANR&P discussion 1.Mar.00}

Next step
Robert Snover, chair of the Port Authority, said VHB will present its final report on 16 March. The Authority will ask for proposals
from potential operators “in the next month or so.” The contract for the current operator, Bulkloader, expires at the end of July 2000. {ANR&P discussion with Snover office 1.Mar.00}

NEW HAVEN
28 February. LOGISTEC IS LOOKING AT BARGING CONTAINERS FROM NEW YORK. James Schine said he hopes to get some progress in perhaps three months.

Expansion
Logistec, which operates New Haven Terminals, is also developing plans to expand into some 12 acres across Waterfront Street. Warehousing, current done north of I-95, would happen in a new warehouse on the site, much closer to the pier. Schine characterized the project as a “very complex real estate transaction” which should see some result in the next 60 to 90 days.

Restoration of rail over bridge
The return of rail to the port awaits the rebuilding of the Tomlinson bridge over the Quinnipiac River. Bridge construction had languished because of environmental and legal struggles, said Alan Stevens, ConnDOT maritime coordinator, but has now become active. {ANR&P discussion 1.Mar.00}

Bob Ceffitti, ConnDOT transportation supervising engineer, said the bridge, to be finished in two years, will contain a roadway and a rail corridor on the same grade. It can lift vertically to give a 60-foot clearance, and will provide around 200 feet of horizontal clearance.

This will permit the barges to go upriver to the oil tank farms, and the shellfishing vessels to pass through.

Restoration of rail on Waterfront Street
The city, rail users, and the Providence & Worcester Railroad (PW) are willing to pay for the rail rebuilding as part of the reconstruction of Waterfront Street. The entire project will be paid by TEA-21 funds, with appropriate state and local matches.

Lisa Bardon, an engineer with the city, explained that the line was built in the 1920s for smaller cars with lower loadings. The spurs to serve waterfront users were made with a relatively sharp radius, and current PW cars cannot negotiate the spurs.

According to the RFP: ‘Several port facilities will use the Providence and Worcester Rail service once re-established. These include the Gateway Terminal, the New Haven Terminal, Logistec, and the United Illuminating Company [now owned by a Wisconsin firm]....This project will completely reconstruct Waterfront Street such that the majority of the railway track will fall outside the travel way for vehicular traffic....To the south of Alabama Street a runaround track will be provided to allow the trains to change direction and also allow for storage and maintenance of train cars.

‘In the areas where the track must be in the roadway, the track will be embedded so that traffic may pass over the track safely.” The city estimated the cost for the entire project at $6 million in March 1999.

The engineer’s office by 3 March will make a recommendation on a consultant to provide construction plans for the street and rail. Bardon said in concept, the rail will run in the street right of way, but not down the middle of the street. The concept does include spurs for users along Waterfront Street.

The design team should begin in May or June; the city will set a completion date in the negotiation of the contract. As for completion of actual construction, Bardon pointed out that the South Central Regional Council of Governments Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) lists the project as taking place after FY2002. {ANR&P discussions 2.Mar.00; text of RFP}

EDITORIAL

FOR SHAME, NOVA SCOTIA
As reported in this issue, Georgia Pacific has an apparent green light to use trucks to move gypsum from its new mine in Melford, Cape Breton, to Port Hawkesbury. That’s 250 trucks a day which GP is insisting on using.

Rail would provide a much better alternative, in terms of safety, the environment, and wear on the highway. Local railroad Cape Breton and Central Nova Scotia has offered GP two different plans for bringing out the gypsum by rail, but apparently no one’s listening.

The fault lies not with the Department of Transportation and Public Works, nor with the Department of Environmental Protection. These can only do what legislation permits, and no statute requires that the environmental impact be weighed and costed.

No, the fault lies with the citizens and their leaders. Why doesn’t the premier suggest a different approach to this? Why don’t local legislators suggest a new statute to govern these instances. And finally, why aren’t the citizens of Port Hawkesbury and the surrounding area saying, “Stop! We don’t want those trucks on our street!”

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