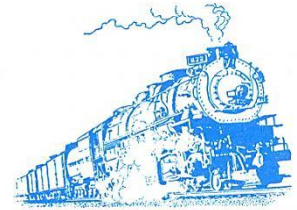


The Semaphore

South Shore Model Railway Club

NEWSLETTER

Home of the "East Coast Lines" since 1938



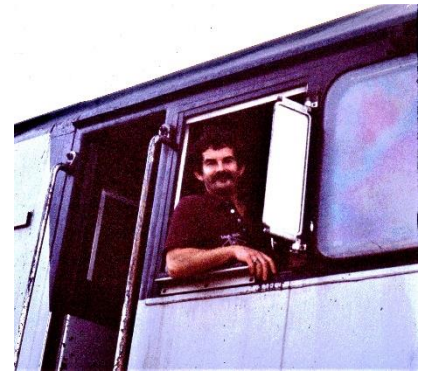
JANUARY 22, 2024 ■■■■■■■■■■ VOLUME 44 ■■■■■■■■■■ NUMBER 1



DOUBLE-HEADER SPECTACULAR AT EDAVILLE RAILROAD!

The Semaphore

David N. Clinton, Editor-in-Chief



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Southeastern Massachusetts.....	Paul Cutler, Jr.
“The Operator”.....	Paul Cutler III
Boston <u>Globe</u>	Paul Bonanno
Western Massachusetts.....	Ron Clough
“The Chief’s Corner”.....	Fred Lockhart
“Behind the Scenes”.....	Savery Moore
Mid-Atlantic News.....	Doug Buchanan

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The Semaphore is the monthly (except July) newsletter of the South Shore Model Railway Club & Museum (SSMRC) and any opinions found herein are those of the authors thereof and of the Editors and do not necessarily reflect any policies of this organization. The SSMRC, as a non-profit organization, does not endorse any position. Your comments are welcome! Please address all correspondence regarding this publication to: *The Semaphore*, 11 Hancock Rd., Hingham, MA 02043. ©2024
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VOLUME 44 ■■■■■ NUMBER 1 ■■■■■ JANUARY 2024

CLUB OFFICERS

President.....	Jack Foley
Vice President.....	Ed Bulman
Treasurer.....	Will Baker
Secretary.....	Bryan Miller
Chief Engineer.....	Fred Lockhart
Directors.....	David Galbraith ('24)
	Bob England ('24)
	Roger St. Peter ('25)
	Gary Mangelinkx ('25)

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ON THE COVER: Due to the need to have both steam locomotives “warm” for draining and winterization, Edaville’s management made a last-minute decision to run a steam double-header photo special on New Year’s Eve, December 31, 2023 – the last day of the 2023 season. With only a few days of publicity, more than 90 people took advantage of a nice day and purchased tickets. The train ventured out on the seldom-used old main line along the reservoir, with many photo run-bys included in the two-hour journey. Edaville had a very successful 2023 Christmas Festival and plans to be expand their season in 2024. (Photo and caption Savery Moore)

CHIEF'S CORNER

Fred Lockhart

FORM 19 ORDERS

SCENERY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, January 22nd 8 p.m.

JANUARY B.O.D. MEETING

Monday, January 29th 8 p.m.

FEBRUARY BUSINESS MEETING

Monday, February 5th 8 p.m.

DCC & EQUIPMENT TUNE-UP CLINIC

Thursday, February 8th 8 p.m.

OFFICIAL OPERATIONS

Sunday, February 18th 11 a.m. & 2 p.m. (lunch ordered)

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Sunday, February 25th

FEBRUARY B.O.D. MEETING

Monday, February 26th 8 p.m.

CONTESTS

Congratulations to **Jim Ferris** on winning this month's "50/50" drawing (again)!



Nine members entered this month's "calendar contest" and went home with a train calendar:

Doug Buchanan
Roger St. Peter
Fred Lockhart
Savery Moore

Will Baker
Ron Clough
Dan Peterson
Al Munn

Bob Farrenkopf

Thanks to all of them, as well as honorary members Kurt Kramke and Ross Kudlick, for donating calendars for the contest. This was the last cross-word puzzle that Al Taylor made for us. I miss him still.

I have just a few things to report on this month, December is a busy month with the holiday's, members are busy with family and friends. Resulting less activity at the club.



First, John Sheridan continues to work on the upgrades to our DCC system on the first peninsula, he currently is setting up a new power station to separate the original large power district; it is just not practical to have a power district that large. Second, while working on electrical for the trolley, I installed a product from Tam Valley Products called a "Frog Juicer". It is a small auto-reverser and it will correct the polarity on two frogs. I installed it on the double crossing on the entrance to the steel mill from Bethlehem Junction, which eliminates the toggle switch that previously had to be in the correct position to avoid a short circuit. One less problem during operation sessions! The next item is also meant to eliminate problems during operation sessions: I asked Bob England to design a small model board of Bethlehem Junction with LEDs similar to Cedar Hill Passenger terminal with white lights for the double slip switches and red/green for standard turnouts. The board will be approximately eight by fourteen inches in size and will be mounted to the fascia in front of the junction. After watching confusion at the junction last ops session, this board is absolutely necessary. Yes, we had a dispatcher, but the engineers involved must have thought they had a better idea for turnout position—well, we can't fix that!

The next subject would be considered "Good of the Club" stuff. Part of the reason I write this column is to try to let everyone know first hand what is going on, because sometimes when I mention something to one member of a team project it doesn't get passed along. So in regards to the town scene built by the "Day Crew", Savery and I have had a conversation of possibly being able to incorporate the town into a future part of the railroad in some form. They have done a lot of work and it looks nice and they did it knowing that the area was temporary, so guys it won't be trashed. Next, we have new members and applicants that may not know this and members who have forgotten, it is *not* a club rule, it would be considered a courtesy to other members: if you happen to be the first to arrive at the club after a snow storm, please make an attempt to clear a

path to the members door, one shovel width would help. We don't expect anyone who's health is compromised to do this. If it is a bad storm, we normally (by email) will try to get a few members together to clean up. Just a reminder, again, **don't do it** if it may hurt you. Also, I would like to thank the member who cleaned the walk a couple weeks ago after a Sunday storm. I was expecting to have to do it, as I get to the club early afternoon on Mondays.

That is it for this month, comments and questions are always welcome.

Fred Lockhart
Chief Engineer

Semaphore Memories

JANUARY 2019 (5 years ago)

- Planning for "horseshoe curve" over staging area and movement of present Boston/Great Lakes yards down, replacing with new third leg being built.
- First of 152 Orange Line subway cars completed by CRRC in Springfield plant.
- Amtrak announces order of 75 new Siemens locomotives to replace 25-year-old P40 & P42 locos.
- MBTA brings back \$10 weekend unlimited-ride Commuter Rail tickets.
- Cass Scenic opens restored line from Cass to Durbin, out of service since 1985 flood.
- Restoration of ex-C&O 2-6-2 continues at Western Maryland Scenic RR shops.
- MassDOT and MBTA announce 11-month pilot project for weekday commuter rail service from Patriot Place/Foxborough Station at Gillette Stadium to Boston.
- Amtrak issues RFP seeking new single-level equipment to replace Amfleet I cars on the Northeast Corridor.
- Member Rick Sutton passes.

JANUARY 2014 (10 years ago)

- Vermont Rail Systems celebrates 50 Anniversary, with specially-painted GP40-2W with gold-painted trucks.
- Paul Bonanno presented plan for "Corner City"—liked by all.
- \$3-billion in grants from US D.O.T. to public transportations systems affected by "Super Storm Sandy".
- MBTA awards Keolis Commuter Services 8-yr. contract to operate Commuter Rail.
- FRA new rule requires inward-facing cameras in locomotive cabs.
- Amtrak president Joe Boardman sez "Highway Trust Fund" is dead and should be replaced with "Transportation Trust Fund" for national projects in all surface modes.
- UP adds connecting track to Los Angeles County Fairgrounds, to enable "Big Boy" 4014 to get on mainline to travel "home" for restoration.
- Allston rail yard ("Beacon Park") is dead, after new yard opened in Worcester for containers.

JANUARY 2009 (15 years ago)

- MBTA takes delivery of first "Genset", #3249.
- CN gets approval to acquire EJ&E Railway.
- Colorado Railcar Manufacturing, manufacturer of DMUs, closes its doors.
- Valley RR of Essex, CT, purchases former Knox & Kane 2-8-2, which was built in China in 1989. Included were 10-tons of spare parts!
- Amtrak acquires credit card readers for conductors to sell tickets on trains.
- Former Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI), considered "the father" of high-speed rail between D.C. and Boston, dies at age of 90.
- BNSF completes construction of 3rd main line through Cajon Pass in California.
- NH Governor John Lynch dedicates first Cog Railway locomotive to burn biodiesel; "Wajo Nanatasis". Built on-site by the Cog employees.
- Town of Hingham demolishes remaining unused buildings in Bare Cove Park and covers over some exposed foundations.
- Yellow tape placed on floor, as plans for "Leg 3" are developed.
- Cabot Cheese Reefer Club Car received for "Big E" sales.

JANUARY 2004 (20 years ago)

- First Boxcar Decal Clinic held.
- Athearn Trains sold to Horizon Hobby.
- Construction of Greenbush Line in full swing.
- First foreign coal shipments to Bow Power Plant handled by P&W from Providence, RI.
- Canaan Union Station in CT purchased by Connecticut Railroad Historical Association, with plans to restore.
- Last two Amtrak F40s in New England head west to Beech Grove, Indiana for disposition. (Cake icing-Ed.)
- Amtrak extends "Quiet Car" service to weekend *Acelas*
- 1st anniversary of Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Rwy, headquartered in Bangor.
- Amtrak's *California Zephyr* stuck for 14 hours in Sierra Nevada Mountains blizzard. (Donner party in the diner.)

JANUARY 1999 (25 Years Ago)

- LDC recommends Club go with DCC and use code 83 flex track where appropriate.
- Heat installed in train room.
- Former New Haven "Roger Williams" RDCs go to Lincoln, NH for restoration.
- Cape Cod Central awarded state contract to run tourist trains from Hyannis.
- Guilford embargoes White River Jct. to Wells River, VT ex-B&M line; only one customer.
- Seashore Trolley Museum celebrates 60th anniversary.
- South Station celebrates 100th anniversary.
- Member Fr. George Gardner dies.

JANUARY 1994 (30 Years Ago)

- Morrison-Knudsen places four LNG switching locos into test service on Union Pacific.
- Burlington Northern places largest locomotive order in U.S. history: 350 of the SD70MACs from EMD.
- CSX places largest locomotive order to GE: 300 locos, which includes 250 A.C. traction units.
- Connecticut Valley RR receives state grant to restore ex-New Haven parlor car "Great Republic".

- MBTA builds new Commuter Rail station in Haverhill.
- MBTA awards first contract for restored service to Newburyport.
- Amtrak concludes 15-month testing program for high-speed trains, with final run of German I.C.E.
- "Citizens Against Amtrak Electrification" formed to stop electrification of Shore Line from New Haven to Boston.
- CP Rail files for approval of agreement to sell operating assets of Dominion Atlantic Railway in Nova Scotia to U.S. investors, who will manage operations under name "Windsor & Hantsport Railway."
- State environmental officials approve plans to extend Commuter Rail to Worcester.

JANUARY 1989 (35 Years Ago)

- State of NH purchases 64 miles of Guilford tracks to "rail bank" various branches of ex-B&M trackage.
- Jim Bradley, owner of a collection of ex-New Haven passenger cars, located above the Shore Line in Stonington, Ct, dies.
- 49-miles of ex-Guilford (B&M) tracks along Connecticut River officially re-opened, after restoration. Amtrak awarded line and subsequently sold to Central Vermont to restore *Montrealer* train.
- New depot in Claremont, NH, opened in anticipation of restoration of *Montrealer*.
- Amtrak considers use of "real" china in dining cars, replacing disposable dinnerware.
- Rehabilitation of New York's Penn Station begins.
- First "double stack" train to New England arrives in Worcester; cargo in Maersk Line containers.
- Plans for new Boston Garden and North Station unveiled, including moving Green Line trolley underground.
- *Metroliners* celebrate 20th anniversary, with original *Metroliner* cars used as "push-pull" cab cars on *San Diegan* trains in California.
- 100th anniversary of urban trolley cars.

JANUARY 1984 (40 Years Ago)

- Editorial: "Are we growing too old for our own good?" Average age of membership: 45.
- "The Gov" (John Governor (D) introduces first "All Diesel Operation Night".
- "Heritage Park" in North Adams dedicated by train enthusiast Governor Mike Dukakis. (Great display and movie about building the Hoosac Tunnel.-Ed.)
- UTDC, Inc. of Detroit and Hawker-Siddeley Canada, Inc., offer lowest bid for 44 new Red Line cars; first new cars in 12 years.
- Chessie System wants model train and railroadiana manufacturers to pay them a "royalty" for using their symbols and naming rights.
- ICC approves merger of holding companies that own Southern Pacific and Santa Fe. Railroads will remain independent until another ICC ruling. Analysts say "highly unlikely" that ICC will reject merger of two rail lines. (But they did!-Ed.)
- Three-dimensional steam locomotive weather vane stolen from top of White River Jct. station.
- B&M Goffstown Branch torn up and operations cease on Ashuelot Branch from Brattleboro to Keene, NH.

- MEC 2-8-0 #501 bought by "470 Railroad Club" from Steamtown and moved to display at Conway Scenic RR in North Conway, NH; possible future restoration.
- GE rebuilding 50 Red Line cars at its E. Boston facility.
- BAR's bus service to northern Maine discontinued; service began in 1936.
- B&M GP40-2 #317 and 50' boxcar #80017 first B&M equipment to get Guilford's (ugly-Ed.) paint scheme

POTPOURRI

THE CPKC HOLIDAY TRAIN raised a record C\$1.8 million and collected more than 160,000 pounds of



food for local food banks during four weeks of travel across the United States and Canada, the railroad has announced. The Holiday Train program, which has completed its 25th year, raised more than \$24.3 million and collected approximate 5.3 million pounds for the community food banks in the two countries. Also, the CPKC Holiday Express, which continued a tradition started by Kansas City Southern, visited 20 communities in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas and raised \$200,000 for the Salvation Army. In Mexico, CPKC operated the *Tren Navideño*, a specially-decorated train adorned with lights and festive scenes that began in 2010. It visited nine communities. (TN)

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CLASS I RAILROADS operating in the U.S. reached a series of agreements with their labor unions this year that are designed to improve workers' quality of life. Chief among them: Paid sick time deals. Railroaders' lack of traditional paid sick time became a flashpoint toward the end of contract negotiations in the fall of 2022. When Congress imposed the Presidential Emergency Board's recommendations and President Joseph Biden signed the measure into law in December, sick time changes were not included. "We ensured workers are going to get a historic 24% wage increase over the next five years, improved working conditions, and peace of mind around their healthcare," Biden said. "And, look, I know this bill doesn't have paid sick leave that these

rail workers and, frankly, every worker in America deserves, but that fight isn't over." The Class I railroads followed the Presidential Emergency Board's recommendations that quality-of-life matters — including sick time and work scheduling — be negotiated with unions on a local basis. In June, NS became the first railroad to sign paid sick-time deals with all 12 unions that represent the railroad's craft employees. (TN)

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AMTRAK HAS ISSUED a formal Request for Proposals for replacement of its bilevel long-distance railcar fleet, outlining requirements for what it says will be a multi-billion-dollar order for equipment projected to enter service in the early 2030s. The document, which outlines for manufacturers requirements for coach seating, sleeping cars, food service, and accessibility, is not publicly available. Responses from manufacturers are due by May 17, 2024. The request is for bilevel equipment, "as it is Amtrak's highest priority to replace the oldest portion of the long distance fleet," Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari said in an emailed response to questions from *Trains News Wire*. Specific numbers of car types, as well as details on "classes of service, onboard amenities, and customer enhancements will be determined based on capabilities of the car builders." Those details will be made public once a manufacturer is selected. The plan is to order trainsets rather than individual cars. (TN)

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NORFOLK & WESTERN NO. 611, the Virginia Museum of Transportation's celebrated Class J 4-8-4, has gained a new honor: a spot on the National Park Services' National Register of Historic Places. The museum learned of the designation earlier this week, and plans an official celebration in the spring, according to social media manager Zac McGinnis. According to McGinnis, the museum was told only 40 steam locomotives are on the more than 112,000

items and locations in the register. No. 611 is expected to be added to the registry sometime in February. (TN)

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WABTEC CORP. WILL CLOSE its plant in Wilmerding, Penna. in 2024, with layoffs beginning in February or March. The plant is expected to close by July 1. The 13.1-acre facility was sold earlier this month to Wilmerding Warehouse LLC of Zelienople, Pa., for \$1.3 million. The plant covers some 365,000 square feet, but only a small portion was still in use. The planned shutdown, which will result in the layoff of 94 workers. The facility is the historic home of Westinghouse Air Brake, which became Wabco and later Wabtec. The company, founded in 1869, moved to Wilmerding in 1889, and by 1905 employed 3,000 workers.

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THE MBTA HAS FINISHED Green Line D Branch track work and subsequently removed 22 speed restrictions. A full list of the speed restrictions that were removed can be found [here](#). From December 11th to December 20th, D branch from Riverside to Kenmore service was suspended so crews could complete this track work unimpeded. Also, crews worked along the Lechmere Viaduct between Science Park and Lechmere. In addition, the bypass of Haymarket Station has been lifted, and normal service has resumed. HYM finished deconstruction activities on December 17th at the Government Center Garage project. Phillip Eng, MBTA General Manager and CEO, commented that due to the "close collaboration between contractors and our Maintenance of Way team, the MBTA continues to demonstrate a new way of doing business and safely improving our infrastructure. We made a commitment to the public and I thank them for their patience as we eliminate slow zones and restore our facilities. We're also pleased that HYM's garage demolition above our facilities is complete. . . There is more work to do, and with each successful step,

we will ensure that any lessons learned will be incorporated into our planning and delivery of future work to streamline efforts and better serve the public.” (RA)

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THE FEDERAL D.O.T. awarded Amtrak the final funding it needed to replace the 116-year-old railroad bridge over the Connecticut River between Old Lyme and Old Saybrook. Construction is expected to begin in 2024 and take five years to be completed, at a cost of \$957-million. The old bridge will be demolished. The \$826-million award is part of what President Biden described in a tweet as the largest investment in passenger rail, since the creation of Amtrak: a total of \$16.4-billion for 25 passenger rail improvement projects along the Northeast Corridor between Boston and Washington, D.C., the busiest passenger rail corridor in the country. It is one of nine projects that will upgrade railways in Connecticut. The projects are funded by the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The 1,570-foot-long bridge, built in 1907, carries an average of 38 Amtrak trains, 12 Shore Line East and six Providence & Worcester freight trains a day. The new bridge will be built to the south of the existing one, will improve the reliability of train service and increase authorized speeds for trains from 45 to 70 MPH. (RP)

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THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD is seeking nominees for its newly formed Passenger Rail Advisory Committee, with nominations for the 18 positions due by Feb. 5. “The Board seeks to fill all PRAC positions with active and engaged transportation professionals to help us more fully understand the complexities of passenger rail issues,” STB Chairman Martin J. Oberman said. “The Board has benefitted greatly from the energetic engagement of the members of our existing advisory committees ... and I am confident that members of the new PRAC will provide the same kind of advocacy for their concerns with passenger rail that will significantly contribute to the Board’s fulfilling its new and ongoing passenger rail responsibilities. Indeed, there are several pressing areas of concern in passenger rail for which the Board will need broad, diverse, and insightful perspectives. We expect to fill these positions and have discussions commence as soon as possible. I look forward to productive conversations regarding effective and efficient passenger rail.” (TN)

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AS OF 2024, TRAINS MAGAZINE has circulated for 84 years. This February marks their 1,000th issue, which is a special expanded edition. The video here

celebrates this milestone that not every print publication is capable of obtaining:

<https://www.trains.com/trn/news-reviews/news-wire/the-1000th-issue-of-trains-magazine/>

●●●●●



CSX’S EIGHTH HERITAGE LOCOMOTIVE is a salute to the New York Central. The ES44AH, which carries No. 1853 for the Central’s founding year, made its debut just after the first of the year. It took the Waycross, Ga., paint shop crew 22 days to adorn the locomotive with the Central’s classic lightning stripe scheme. The New York Central locomotive joins units honoring the history of CSX predecessors Baltimore & Ohio, Chessie System, Seaboard System, Conrail, Chesapeake & Ohio, and Louisville & Nashville, and Atlantic Coast Line. CSX also released a video that explains the painting process. (TN)

<https://www.trains.com/trn/news-reviews/news-wire/csxs-eighth-heritage-locomotive-honors-the-new-york-central/>

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MONTANA RAIL LINK officially became a “fallen flag” on Jan. 1 when the regional railroad ceased operations and became BNSF Railway’s MRL Subdivision. Burlington Northern leased the former Northern Pacific main line from Jones Junction, Mont., to Sandpoint, Idaho, in 1987. In January 2022 BNSF and MRL announced an agreement to terminate the 60-year lease early, pending regulatory approval. “We’re excited about the years ahead working together as one team,” Luke Johnson, general manager of BNSF’s Montana Division, said in a statement. “Our combined forces will have a unique opportunity to build upon the best-in-class service our customers throughout the Montana region have come to expect.” MRL grew to become a critical segment of BNSF’s routes from the Midwest to the Pacific Northwest as part of NP’s “Main Street of the Northwest” main line. Last summer, BNSF joined forces with 32 MRL employees following the bridge collapse and derailment at Reeds Point, Mont. “Working through the bridge issue reminded us just how much we rely on the MRL team,” Aaron Ratledge, BNSF’s assistant vice president, Safety Practices and Rules, said in a statement. “The integration of MRL into our operations team will be a great fit. They have

extremely positive attitudes and a great work ethic.” (TN)

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RAILWAY AGE’S 2024 RAILROADER of the Year Award, the 61st annual, goes to an experienced and highly respected North American rail industry leader: CN President and Chief Executive Officer Tracy Robinson. (RA)



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THE PANAMA CANAL RAILWAY, which saw a 20% increase in container traffic last summer due to drought conditions affecting water levels in the Panama Canal, got another boost this week. Maersk, the largest container shipping line, recently announced that shipments bound to and from Australia and New Zealand are being diverted to the Panama Canal Railway. “Based on current and projected water levels in Gatun Lake, the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) has needed to make reductions to the amount and weight of vessels that can pass through the canal. Whilst we continue to work closely with the ACP, moderating and aligning our operations to fit the changes, we have made changes to services to ensure that our customers are impacted as minimally as possible,” Maersk said. “The vessels that utilized the Panama Canal before will now omit the Panama Canal and use a ‘land bridge’ that utilizes rail to transport cargo across the 80 km of Panama to the other side,” the advisory said. “This creates two separate loops, one Atlantic and one Pacific. Pacific vessels will turn at Balboa, Panama, dropping off cargo heading for Latin America and North America and picking up cargo heading for Australia and New Zealand. Atlantic vessels will turn at Manzanillo, Panama, dropping off cargo heading for Australia and New Zealand and picking up cargo heading for Latin and North America.” The 37-mile Panama Canal Railway, which handles about 300,000 containers in a typical year, is jointly owned by Canadian Pacific Kansas City and Mi-Jack. In 1998 they were awarded a 50-year concession to operate the rail line that parallels the canal. (TN)

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A COALITION OF LABOR UNIONS representing railroad shop workers has asked the Federal Railroad Administration and Surface Transportation Board to take five steps to improve safety and service on the Class I railroads. In an 81-page letter posted on the STB website this week, the unions say the implementation of the low-cost Precision

Scheduled Railroading operating model – which has reduced locomotive and car shop employment by 41% in the U.S. since 2015 – has put the industry “on the precipice of a self-made disaster. Under PSR, the railroads slashed their skilled Shop Crafts workforce to a level that is inadequate for properly inspecting, maintaining, servicing, and repairing all the railroads’ trainsets in accordance with federal regulations,” the unions say. “Furthermore, even when Shop Craft employees are permitted to perform their skilled trade, the railroads pressure workers to ignore defects and defer necessary inspections, services, maintenance, and repairs required under the regulations and which are critical for the safe operation of trains across the Class I’s rail infrastructure network.” The unions note that the 41% reduction in the number of shop employees greatly exceeds the 13.5% reduction in the active locomotive fleet and the 27% reduction in the freight car fleet since 2015. (TN)

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WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC Railroad has launched a fundraising campaign to return both its steam locomotives — 2-6-6-2 No. 1309 and 2-8-0 No. 734 — to operation, with No. 1309 newly sidelined after the discovery it needs its pistons and rods replaced.

The former Chesapeake & Ohio 2-6-6-2 has been the heritage railroad’s steam power for the last two years after a multi-year, \$1 million-plus rebuild at Western Maryland Scenic’s Ridgeley, W.Va., shops. The pistons were not part of that rebuild, but the railroad says it discovered that replacement was



needed during operation in December. “Although this was already in the works, the timeframe has become sooner than expected,” the railroad says. Compound Mallet No. 1309 was one of 10 identical Class H-6 locomotives ordered by the C&O in 1948 and delivered by Baldwin in 1949. They were the last Mallets produced by that builder. Though this was

very late in the steam era, C&O was looking for quick, relatively inexpensive replacements for their aging articulated locomotives serving the southern



West Virginia coalfields out of the Peach Creek Yard in the Logan district. After less than 10 years of service, C&O retired No. 1309 in 1957 and donated the locomotive to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum in Baltimore. Western Maryland Scenic purchased the locomotive in 2014. No. 734 had previously been sidelined for its 1,472-day inspection and complete rebuild. The locomotive began life as Lake Superior & Ishpeming Railroad No. 34, one of three burly Class SC-1 Consolidations delivered by Baldwin in 1916. LS&I retired its steam locomotives in 1963, and sold all three SC-1s to Marquette & Huron Mountain Railroad, which operated them in tourist service until 1987. It was then sold to the Illinois Railroad Museum, which sold the locomotive to Western Maryland Scenic in 1991. There, it was restored to resemble a Western Maryland Class H Consolidation. It emerged from its rebuild in 1993 with the No. 734, matching an older-design Western Maryland Railway Class H-7 locomotive, while the huge 12-wheel tender (from a New York Central Railroad "Mohawk" 4-8-2, purchased from CSX after serving in work-train service) and piston-valve cylinders more closely resembled the Western Maryland Class H-9 consolidations. Many consider the H-9 locomotives the very apex of 2-8-0 development. (TN)

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ALSO, THE WMSR has signed a long-term lease to acquire the Georges Creek Railway, a dormant short line in Maryland's southwestern Allegany County, which the railroad plans to use for "passenger and potential freight opportunities," according to a press release. The newly acquired line will be known as Western Maryland Scenic's Georges Creek Division, and will be structured as a separate business managed by WMSR. Western Maryland Scenic Executive Director Wesley Heinz said the

agreement follows more than two years of discussions with Georges Creek owner Eighteen Thirty Group, which purchased the line out of bankruptcy in 2006. The railway ceased operations in 2019 following the closure of a paper mill it served in Luke, Md. The Georges Creek line is a former CSX branch, and Heinz said CSX and some businesses have occasionally approaches Western Maryland Scenic about the possibility of providing limited freight service. "CSX has been courteous enough to identify opportunities for WMSR, and the Georges Creek Division could help us fulfill these requests," Heinz said. "Our staff has spent countless hours imagining a revitalization of the railroad line and how WMSR can use their vision to bring economic development to the Georges Creek valley through tourism and rail services." The line, originally the former Cumberland & Pennsylvania, was purchased by the Western Maryland Railway in 1944. CSX operated it until 2005, when it ceased operations because of a combination of washouts and declining traffic. Separately, the railroad said that it would need additional diesels for the Georges Creek Division and has purchased a pair of former Western Maryland GP9s. (TN)

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BEGINNING THIS MONTH, the B&O Railroad Museum launched its "B&O Unlocked" series, a 12-month program offering limited access to locomotives and railcars in the museum's collection not previously open to the public. One piece from the museum's collection will be open for three days each month between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., beginning this month with B&O tunnel clearance car No. CE-15, dating to 1904. "We are excited to open these locomotives and cars for the first time for guests to experience and immerse themselves", Kris Hoellen the museum's executive director, said in a press release. "This is a true behind-the-scenes opportunity and we are proud as an institution to make our collection even more accessible." (TN)

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AMTRAK'S NEW ACELA TRAINSETS have finally cleared a computer-modeling hurdle that has stalled testing. The trains passed computer modeling tests on the 14th try and have been cleared by the Federal Railroad Administration to begin test runs between Washington and Boston. Modeling showing the equipment can operate safely is required before the FRA will allow the trains to operate. The company said that testing on the Northeast Corridor will be "the next step in the safety certification that leads toward launching revenue service." The new Acelas were supposed to have been in service in 2021, but have been plagued by difficulty in adapting the

European designs on which they are based to the aging, curving Northeast Corridor infrastructure, a far cry from the purpose-built high-speed routes in most of the world. Along with the modeling issue, the trains have so far dealt with a problem with pantographs that lost contact with catenary wire; a need to increase weight over some wheels to improve “behavior on the curves of the NEC,” and an issue with wheelsets found through the computer modeling. The delays have forced Amtrak to keep the first-generation Acelas in service past their intended life at an increasing cost, and despite issues of parts availability: four trainsets are being cannibalized for parts to keep the others running. Amtrak says the equipment is scheduled to enter service this year; an Amtrak inspector general report said the company is aiming for October. (TN)



New Acela trainsets sit stored in Amtrak’s Philadelphia yard this past September.

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AT THE JANUARY 17TH MASSDOT Board of Directors meeting, Rail and Transit Division (RTD) Administrator Meredith Slesinger announced that “RTD selected a consultant in December of 2023 for Planning and Conceptual Design” of a Palmer intercity passenger rail station. “This contract will include public outreach, site selection, identification of station amenities and access, conceptual design, and environmental scoping.” Administrator Slesinger estimated that this work would take a year-and-a-half to complete. Slesinger characterized the Palmer planning and design as “an important part of the Compass Rail program that the Governor’s Budget originally identified as a priority last year, and that was identified in prior studies, including the East-West Rail Study, that Palmer needs a station.” The contract will be funded from the \$4 million for Palmer planning added last June to the MassDOT Capital Investment Plan (CIP). As a member organization of the Western Massachusetts Rail Coalition, the Citizens for a Palmer Stop successfully lobbied the

Governor and MassDOT to put this money in the CIP after it was (unfortunately) axed from the FY2024 state budget by the legislature. In the MassDOT Board meeting Slesinger also said that RTD is “continuing to advance the work with Amtrak and CSX on the Inland Route award that we received from FRA (Federal Railroad Administration)—that’s the \$108 million for infrastructure improvements between Springfield and Worcester—and we continue to work on the infrastructure modeling for that ahead of schedule.” (MassDOT)

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EXPANDED TOURS of the East Broad Top Railroad shops, roundhouse, and archives will be offered for the first time in 2024, the non-profit EBT Foundation, Inc., has announced. The narrow-gauge central Pennsylvania steam preservation railroad, a National Historic Landmark, will open new opportunities besides its existing one-hour tour of its circa-1910 shop complex. The three additions for visitors are a 3-hour intensive tour of the shops, a 2-hour tour of the roundhouse, and a 1-hour tour of the company archives, which are housed in three vaults contained in the two-story office and passenger station here. A partner of the railroad, the 2,085-member Friends of the East Broad Top, has worked for decades, even during the railroad’s 2011-2020 shutdown, to stabilize, repair, restore, and paint the cluster of buildings where the company built, serviced, and repaired everything that moved on EBT. (TN)

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GENESEE & WYOMING’S latest sustainability report outlines how locomotive modernizations and other fuel-saving efforts will help reduce the carbon footprint of its more than 100 short line railroads. “We are committed to upgrading our locomotives and improving the performance of our existing fleet to reduce carbon emissions,” says the report. “To achieve our climate goals, we will continue to upgrade and enhance our locomotive fleet. Over the last five years, approximately 17% of our North American fleet has been replaced, overhauled, modified, or upgraded – contributing to an estimated 3.5% fuel savings annually.” Last year G&W paid a \$1.35 million fine for violations of the Clean Air Act as part of a settlement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The company also agreed to pull from service or upgrade 70 non-compliant locomotives. (TN)

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CSX IS TOUTING ITS TOP RANKING in a recent survey of railroad intermodal customers. The railroad was named the intermodal service “top performer” in a survey by the Journal of Commerce.

The survey, conducted between Sept. 1 and Oct. 31, involved shippers and intermodal marketing companies. Among the four U.S. Class I railroads, CSX was voted the top performer by 38.8% of respondents. It was the second straight win for CSX. (TN)

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CONSTRUCTION ON A NEW AMTRAK station in Brattleboro is set to begin March, the Commons News reported. The station, which will be served by Amtrak's *Vermont*, will cost \$10 million and take 18 months to complete. It will include the first high-level passenger platform in Vermont. (TN)

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IT'S NO LONGER SIMPLY called "east-west rail", according to the MassDOT. The multi-million dollar project to connect Springfield, Worcester and Boston with passenger trains is part of "Compass Rail", according to a recent presentation given to the department's board of directors. Following the \$108-million federal railroad grant the state got last month to build east-west rail, construction could begin in the spring of 2027. And the project—which requires a \$27-million local match for a total of \$135-million to fund it—could last about five years. The "Compass Rail" name refers to rail expansion in all directions with Springfield as a hub. The plan also referred to station stops in Pittsfield and Palmer. (RRE)

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I ENJOYED THESE ARTICLES in this month's RR magazines and can suggest them for your reading:

TRAINS

Best of Trains: Quebec, Northshore & Labrador Preservation

Durango & Silverton's Mikados Mark a Century of Service Travel

Amtrak's Auto Train is N. America's Most Unusual Train News

Avoiding Amtrak Airo Surprises

Brightline's Milestone Moment

MODEL RAILROADER

Welcome to Freemont Mills

Wireless Control Using ESP

MODEL RAILROAD CRAFTSMAN

Build an Inexpensive End-of-Train Light

Diverging Points

Backdrops

CLASSIC TRAINS (Winter 2023)

Delaware & Hudson Steam Remembered

Between the Lines

An "Alco Safari Retrospective"

The Way it Was

Tales of Amtrak's *Cape Codder*

Classics Today

For Alcos, Head Northeast

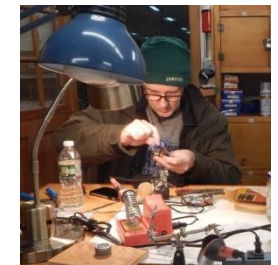
News sources: Boston Globe, Boston Herald, Trains "Newswire", Railway Age, Railpace Newsmagazine, RRE "Callboy", "The 470", Patriot Ledger, Rail Passenger Assoc., Attleboro Sun Chronicle.

EQUIPMENT REFRESH CLINIC

A full house for this first clinic of the New Year. Applicant **Larry Edwards** brought a CSX GP40 from Bochmann, which he had taken apart to reveal a massive lead weight with old electronics squeezed in. After analyzing, it was determined that there was no way to fit a decoder into this, with milling down the weight. The decision was made to button up the model and sell on Ebay or the W.E.T. and he would order a model, which already includes DCC.



Chris Wheeler brought an Athearn "Blue Box" F59PH dressed in "Amtrak California" colors. This was one of the earlier models of this brand and was not "DCC-ready", as the present models are. Consequently, the drive trains was original Athearn, with bronze strips carrying the



power to the motor and "cookout in the cab" lighting. Making it more difficult to work on were the high sides of lead weight surrounding the drive train. Chris was persistent and hard-wired the DH123 in-between these high weights and, as "icing on the cake", he installed a surface-mount "bright white"

LED onto the light tubing, covering it with black electrical tape to keep the light from shining in the cab. Installing couplers, particularly on the front, was another job, that was made much more complicated by the Athearn design. "Well-done Kemosabe", as Clayton Moore would have said!

Al Munn spent the evening with an old Athearn SW1500 in BAR paint—are you surprised? He was able to hard-wire the DH123 and planned on mounting inside the cab but one of the motor mounts broke in half, due to age (it had actually turned yellow from it's original white color). He planned on seeing if he could order replacements and complete the job at the next clinic.



John Sheridan was working on wiring and testing of new DCC-PX circuit breakers for the Club. It looked, and sounded, like he was successful with several.

Roger St. Peter brought an Athearn GP38-2 in White Pass & Yukon colors (but not narrow gauge). He successfully hard-wired the DH123, after swapping the bronze motor strips between top and bottom m brushes. Paying attention to preventing the brush springs from flying away is extremely important in this step. We also discovered that instead of swapping the strips, just cut off the “teeth” on the bottom strip with nippers. That way, you never uncover the springs; you would still solder the gray decoder wire to the bottom strip. And don't forget to put a strip of Capton tape on the bottom, where the “teeth” from the strip bit into the frame. Use the light connection on the front of the loco to solder the red decoder wire (+ polarity). The two silver towers coming from the trucks are wired together, with the black decoder wire going to them...the other “polarity” side. He decided to continue with the headlight at the next meeting. He had also brought an SP RS-3 from Athearn R-T-R but did not have the time. The model's drivetrain is “locked-up”, which seems like the lubrication has deteriorated to the point of becoming just the opposite of lubrication and acting like a mass of clay or gunk, preventing the motor and gears from turning.



Eric Mercer continued to work on up-grading his trucks for the several Athearn F7 locomotives that he is restoring to good health. Sideframes and wheels are the present activity.



Ed Bulman worked on changing the couplers for **Donnie Pierce's** two Atlas Trainmasters. The two New Haven units are



beautiful but come with the typical Atlas crap-u-mate “split” couplers, so a pair of Kadee “whiskers” on each took care of that ugly problem! Ed brought his Atlas U23b, dressed in PennCentral black.

He added the DZ123PS, which plugged into the 8-pin receptacle and away he went—of course after changing the rotten Atlas couplers! Next was an Atlas C425, also in PC no-imagination black. This was the old “Master series” and included the “Dual-mode” decoder, so depending on where you placed the 3-pin plug on the light board, you could run the loco on DC or DCC. They came from the factory as DC, so he just removed the dynamic brake blister and moved the plug one set of pins and, voila, is was ready to ride the East Coast Lines! Of course, the coupler situation was the same and he spent the next half-hour getting the Kadees in place.

Overall, a successful evening for most, especially considering what we were working on. Thanks to Joe Dumas for the pics. The next Clinic will be **Thursday, February 8th at 8 p.m.** Let me know if you have any questions about the clinics.

EDITOR'S NOTES

1. Happy New Year and **welcome to Volume 44** of the *Semaphore*. Please let me know of any suggestions you may have for a better newsletter.
2. Our **NEW LOCKERS will be given out** at the Business Meeting on February 5th. If you signed up for any, please attend the meeting and get yours!

3. The first “**Christmas Model Railway Open House**” was quite the success, with 156 attendees and over \$500 in donations received. Thanks to **Dave Galbraith** for suggesting and organizing the event and to all of those members who ran trains. Also, thanks to “Santa” (played by Dave’s son) who added something special to the festivities. Trains and Christmas *do* go together, don’t they.
4. From **Ron Clough, Trolley Committee chairman**: “The trolley committee would appreciate that any member going to the Show at “the Big E” keep us in mind as you do your shopping/browsing. We are always looking for a decent freight motor and passenger and other trolley cars appropriate to the area/era. We are, also, always looking for brass trolley poles, both with cantilevered arms or just straight. Appropriate wire hanging items such as “eyes” and “overhead switches” are also in need. If you purchase something for us, get a receipt so we can reimburse you.”

.....*David N. Clinton*

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”
(Philippians 4:13)

MEMBER NEWS

(Note: For the “Health & Welfare Committee”, Ye Ed, would like to hear of any member who is ill, hospitalized, or special occasion news, so we can keep the membership advised of these happenings.)

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The following members have made it through another year and deserve congratulations on their special day next month:

Dominic Mirabello .. January 4th
 Paul Cutler III January 7th
 Ed Carter..... January 20th
 Jesse Collins..... January 20th
 Mark Hall..... January 21st
 Eric Tedeschi January 25th
 Andrew Allen..... January 27th

Running Extra

Frank Sinatra's Train Story

Frank's story as told by Barbara Sinatra

"A model railway enthusiast, he'd had a special train room built at the Compound for his two hundred or so trains, replicating the layout of the famous Lionel showroom in New York. His museum-quality setting featured yards of tracks on two levels amid scenery of mountains, factories, houses, and bridges as well as a miniature replica of Hoboken. It also had an old Western town, a billboard announcing one of his sellout concerts, and a New Orleans riverboat. From the ceiling hung replicas of all the planes he'd ever owned. In the wood-paneled room built as an extension of an old railroad caboose, he played with his favorite locomotive—the high-speed Japanese one he'd traveled on several times. On the wall were hung all sorts of station signs and slogans, including his favorite, which said, 'He who dies with the most toys wins.'



Once he was in that room, Frank was a child again, the same little boy who'd pressed his nose against the glass of the Lionel model train store. His mother, Dolly, had pawned her fox fur to buy him his first set, a sacrifice he never forgot. In his special room that took him back to those days, he wore a bright red engineer's hat with a visor and blew a whistle while the sounds of trains and engines played. He loved it, and so did his friends, who would happily don hats and blow whistles too. Many of them bought him new or unusual trains as gifts, happy to find a gift to give the man who had everything. He had a gold one with his initials set in diamonds which was a present from one of the Vets. He had a locomotive that was a gift from the Vets—a crystal version of the train that inspired G. 'Chattanooga Choo Choo.' Whenever his electrician came by to help fix any problems with the track, the two of them would spend hours 'testing' the entire system. I'd pop my head around the door sometimes just to watch Frank, happy to see him so playful and animated, a glass of Daniel's in his hand."



John Aaron (musician, piano technician and fellow toy train enthusiast): “Over the years, we met up at train conventions, shows, swap meets, auctions, etc.

We also frequented many hobby shops, after regular hours, of course, and visited numerous layouts of fellow train collectors.

Most folks in his childhood neighborhood could not buy electric trains which have always been costly, but so the story goes, Frank's mother pawned an old fox fur piece she had acquired and bought him his first set of trains. Another often-heard tale has Frank and various friends jumping aboard a streetcar every now and then and traveling the dozen miles or so to the Lionel Train factory where they would rummage through the trash bins after hours in search of discarded train parts. From the parts, they would cobble together whole trains.

In his glory years, Sinatra would stroll the Lionel factory floors with Joshua Lionel Cowen himself as Frank picked out the latest Lionel offerings to add to his growing collection. Frank collected trains from almost all the major manufacturers the world over. The value of his collection eventually exceeded a million dollars.



Of course, once the word got out that Sinatra loved toy trains, many came to him as gifts, including an antique locomotive courtesy of the Vatican. Tommy Dorsey, one of the first bandleaders Frank worked for, had a huge train layout in the basement of his Bernardsville, New Jersey, mansion which Frank enjoyed visiting and operating. Frank was also quite taken with the 1949

Macy's holiday display layout in New York. Sinatra's personal toy train layout not only surpassed both the Dorsey and Macy's layouts, but it also gave the Lionel Corporation's New York showroom layout a good run for the money!

The Sinatra collection and layout was not about owning the most toys. It was about fun. I never saw him more relaxed than when he was cleaning or oiling a locomotive or at the controls while four or five trains roared around his layout.

During the holidays, Frank often had neighborhood kids in to not only look at but to actually operate his layout. The fact that some trains were occasionally damaged by the overly enthusiastic kids did not upset him.

Sinatra and I were also of the mind that no train was too rare or valuable to operate. We both owned the rare and highly coveted 1957 Lionel pink girl's train sets. Although they were beyond valuable, we both frequently operated them on our layouts. Neither of us was much into the mint, never-opened, boxed train sets so many collectors strive to acquire. We both felt that toy trains were made to be toys and made to be played with."

EDITED FROM WISCASSETNEWSPAPER.COM, DECEMBER 1, 2023

Midcoast Railservice looks to forge on after equipment issue and Dragon Cement plant's impending closure

By Susan Johns

Something did not feel as peppy, Midcoast Railservice Vice President and co-founder George Betke recalled an engineer saying after the last Coastliner passenger run in October, a Damariscotta Pumpkinfest excursion. Turned out, there was a problem with one of two engines on the reversible, self-propelled, low-emission car that had drawn riders' praise from Wiscasset and elsewhere on the Rockland Branch this summer and fall.

In a phone interview Thursday, Nov. 30, he said if not for that engine issue and a lack of replacement parts, the rail service would be adding the planned second car. Instead, both cars are being sold and Midcoast Railservice has been looking for its next move to continue passenger service.

Betke explained, the Coastliner cars came from a fleet now destined for a railroad in Canada, as is the remaining parts supply.

"As we reviewed that situation, we came to the conclusion that the worse possible thing we could do would be to introduce a service that did not prove to be totally reliable, because people have to have confidence that you're going to be able to meet your schedule. So we reluctantly decided, just within the last week, to let the cars go ... So the question remains, 'What's next?'"

He said Midcoast Railservice told Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) the Coastliner trips had built some good will and interest; and that Midcoast Railservice service, probably could, by January have "a couple of well-appointed, conventional coaches delivered to be hauled by a locomotive between Brunswick and Rockland. Well, that's a step backward, in one sense, technologically." And when NNEPRA contacted Amtrak, a proposal resulted that Maine Department of Transportation – which Midcoast Railservice has the rail operations lease with – may find too expensive, Betke said.

He said NNEPRA has asked Amtrak for a cheaper proposal under which Midcoast Railservice, which leases the tracks from MaineDOT, would only be a host-carrier, doing dispatch, track inspections and incidental repairs including fallen trees, and Amtrak would be the operator, meaning, he said, the state would have less control than it has with Midcoast Railservice as operator; and Midcoast Railservice would still do freight.

Wiscasset Town Manager Dennis Simmons' regular report to selectmen ahead of the board's Dec. 5 meeting mentions Midcoast Railservice's passenger car's parts problem. The report, released Thursday afternoon, Nov. 30, states, "Looks like (Midcoast Railservice) may be back to trying to entice Amtrak to extend its service along the corridor."

Betke said, based on what Simmons wrote, "I can say that Mr.

Simmons is up to speed, and very perceptive."

Betke then shared a development that occurred about two hours before Wiscasset Newspaper called: Betke proposed to MaineDOT what he is calling "Plan C."

He said it involves "a more advanced technology that would be more appealing" from an environmental and noise standpoint, be reversible like the other cars were, "and probably could be customized and delivered by April or May ... which is what NNEPRA has targeted as a desirable startup date for something. The something is to be determined, and we're trying to put on the table a concept that would be eminently appealing to any thinking traveler to or from Maine," he added.

He said MaineDOT will review the proposition and he hopes for some, at least preliminary, response the week of Dec. 4.

Betke remained optimistic for the future of self-propelled rail cars, in and beyond Maine. "And we can be the proving ground for that." As for Midcoast Railservice's passenger service, he said, "This was already a work in progress," before the engine issue. "I can't predict to you an outcome, or a precise timing of the outcome ... I can only pledge that we're doing our best to put all the options on the table and encourage the public, politicians and participating agencies to use a common sense approach to arrive at a conclusion."

And while the passenger service had its surprise equipment problem, the freight service, too, received "a big surprise," Berke said of Dragon Cement's announcement it would close its Thomaston plant. Dragon Cement was 90% of the freight traffic, Betke said. "We're helping them get rid of their remaining inventory. They're scrapping some obsolete rail cars. We'll probably haul the scrap out. There may be other raw materials that they can reposition somewhere else by rail. But our freight business will dwindle to virtually nothing" probably by the end of January, he said.

"What this means is we have to figure out a way – well, one choice is to go out of business: Relinquish the lease (and) walk away from the whole thing ..." Midcoast Railservice had always aimed to help pull freight and people from Route One, onto rail, so this option would be "exactly the opposite of what we were trying to accomplish."

Besides working on passenger service possibilities, Midcoast Railservice is trying to line up other freight customers, Betke said. "We'll keep trying," on both fronts, he said.

(Contributed by Scott Ornstein)