



# MAINE RAIL NEWS

MRG, Inc. (Maine Rail Group)

P.O. Box 5494

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<https://mainerailgroup.org>

*A volunteer group  
working to enhance  
rail services in Maine*

## May / June 2026 Newsletter

### In This Issue

- A message from MRG president Peter Cole
- Updates on Two Downeaster Station Projects
- MRG Annual Meeting and Excursion on June 27
- Rail News Briefs
  - Maine RR Documentary in Production
  - Precision Terminal Logistics in Rigby
- Maine Trains T-Shirts and 2026 NE Rail Maps
- Mark Your Calendar

---- Ed Hanscom, newsletter editor

### MRG President's Message

I could write pages about all the reasons that we need to expand train service and protect state owned rail corridors in Maine, but as readers of this newsletter you know all the reasons. All you need to do is pass by a gas station, open your most recent insurance bill, or pay your car registration and you know why options are needed. You could also look at the age demographics in Maine and know that whether you are old or young, driving is getting more difficult.

The MRG board has decided that to spread our message across the state more frequently and consistently, we need to join forces with the other citizen rail advocacy group, Trainriders Northeast (TRNE). We believe that together we can have a greater impact. Over the next year we will work to get our common message out. MRG will continue to exist until July 2027, but rather than renew your dues in December to MRG please join TRNE. If you are already a member of both, you can make an additional donation to TRNE.

Our website will continue to post information. By the end of the summer, our newsletter editor, Ed Hanscom, and I will be able to put out electronic monthly brief newsletters that go to members of both MRG and TRNE as well as

continue our traditional bi-monthly MRG newsletter through December.

MRG's goal is to create a stronger advocacy group that can meet individuals where they are. It is increasingly difficult to break through all the social media and fractured news organizations. While other groups can promote fun "recreational activities" at the cost of long-term economic benefits, we as rail advocates are often ignored as we work to build and retain long-term infrastructure.

Rail services and bicycles should be partners. They are both environmentally friendly, and help decrease car usage which is bankrupting local, state, and federal budgets. Unfortunately, active transportation, a concept for "last mile" transportation, suddenly became misunderstood as the reason to tear out a key part of the rail infrastructure. I have witnessed many locations in both the US and Europe where bicycles and rails serve as partners, allowing rails to carry the bicycles over long distances and then allowing individuals to walk, bicycle or otherwise roll to that last mile location.

While population density and distances discourage the build out of heavy passenger rail in Maine, outside the corridor from Kittery to Bangor right now, the use of existing rail corridors to move bulk and heavy freight to take advantage of the improvements of the CSX mainline across the state should not be ignored. The same people who complain about trains crossing the road also complain about the state of roads destroyed by heavy trucks.

Infrastructure is expensive, partially due to lack of officials who are educated in getting the most out of every dollar and are thus dependent upon outside "expert" contractors. A bus rapid transit (BRT) system is being proposed for the Portland to Gorham corridor. Done right, it will cost \$20 to \$50 million a mile. Resurrecting the 30-mile Mountain Division for freight total would be \$30 million (with 10% of that cost due to the 1.1 miles pulled out by the state). While those 30 miles are not for passenger service at this time, freight rail would remove heavy trucks off the rural roads and reduce the danger to cars and pedestrians. Meanwhile, the state is proposing

to replace the 30 miles with a bicycle trail costing 1.5 to 2 million dollars a mile (or double the cost of bringing the line up to service). While recreation is great, with rail freight connections come jobs, and investments in local communities. Somehow, the perception that people driving in a vehicle with their bicycles to the trail will decrease pollution seems disingenuous.

The bottom-line is that people living in Maine need choices, not just automobiles that do not service 30 percent of the population. Ideas like BRT, if done right, is one choice. Bicycle trails within towns offer alternatives. A Downeast rail passenger corridor going from Bangor to Wells and beyond, with bus service from stations along the line gives people choices, but the full cost of driving must be realized before critics complain about spending money on alternatives.

We look forward to working with TRNE as we try to make Maine a wonderful place for the young, the old and the ones in between, while encouraging investment in freight rail to build the industries to support the small towns in Maine.

--- Peter Cole, President of the Maine Rail Group

### Updates on Two *Downeaster* Stations

Source: NNEPRA

Work progresses on bringing improvements to two train stations served by the *Downeaster* passenger service. Closest to completion is the Wells station pictured here as it was in March 2026. The cross-laminated timber wall and roof panels are all in place. Waterproofing the building is the next step, now in progress.



The updated Wells station, with its two passenger platforms and connecting walkway over the CSX mainline, should be completed by late fall. The next image is an artist's rendering showing how the completed station will look when viewed from the west.



Another artist's rendering below shows the planned Portland station at its preferred new site on St John Street. St John Street is shown in the foreground. Looking west toward the background beyond the station and the CSX mainline, one can see the parking areas that are part of the Mercy Hospital complex. Like the Wells station, the Portland station will have a boarding platform on each side of the double-track CSX mainline to provide flexibility on which track the *Downeaster* would use for boarding. However, the Portland station will also have external access to the station from both the St John side and the Mercy side. This will give passengers more options on how to reach the station directly. An important benefit of relocating the Portland station to this site is the greatly improved efficiency in train operations from avoidance of the backing maneuvers required to serve the current station location. The *Downeaster* travel time between Portland and points north is expected to be reduced by 17 minutes.



The last rendering is a drawing that shows the future Portland station area as viewed from the platform on the west (Mercy) side of the CSX mainline. Note the over-track pedestrian connection between the east and west platforms, similar to the Wells station treatment.

The next step for the Portland station relocation project is adding the City of Portland's support for the preferred station site to the support that the project has already received from Amtrak, CSX, and MaineDOT. More information about the Wells and Portland station projects

and other NNEPRA initiatives can be found at [NNEPRA - NNEPRA](#).



**MRG’s 2026 Annual Meeting and Train Ride to be Held on the Rockland Branch**

Sources: MRG, Cumberland & Knox RR

On Saturday, June 27, 2026, the Maine Rail Group will hold its Annual Meeting in Rockland, highlighted by a special excursion train from Rockland to Waldoboro and return. Along the way, the train will stop at the Heidelberg Materials (formerly Dragon) cement facility in Thomaston for a brief tour. Heidelberg Materials is one of the major freight customers of the Cumberland & Knox Railroad along the reactivated Rockland Branch. The passengers will ride aboard streamlined coaches acquired by the Midcoast Railroad Heritage Trust last year for use in excursions on the Rockland Branch. This trip will be one of the first uses of these railcars on the Rockland Branch. After the MRG business meeting and lunch, boarding for the train trip is scheduled for 12:30 PM, outside the Rockland passenger station (home to the Tracks restaurant). The duration of the trip is planned for 1 hour and 30 minutes. Total seating capacity will be limited to 150 passengers. Tickets for the excursion will be \$20 for adults and teens and \$10 for children age 12 and under. An 11:30 \$25 lunch option will be available for MRG members and their guests. More details will be coming soon. To reserve your train tickets, fill out the form on this page and mail it in, along with payment. Below is the location of the passenger station in Rockland.



June 27, 2026 Maine Rail Group Excursion Train Tickets Order Form											
Name		Email (to confirm your order)		Adult Tickets (\$20 each)		\$		Child Tickets (\$10 each)		\$	
				Total Enclosed		\$					
Please mail check (made out to "MRG") to:										MRG, Inc.	
										P.O. Box 5494	
										Augusta, ME 04332	

**Rail News Briefs**

[savemainerails.org](http://savemainerails.org):

With input from the Maine Rail Group and others, a new **documentary film** is in the works to tell a story about **preserving state-owned rail corridors in Maine**. The film is a project taken on by recognized Maine film director/producer Reggie Groff. In April, a 6-minute trailer was made available for viewing on YouTube. A full documentary will be forthcoming soon. More information and a link to the documentary trailer can be found at <https://savemainerails.org/>.



**Precision Terminal Logistics:**

On March 23, Precision Terminal Logistics announced that it would be operating the new CSX Transflo facility at Rigby Yard in South Portland. The multi-commodity rail-truck transload facility, constructed over the last two years, has a 110-railcar spotting capacity, railcar heating capability, and lift capability for containerized trash. Precision Terminal Logistics serves major (class I) railroads across the United States and Canada.

**T-Shirt Weather is Back!**

That's right! And the perfect T-shirt for Maine summers is the MRG limited edition "I ♥ Maine Trains" T-shirt. They are perfect for that Amtrak outing, train-chasing mission, volunteer work gang workout, or just about any other summer occasion. These beautiful navy-blue shirts are currently available in sizes L and XL at \$10 each (plus shipping and handling, fixed at \$10 for small quantities). Send an email or a letter to reserve your shirt, or show up at an upcoming MRG event (no shipping and handling charge!).

*Editor's Note:* You can send an email to [trains@mainerailgroup.org](mailto:trains@mainerailgroup.org) or a letter to MRG, Inc., P.O. Box 5494, Augusta, ME 04332.

**The New 2026 Edition of the New England Rail Map!**

MRG has just published the 2026 edition of the *New England Rail Lines and Regional Gateways* and orders are coming in! The map is offered in folded, rolled, or laminated formats. Copies may be purchased at train shows and fairs on MRG's calendar or by mail. The price schedule is listed below.

New England Rail Map 2026 (22"x29")			
Map Format	Folded	Rolled	Laminated
Price per Map	\$5	\$5	\$10
Shipping Cost	\$6 (1 to 5 maps)	\$12 (1 to 5 maps)	\$12 (1 or 2 maps)

Bulk order pricing available on request.

*Editor's note:* You can send an email to [trains@mainerailgroup.org](mailto:trains@mainerailgroup.org) or a letter to MRG, Inc., P.O. Box 5494, Augusta, ME 04332.

**Mark Your Calendar!**

Regular MRG, Inc. meetings are virtual by Zoom, starting at 7pm unless otherwise advised. Please check the [Maine Rail Group](http://MaineRailGroup.com) website for changes or send an email to [trains@mainerailgroup.org](mailto:trains@mainerailgroup.org) for a link to the meeting.

**MRG, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation dedicated to railroad education and enhanced rail services in Maine and New England. Membership is open to all who share our goals and interests. Annual dues are \$40 (\$20 for students and first-year members). Inquiries are welcome.**

- Build Maine Conference, Skowhegan, June 2-3, 2026**
- MRG Annual Meeting, Rockland, June 27, 2026**  
(see article in this issue for more information)
- MRG, Inc. Board Meeting, September 16, 2026**
- Common Ground Fair, Unity, September 25-27, 2026**
- Cumberland Fair, Cumberland, Sept 27 – Oct 3, 2026**

**Maine Rail Group (MRG, Inc.)**

A non-profit group working to enhance rail service in Maine  
[www.mainerailgroup.org](http://www.mainerailgroup.org)

**MAINE  
RAIL  
GROUP**



**2026 Membership:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal (\$40) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ New or Student (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Volunteer Interests \_\_\_\_\_  
 Contact Preference: \_\_\_\_\_ by E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ by U.S. Mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail check to: MRG, Inc., P.O. Box 5494, Augusta, ME 04332**

THANKS for supporting the Maine Rail Group!