



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*

May / June 2024 Newsletter

Plenty of news regarding passenger rail, the Flying Yankee, and the activities at the upcoming MRG Annual Meeting in Ellsworth. --- Ed Hanscom, Editor

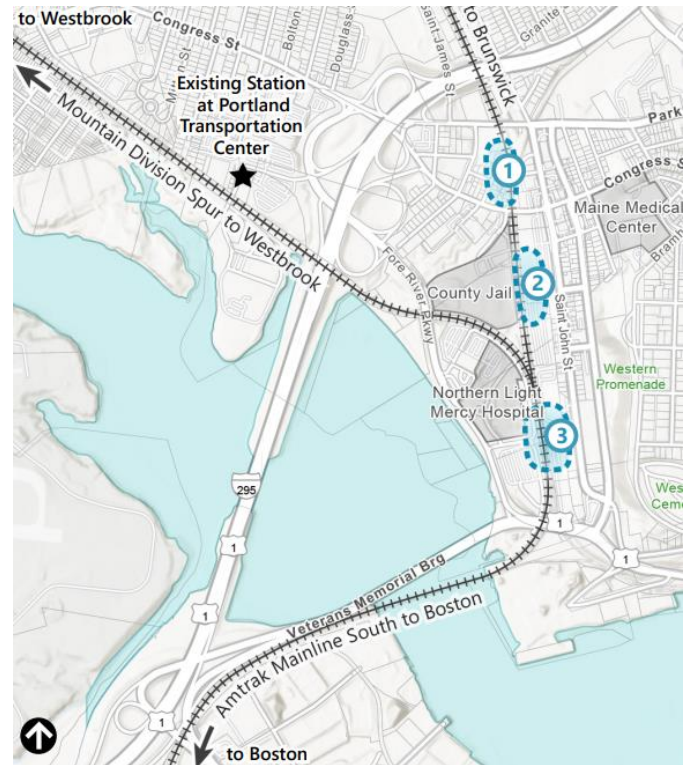
In This Issue

- Portland Station Relocation Study
- The Flying Yankee Finds a New Owner
- LD 860 Update
- MRG's Annual Meeting in Ellsworth on June 8
 - Updated Bylaws
 - MRG Directors and Officers
 - Downeast Scenic Train Ride
 - Tour of MEC 470 Restoration

Portland Transportation Center Move Under Study

Sources: Portland Press Herald, NNEPRA

The operator of the Amtrak Downeaster on Thursday [April 25] outlined three sites being considered for a new Portland station along the main rail line between Boston and Brunswick. The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority [NNEPRA] and VHB, an engineering consulting firm, identified one site between Congress Street and Park Avenue behind Amato's/McDonald's on St. John Street with access to Congress Street [west of the tracks crossing Congress Street]. A second possibility is south of Congress Street near Union Station Plaza between the Cumberland County Jail and St. John Street. A third option unveiled during the virtual meeting Thursday is between the southern end of St. John Street and Northern Light Mercy Hospital. *Editor's note: See the following map showing the three station location options. Each of the locations has its pros and cons. To see the April 25 presentation and public comments, follow this link to the NNEPRA website. [Portland Station Relocation - NNEPRA](#)*



Patricia Quinn, executive director of NNEPRA, said officials are “very early in the process” and that a rough cost estimate would be in a “few tens of millions of dollars.” “Without knowing exactly what we’re going to build, it’s hard to get there.” She said, referring to a more precise cost estimate. Quinn previously has said a train station and platform could be complete within five years.

A new station could ease traveler and parking congestion where the Downeaster stops at the Portland Transportation Center, which is owned by and shared with the Concord Coach Lines bus company. The transportation center at Thompson’s Point takes the northbound Downeaster onto a branch of Pan Am’s main line. [The branch is the beginning of Maine Central Railroad’s Mountain Division.] To continue north, the train must back up to the main line, which takes 15

minutes [for the entire sequence of train movements], reducing the timeliness and efficiency of the passenger service. *Editor's note: The operational efficiencies of relocating the Portland station to the CSX main line would reduce travel times by 15 minutes between Boston and all locations north of Portland, including Freeport, Brunswick, and any other future station locations such as Lewiston, Augusta, Waterville, and Bangor. These time savings would attract more passengers to the Downeaster. It also means that a Downeaster trainset that makes two daily round trips to Boston (with four Portland stops in total) in an hour's less time overall, allowing more scheduling flexibility and possible expansion of service at minimal cost.*

The Flying Yankee Has Found a New Owner

Source: flyingyankee.org

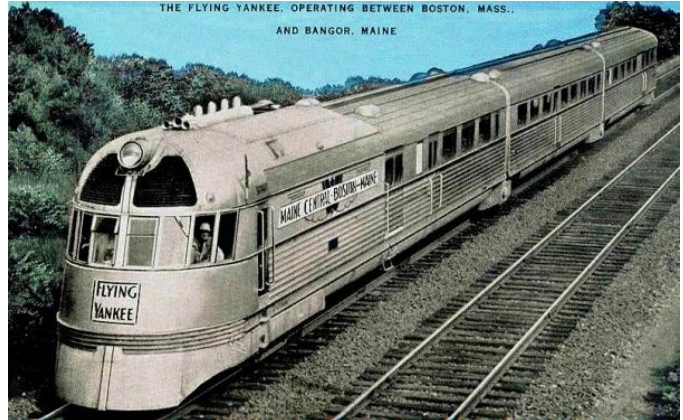
The Flying Yankee Association (FYA) announced at its Annual Meeting on Saturday, April 6, 2024, that it has been selected by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) to receive ownership of the historic "Flying Yankee" train. The announcement comes after the state conducted a competitive and comprehensive Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

"We are both honored and thrilled to be receiving this historic train from the State," said Brian LaPlant, President of the FYA. "The Flying Yankee has languished for far too long, and we look forward to preserving, relocating, and restoring the train, thanks to the State, as well as our friends, partners, and supporters that will help make this dream become a reality. A beautiful piece of New England history has been saved today."

The FYA will first meet with the state later this month to finalize the transfer details. Afterwards, the State's Executive Council will meet to approve the details and transfer the ownership. Mr. LaPlant expects that to take place sometime in the summer of 2024.

NHDOT formally released an RFP in November of 2023, searching for a responsible entity to complete the restoration of the historic train. The successful bidder will receive ownership of the train from the State, the current owners of the train. The RFP's submission window officially closed on January 3, 2024.

The Flying Yankee Restoration Group d/b/a Flying Yankee Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization that is responsible for raising and managing funds related to the restoration of the famous Flying Yankee train, originally owned and operated by the Boston & Maine Railroad. For more information, please visit the FYA website at www.flyingyankee.org, or find the organization on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram.



Editor's Note: The Flying Yankee, one of the first streamlined diesel passenger trains in the United States, began operations between Boston and Bangor on the Boston & Maine and Maine Central Railroads in 1935. After 11 years, it was reassigned to other lines on the Boston & Maine before being retired in 1957. It was on static display at the narrow-gauge Edaville Railroad in South Carver, MA until 1993. After NHDOT took ownership in 1997, the FYA and other organizations began restoration of the train. The Conway Daily Sun has reported that NYA's plan, once ownership is transferred from NHDOT, is to move the Flying Yankee to Conway Scenic Railroad to be fully restored and operated their lines. It would be wonderful to see the Flying Yankee carrying passengers on the Mountain Division!

Status of LD 860

Source: legislature.maine.gov

After the divided vote by the Joint Committee on Transportation on January 30, 2024, LD 860, "An Act to Identify the Railroad Lines from Portland to Bangor as a Major Corridor and to Fund a Feasibility Study" went on to the Senate and House of Representatives for further consideration. On March 20, the full Senate approved LD 860 by a 23 to 11 vote. However, on April 2, the full House defeated the bill by an 80 to 64 vote. A reconsideration of the bill by both legislative bodies did not change the earlier result. The drive for advancing passenger rail service through Central Maine to Bangor is stalled for the current legislative session. A new Maine Legislature will be elected in November.

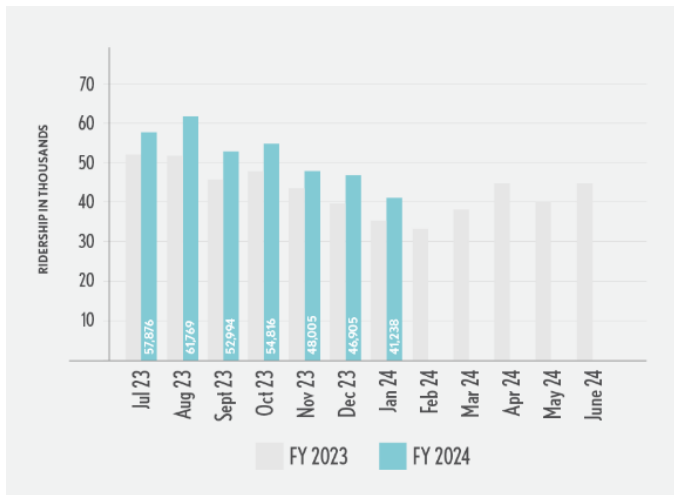
Editor's Note: Based on the majority vote in the Senate and a substantial minority vote in the House, there does seem to be substantial support for extending passenger rail service in Maine. The growing support for passenger rail, as evidenced by ridership growth on the Downeaster, and a greater public awareness of the economic and environmental benefits of rail could shift

the balance in the next legislature to pass legislation to pursue extending passenger rail service.

Downeaster on a Record-Breaking Ridership Pace

Source: NNEPRA (data)

The Downeaster passenger rail service between Boston and Brunswick is continuing to show strong growth in ridership in Fiscal Year 2024 (which began in July 2023). In every month From July through January, monthly ridership has exceeded same-month ridership in the previous year by thousands of riders. (See the following chart.) Through the first seven months of FY24, total ridership stood at 363,603 passengers. Adding the 42,045 in February puts the fiscal year-to-date total at an all-time record 405,648 for those eight months. The Downeaster is on track (pun intended) to have its first 600,000-rider year. This latest Downeaster ridership information is further proof that train travel in Maine has more than recovered from the Pandemic and is poised to climb to new heights.



MRG Annual Meeting on June 8 in Ellsworth

Maine Rail Group will hold its 2024 Annual Meeting in Ellsworth on June 8 at the Downeast Scenic Railway. The Annual Meeting is the biggest annual event for the Maine Rail Group. The 2024 Annual Meeting will be no exception. The doors will open at the Maine Community Foundation’s meeting hall at 10:00 AM with light refreshments available.

The MRG president will open the business meeting at 11:00 AM. Following the normal review of MRG activity and financial summary of the past year, the membership will vote on an updated set of Bylaws for the organization a Board of Directors for the coming year. After the adjournment of the business meeting, the newly elected Board of Directors will elect the officers for

the coming year. See the special briefs on page 4 about the Board of Directors and the updated Bylaws.

At 12:00 noon, pre-ordered box lunches will be delivered. After lunch, the special afternoon activities will begin. At 1:00, MRG members will migrate by car to the Downeast Scenic Railroad’s facilities for the 1:30 train ride to Ellsworth Falls and back, returning around 3:00. Then, MRG will be given a tour of the New England Steam Corp. facilities where the former Maine Central Railroad 470 steam locomotive is being restored to operating condition. MEC 470 was the last steam locomotive to haul passengers on the railroad and was a static display for many years in Waterville. The 2024 MRG Annual Meeting promises to be a memorable event that you won’t want to miss. Be sure to fill out the registration form below and send it in with a check to reserve your box lunch(es).

Maine Rail Group 2024 Annual Meeting

MRG, Inc. (Maine Rail Group) will hold its 2024 Annual Meeting in person on June 8 at the Maine Community Foundation meeting facility (in former Maine Central RR train station), Main Street in Ellsworth.

AGENDA

- 10:00 am Doors open at Maine Community Foundation
- 11:00 Meeting called to order
 - President’s report
 - Treasurer’s report for 2023
 - Other reports
 - By-laws update and vote
 - Election of directors (members vote)
 - Other business
- 11:45 Adjourn Annual Meeting – directors elect officers
- 12:00 noon Lunch
- 12:30 pm Guest speaker – TBA
- 1:00 Drive to Washington Jct. for train ride and facility tour
- 1:30 Downeast Scenic RR train ride
- After train New England Steam Corp. tour

Please complete and return this form with payment for lunch(es) at \$20 per person by May 30. Your guests are welcome.

----- detach here -----

Name: _____ Current member? Y [] N []

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Postal Address: _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

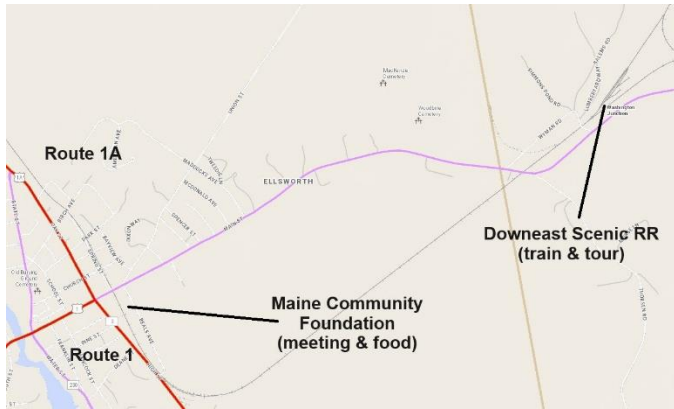
Names & Number of Guests: _____

_____ Total Number _____

Annual meeting only	NO CHARGE	Lunch Preference(s)
Lunches [] @ \$20 pp	\$ _____	___ Ham +Swiss
Train Ride	NO CHARGE*	___ Roast Beef
Donation - optional	\$ _____	___ Chicken
TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$ _____	___ Veggie

Please mail completed form with payment to:
MRG, Inc., PO Box 5494, Augusta, ME 04332

* ...to MRG 2024 Annual Meeting riders – thanks to Downeast Scenic RR



MRG Annual Meeting Location, Ellsworth, ME

MRG's Bylaws Are Overdue for an Update

After more than a decade of operating under bylaws that had grown outdated in purpose and procedure, Maine Rail Group has updated its bylaws to fit its education and awareness mission and to ensure that meets current legal standards. This proposed set of bylaws is available for review by MRG members before the 2024 Annual Meeting, where members will have the opportunity to vote to enact it. Any member can receive a copy of these bylaws by submitting a request to MRG, Inc. at our mailing address: P.O. Box 5494, Augusta, ME 04332.

Slate of Directors for MRG Board is Up for Election

As it does each year, the MRG Board of Directors proposes a slate of Directors for the coming year, subject to membership approval at the Annual Meeting. In 2024, the slate includes the following names (with offers to serve as officers shown in parentheses):

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Russ Barber (vice president) | Joe Leonard |
| Mike Byron | Jack Madden |
| Peter Cole (president) | Richard Rudolph |
| Edward Hanscom (treasurer) | Andy Sandweiss |
| Bob Holland (secretary, clerk) | Jack Sutton |
| Stan Koski | |

Most Board members on the slate are returning Board members from last year. A notable exception is Peter Cole, a former Board member returning and willing to succeed Russ Barber as president. Russ offers to fill the position of vice president to ease the transition. Also notable is that secretary Bob Holland has offered also to serve as clerk of the organization, replacing Mark Walker, who had ably served in that role for many years.

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.

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 all students and all new (first-year) members 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 if 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!

Maine Rail Group (MRG, Inc.)

A non-profit group working to enhance rail service in Maine

www.mainerailgroup.org



2024 Membership:

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

Name
Address
City

State
Zip

E-mail
Affiliation
Volunteer Interests
Contact Preference:

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 May 22, 2024

MRG, Inc. Annual Meeting, June 8, 2024

MRG, Inc. Board meeting, July 17, 2024

MRG, Inc. Board meeting, September 25, 2024

MRG, Inc. Board meeting, November 20, 2024