REGIONAL ISSUES

Regional meetings: CLF holds kick-off meeting. EBTC discusses rail, and so does the I-95 coalition. Bids for the study of high-speed rail to Montreal in 2001.

CONNECTICUT

[No report.]

MAINE


MASSACHUSETTS


NEW HAMPSHIRE

NHDOT: Second ITRAC meeting. CCRR: Nearly ready to start in West Lebanon. NEGS: Scrap metal traffic to grow. NHH: Ready for new traffic. Locomotive repair for the MBTA.

RHODE ISLAND

[No report.]

VERMONT


MARITIMES/QUÉBEC

CBNS: Sydney Steel sold.

ATLANTIC NORTHEAST PORTS


PEOPLE, POSITIONS, EVENTS

Deborah Sadares, Mary Tanona, Dave Seaman, Steve Arnold.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Regional meetings
October is the month of choice, with CLF, I-95, and EBTC all meeting. Plus, both CONEG and the high-speed study are moving ahead. What an exciting time for rail, and how different from 1994, when I founded this newsletter (then called Maine RailWatch).

The e-bulletin
Print recipients may receive, free of charge, the Atlantic Northeast Rails & Ports e-bulletin. It will give you a news update between the regular issues. You need only send me your e-mail address.

- Chop Hardenbergh

Next issue: 17 November.

REGIONAL ISSUES

CLF REGIONAL RAIL

23 October. PARTNERS WITH CLF HELD THE KICKOFF MEETING. According to Nancy Girard, head of CLF’s New Hampshire office and the lead person on the rail planning effort:

Participants
All ‘partners’ participated: from Vermont, representatives of Burlington, Bennington, and the Two Rivers - Ottauquechee Regional Commission; from New Hampshire, Steve Pesci of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission, a representative of...
Concord, and Tom Noel of the NH Division of Environmental Services, air resources division; from Maine, Alan Stearn of MDOT and Bruce Sleeper of TrainRiders/Northeast.

Girard explained that partners will be working with CLF, will receive part of the $200,000 EPA grant, and will give services back to the project.

NHDOT’s Jim Marshall attended also, but not as a partner.

Substance
Girard characterized it as a brainstorming session. “We went over the proposal for the planning process we submitted to EPA, and we tried to surface some areas which other studies are currently handling” because the group does not want to duplicate other efforts [see New Hampshire - ITRAC meeting]. The group wanted to find gaps to be filled in. As a first mission, Girard said, the group can knit together a state commitment to regional dialogue.

“We can focus on the larger regional picture. Our diversity brings strength. We all recognized as a region we need to pull together.” {ANR&P discussion 2.Nov.00}

**EASTERN BORDER TRANSPORTATION COALITION**

16-18 October, Burlington. *ISSUES FACING RAILROADS AT THE BORDER* formed one topic of the most successful meeting yet of the Eastern Transborder Coalition (EBTC). The coalition, formed of state and provincial government officials aiming at eliminating border crossing problems for both freight and passengers, convened, *inter alia*:

A US-Canadian rail issues panel
Dan Sabin, chief operating officer of the B&A System, talked about the Wells River gateway and moving freight from Maine and the Maritimes through Quebec and down into southern New England. Gloria Coombe, a last minute substitute for Dale Williams of Canadian National, discussed *inter alia* the Vancouver to Auburn ME doublestack intermodal route. Coombe directs US governmental affairs, headquartered in Detroit.

Roger LeDoux of the Quebec Ministry of Transport and Anne Stubbs, executive director of the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) both also spoke.

The panel was moderated by Lou Rossi, former rail coordinator for New York State and now a consultant.

Kevin Rousseau, MDOT representative and co-chair with Tom Beckett of Newfoundland, said rail is playing a more prominent role at the meetings. “It’s starting to become a focus; delays in shipment are becoming a problem area for a lot of railroads and shippers.”

Rail survey
According to Karen Songhurst, a VAOT representative, the group heard about a roadside survey looking at trucks. Phase II of the National Roadside Survey Update would have a Rail Component, a topic discussed by Irv Rubin, EBTC executive director, Rick Donnelly of Parsons-Brinckerhoff, and Rob Tardif of the Ontario Ministry of Transport. *Contact* Rubin at vox 717-745-1087.

**Strategic planning for EBTC**

Songhurst noted that EBTC held a separate meeting to look at its own mission, Members re-affirmed its focus on multimodal surface transportation border-crossing issues.

**Praise for the session**

Rousseau described the meeting as “taking EBTC to a new level...the best-attended and best-quality session” yet. NHDOT attended for the first time and was very interested.

The meeting proves the need for an organization to provide objective analysis on US-Canadian trade and transportation issues. Unlike other, private meetings EBTC provides a public forum for issues, made up of public agencies. {ANR&P discussions 1.Nov.00}

**HIGH-SPEED RAIL BOSTON-MONTREAL**

1 November, Montpelier. *AN RFP FOR THE CORRIDOR STUDY WILL EMERGE BY JANUARY*, according to Songhurst. VAOT took the lead on the application for the funds, and she is now talking with the FRA to develop the scope of work for the study just funded by the US Congress [see 20 October issue].

The local match to the federal funds will come from the states, as they agreed to earlier this year. Congress limited the study funding to the corridor from Boston to Burlington, but USDOT designated the corridor as Boston-Montreal. Therefore, said Songhurst, the study will encompass the views of the Province of Quebec and Montreal, as well as the railroads. She anticipates the study will take at least a year. {ANR&P discussion 1.Nov.00}

**I-95 COALITION**

18-20 October, Kings Point, NY. *THE INTERMODAL PROGRAM TRACK OF THE I-95 COALITION* held a leadership meeting here at the US Merchant Marine Academy. The conference included both a freight and a passenger track.

Judy Gott, executive director of the South Central Regional Council of Government (New Haven CT), summed up: “A wonderful conference with a lot of technical presentations, all on the same track, how to get trucks off I-95.”

One such: ‘The Amtrak, CSXT, NS Capacity Study.’ The railroads involved did a presentation how they’re connected, how not, and where problems are.

**Not anti-widening**

Despite the focus, Gott emphasized the coalition was “not necessarily anti-widening. By the time 2020 arrives, “we’ll have that many more cars no matter we do.” Some solutions: free trains, or trains which carry autos. {conference agenda from MDOT; ANR&P discussion with Gott 23.Oct.00}
MAINE RAILROADS

ROCKLAND BRANCH BIDS
25 October, Augusta. MDOT RECEIVED 7 BIDS FOR THE ROCKLAND BRANCH PASSENGER RAIL UPGRADE-TRACK STRUCTURE PROJECT:

Atlas Railroad Construction, PA $22,678,500.00
New England Railroad Construction, CT $24,450,717.00
Queens City Railroad Construction, VA $25,671,109.85
Marta Track Construction, PA $25,840,660.00
Delta Railroad Construction, OH $25,988,937.00
Modern Continental Construction, MA $35,167,203.00
Guilford Rail System, MA $44,573,584.18

The bid was awarded to Atlas Railroad Construction on 27 October 2000. Atlas has 15 calendar days to execute the contract and supply bonds satisfactory to the Department. Atlas must submit its initial schedule within 21 days of award.

‘Department policy does not allow me to divulge our engineer's estimate. However, it is safe to say the bid was very favorable.’ {e-mails to ANR&P from Russ Spinney, head of MDOT’s Multimodal Project Development 30.Oct.00}

The bid by Atlas, which was involved in a state project in Auburn about five years ago, was about $3 million below what engineers had estimated. Bruce Jameson, project manager, expected Atlas to line up materials over the winter and start construction in the spring. The project should be completed by 30 October 2002. {AP 31.Oct.00}

GRS/SLR - UNION BRANCH
25 October, DC. THE STB PERMITTED GRS TO ABANDON AFTER THE DEADLINE had passed to consummate abandonment. The Board noted that GRS company Portland Terminal (PT) had filed a notice of exemption to abandon the Union Branch, and the notice became effective on 28 August 1997. PT had a year to consummate the abandonment, after which the authority to abandon would automatically expire.

PT, joined by MDOT in a filing on 28 September 2000, pleaded ‘that, between September 27, 1997, and August 28, 1998, it took affirmative steps to signify that it intended to remove the Union Branch from the interstate rail network, including salvaging track and ties, and discontinuing service over the line. PT states that it could not fully consummate the abandonment until after March 26, 1998, because of an outstanding public use condition, and that it failed to file the required notice after that date and before August 28, 1998, due to an administrative oversight.

‘PT further states that it began negotiations with MDOT in the Spring of 2000, regarding conveyance of the line for possible institution of rail passenger service over a portion of the Union Branch and for the development of the remainder for use as a recreational park by the City of Portland. PT had evidently

proposed that conveyance take place on September 29, 2000, until it discovered that the abandonment authority had been scheduled to expire on August 28, 1998, in the absence of PT’s filing of its notice of abandonment consummation by that date. PT states that, because of its oversight, the conveyance of the right-of-way to MDOT could be delayed if PT must reapply for abandonment authority. MDOT and PT state that they are not aware of any parties, including potential shippers, who have an interest in this line and that neither is aware of any interest that would benefit from the requirement that PT refile for authority now.

‘Under the circumstances, the alternative request for an extension of time for PT to file its notice of consummation will be granted. While PT’s notice of consummation will therefore be accepted under the unique circumstances described in this decision, neither PT nor any other rail carrier should count on the Board's granting similar extension requests in the future or on the Board's accepting late-filed notices of consummation.’ {STB Docket No. AB-268 (Sub-No. 10X) decided 24.Oct.00}

30 October, Portland. MDOT BRIEFED THE CITY COUNCIL ON ROUTE ALTERNATIVES. Commissioner John Melrose and Ron Roy, head of the Office of Passenger Transportation, made the following points:

- City staff and MDOT prefer a route along the right-of-way of I-295, versus a route farther away from the water.

- “On behalf of MDOT, we made clear that grade separation is not an option.” A second embankment alongside I-295 to carry the tracks over three crossing streets would cost too much, plus take too much time to deliver.

- Councillors picked up on the fact that Amtrak trains using the Guilford tracks to reach Brunswick will hit 13 grade crossings in the city versus three on the SLR route. Plus, Melrose pointed out, the GRS runs through neighborhoods, and arouses concern about speeds. Some councillors pointed out that trains would run “safer along the alignment [MDOT] proposed.”

- The City Council also is looking at where the station might end up. If located at Bayside on the SLR route, it will sit on publicly-held land. Portland, which has the lead for the station location and design, is also looking at the new connector from I-295 to Merrill’s Marine Terminal. The connector would provide easy access to a site on the GRS main line for a train station.

But MDOT believes the site does not provide good access for pedestrians and transit, and does not work as the best gateway to the community [it lies much farther from downtown and the tourist attraction of the Old Port]. Furthermore, Melrose noted, it would take private property off the tax roles and possibly frustrate commercial development of that area.

Next step
“If the [councillors] have any serious reservations [about the SLR route] we want to know them now,” Melrose related. “The city is thinking through all [these issues] of heading out of town.
on the GRS line or the SLR line.”

MDOT told the Council that the final decision lay with the department. However, the department wants to pursue the project in partnership, to do a collaborative effort. “We want to take into account [the city’s] concerns,” Melrose said. {ANR&P discussion 31.Oct.00}

31 October, Augusta. MDOT AWAITS A DECISION FROM THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION which will permit the department to avoid an environmental study on purchase of the Union Branch [see 20 October issue]. Normally, according to Ron Roy, state money spent to acquire a corridor may be matched with federal money without an environmental study [because no change in the environment results from that action]. Hence the FTA should OK this use of state money to match federal money.

Roy expected the OK from FTA “this week” and then the department can make an offer to Guilford to buy the Union Branch.

“We will still have to do an environmental study on the layout and rail service beyond Portland.” {ANR&P discussion 31.Oct.00}

SLR - COMMUTER SERVICE

2 November. COMMUTER RAIL BETWEEN PORTLAND AND LEWISTON HAS A NEW TARGET DATE according to Craig Denekas, an attorney in the Portland law firm Perkins, Thompson, Hinckley & Keddy, who is handling the project for the Libra Foundation [see 19 June issue].

The plan

Conceived to carry commuters to the Pineland Office Center in Pownal, trains would run from Portland and Auburn to a switch on the SLR just east of the Office Center (a former hospital). From the switch, a new spur would carry the trains about a half-mile across fields and woodlands to a point on Route 231; Denekas said the line would not cross the road.

To begin, the service may use the former stations for the ski train, in East Deering on Presumpcot Street, and in Auburn near the airport. It would utilize Budd cars, self-propelled rail diesel cars repaired and rebuilt at various places around the continent [for example, Industrial Rail Services in Moncton—see 28 July issue].

“Let’s not wait to get the trestle built across Back Cove [see above], or for a formal depot, or track coming across the Androscoggin to Lewiston.” But eventually, Denekas said, the downtown areas in both municipalities should be linked. “We have no control over those links,” so the service will start with what can be used now.

Ideally, the service will begin when the first building opens for occupancy, which should happen “next spring or summer.” [Later than the autumn 2000 date—see 19 June issue.]

Support in other quarters

Denekas has met with Lucien Goslin, head of the Lewiston-Auburn Development Council, as well as with Roland Miller of the City of Auburn economic development office, Governor Angus King, and MDOT Commissioner John Melrose. “Everyone is enthusiastic from a policy point of view,” to get cars off the road.

Montreal in the future?

The service startup could “catalyze other parties to work for greater expansion of passenger service,” said Denekas, “a role we could play.” He envisions that the SLR line could house a service between Portland and Montreal.

The operator

Denekas faces two start-up issues. The service needs an operator; the October Corporation, which owns and is refurbishing Pineland, cannot operate it because it can’t operate a for-profit business. Perhaps NNEPRA or another entity could do so. The service also must cover liability questions.

Speed

“It must go fast,” said Denekas, to give commuters a reason to leave the car behind. If the service begins at a slow speed, “we may lose the opportunity to attract passengers.” The track, currently Class 2, must be brought up to Class 3 speed (60 miles per hour passenger).

Funding

Denekas believed that the state needs to come on board to improve the grade crossings and track. While MDOT has not allocated any funds at this point, he hoped that funds set aside for other projects could be used.

“We need state government to advocate for this line,” which holds promise for eventual extension of service to Montreal, and for high-speed rail following the corridor designation [see 20 October issue]. {ANR&P discussion 2.Nov.00}

GRS - HOLTRACHEM

2 November, Orrington. THE CHANCE TO REVIVE THIS SHIPPER MAY DISAPPEAR. Karen Gehman, the prospective purchaser from Pennsylvania, on 31 October said her plans for the facility include restarting the plant to make caustic soda and chlorine, expanding into agricultural pesticide production, and building a research and development center to work on environmental cleanup processes. But on 1 November, the day Gehman named as the deadline for closing the purchase of the plant, HoltraChem President Steve Guidry [see 1 September issue] said the sale was not imminent. {Deborah Turcotte Seavey in Bangor Daily News 2.Nov.00}

GRS - AYER FACILITY

2 November, Ayer. THE STUDY OF THE PROPOSED AUTO UNLOADING FACILITY is underway, reported Gary Moran of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.
Required by the transportation bond bill [see 18 August issue], it is due to the town clerks of Ayer, Harvard, and Littleton by 1 December. {ANR&P discussion}

The bond bill language was inserted by State Senator Pamela Resor, who represents the area.

Court status
Following the delivery to US District Court Judge Joseph Tauro of a proposed referral of the question to the Surface Transportation Board, the two sides await his decision on the draft. {ANR&P discussion with Ayer Town Administrator John Kreidler 1 Nov.00}

GRS - WESTOVER INDUSTRIAL TRACK
20 October, Westover. GRS RENEWED ITS EMBARGO OF THE LINE covering all traffic “[t]o, from or via the following consignees located on the Westover Industrial Track at Westover, MA (FSAC 00175) and Chicopee, MA (FSAC 00114): Burke Beverage, Friendlys, Sweeney Trans., Rock-Tenn Company, Engineered Polymers, Country Club Wine Spirits. Cause: Track Conditions. {Association of American Railroads Embargo Notices for 10/19/2000 Consecutive Sheet 166 Supercedes ST 4-99 which expires on 10/19/00}

3 November, Westover. THE WESTOVER METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION IS PROCEEDING toward the hearing mandated by the transportation bond bill [see 18 August issue] on closing the line. Bob Pyers, marketing director, said his counsel is handling the arrangements. “We had initially wanted the hearing to negotiate a change” in the situation; at this point, GRS has embargoed the line. However, the possibility of reviving the line “looks dimmer, not brighter” following a market assessment by WMDC.

How much traffic?
When WMDC began to seek grant funds for track improvement, the state asked for an assessment of the viability of the rail service. “The same situation which causes GRS to look at the Industrial Track as not viable” showed up in a survey of the current park businesses. Even if the businesses had the track back, and perfect rail service, much of the traffic would continue to move in the alternative, price-competitive lanes the companies have developed with the decline of rail service.

Per Pyers, the survey indicated at best several hundred carloads would run on the track, while WMDC has been told it needs 600-1000 carloads to make the service viable.

What about new shippers or receivers?
Pyers acknowledged that CSXT and other carriers are scouring the state for rail-served industrial sites. “But the railroads want the land for autos, and bulk material traffic, not the kind of [economic activity] communities see as desirable. Most communities in metropolitan areas want the higher tech, higher-tooled companies.” Even in paper, the region is seeing more converting rather than the basic paper mill.

Since Massachusetts has so little land, planners are holding out for more intense use, with the exception of areas far from metropolitan centers. There, “they’d rather have a transload facility than nothing.” {ANR&P discussion}

MASSACHUSETTS CENTRAL
2 November, Palmer. McCaIN BUSINESS IS MOVING THROUGH THE INTERMODAL TERMINAL HERE, according to Bob Williams of the railroad. Refrigerated trailers arrive piggyback from Presque Isle, Maine on the new B&A connection via Wells River [see Vermont]. NECR delivered the first train to Palmer on Tuesday 31 October, the second this day, and the third is due Saturday.

From Palmer, the trailers are drayed to points in the Northeast as far away as Pennsylvania. Williams explained that a shortage of drivers, and the high fuel costs, made this move attractive to McCain. He noted that the Palmer-Pennsylvania is only 25% of the Presque Isle-Pennsylvania distance.

“It’s a nice piece of business. We’re scheduled to receive 45 per week, 15 at a clip.” If the test works, and McCain has praised the service thus far, “we could have 100 a week.”

More new business, from Montreal
Williams said the current trucker strike in Montreal has benefitted the MCER facility. “We have a CP train enroute to us with containers off CP ships, which will be unloaded here Saturday.” These boxes are normally drayed out of Montreal, but the strike has blocked that. The train will move via the Green Mountain Gateway.

CNA already doing some of this, said Williams. He hopes that once the shippers or carriers see how well the service can work, in view of the shortage of drivers and high fuel costs, they will use Palmer on a regular basis.

Expansion of the facility
MCER is planning a 100-acre expansion of the intermodal facility. Williams hopes to announce more details in a few weeks. {ANR&P discussion}

NH RAILROADS

NHDOT - ITRAC
24 October, Concord. ANOTHER NH INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION & RAIL ADVISORY COUNCIL took place at NH Fish & Game Department headquarters, with NHDOT Commissioner Leon Kenison as chair. Rail points included:

The Northern Railroad
Representative George Katsakiores reported that the study committee under HB1409 would likely recommend to the speaker that an ongoing task force be created to continue its work. GRS executive vice-president David Fink commented on the study funds appropriated by the US Congress for the Boston-Burlington corridor [see Regional], noting that few knew about
this and no one ever contacted his office.

Representative William Mosher, who chairs the legislative subcommittee on the Northern as well as that on the Manchester & Lawrence, commented: "That corridor is ripe for development—both transload and multimodal...It has tremendous potential. We are probably sitting on a gold mine up there. We had better steer state development people into the marketing end of things. The Manchester & Lawrence is the through route connecting with the Northern and onto Montreal."

Peter Griffin, president of the NH Rail Revitalization Association told ITRAC of a growing bipartisan coalition forming around taking a closer look at the Northern.

**The Boston-Montreal corridor**

Kenison said that Vermont will be taking the lead in studying reestablishing the former Boston/Montreal corridor since “they want it so badly.”

**CONEG and CLF examination**

NH Governor Jean Shaheen now chairs the Coalition of North East Governors which is also taking a close look at the state of rail transportation in northern New England (MA, VT, NH, ME) including mapping what they term "the historic backbone transportation system" of the region.

The Conservation Law Foundation of New England (Nancy Girard, NH branch) has entered into partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to: 1) provide greater public awareness of rail, 2) foster inter-regional cooperation, 3) push for intermodal transport, and 4) endeavor not to duplicate what others are doing. The CLF/EPA project has a two-year timeline.

**Liability limitation**

Jim Marshall, NHDOT director of public works and transportation, noted that states like Virginia and Massachusetts maintain a $75 million cap against personal injury, property damage or death, which is now upgraded to $100 million in the aggregate to protect freight railroads carrying passenger trains. The federal government has a $200 million liability limitation. Similar legislation in the legislature's Judiciary Committee is still bottled up due to objections by the trial lawyers. And there may be a question of constitutionality involved as well.

**I-93 expansion**

Carol Murray, assistant commissioner and chief engineer said that "after this latest expansion of I-93 [Salem/Manchester, from four to eight lanes] there will be no more asphalt solutions left on that corridor. This is why we are looking at a two-track light rail alternative in the medium."

ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems) is the next alternative to growing traffic and congestion problems. Expansion of park 'n ride lots (Jim Jalbert, C&J Trailways) with connecting bus service. In fact buses are needed as feeders into any rail line. Buses are best operated in off-peak hours and into sparsely populated areas, trains best "on peak" during congestion (ref. to The Toronto Plan) Kenison said: "Steel wheels and rubber wheels should not have to compete for the same ridership. "Total ridership will increase. N.H. remains as one of only six states that do not help underwrite rural transportation operating costs.

**Next meeting**

ITRAC will meet next on 22 January. {Malcolm T Taylor in Northeast News Service 24.Oct.00}

**WEST LEBANON - CCRR**

2 November, West Lebanon. **CCRR AND NECR ARE STILL NEGOTIATING ON THE TWIN STATE SIDING** in Vermont.

CCRR is just about ready in West Lebanon to begin operations. Lori Barnes, manager of the railroad, said: “We put in the last of over 2,000 ties this week. We have completed the siding repair at the Twin State facility. The aggregate cars are about ready to go, and we plan to use” one of the two locomotives in Claremont.

CCRR decided not to put the money into moving up a locomotive on the PVRR in Massachusetts, because it was putting the money into the West Lebanon renovation.

The contractor, Industrial Track Service [see 22 September issue], did the bulk of the work in West Lebanon; “our crew supplemented the work,” Barnes said. {ANR&P discussion}

**NEW ENGLAND SOUTHERN**

2 November, Concord. **THE RAILROAD WILL GAIN MAJOR NEW TRAFFIC** when Advanced Recycling opens its new shredder at the end of this year [see 16 May issue]. Principal Steve Cohen said he had located the shredder to take advantage of rail access. NEGS President Peter Dearness is lining up cars to give the shipper a steady fleet, for the acquisition of the shredder “opens up a number of alternative markets,” said Cohen.

**Rail performance**

“Pete has done a wonderful job,” underscored Cohen. “If Guilford were as good as he is, we’d be all set.” {ANR&P discussion}

**NEW HAMPSHIRE NORTHCOST**

14 October. **AN INSPECTION OF IMPROVEMENTS TO THE RAILROAD** by State Caroline McCarley (D, Rochester) and George Bald, commissioner of the Department of Resources and Economic Development, showed that the investment in the line allowed for economic development to take place.

According to Kit Morgan, NHDOT rail administrator, the funding came from a state loan and other funds, including NHN’s. The upgrade took place over several years, with work in Rochester in the first part of the 1990s. More recently, the railroad has built an engine shop and a new car shop. “I believe the inspection trip took place at this time because the railroad acquired a caboose permitting the trip,” Morgan said.

‘Before,’ wrote McCarley, ‘with trains derailing in the middle of Rochester, the idea of new economic development or tourism was off’ the table.

Steve Arnold, the new operations manager [see People] said the railroad is aggressively seeking new business.
Locomotive and car repair
Also in mid-October, NHN began repairing locomotives for the MBTA. The railroad did not bid for the contract. Arnold said the railroad is opening its repair shop for outside locomotive and car repair business. {e-mail to ANR&P 1.Nov.00}

VERMONT RAILROADS

B&A - VERMONT
30 October, White River Junction. THE FIRST TRAIN OF B&A CARS ARRIVED HERE at 1445 with 9 loads McCains Frozen French fries from Presque Isle, Maine, according to B&A chief operating officer Dan Sabin. {e-mail to ANR&P}
The cars travelled by the BAR from Presque Isle to Brownville Junction, then CDAC to Brookport PQ, thence to Newport (milepost 58.4 from Brookport) leaving there around 0600. Newport to Wells River measures 63.30 miles; Wells River-White River Junction 40 miles. {So the train took about 10 hours to travel 103 miles. Since Sabin put much of the track speed at 10 miles per hour–see 20 October issue--the train apparently did not halt for long anywhere.} {William McDonald e-mail to ANR&P}

A JUNCTION AGAIN!

White River Junction earned its name because railroads from Montpelier, Wells River, Concord NH, and Bellows Falls met there. When CCRR restarts, the village will equal or exceed the previous total, depending on how one counts:


Destination
{See MCER in Massachusetts.}

The track access agreements
John Dunleavy, VAOT assistant attorney general, said the B&A System and Vermont still had not signed the operating agreement [see 20 October issue]. The two sides are negotiating on plans to study how much of the Wells River-White River section could host a bicycle path.

Furthermore, GRS and B&A have not reached agreement on GRS access to the White River Junction yard. “Dan Sabin and Rob Culliford [GRS counsel] were busy last week exchanging drafts,” according to Dunleavy. “I think they are making a good faith effort and will reach agreement.” The agreement will provide GRS with access to the wye, which in turn means GRS will take advantage of trackage rights over the track on the Connecticut River bridge now owned by the State of New Hampshire.

McCain likes the arrangement
David Sanchez, McCain’s vice-president for operating services, said that the loads would proceed “to northeast markets” meaning anywhere from Virginia north. “We are committed to getting through this test” of reaching the northeast, a test very successful thus far: “We are pleased with how well we have worked together.” {ANR&P discussions 30.Oct.00}

LAMOILLE VALLEY RAILROAD
25 October. THE CONSORTIUM DEBATED TRAIL COSTS at its first meeting on the consultant’s report [see 20 October issue]. Amy Bell, VAOT’s bicycle and pedestrian coordinator explained that the trail costs could drop significantly. But Doug Zorzi of the agency’s rail division questioned if the cost would drop that significantly, even if the rail were removed.

Next steps
Peter Snyder of North Country Vermont Rail Link, who wants to restart service, reported that the meeting did not agree on a new official trail number. Since the topic took most of the meeting time, participants will meet again, tentatively on 21 November, to continue to discuss the findings.

Snyder suggested that if the agency sent Bell to argue the viability of doing trail for less, VAOT should send someone from the rail division to argue about reducing the rail costs as well. “We see cost savings as well. Rail will still be by far the cheaper way to go, and will provide the most benefits long term.”

Putting the line out to bid
According to Snyder, the consortium has put together a good faith effort. Members are trying to be very neutral. “I hope they issue an RFP, weigh the bids, and pick the winners.”

Snyder also intends to return to the Vermont Rail Council, possibly at its 9 November meeting, to seek its support for the rail alternative. {ANR&P discussion with Snyder 2.Nov.00}

VERMONT RAIL SYSTEM
23 October, Procter. OMYA IS STILL OPPOSING THE ACT 250 DECISION [see 28 July issue]. While losing in the Vermont Supreme Court on how many truckloads it may move per day, it is pursuing a federal remedy by arguing that the state cannot control access to a federal highway, in this case Route 7.

Associated General Contractors, representing the motor carrier which handles the OMYA trucking, sought to become a party to the OMYA case, but recently the federal judge denied the application, according to the attorney who handled the case for Associated General Contractors. {ANR&P discussion with attorney Fead; Docket Number 2:00-CV-180}

24 October. THE BURLINGTON-CHARLOTTE COMMUTER SERVICE HAS A START DATE: 4 December. “We’ll begin a limited schedule of 2 trips in each direction, then move into a full schedule around 1st April. We have so many loose ends, we
should get started, ease into it, and do a little bit of marketing,” said Jim Fitzgerald, executive director or the Vermont Transportation Authority.

**Outstanding points:** VTA is very close to agreement with VRS on an operating agreement. “We have a GP-38 leased, dedicated to our service. The equipment’s all here: 6 coaches and 2 CAB cars

*Note:* Fitzgerald, as a locomotive engineer, once ran the same cars when they had motors, in the late 1950s. {ANR&P discussion}

31 October, Burlington. **NO DECISION ON THE SALT SHED** from the Vermont Supreme Court, reported Burlington City Attorney Kim Sturtevant. “The court can take up to six months,” and no prediction can be made on when the decision will come out. It was argued on 20 June. {ANR&P discussion 1.Nov.00}

1 November, Burlington. **AN UPDATE ON TWO POINTS** was provided by David Wulfson, president of the system:

**Fulton Company rail access.** The railroad is working with the neighbors so that “everyone is happy” with the track extension to the company’s building [see 20 October issue]. “There’s a lot of old baggage from the previous operator.”

**Hoosick branch work: ABRB.** Ties are now inserted along the line, Wulfson said. Ballast needs spreading, and the ballast will arrive when VRS can obtain some additional ballast cars on lease. “Our 20-car fleet” can’t handle the work.

31 October, Halifax. **THE PROVINCE WILL SELL THE SYDNEY STEEL COMPANY** to Swiss-based Duferco [see 3 July issue], following worker approval of a new five-year contract. Gordon Balser, provincial minister in charge of the deal, introduced legislation to sell Sysco’s assets and privatize the plant this day. The province will still spend $30 million on a pension plan and an estimated $300 million to clean up the site.

Duferco negotiator Mike Hrycik said earlier that if the union approves the deal, Duferco should assume operation of the plant no later than the second week of November. Hrycik says the company will hire 32 hourly maintenance staff and 15 salaried employees immediately. And he says those numbers should swell to about 230 jobs within five months. { {CBC internet reports 26.Oct & 1.Nov.00}

In the spring, rail installation will take place, and Amtrak can operate over it by September 2001 [the target of summer 2000–see 20 March issue–was spurned by VAOT]. “As long as the money keeps flowing, we will stick to our schedule.” Whether VAOT will want to start the train by then was not a matter for VRS. {ANR&P discussion}
BAYSIDE

2 November. PORT STAKEHOLDERS ARE DISCUSSING EXPANSION OF THE LAYDOWN AREA. Maureen Worrell of Champlain Stevedoring, secretary of the port board, said, “We have not gone out to tender yet. It will take a few months to complete the planning.”

The previous port expansion took place in the late 1980s, when fill was added north of the small L-shaped pier [see photo].

Peter Frye of Bayside Food said the expansion would permit ships to dock north of the current pier, or increase the laydown area.

Progress on the rail study?
Peter Fullarton, NBDOT rail manager, said the recently completed study about getting rail to the port “is in the hands of the port.” Once the board has wrapped up its port expansion plans, then it will sit down and talk about rail project. “We’ve left it up to them, they will host the meeting” on the rail study, and bring everyone else to the table. He had expected to receive an invitation to the meeting by now, said Fullarton.

Danny Williard of Arundel Corporation, which owns the quarry along with Jamer, said he had talked to people in his company about the rail expansion, but the board as a whole had not met on the subject. {ANR&P discussions 1 Nov.00}

EASTPORT

19 October. RAIL ACCESS TO THE PORT was again discussed by the Eastern Maine Railroad Development Commission (EMRDC). Skip Rogers, who chairs the Commission and also runs Federal Marine’s stevedoring operation, reviewed the discussion:

Acquisition of land for a rail alignment
Port stakeholders have accepted that the port can best grow with bulk cargoes. That means, Rogers emphasized, that the rail must come right to the top of the hill above the pier. “We have begun creating an artist’s view of the transload facility,” to show to the Legislature in spring 2001.

Because the previous rail alignment to Eastport ran through the Passamaquoddy Native American reservation in Perry, and the tribe has purchased the section of the right-of-way through its reservation, the port must come up with a new alignment. Rogers listed two which would pass over salt water: the old Toll Bridge route, or a route which would bend around the reservation.

Strategy for dealing with opponents of rail
For several years, trail advocates have argued that the Calais Branch will never see profitable rail traffic, and have asked that MDOT lift the track to permit a trail. Rogers said EMRDC would like to counter that by supporting a potential operator. “We’d like to see if NEGS and Safe Handling could work out something between them” to create and operate a transfer facility for Cherryfield. Then EMRDC could propose to the state to accept them.

“The longer time passes without a real freight train on the line,” the more the trail people will prove their point, and NIMBYs will gain support. Rogers believes that MDOT is doing what it can to hold off freight operation on the line, and that the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Transportation is supporting MDOT’s position. “Because the idea of reviving the rail didn’t come from Augusta, state government does not support it. They believe nothing good can come from the hinterland. But we have momentum here.”

What about MDOT’s support for a large tourist rail operation on the line? [See 20 October issue.] “I don’t understand why MDOT is not using local, small resources instead of a large out-of-state resource.”

Eastport traffic
“We’re continuing to serve our customer, Georgia Pacific.” Its overseas traffic is pretty much as predicted, and Eastport is hosting no other traffic.

The peat moss move in January 1999 ended with the shipper, Morrill Worcester, not paying Federal Marine the full bill. Rogers said the stevedore won a federal court case to recover its fee; Worcester has appealed to the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston, with a hearing scheduled for March 2001. {ANR&P discussion 23 Nov.00}

NEW HAVEN

1 November. AN UPDATE ON THE PORT CONFIGURATION ISSUES. As noted before [see 22 September issue], the effort to reconstruct rail access to the port is enmeshed with several other planning efforts: a reconfiguration of vehicle traffic flows, the rebuild of the Q (I-95) bridge, the rebuild of the Tomlinson (US Route One) Bridge, the study of barging containers from New York to a Connecticut port, the re-use of a city parcel in the port area, access to the East Shore Park, and the possible elimination of the power transmission towers.

Genesis of traffic plan
According to Marty Tristine, president of Logistec Connecticut, the traffic reconfiguration effort began with the city/state plan to rebuild the 40-year-old I-95 bridge over the Quinnipiac River, aka the ‘Q-bridge’. The plan entailed taking 5.5 acres of Logistec property plus five buildings totalling 50,000SF.

New Haven City Plan Director Karen Gilvarg noted that highways had landlocked the 300-year-old port, cutting down available space. “Every square inch comes out of our hide: first US 1 then I-95 took space” and then the Q-bridge plan would take even more. Moreover, the new highways had cut off the former US Steel facility north of the highways, now called the ‘North Yard.’

In looking at how the I-95 plan “would affect our facility,” Tristine said, he conceived an alternative which would close one of underpasses, save the FHWA money, separate out the traffic to the different port facilities, and improve traffic flow.

He submitted the alternative to city and ConnDOT officials. “Everyone who looked at it believes it makes sense.”
The port traffic alternative
ConnDOT asked consultant URS Greiner (who is handling the Q bridge project for ConnDOT) to look at Tristine’s proposed configuration. URS Greiner consultant Howard Mirsky did so and drafted an ‘East Shore Traffic Study’. ConnDOT reviewed the draft internally for some months, and within the last three weeks has provided the draft to stakeholders.

While Tristine has not seen the report, those who have seen it tell him that it supports the bulk of what he recommended.

Gilvarg cautioned that Mirsky’s draft may not be the most recent ‘preferred alternative.’ She has asked a city engineer, Lisa Bardon, to look at the draft.

City response
Gilvarg cautioned that the city wanted to hear from other port users, and in particular from the other multi-product user, Gateway Terminals [see 22 September Regional for coal use].

She did not think that the tank farm owners (Hess, Motiva Storage, Getty, Gulf, and Williams Energy Services [Wyatt Terminals became Williams Energy Services as of 1 September 2000 per USDOE US Heating Oil Reserve study] were as concerned about the traffic patterns. Their tanker trucks would use the roads and scales which will be built to take tractor trailers. “They don’t have to accommodate many other cargoes.”

The far future: relocating the tank farms
Anticipating the need for even more waterfront space, Gilvarg noted that the city “over the very long term” will look at moving the tank farms off the waterfront to a more remote site. “The terminals only need a pipe from the dock.” But that long-term thought will not get mixed up with the I-95 reconfiguration going forward.

The effect on the rail access
Tristine said that his alternative would provide access to port facilities from Stiles Street via ‘punchthroughs’ of Albia and Kendall, and eliminating Alabama Street. This would end through-traffic of vehicles along Waterfront Street, permitting trains on the reconstructed track to use the street without interference from vehicles.

The barge study and the effect of the re-configuration
Tristine’s alternative involves the elimination of some city streets near the Logistec and Gateway Terminals, and the creation of additional land near the docks. He anticipates that if containers from New York were off-loaded in New Haven, that would occur at his dock, and he would utilize some of the new laydown space.

However, he noted, the proposed barge service may call Bridgeport or New London instead (also at Logistec facilities there). According to Judy Gott, executive director of the South Central Regional Council of Governments, Marlin Peterson of consultant Frederic G. Harris [see 14 July issue] in New York has the lead on the barge study. Peterson anticipates it taking six to 12 months, with a report by the end of 2000 for interim study.

Sale of Logistec’s North Yard facility
According to Tristine, Logistec has sold its warehouse in the North Yard, under the condition that it acquire property along

East Shore Parkway to build a new warehouse there. If Logistec can swing the deal, it will occur independently of the other projects underway.

What’s next?
Tristine believed stakeholders were waiting for ConnDOT to put forward a final traffic reconfiguration study. This would then permit other projects (Tomlinson reconnection, rail access, East Shore Park access, and so forth) to go forward. Gilvarg believed that the city and ConnDOT would reach an agreement on the configuration. “We are advocating on behalf of the port,” she said. “The mayor has talked to ConnDOT’s commissioner to make sure the configuration will meet the needs of all port entities.” {ANR&P discussions 1&2.Nov.00}