

MRG, Inc. (Maine Rail Group)
P.O. Box 5494, Augusta, Maine 04332
<http://mainerailgroup.org>

July / August 2021

Greetings,

Membership

Stanley Koski, a founding director of MRG, Inc. suffered a stroke recently that has affected his movement. After hospitalization in Portland, he is now recovering at River Ridge Center in Kennebunk, Maine. Stan speaks fluently and welcomes phone calls directly to his room at (207) 467-4740.

We appreciate Claudette, Stan's wife, stepping in to help cover some of Stan's mail and forwarding responsibilities.

President's Report

Presidents' comments,

I am happy to report that there have been some satisfying developments since our last Newsletter.

First, the State of Maine legislature has passed LD 227 a resolution to study the expansion of Passenger rail, both from Lewiston-Auburn to Bangor, and Brunswick to Bangor. Called a transit propensity study in the state's language, it is none the less, a first step towards the possibility of extending passenger rail in Maine.

Second, Maine Rail Group, now has an official logo to go with all our publications, mail, banners, and other uses. Everyone on the board contributed to creating this logo. I think it will serve us very well.

Third we are working on both enhanced website presence, and social media presence. So, look for those improvements going ahead.

Forth, we're about to publish a brochure that will help in getting the word out and drawing support for the Passenger Rail bill and study.

Lasty, I want to thank several people who have showed up and contributed weekly on the ongoing zoom meetings, State hearings, working to help get LD227 to where it is now. Getting to this

point and keeping it moving forward has been a lot of work and continues to be a lot of work. Besides the entire board, I want to mention the following people:

Paul Weiss, Joe Baldacci, Jack Madden, Andrew Sandweiss, Joseph Leonard, Robert Klose, Tom Testa, and John Koons.

Russ Barber

Annual Meeting Announcement

MRG, Inc's 2021 annual meeting is delayed until October, allowing more time for clarity regarding an in-person or virtual format, and to decide the location and date if it's in-person. Meeting details and agenda will appear in our September / October newsletter, due out in early September. Stay tuned!

New Maine Rail Group Logo



This new logo was adopted by the MRG, Inc. board in June, thanks to leadership of Peter Cole and participation of board members. We look forward to displaying it proudly on future publications.

Passenger rail to Augusta, Waterville & Bangor

Richard Rudolph

Latest Update on Passage LD 227

Richard Rudolph, MRG Director, Chairman,
Rail Users Network

This is an update regarding the passage of LD 227 which was approved by the Maine State Legislature and signed by the Governor Janet Mills on June 14, 2021. The original bill

which was sponsored by Senator Joe Baldacci and seven other state legislators from Central Maine called for the state to conduct a feasibility study for passenger rail service from Brunswick to Augusta and beyond to Waterville and Bangor. Despite a large turn-out of supporters who testified virtually at the public hearing in favor of the bill, the final version was modified at the Transportation Committee's Work Session to conduct a "Transit Propensity Analysis". This analysis will include the evaluation of the two possible routes to Bangor: the state-owned rail line from Brunswick through Augusta or Pan Am's main rail line from Lewiston/Auburn. The passenger rail service from Waterville would then continue to Bangor.

While the request for proposals has not been sent out yet, we expect the propensity analysis will include an evaluation of potential ridership by examining similar rail corridors, the demographics and travel demand/patterns of the Study Area and the potential development opportunities.

We are delighted that the state is willing to provide \$150,000 for its share of the study. As the major communities in Central Maine are expected to cover 25% of the cost of the study, the Maine Rail Group is working to build public support in Augusta, Bangor and Waterville. We believe passenger rail service extending to Bangor is a strategic investment in Maine's future and recognize it cannot be achieved without the active support of community organizations and local businesses.

It is our understanding that city officials in both Bangor and Waterville will provide funding to help pay for the project and we are hopeful that with the impending change in leadership in Augusta, city officials will recognize the value of participating in this endeavor as well. In the meantime, we plan to reach out to local Rotary Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, Maine Planning Organizations and other business groups to build community support to ensure that the three municipalities will provide funding for their 25% share of the cost of the study.

We have also revised MRG's brochure, developed a new logo for the organization and are updating and improving our website. We are also reaching out to university and college students in Central Maine to build support for this project. We plan to continue to meet as needed during the summer. In the meantime, we thank you for your support. We will keep you apprised of progress on this important project that could put 90% of the state's population within one hour of passenger rail.

Passenger Rail Funding – An Overview

Editorial

Legislative changes to LD227 before its enactment assure the forthcoming study compares passenger rail to Waterville and Bangor via Augusta with the alternative rail route via Lewiston – thus by-passing Brunswick and Augusta. That recommendation, if adopted, would disadvantage Maine's State Capital for the foreseeable future in seeking funding for passenger rail to serve the Augusta region. Citizens interested in the travel, economic development and environmental benefits of passenger rail should make their concerns known to Maine DOT and their municipal and state representatives as this study unfolds.

Anticipated strong federal funding for passenger railroad projects emboldens proposals around the country for major projects of national and regional significance. Maine interests requiring public funding for implementation and operation must compete for some of this money, in amounts not yet determined, in ways designed to flow toward the greatest public needs and environmental opportunities.

Examples of northeast visions and projects dependent on federal funding include:

- New Hudson River tunnels and Gateway bridge for Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC);
- Century-old NEC bridges in Connecticut;
- Replacement routing and new Frederick Douglass tunnel to replace Amtrak's use of the Baltimore-Potomac tunnel built in the 1870's;
- NEC upgrades for increased speeds and shortened schedules between NYC and Boston;
- Amtrak's national vision for regional and long-range services;
- North Atlantic Rail's \$100+ billion proposal for two-hour train service from NYC to Boston, via Long Island, a tunnel beneath Long Island Sound, New Haven, Hartford and a new route to the NEC at Providence;
- Connecticut's proposed \$8-10 billion vision to upgrade its New Haven – Hartford - Springfield, MA line;
- New Hampshire proposed service to Nashua, Manchester and Concord, connecting with MBTA to Boston;
- Massachusetts services via the "Inland Route" from Boston to NYC through Springfield, Hartford and New Haven to NYC; and westward from Springfield to Pittsfield;
- Grand Junction renovations in Cambridge and Boston to connect Boston's North Station at Alston with the "Inland Route" as an Amtrak alternative to the NEC at South Station;
- Vermont's interests to extend Amtrak's Ethan Allen service from Rutland to Burlington, and extend the Vermonter service from St. Albans to Montreal.

To earn federal funding, Maine must project a benefit-to-cost ratio for the passenger rail expansion project that competes successfully in this league. We are confident that expansion of passenger rail in Maine to include Augusta, Waterville, Bangor and Lewiston will contribute to Maine's economy through residential and commercial development and to tourism. Passenger rail can help Maine reach its environmental goals by reducing dependence on automotive travel, and less carbon pollution.

Upgrading and maintaining to passenger standards those lines used jointly with freight trains will enhance Maine's critical freight rail system, as demonstrated today on lines shared by freight trains and the Downeaster.

NEARS Conference - Portland September 22-24

NEARS (New England Association of Rail Shippers) will hold its 2021 conference in person at the Westin Hotel in Portland, Maine on September 22nd through the 24th.

This writer has attended several NEARS conferences representing Maine Rail Group in years past and found they are useful sources of information, membership leads and map distributions, both through formal presentations and with acquaintances during the breaks and off-hours. The preliminary 2021 NEARS meeting follows, subject to change:

Wednesday September 22

07:30 Golf Outing – Organized by Curry Rail Services & Shale Rail; Nonesuch River Golf Club, 304 Gorham Road, Scarborough, ME 04074.

09:00 – Golf Outing – Shotgun start time

15:00 – Registration opens at the Weston Hotel

17:30 – The Joseph & Eileen Networking Reception

19:00 – Dinner on Your Own

Thursday September 23

07 :30 – Breakfast Starts (Available until 8:15

07:30 – Registration re-opens

08:00 – Welcome to NEARS, Safety Briefing and Housekeeping.

Dennis Wilmot, President & CEO, Iron Horse Logistics Group

John Meyers, Secretary, NARS (North American Rail Shippers)

08:15 – Are we ready for the new North American Rail Network? Martin J. Oberman, Chairman, Surface Transportation Board

09:30 - Great Expectations from the Class 1 Railroads

Kenny Rocker – Executive VP Marketing & Sales, Union Pacific Railroad

10:45 – What is the rail business outlook?

Dean Piacente – CEO, Omnitrac

NOON – Nears Networking Lunch & Vendor Fair

13:30 – NEARS Awards presentation

14:30 – How do we optimize our North American Supply Chain?

Corrie Banks – General Manager, Cando Rail Services

15:30 – How do we make sense of our railroad situation?

Todd Tranausky – Vice President, Rail & Intermodal, FTR

17:30 – The Joseph & Eileen Gearin Networking Reception

19:00 – Dinner on Your Own

Friday September 24

07:00 – Special Networking Breakfast Starts

(Available Until 08:15)

08:00 – The Journalists of the Northeast Rail – Big Steel Wheels and Big Topics

Jim Blaze, Freelance Journalist, Railway Age & FreightWaves

Joshua Davidson, Editor & Publisher, Atlantic Northeast Rails & Ports

09:00 – Class 1 Perspectives from Both Sides of the Northern Border

Steve Nettleton, General Manager, CP Rail (Ret)

10:00 – Are we in a new rail era, or the same era in a different container? AKA – The Tony and Jason Show

Tony Hatch, Principal, ABH Consulting

Jason Seidl, Managing Director, Cowen & Company

11:30 – Closing Remarks and William J. Donovan Memorial

Passenger Rail to Cape Cod?

The Cape Cod Times, by Jeannette Hinkle June 9, 2021, reports on a study in progress to return year-round commuter passenger rail service between Boston and Cape Cod via two alternatives – a station in Buzzard's Bay just north of the Cape Cod Canal railroad bridge, or a continuation across the canal to Bourne, on the Cape itself. This study by Massachusetts DOT with consultant VHB is the fourth in a series of such studied dating back to 1997.

The Cape Cod Times on June 11 reported these estimates for travel times, daily boardings, vehicle trips eliminated, reduce vehicle - miles traveled and tons of CO₂ eliminated from vehicles for each station option:

Terminal Station	<u>Buzzard's Bay</u>	<u>Bourne</u>
Travel time (one- way)	1hr30min	1hr40min
Daily boardings	1,710	2,540
Vehicle trips: Cut	800/day	1,200/day
Miles/yr less traveled	10 million	16 million
CO ₂ car emissions cut *	3,400 m-t/yr.	5,200 m-t/yr.

*No reported estimate for locomotive emissions.

Mark Your Calendar

MRG, Inc. meetings for 2021:

July 21, Sept.15, Nov.10

October – MRG, Inc. Annual Meeting Date & Time to be announced

Meetings will be virtual, by Zoom starting at 6pm unless otherwise advised. Please check in advance for changes if you plan to participate. President Russ Barber (rustyrails@gmail.com) will send links to virtual meetings by request.

For the MRG, Inc. Board, Jack Sutton

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 \$25. Regular meetings are bi-monthly. Inquiries are welcome.