



# MAINE RAIL NEWS

MRG, Inc. (Maine Rail Group)

P.O. Box 5494

Augusta, ME 04332

<https://mainerailgroup.org>

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

## March / April 2024 Newsletter

With the growing interest in extending passenger service in Maine north of Portland and Brunswick to Bangor, it's worth reviewing what new passenger services were offered in the 1930s and 1940s, and discussing what new passenger services between Bangor and Boston could look like in the future, based on what other states and Amtrak are doing and planning to do. These topics are too broad to cover in a single newsletter, so I propose to cover these topics in a two-part series of articles.

Part 1 of this two-part series deals with the new Bangor to Boston services that were developed by the Boston & Maine and Maine Central railroads in the early days of the transition from steam locomotives to diesel locomotives. You'll find Part 1 in this issue of the newsletter. Part 2, which will appear in a future newsletter, will be based on certain comparable services that Amtrak and other state partners are doing now or planning to do, and how they might relate to the Bangor to Boston corridor.

--- Ed Hanscom, Editor

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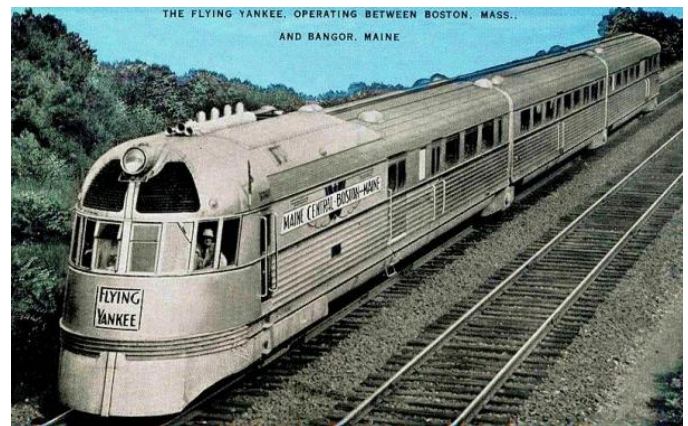
### Bangor to Boston Passenger Trains --- Part 1:

#### A Look Back at What Was Offered in '30s & '40s

Sources: Flying Yankee Assoc, Streamliner Schedules

In the 1930s, railroads in America relied on steam locomotives to move passengers and freight, but a new type of locomotive power was beginning to appear on the tracks: diesel power. Small diesel locomotives were showing up in railroad yards as switchers, shuffling and sorting freight cars at low speeds as they broke down trains that arrived and built up trains for departure. By the middle of the decade, a few railroads were trying out diesels to power high speed (for the time) passenger trains. These trains consisted of a diesel-powered lead car semi-permanently coupled to trailing passenger cars. These pioneering railroads included western lines like the Union Pacific and the Burlington, but also two partnering eastern railroads: the Boston & Maine and the Maine Central.

The diesel-powered train that Pullman-Standard built for the B&M and MEC consisted of three cars: a leading diesel-baggage-buffet-coach unit, a mid-train coach, and a trailing coach-lounge, providing a total of 132 seats. The cars were streamlined and constructed of stainless steel, as shown in the following photo.



The new passenger train, dubbed the *Flying Yankee*, began operation on the B&M between Boston and Portland and on the MEC between Portland and Bangor

in 1935. The timetable below shows the 1936 schedule that the *Flying Yankee* maintained Monday through Saturday. The 1936 schedule shows that the *Flying Yankee* trainset, starting out of Portland, made a morning trip to Boston and then made a trip north to Portland and on to Bangor in the afternoon. The train returned to Portland and on to Boston in the evening. In the late evening, it returned from Boston to Portland, finishing its daily runs. The trip between Boston and Portland took about two hours. The trip between Boston and Bangor took about five hours. By comparison, the Downeaster makes the trip between Portland and Boston on a schedule around 2 hours and 30 minutes.

**The Flying Yankee**  
Boston & Maine Railroad  
Maine Central Railroad  
April 26, 1936

15		265		Train Number				142		16	
Ex Su	Ex Su	Miles	(Boston & Maine)		Services	Ex Su	Ex Su				
11 00A	10 30P	Dp	0.0	Boston, MA (North Station) (ET)	C	Ar	9 25A	9 30P			
	11 04P		27.8	Ipswich, MA	C						
	11 15P		37.3	Newburyport, MA	C						
	11 38P		56.9	Portsmouth, NH	C						
	12 20A		96.2	Biddeford, ME	C						
12 06P			67.1	Dover, NH	C		8 19A	8 24P			
			99.1	Biddeford, ME			7 51A				
			103.7	Old Orchard Beach, ME (See Note)			7 46A				
			108.7	Scarboro Beach, ME (See Note)			7 40A				
12 50P	12 40A	Ar	114.7	Portland, ME (Union Station)	T C M	Dp	7 30A	7 40P			
(Maine Central)											
12 55P		Dp	114.7	Portland, ME (Union Station)	T C M	Ar		7 30P			
1 42P		Ar	150.2	Lewiston, ME	T C	Dp		6 43P			
1 45P		Dp				Ar		6 41P			
F 2 09P			169.8	Winthrop, ME	T C			F 6 17P			
2 50P		Ar	198.4	Waterville, ME	T C	Dp		5 41P			
2 52P		Dp				Ar		5 38P			
F 3 25P			226.2	Newport Jct., ME	T C						
D 3 52P			248.0	Northern Maine Jct., ME	T C						
4 00P		Ar	253.7	Bangor, ME (ET)	T C	Dp		4 15P			

How was the *Flying Yankee* able to cover so much ground in so little time? There seem to be two major reasons. One is that the mainline between Portland and Boston was all double track, so that the *Flying Yankee* could get around opposing and slower trains on the line more easily. Over half of the mainline between Bangor and Waterville was also double track. The other reason is that the *Flying Yankee* had few regular intermediate stops between Bangor and Boston. Although there were some seasonal and "flag" stops, the only regular intermediate stops were in Portland, Lewiston, and Waterville. The Portland to Boston leg operated as a virtual non-stop (express) service.

In the years following World War II, the B&M and MEC invested in new diesel passenger train sets for the Bangor to Boston runs as the original *Flying Yankee* equipment was transferred to other parts of the B&M system. Each of the new trainsets included a locomotive, a baggage-coach, several full coaches, and a diner-lounge. The trainsets would be used on three Bangor to Boston trains: the *Flying Yankee*, the

*Kennebec*, and the *Pine Tree*. This photo shows the fully equipped *Kennebec*.



The three trains kept a schedule around 5 hours and 30 minutes for the full trip from Bangor to Boston, stopping in Waterville, Portland and a limited number of other scheduled stops. The 2-hour Portland to Boston express schedule was maintained for all three trains. The *Flying Yankee* continued to serve Lewiston via the MEC "Back Road". The *Kennebec* and the *Pine Tree* served Augusta and Brunswick via the MEC "Lower Road". For each of these trains, the added 30 minutes on the Bangor to Portland leg allowed some time for added stops and baggage handling. Below is the schedule, as presented in a 1947 ad in the Boston Globe. Under the 1947 schedule, the train departure times offered travelers a range of options to suit their needs. Boston departures were mid-morning, noon, and late afternoon. Bangor departures were early morning, early afternoon, and late afternoon.

**3 NEW TRAINS**

**HERE ARE YOUR TRAIN SCHEDULES BETWEEN BOSTON and BANGOR...**

Road Down			WEEKDAYS (Daylight Saving Time)				Road Up		
KENNEBEC	FLYING YANKEE	PINE TREE	BOSTON	PINE TREE	KENNEBEC	FLYING YANKEE			
9:45 A.M.	12:00 noon	4:30 P.M. Lv.	Ar.	1:10 P.M.	7:20 P.M.	10:15 P.M.			
11:45 A.M.	2:00 P.M.	6:30 P.M. Ar.	Lv.	11:10 A.M.	5:20 P.M.	8:15 P.M.			
12:00 noon	2:05 P.M.	6:40 P.M. Lv.	Lv.	10:55 A.M.	5:05 P.M.	8:05 P.M.			
1:07 P.M.	2:54 P.M.	8:05 P.M. Ar.	Lv.	9:37 A.M.	4:36 P.M.	7:15 P.M.			
	3:29 P.M.	Ar.	Lv.	Ar.	Ar.	6:43 P.M.			
12:36 P.M.	Ar.	7:16 P.M. Ar.	Lv.	10:16 A.M.	4:26 P.M.	6:25 P.M.			
1:24 P.M.	Ar.	8:06 P.M. Ar.	Lv.	9:28 A.M.	3:38 P.M.	6:10 P.M.			
1:53 P.M.	4:04 P.M.	8:34 P.M. Ar.	Lv.	9:02 A.M.	3:11 P.M.	6:00 P.M.			
2:28 P.M.	4:37 P.M.	9:09 P.M. Ar.	Lv.	8:33 A.M.	2:56 P.M.	5:28 P.M.			
3:25 P.M.	5:30 P.M.	10:00 P.M. Ar.	Lv.	7:45 A.M.	1:40 P.M.	4:40 P.M.			

Ar—by connecting train. Lv—by connecting train.  
For Sunday schedules, consult your local ticket agent.

So, what conclusions can be drawn from the review of the Bangor to Boston passenger services offered in the

1930s and 1940s? One is that Boston, in those days, was as important a destination for Maine rail passengers as it is for today's Downeaster passengers. The *Flying Yankee*, *Kennebec*, and *Pine Tree* were developed to provide a speedy service connecting Maine cities from Bangor to Portland with New England's largest city. Boston was so important a destination for central Maine cities, that these trains had no regular passenger stops between Portland and Boston. Intermediate stops between these two cities were handled by a series of local B&M trains on slower schedules. Another conclusion is that the use of limited stops between Bangor and Portland and Boston and the technology of the day allowed these trains to maintain schedules on a par with those of today's passenger services. A final conclusion is that close cooperation between the B&M and the MEC on passenger equipment and scheduling made Bangor to Boston service possible and viable, much as the cooperation of today's railroad entities makes the Downeaster the success that it is.

**MaineDOT Publishes Latest 3-Year Work Plan**

Source: [maine.gov/mdot/](http://maine.gov/mdot/)

On January 18, 2024, the Maine Department of Transportation publicly released its annual Work Plan, which outlines the work that MaineDOT expects to do in the upcoming three years. In this latest edition of the Work Plan, activities in 2024, 2025, and 2026 are covered. The \$3.94 billion Work Plan covers all aspects of work including planning, project development (design and construction), maintenance, operations, and administration for all transportation modes. Not surprisingly, highway transportation represents the bulk of the Work Plan, but railroad-related work is about \$280 million out of the total.

The following table shows a condensed listing of the rail transportation elements of the Work Plan. The major elements include track rehabilitation, bridge rehabilitation, spur track construction, operating and capital assistance for the Downeaster, and railroad grade crossing improvements. While most work items are focused on maintaining or improving railroad infrastructure, services, and safety, there are two exceptions that fall under the railroad category that would tend toward degradation of state-owned railroad assets: the RUAC (Rail Use Advisory Council) process in the Calais area, and the trail planning on the Mountain Division (Standish to Fryeburg).

It should be noted that a large fraction of the railroad-related elements of the Work Plan are listed for 2024 and that most of the funding for track rehabilitation and other capital improvements comes from grant awards from the Federal Railroad Administration to MaineDOT for successfully submitting applications to competitive

grant programs like CRISI (Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements). The track rehabilitation being done on CSX (former Pan Am) lines is being funded through CRISI grants from prior years. Taking advantage of FRA grant opportunities is a key to improving freight and passenger rail services in Maine.

Year	Locations	Work	Funding
2024			
	Calais-Ayers Jct	RUAC process	\$ 135,000
	Standish-Fryeburg	trail planning	\$ 150,000
	Rockland Branch	bridge needs study	\$ 180,000
	Auburn	railroad spur	\$ 545,000
	Hermon	2 railroad spurs	\$ 830,000
	Houlton	railroad spur	\$ 517,000
	Skowhegan	yard improvements	\$ 1,270,000
	MNRY various locations	improvement materials advance purchase	\$ 1,280,000
	Ashland, Easton, various locations	grade crossing improvements	\$ 874,000
	Calais	track rehabilitation	\$ 641,000
	* EMRY, CPKC	track rehabilitation	\$ 77,400,000
	CSX e/o Waterville	track rehabilitation	\$ 42,500,000
	CSX Yarmouth-Waterville	track rehabilitation	\$ 35,500,000
	SLR various locations	line improvements	\$ 1,900,000
	Downeaster	operating assistance	\$ 16,800,000
	Downeaster	equipment purchase	\$ 6,820,000
	Windham	bridge engineering	\$ 50,000
	Brunswick, W Bath	bridge rehabilitation	\$ 4,000,000
2025			
	Hermon	5 railroad spurs	\$ 4,160,000
	Brunswick, Waldoboro	grade crossing improvements	\$ 1,313,000
	Bangor, Hermon, Madawaska	track rehabilitation	\$ 477,000
	Scarborough	grade crossing improvements	\$ 353,000
	Statewide, TBD	improvements match	\$ 4,000,000
	Statewide, TBD	line improvements	\$ 2,910,000
	Statewide, TBD	grade crossing improvements	\$ 1,000,000
	Downeaster	operating assistance	\$ 17,700,000
	Downeaster	capital assistance	\$ 5,200,000
	Crystal, Fort Kent, Mapleton, New Limerick, Oakfield	bridge rehabilitation	\$ 3,693,000
2026			
	Southern Maine	FRA grant match	\$ 12,000,000
	Statewide, TBD	improvements match	\$ 4,000,000
	Statewide, TBD	line improvements	\$ 2,910,000
	Statewide, TBD	grade crossing improvements	\$ 1,200,000
	Downeaster	operating assistance	\$ 18,900,000
	Dyer Brook, Fort Kent, Frenchville, Nashville, T14 R6	bridge rehabilitation	\$ 8,350,000
	* depends on grant being awarded from FRA		

**Status of LD 860**

Source: legislature.maine.gov

On January 30, 2024, the Maine Legislature’s Joint Committee on Transport held a vote on LD 860, “An Act to Identify the Railroad Lines from Portland to Bangor as a Major Corridor and to Fund a Feasibility Study”. The vote led to a divided vote as shown below.

Report	Divided Reports	Report Signer
MAJ - Ought Not To Pass		Representative Lydia Crafts of Newcastle, Chair Representative Roger Albert of Madawaska Representative Dan Ankeles of Brunswick Representative Holly Eaton of Deer Isle Senator Brad Farrin of Somerset Representative Rick Mason of Lisbon Representative Wayne Parry of Arundel Representative James White of Guilford
MIN - Ought To Pass As Amended		Senator Ben Chipman of Cumberland, Chair Representative Kevin O’Connell of Brewer Representative Bruce White of Waterville

The next step in the legislative process is consideration of the bill by the full Maine Senate. Let your Senator know how you feel about this bill.

**MRG Attends Amherst Train Show**

On January 28 and 29, 2024, representatives of the Maine Rail Group manned a booth at the Amherst Railway Society’s annual Railroad Hobby Show to meet and exchange information with thousands of railroad enthusiasts and activists. Attending were President Russ Barber, Board members Richard Rudolph and Jack Sutton, and past Board member Dave Potter. Russ Barber and Ed Hanscom also attended a local train show in Augusta, ME on February 17.

**2024 Memberships Available!**

If you came across this newsletter at MRG’s website or at MRG’s table at a recent train show and think you’d like to see more newsletters, the best way is to join the Maine Rail Group. Membership dues are \$20 for students and all new (first-year) members and students and \$40 for the rest of us. Just copy the membership form on this page, fill it out, mail it in, and enclose a check, and you can start getting the MRG newsletter on a regular basis. And you are one of those existing members who forgot to renew your membership and lost your membership renewal card, this form works for you, too!.

*MRG, Inc. is a 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.*

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

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



**2024 Membership:**

Renewal (\$40)  
New/Student (\$20)  
Donation \$  
Total Enclosed \$

Name  
Address  
City  
E-mail  
Affiliation  
Volunteer Interests  
Contact Preference:

State  
Zip

Phone ( ) - -

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!

**Mark Your Calendar**

Regular MRG, Inc. meetings are virtual by Zoom, starting at 7pm unless otherwise advised. Please check the <https://mainerailgroup.org> website for changes, or contact President Russ Barber for links:

<rustyrailsis@gmail.com>

**MRG, Inc. Board meeting March 27, 2024**

**Southern Maine Model RR Club, April 13, 2024**

**Train Show at Westbrook Community Center**

**Great Falls Model RR Club, April 27, 2024**

**Topsham Train Show at Mt Ararat HS**

**MRG, Inc. Board meeting May 22, 2024**

**MRG, Inc. Annual Meeting, June 8, 2024**

**at the Downeast Scenic Railroad, Ellsworth**

**MRG, Inc. Board meeting, July 17, 2024**

**MRG, Inc. Board meeting, September 25, 2024**

**MRG, Inc. Board meeting, November 20, 2024**