operating railroads + their intermodal facilities, ports, and government environment

REGIONAL ISSUES

HRRC: new customers

CONNECTICUT

NAUG: possible new customers.

MAINE

B&A: T2000 money not spent.
Calais branch: No transload facility. Brushcutting.
Lewiston Lower: MDOT doing track rehab.
Rockland branch: Seeking engineering firm.

 MASSACHUSETTS

EOTC: Doublestack, Berkshire Scenic, transportation bond bill.
Railroad Association: Details.
BCLR: EOTC concern, CSXT, rail-trail in Falmouth.
CSXT: Florida-Massachusetts intermodal train.
PVRR: Conrail split, abandonment postponed.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Airport branch: NHDOT schedules hearing. GRS abandons.

RHODE ISLAND

Amtrak: TF Green station moves ahead.
Newport secondary: Trackwork begins to benefit the two passenger operations.

VERMONT

VAOT: Negotiations on Wells River, west end access, LVRC, NECR/WACR.
VAOT: Industrial siding program, reorganization.
GRS-VRS: Haulage agreement.
VRS: Commuter rail.

MARITIMES/QUÉBEC

A semi-monthly trade newsletter dedicated to the preservation and extension of the rail network in the Atlantic Northeast.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Favorite story: NHDOT setting a hearing on what I call the airport branch (ex-Manchester Lawrence). It came in at the end of the day Friday, so the issue is going out a little late. The Newport secondary story fills a gap in my knowledge about the Atlantic Northeast rail system.

Date of issue

Thanks to those who inquired about my back. I am functioning - as you can see - but surgery is beckoning with her finger. The vacation will happen though! I’ll be back 5 August.

- Chop Hardenbergh Next issue: 11 August.
REGIONAL ISSUES

HOUSATONIC
July. THE RAILROAD DESCRIBED SOME NEW CUSTOMERS. Rian Nemeroff, vice-president for sales and marketing, listed Mead Specialty Papers’ plant in South Lee MA as re-introducing rail shipping with a coast-to-coast move, and a possible move to the south to an NS destination.

Also, Besse Forest Products of Wisconsin is shipping logs from northwest Connecticut to its mills [logs in Connecticut?], and Hampton Lumber has begun to use the Shepaug reload facility.

Finally, John O’Neill of Kimberly-Clarke Kim-Fibers (pulp) facility in New Milford CT has expressed complete satisfaction with a redesigned material flow. {HRRC The Berkshire Hills Newsletter 7.99; ARW discussion with Nemeroff 23.July.99}

CONNECTICUT RAILROADS

NAUGATUCK RAILROAD
21 July, Thomaston. THE RAILROAD CONTINUES TO LOOK FOR MORE CUSTOMERS, said John Gamm, the vice-president. A lumber distribution center, remains a possibility, though NAUG will face strong competition from HRRC [see above] and others. Also, Smurfit Stone Container presents a possibility, for the trucks it now uses are presenting a problem to the town of Torrington. As well, “they sometimes park in our right of way,” said Gamm.

Smurfit Stone Container
This producer of corrugated cardboard, located in Torrington, formerly received rolled paper stock by rail, on the order of ten cars a week per Gamm. But, according to Bob Rounds, the general manager, it stopped three to four years ago for two reasons: a surcharge imposed on the delivery fees, and the intermittent delivery schedule at the plant. About 18 months ago, the company sold its switching locomotive, which was needed once or twice a day because the facility permitted spotting only one car at a time.

To get the paper rolls, Smurfit Stone began using its truck backhaul capability: the company’s product, mainly used for pizza boxes, goes to users in the New York market, the Boston market, and points as far away as Florida. Currently, trucks returning to Torrington pick up rolled paper at a warehouse in Springfield MA, and sometimes in Philadelphia. The paper rolls come by rail to the warehouses from Smurfit Stone mills, or the mills of other companies. This use of backhaul, said Rounds, saves the company $10,000 to $15,000.

The CSXT/GRS effort
Since NS and CSXT took over the Conrail routes, CSXT “has gotten aggressive,” according to Gamm [see also PVRR], and he thinks Smurfit Stone could become a customer. To get traffic from Springfield MA to Waterbury for interchange to NAUG, GRS runs EDPL three times a week from East Deerfield MA to Plainville. It stops in West Springfield to interchange with CSXT. From Plainville, GRS runs a local to Waterbury or beyond as necessary. Gamm would not see service as an issue for new customers: “I sense a real dedication to customer service at Guilford.” {ARW discussions 21-22.July.99}

MAINE RAILROADS

B & A - T2000 GRANTS
20 July, Houlton and Jackman. B&A COMPONENT LMS HAS NOT YET SPENT THE GRANT MONEY it won in 1997 in competition with other transportation projects for what MDOT called the T2000 program [see 25 September 1997 issue]. Logistics Management Services will receive $350,000 for Houlton and $510,000 for Jackman, each to expand the existing facilities. {ARW discussion with Allan Bartlett}

CALAIS BRANCH
20 July, Calais. MDOT HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED NOT TO FUND A TRANSLOAD HERE. The department’s Allan Bartlett said Calais, which had applied for IRAP funding, has not yet received it [see 12 March issue].

Jim Porter, the assistant city manager, listed two reasons. The Licenzo Construction Company, located next to the proposed public transload site, indicated it would begin private transload operations “at a moment’s notice” on its own property [see 30 April issue]. Also, Eastport support for the Calais facility has waned, in favor of locating one in Charlotte, nearer to the port. {ARW discussions}

22 July. MDOT HAS HIRED JOHN BROWN & SON TO BRUSHCUT THE ENTIRE LINE, said George Jackman, maintenance manager for the state-owned rail lines. Brown did similar work on the Mountain Division in 1998 [see 3 December 1998 issue]. This will occur between September and December, and chew up much of the $300,000 the Legislature appropriated for maintenance. The balance will go to repair washouts, though Jackman said unless the state did annual maintenance, “the washouts will just recur.”

He estimated the cost for annual maintenance at $2000-$3000 per mile for inactive track, and $10,000 for active track regard of the class of speed permitted.

MDOT position
Skip Rogers of the Eastern Maine Railroad Development Commission said Melrose responded to the Commission letter recently [see 16 July] that:

- The state would use highway funds to align the track and the road at the problem crossing in East Machias;

- The state would have no funds left over from the $300,000 to do...
MDOT IS SEEKING PROPOSALS FOR ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

now that FHWA issued the Categorical Exclusion (no environmental evaluation needed). Russ Spinney, head of Multimodal Project Development, said that with the funding in place, Commissioner John Melrose wanted to move ahead as quickly as possible. To accomplish that, MDOT decided not to issue an RFQ (request for qualifications) “which would have taken six months or longer.” Instead, with the approval of FHWA, Spinney’s office selected eight firms from MDOT’s pre-qualified list from whom to seek proposals: SYSTRA Consulting; Fay, Spofford & Thorndike; HTA Consulting Engineers; TAMS Consultants; T.Y. Lin; STV; Gordon Bua Read; and Vanasse Hangen Brustlin.

According to a source at a firm not selected, this ‘short-listing’ disgruntled several large firms who did not make the cut. But Spinney explained that MDOT wanted a firm with which it already had “an excellent working relationship” and at least a “known project manager” within the firm, because this effort will stretch out over several years. “So we selected firms who have worked with us in the past” from the pre-qualified list. “I’m very comfortable with these firms; we will have one firm, or a team of firms, with which we can work,” said Spinney.

The proposals will not be evaluated on price; MDOT will select based on a firm, or team, approach to the project; how they propose to interact with MDOT; the project manager and other key personnel, and the proposed work plan and schedule. “We would like the firm under contract by 1 September,” Spinney related. “That’s ambitious, but I think we can do it.”

The $33 million project

Bruce Jamieson of Spinney’s office, who has shepherded the environmental review, explained the price tag included about $11 million in bridge work, plus the construction of a platform at Wiscasset and at Newcastle. All the rail, 85-pound rolled in 1917, must be changed out for 115-pound rail. The current operator, Maine Coast, has not had funds to improve the track [see 9 June issue], and before the last operation by Maine Central in 1982, maintenance was probably deferred. Hence improving the 52-mile Rockland branch to Class III speeds will require more than the kind of upgrade done on the GRS main line between Portland and Plaistow.

The Long Bridge

Because of the deteriorated condition of this [see 12 March issue], the state is getting it rehabbed this year. At the bid opening on 21 July, Chesterfield Associates of Westhampton Beach NY and Westport Island ME held the apparent low bid at $822,000, with Maine Track Maintenance second at $849,000. {ARW discussions 21 & 22 July.99}
Massachusetts. “We would love to work to develop a such proposal,” but CSXT has “never been invited to formulate either an incremental or bifurcated approach to clearing obstacles.”

**Berkshire Scenic**

EOTC is still trying to get the contract in better shape, ensuring that common understandings are indeed “common, detailed, and complete,” said Glynn. She hoped to complete that process in time to permit the Berkshire Scenic to operate this season.

**Freight Advisory Committee report**

This Glynn hoped would appear this autumn [see 9 June]. {ARW discussion}  

**State transportation bond bill**

According to Sean McDonnell, a staffer at the Joint Transportation Committee of the General Court, the Committee could release the bill “any day now.” Committee members are attempting to line up consensus from the other committees which need to review the bill, so that once released, it will sail quickly through the committee process and reach the House floor. “No votes” on any portion of the bill will occur until the floor, predicted McDonnell. He hoped that would occur before the August recess, but acknowledged it might not happen until September. {ARW discussion 20.July.99}

**MASSACHUSETTS RR ASSOCIATION**

19 July, Cape Cod. _THE ASSOCIATION HELD ITS MONTHLY MEETING_ here. _Paige Kane, who serves as the chair for the current calendar year, said any passenger or freight railroad in the Commonwealth may join. Current members consist of BCLR, CSXT, GRS, HRRC, MCER, NECR, PVRR, PW, and QBT. Attendees participate in discussions about common interests and best practices. They also hear reports on legislative activity, what happens at other state railroad associations, and Operation Life Saver work. Meetings, which Kane said are “well-attended,” move around the state, generally occurring the first Wednesday of every month. {ARW discussion 22.July.99}  

**BAY COLONY**

20 July, Braintree. _AN UPDATE ON SOME ISSUES_ facing the railroad was provided by Bernie Reagan, general manager.

**EOTC concern**

A communications snafu on 28 May led the railroad dispatcher, located in Fort Meyers FL at the Seminole and Gulf Railroad, a sister operation, to permit the first Cape Cod Central (CCCR) excursion train onto the line at Hyannis while a BCLR trash train was proceeding toward Hyannis on the same track - albeit miles away. The error was discovered and the BCLR train backed up.  

But EOTC learned of the episode, and Transportation Secretary Kevin Sullivan reacted quickly by ordering a review of the state’s contract with BCLR, which runs on state-owned tracks. At a meeting with the editorial board of the _Cape Cod Times_, Sullivan expressed upset with what he called a less than cooperative attitude by BCLR during the negotiations to work out a trackage rights agreement for CCCR.

Reagan said he learned of Sullivan’s concern only when contacted by a reporter for the _Times_, and as of today was still hoping to meet with Sullivan to discuss his concern. Reagan acknowledged that the BCLR-CCCR negotiations were hard, but not acrimonious, and that the intervention by Astrid Glynn, EOTC deputy secretary, helped to bring them to a conclusion.

**Opportunities presented by CSXT**

In another matter, Reagan stated that because of CSXT’s takeover of Conrail in Massachusetts, he could present to current customers the opportunity to move more traffic by rail because of CSXT’s reach deep into the South. While declining to name the customers, he said one could replace an over-the-road move, and another could reach a new market not yet tapped.

**Rail-trail to Falmouth?**

Tracks remain from the end of the BCLR rights, at the switch to Otis Air Force Base north of Falmouth, into Falmouth itself. The former track from Falmouth to Woods Hole has become a bicycle path, and cyclists would like to extend it up the former New Haven trackage to the Otis switch or even beyond.

On 30 June, Sullivan announced that the state will support a trail built alongside the track, under a memorandum of agreement. However, according to one rail observer, state money is not available for the bike path, meaning town money or federal grants will have to be used. Since the tracks and ties will remain, the bike path will have to reroute when it comes to the Sippewissett swamp, for example, as there is not enough room for the path and the RR bed. The need for engineering studies for construction and construction itself mean that the path will not emerge for some time.

Reagan on 20 July said he had nothing to say about a path south of Otis switch, but became concerned if the cyclists wanted to continue north, alongside active tracks. {ARW discussion with Reagan; Anne Brennan in _Cape Cod Times_ 9.July.99; NERAIL e-mail list observers 3.July.99}

**CSXT**

July. _A NEW FLORIDA-MASSACHUSETTS INTERMODAL TRAIN_, TV174 (Q174), has been operating for the past month. It runs every day except Tuesday as far as Jersey. Between Little Ferry NJ and Worcester the train runs as required, the only scheduled move over the new River Line-to-Selkirk Branch/Boston Line Connector at CP SK near Selkirk Yard. When it does not run, the cars are set off by a northbound River Line TV train at Selkirk for pickup by a Boston-bound TV.

CSX operates Q174 with UPS vans for the Worcester ramp. The train departs Jacksonville FL (Tuesday-Sunday) at 1415, Rocky Mount NC at 0220 (Wed-Mon), Philadelphia-Eastside at 1500, with a 0345 arrival at Selkirk (Thursday-Tuesday), and to Worcester as needed. The schedule calls for a 0630 time through Pittsfield, 0745 through West Springfield with a 0915 arrival at Worcester MA. {Various observers on the NERAIL e-mail list}  

**PIONEER VALLEY**

His customers have not seen much of a sign of a service disruption; the local from West Springfield which provides the interchange is running well. “Not too many cars are delayed, and when they are, we’re getting a good response in resolving the problem.” Like others, his receivers have suffered more with NS-origin cars, but the situation is improving.

New customers?
Lasko had nothing definite to report, but is impressed with CSXT’s “very aggressive, very cooperative” attitude toward getting new customers [see CSXT].

Abandonment in Westfield
On 19 July, the STB granted PVRR an extension of time to consummate the abandonment of a 1.9-mile branch running south from the former diamond with CSXT [see 14 May 1998]. The railroad is selling the line to the City of Westfield, and needs more time to complete the deal. {STB Docket No.AB-513X}

**NH RAILROADS**

**GRS - AIRPORT BRANCH**
22 July, Concord. **NH DOT DECIDED TO PROCEED TO A HEARING ON THE CLF PETITION.** Paul Sanderson, the hearing officer, said the department had examined the petition in light of the New Hampshire Administrative Procedure Act (APA). Under the APA, the department has no deadline to act on a petition seeking only a declaration (such as interpretation of a statute), but must reply within 60 days to a request for a hearing in a contested case (between two or more parties).

CLF headed its petition ‘for declaratory relief and other relief’ and listed as parties itself and the Manchester Airport. Because of the listing of two parties, NH DOT - still lacking an opinion from the Attorney General - decided to treat the matter as a contested case and responded just under the wire [CLF filed at the end of May - see 26 May issue].

In a letter to CLF, Sanderson set a scheduling hearing for 6 August. CLF attorney Tom Irwin said at that point the parties would discuss the issues and the witnesses they intend to introduce.

Irwin said he had no word from the Public Utility Commission, where CLF had also filed a petition.

Intervene in the abandonment?
CLF considered whether to intervene when GRS sought exemption from the full abandonment procedure to end its service obligation on the part of the line bought by the airport, from south of it to north of it [see 5 February issue]. If no party intervenes, the exemption will become final on 1 August.

“We saw any intervention as a time sink, with slim likelihood of benefit to our cause,” said Irwin. CLF is aiming its effort at enforcement of the state obligation to preserve rail corridors. {ARW discussions; STB Decision Docket No. AB-32 (Sub-No.87X) 2July.99}

The Salem end?
Despite the 16 April notice of intent to abandon this stub [see 30 April issue], and the track work ending the rails just north of the last customer in Salem [see 23 June issue], GRS has not yet filed for abandonment of the stub.

**RHODE ISLAND RRs**

**AMTRAK - T.F.GREEN STATION**
19 July, Warwick. **THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION RULED THE PROPOSED STATION would have ‘no significant impact’ on the environment, avoiding the need for a full Environmental Impact Statement and opening the way to design engineering.** As announced at a media event attended by Governor Almond and the Congressional delegation, this project has $25 million in demonstration funds that Senator John Chafee included in TEA-21.

Design work will now kick into high gear, with a construction start scheduled for late 2000 or early 2001. Environmental degradation requires some remediation, but the combination of rail station and airport in close proximity is expected to induce more economic development for the adjacent land. The project does include a people mover between the two terminals [see 8 January issue]. {ARW discussion with Steve Devine of RIDOT 20July.99; e-mail fromEverett Stuart, Rhode Island Association of Railroad Passengers}

**NEWPORT SECONDARY**
This 16.3-mile stretch begins at the Massachusetts state line in Tiverton (milepost 14.2) and ends at the connector to Goat Island in downtown Newport (milepost 30.5). Built in 1846 as the Newport and Fall River Railroad, the section from milepost 21.7 to the end was bought by the state in 1979. The balance was acquired from PW in 1983, though PW reserved the right to serve any freight customers.

In February 1988, a barge hit the Sekonnet River bridge at milepost 17.05, connecting Aquidneck Island (location of Newport) to the mainland. Since then, though the state did recover some funds from the barge company, the track on the island has remained isolated from the national rail system.

Two passenger rail franchises operate on the Newport Secondary: the Newport Dinner Train, and the Old Colony and Newport excursion train. [Rhode Island Rail Plan 1993]

**Old Colony excursion operation**
The ‘National Railroad Foundation and Museum at Newport’ operates a 70-minute, ten-mile roundtrip excursion service, the Old Colony and Newport Railroad, from downtown Newport to Melville. The train runs backward for the return trip.

Jack Doyle, the general manager and one of the surviving founders, said the Museum began in the same year the state bought the line with the intent of attempting to preserve and restore the line and some equipment.

Executive Director (unpaid) Don Elden said running year around, with but two trains on Saturdays and two trains on
Sundays, it now handles 6,000-8,000 passengers per year, at a cost of $7 for adults. It also runs charter trips as far as the Sekonnet River bridge, to keep residents aware that the rail line could revive, and to provide additional scenic vistas.

**Newport Dinner Train**
The Dinner Train operates four times a week from downtown Newport to Melville and return. It offers a luncheon Musical Review train on Thursday, a Murder Mystery on Friday, a Candlelight Dinner on Saturday, and a Family run for Sunday lunch. Prices range from $35 to $53. According to Doyle, who also serves as a locomotive engineer on the train, the predecessor operation ran a three-hour trip as far as the Sekonnet River bridge and return.

**Maintenance agreement**
The first dinner train operation, the Newport Star Clipper Dinner Train, agreed with the state to maintain the track to Class I standards up to the Sekonnet bridge, permitting 15 mile-per-hour passenger operation. That agreement disappeared in the early 1990s when the Star operation went through bankruptcy because of financial losses at the owner’s dinner trains in Iowa and Michigan; the Newport operation was making money but failed to keep the track at Class I.

In 1997, new operators restarted the dinner train, and signed a new operating agreement, stating that once the track was brought up to Class I, the Dinner Train would maintain it to those standards. According to Steve Devine, RIDOT rail chief, the department spent about $250,000 in spring 1997 on track rehab, and is spending another $250,000 this summer from Newport to Melville.

New England Railroad Construction of Bridgeport CT, the low bidder, began on 20 July the installation of 1,500 ties from Newport to Portsmouth and the rebuilding of three grade crossings.

**Coordinating the two operations**
Both railroads, said Elden, have non-exclusive licenses for the track. In the beginning, Old Colony did do maintenance, but with the arrival of a for-profit operation, RIDOT asked it to take over.

The two rail operations have separate equipment, with the Dinner Train leasing its from the Museum. The initial operator had to import the equipment by barge, for the bridge was no longer functioning at that point.

Equipment maintenance and other functions are shared between the two operations. Like Doyle, three other employees of the Museum are “hired out” to the Dinner Train.

**Freight service**
Conrail ran perfunctory service to the Kaiser Aluminum plant and other sites until 1985. Doyle and others state that PW, which succeeded to the freight rights, never operated on Aquidneck Island. For a few years, the Old Colony would call Worcester to get permission to use the track, but finally PW said, “If we ever use the track, we will notify you.”

**Track north of the bridge**
While still in place, it suffers from lack of attention. Doyle noted that it has at least one severe washout. It runs directly into Fall River at Battleship Cove.

**Possible rail shuttle**
According to Devine, RIDOT will soon issue an RFP for a consultant to examine the potential for rail shuttle service to carry residents and tourists into Newport along this line. The study will also examine the possibility of the shuttle service extending to Fall River if MBTA’s service is extended that far. The dinner train might serve nicely here, said Doyle, meeting rail passengers in Fall River and giving them dinner enroute to Newport.

Traditional commuter rail would not produce enough riders, said Devine. Under earlier federal funding guidelines, the Urban Mass Transit Administration and FTA could only fund work trips. The passage of ISTEA in 1993 and the creation of the surface transportation enhancement program meant funds could be used for less-intense traffic. Devine talked to VAOT, whose nascent commuter service will also handle shopping trips instead of the usual commute to work and which is using enhancement money.

Using the Vermont program as a model, RIDOT hopes to use enhancement funds for the rail shuttle. Heavy development pressure on the west side of the island is expected to produce more people willing to take the train.

**Restoration of the bridge**
The US Coast Guard would like the state to make a choice: repair or demolish the Sekonnet River bridge. Devine said the state has four options to deal with the swing bridge, now sitting in the open position: (1) demolish it; (2) demolish it and leave the piers in place for a possible reconstruction; (3) rebuild it; or (4) build a new highway cum rail bridge.

According to Devine, RIDOT has decided to replace the Route 24 bridge over the Sekonnet River, which runs parallel to the rail line at that point. The chief engineer is currently considering whether to carry the track on a span below the highway bridge, which would close as needed for rail traffic. The highway would use a high, fixed span. Doyle said the Museum is “putting some energy” into convincing RIDOT to do the dual-function bridge. {ARW discussions 19-22 July 99}

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**VERMONT RAILROADS**

**VAOT - NEGOTIATIONS**
20 July. WHERE DO THE TALKS WITH VARIOUS RAILROADS STAND? According to John Dunleavy, assistant attorney general, Sue Compton of the rail program, and others:

**GRS - Wells River branch**
At an 8 July meeting in White River Junction with GRS officials, the two sides were “unable to reach agreement,” and the talks about VAOT acquiring the branch were “suspended indefinitely,” said Dunleavy. Compton said the problem revolved
around track access, but would not provide further details.

“I wouldn’t say that,” responded David Fink, GRS executive vice-president, when asked about Dunleavy’s characterization. He declined to comment further, however.

**GRS - west end access**

According to Compton’s understanding, Pat Garahan is continuing to talk with GRS about access for Amtrak from Mechanicville to Hoosick Junction [see 23 June issue].

**Lamoille Valley**

With the work on Wells River suspended, Dunleavy said he could turn some attention to considering how to relieve LVRC of its service obligation. The STB in May rejected an easy approach [see 26 May issue]. He expected to contact LVRC’s attorney, David Anderson, to resume discussion.

**NECR - WACR**

Dunleavy said VAOT is meeting with NECR and Bombardier to meet the latter’s requirement for more service more than the once-per-week earlier provided. This means NECR must provide crew and power, both of which it does not now have enough of.

Bombardier is willing to deploy its plant switcher to move the assembled cars to the junction with NECR in Montpelier, but because of the length of time to make that run, must also have a trackmobile to switch the factory during the absence of the switcher.

**VAOT - INDUSTRIAL SIDINGS**

20 July. **HAVE A PET SIDING PROJECT?** VAOT has money available, said rail administrator Dick Bowen for FY00. The B&A System and NECR have both applied for some of the $1.8 million available [see 26 May issue], but wanted an extension of time to hone their applications, which were due by 1 June. “That’s fine,” as long as each realizes that if other railroads apply and want to use the money immediately, B&A and NECR may lose their chance.

**FY99**

Of the 12 projects funded [see 18 December 1998 issue], B&A has five, one completed: rebuilding an existing siding to better serve a new warehouse in Beebe Junction built by Columbia Forest Products. Rick Nelson, an engineer at the plant, said the $26,000 of siding work would not necessarily increase traffic, but did improve track “in very poor shape.” The VRS siding project at OMYA was also complete, said Bowen. **[ARW discussion]**

**VAOT - REORGANIZATION**

14 June. **MEMBERS OF THE VERMONT RAIL COUNCIL EXPRESSED CONCERN** about the disappearance of the rail and air division [see 9 June issue], fearing the agency would de-emphasize rail if it were folded in with the other programs. Mike Brigham, head of NECR, John Pennington, president of VRS, and Jerry Hebda, VRS vice-president, all spoke.

Mique Glitman, acting secretary of the agency, asserted that the situation would actually improve for rail. “There was a rail program before, there is a rail program now. There’s still a rail program manager and probably there’s going to be more people. This is going to improve our delivery of rail projects.”

Referring to the need for projects to get out the door, Glitman said she will visit Castleton and Fair Haven next week to explain to local officials why crossing work approved and funded by the legislature is not yet done. “We’re going to have more resources in the rail program, which will benefit taxpayers in being assured that we’re being the most efficient we can be.”

**GRS - VRS HAULAGE AGREEMENT**

20 July. **VRS BEGAN MOVING SOME EASTBOUND GRS TRAFFIC FROM WHITEHALL TO BRATTLEBORO** in a temporary move to alleviate congestion in the Saratoga and Mohawk NY yards. CP (D&H) train #512, southbound from Montréal, yards at Whitehall. VRS crews switch the train out making four blocks for these destinations: GRS, Saratoga, Kenwood, and Albany.

From Whitehall, the GRS block is moving via the VRS to Bellows Falls, where GRS moves the block to East Deerfield. On 22 July, observers spotted a block of 22 loads and 3 empties headed for Bellows Falls. **[Gordon Smith and David Rose in NERAIL e-mail list]**

**VRS - COMMUTER RAIL**

20 July. **MORE STEPS TOWARD BEGINNING OPERATION:** grade crossing work started at the end of June, and the signal contractor is ready to start cabling the crossings. Sue Compton said VAOT had decided to negotiate a lease of a locomotive from VRS, with VRS agreeing to provide a backup locomotive when necessary. The hourly commuter service from Burlington to Shelburne requires only one trainset, with a trip time of just 22 minutes one way. **[ARW discussion]**

**MARITIMES/QUÉBEC RRss**

**COMPETITION?**

**PORTSMOUTH**

19 July. **THE NH PORT AUTHORITY BOARD ACCEPTED THE TRAFFIC LOSS** which occurred when Hugo Neu, the stevedoring company Bulkloader’s parent, could not come to terms on a move of the concrete pilings [see 9 June issue]. Immediately following the news, Port Authority Executive Director Tom Orfe said the board needed to decide if it wanted a terminal operator. “My desire right now would be to eliminate Bulkloader from the formula.” {Christine Gillette in *Portsmouth Herald* 16 June.99}

**Mayor’s reaction**

On 18 June, Portsmouth Mayor Evelyn Sirrell described herself as “furious” with the failure of Bulkloader to deliver on promises, and hoped a state legislative representative would introduce a bill to return control of the facility to the city. The city could convert it to a use which would pay property taxes, and generate $500,000 per year from the $18 million assessed value. At this point, the Authority pays the city $30,000 in lieu of taxes.

Sirrell, who sits *ex-officio* on the Board, could not be present for the meeting at which it decided not to terminate the Bulkloader contract before its third, final year. {Christine Gillette in *Portsmouth Herald* 16 June.99}

**The board meeting**

On 24 June at the board’s regular monthly meeting, Chair Steve Foss of Foss Manufacturing stated that Bulkloader was unlikely to meet its third-year tonnage requirement of 200,000 tons. Sirrell renewed her criticism. But Board Vice-chair Bob Stover, head of Appledore Engineering, called the tonnage requirement a red herring and added it may not remain a requirement in future contracts - this one expires 1 August 2000. Stover, Foss, and member Kathleen Salisbury (a state employee) noted the diversification which has taken place. Salisbury insisted: “The contract is a good one. We have a year to figure out where we want to go.” {Jerry Miller in *Manchester Union Leader* 25 June.99}

Reached on 22 July, Foss underlined that the board had taken no action with respect to Bulkloader’s failure to clinch the piling contract. {ARW discussion}

**The diversification**

Geno Marconi, port manager, ticked off the various recent ship calls: tall ship HMS Bounty, US Coast Guard layovers June and August, Simplex Cable loading Memorial Day, ABB Combustion Engineering project cargo 9-10 June, UNH off-shore aquaculture experiment May-June, Maine Maritime Academy training ship 4 July, and six cruise ship calls, up one from 1998. {ARW discussion 19 July.99}

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**HALIFAX**

19 July. **CERES ANNOUNCED COMPLETION OF ITS SECOND BERTH FACILITY** [see 22 January issue], done by the Halifax Port Authority. The improved track permits a train of about 1.6 kilometers - a normal Halifax container train - to depart directly from Ceres.

Business has improved about 20% [see 16 July issue]. The main customer is the Grand Alliance (OOC, NYK, Hapag-Lloyd, and P&O Nedlloyd); the alliance which began calling in October 1998 - K Line, Yang Ming, and COSCO - has also helped. “But their volumes are not where we would like them to be, or where they would like them to be.” {Tom Peters in *Halifax Herald* 20 July.99}

**COMPETITION FOR MARKET SHARE IN THE ATLANTIC NORTHEAST**

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PO Box 941
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Chalmers (Chop) Hardenbergh, publisher and editor;
Fred Hirsch, correspondent
e-mail: C_Hardenbergh@juno.com

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