

Passenger Rail Announcement*By Sue Moreau, Manager, Multimodal Planning & Operations*

MaineDOT is pleased to report that the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) will receive \$35 million from the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) ARRA grant which was recently awarded by the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) for the expansion of passenger service from Portland to Brunswick. On June 17, 2009, the FRA announced that \$8B was available for passenger rail projects under Round 1 of the HSIPR ARRA program. Track 1 projects were required to be “shovel ready” and completed within two years. The Track 2 projects allowed for more time for implementation but required significant

regional coordination.

Last summer, NNEPRA submitted two applications requesting over \$88.2M for HSIPR Round 1 projects. The Track 1a application requested \$35,700,493 to extend Amtrak Downeaster service from Portland through Freeport to Brunswick. The proposed project upgrades 28.7 miles of track owned by Pan Am and constructs passenger platforms in Freeport and Brunswick. The Track 2 application requested \$52,598,000 to improve rail operations from Portland to Boston and decrease travel time by adding passing sidings, signal enhancements, curve adjustments and track and tie replacements.

Park & Ride Lot Program*By Penny Vaillancourt, Statewide Multimodal Planning Division*

MaineDOT’s Park & Ride Lot Program, despite its small size among fellow transit programs, has nonetheless earned a reputation as a significant contributor to the department’s goals of reducing congestion and air pollution, improving air quality and reducing dependence of foreign oil. Innovative partnerships, hard work and optimism are hallmark characteristics of the program that have also contributed to its success.



The Park & Ride Lot Program originated when the department developed Rideshare and Vanpool programs first for state employees and then for the private sector in response to a 1986 Transportation Needs Study. Subsequently, Park & Ride lots were developed to provide the parking space necessary to support these programs and to encourage the general public to carpool whenever possible.

However, it was the pursuit of partnerships with the Maine Turnpike Authority, regional planning councils, municipalities, businesses and private landowners that opened the dialogue regarding shared land use opportunities and associated benefits to communities, businesses, residents, commuters and visitors alike. Now, more than 20 years later, there are 53 Park & Ride lots available to the public.

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Park & Ride Lot Program continued:

In addition to providing the public with safe, secure and convenient commuter facilities for the traveling public that encourages carpooling, vanpooling, and use of public transportation systems such as GOMaine and Zoom, the program has proven to have a direct impact on the reduction of vehicle miles traveled. A 2007 study reported that 1,087 vehicles use the Park & Ride Lots at least 250 days per year. The average distance was estimated at 55 miles per trip bringing the total annual trips to 272,000. The net result is a reduction of approximately 15 million vehicle miles traveled on an annual basis.

The Park & Ride Lot Program may be a small program, but its impact on various transportation initiatives ensures that the bureau's mission is fully realized. For more information regarding the Park & Ride Lot Program, please visit the following website: <http://www.exploremaine.org/parkandride/index.htm>

Motor Carrier Updates

By Kevin Rousseau, TPS, Marine & Motor Carrier Section



Maine Receives 100,000 lb., Six-Axle Exemption For One-Year Pilot Project

Maine commerce received a boost in late December with the Congressional passage of a piece of legislation that will allow for a one-year exemption that would allow 100,000 pound, six-axle trucks to use the Interstate system instead of Maine's secondary road network. MaineDOT and the Congressional Delegation have been advocating for such a change for years.

Maine has a 25-year history of allowing trucks at 100,000 pounds to run on I-95 south of Augusta with a record of positive economic, environmental and safety outcomes. An extension of this practice north of Augusta on I-95 would take 100,000 pound, six-axle trucks off secondary roads lined with numerous schools, intersections, driveways and traffic lights and put them on a piece of highway infrastructure designed to handle such demands. Allowing heavier trucks to use the Interstate would also reduce overall travel time, thereby saving driver hours and reducing the tired-trucker problem.

As part of the Pilot Project, Congress mandated that FHWA conduct a study on the impacts of the change within six months. MaineDOT and the Maine State Police will work with FHWA on the project.

Kittery Truck Weigh Area Project Opening

Maine will take a considerable step forward towards more modern, efficient motor carrier enforcement with the completion of the Advanced Commercial Vehicle Screening System (ACVSS) at the Kittery I-95 truck weigh area this winter. The project uses federal funding to modernize and automate how the State Police handles truck size and weight enforcement.

As the traffic proceeds up the ramp, a Weigh in Motion (WIM) strip would be utilized to determine weight compliance. Also in the same location of the WIM, there would be an Optical Character Reader, (OCR). This would check the USDOT number on the side of the truck for potential "flags" related to safety ratings, suspensions, or other items of interest. Compliant trucks will benefit by being released more quickly while State Police officials will be able to better focus their enforcement efforts.

With the completion of this project, focus will now turn towards identifying funding for I-95 York truck enforcement facility. Taken together, these upgrades will both ensure that the Maine's road and bridge infrastructure is protected and that compliant carriers are able to move their products to and from market in a quicker manner.

Maine-New Hampshire Connections Study

By Gerry Audibert, PE Mobility Management Division



Three bridges co-owned and maintained by MaineDOT and NHDOT link Portsmouth, NH and Kittery, ME: The 1972 I-95 “High Level Bridge”, the 1923 Memorial Bridge and the 1940 Sarah Mildred Long Bridge. The Memorial and Sarah Long bridges are both eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and are in need of extensive repairs. The Memorial Bridge was advertised for historic reconstruction in 2008. The lowest bid came in at nearly \$60 million, about \$15 million over budget. The lack of the additional funding needed to reconstruct the bridge raised questions about the value of rehabilitation vs. replacement of the Memorial Bridge. The condition of the Sarah Long Bridge and the possibility that it would also need extensive work, resulted in a decision by Maine and New Hampshire to conduct an analysis to determine the best long-term solution for the Kittery-Portsmouth area.

The *Maine-New Hampshire Connections Study* is taking a detailed look at how these bridges are used and will identify the best long-term solution for the region. The Study is being conducted under the guidelines of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Maine’s Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA). To date, a Purpose and Need Statement has been developed through the public process, background materials have been assembled and 63 potential alternatives have been identified. As a result of the public process which includes a “Fatal Flaw” analysis, nine alternatives now remain, including a “No Build” alternative that must be carried forward per NEPA requirements. A fatal flaw is one in which a proposed alternative does not meet the Study purpose or needs of the communities identified by the process. Work continues to further reduce the number of alternatives as we move into a more detailed analysis of the impacts to the communities and the region. The study, to be completed in June, will identify the best solution to connecting Kittery and Portsmouth.

Early into the Study, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provided a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant opportunity, so MaineDOT and NHDOT jointly applied for a \$70 million TIGER grant to rehabilitate the Memorial Bridge. The TIGER grant program is funded at \$1.5 B and grant applications total \$56.5 B, so the competition is fierce. A decision will be announced by February. If a grant is provided, Memorial Bridge will be rehabilitated and the study will be adjusted to make a recommendation only on the Sarah Long Bridge. If the application is unsuccessful, the study will make recommendations on both bridges by June 2010.

Readers can view the Purpose and Needs Statement, numerous maps on transportation, land use, historic and cultural information, all proposed alternatives including those that remain, meeting summaries and other information at the study web site located at <http://mainenhconnections.org/>.

Capital Work Plan Update (2012-13)

By Sara Behr, Supervisor, Program Development & Management Division



The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) will shortly begin preparing the FY2012-2013 Capital Work Plan. The Work Plan contains projections of capital transportation resources and MaineDOT's strategy to apply them to the design and construction of transportation infrastructure throughout the State of Maine. Although the next Work Plan will not be published until early 2011, beginning it now enables broad-based public input as well as provides time for field reviews, safety evaluations and project cost estimating.

As in prior Work Plan development, the first essential step is a formal request for project priorities to all Maine municipalities, County Commissions and Native American tribes and nations. Once again, MaineDOT is partnering with Maine's Regional Planning Organization (RPO) network to assist in this process. A map showing RPO jurisdiction and contact information is available at <http://www.state.me.us/mdot/planning-documents/planning-docs-home.php> (see **Other Planning Documents - NEW - Regional Planning Councils and their MaineDOT Contacts**). In the next couple of weeks your RPO will contact you asking for your transportation priorities and interest in competitive transportation programs. Each RPO will provide MaineDOT with all the responses they receive by the end of March, 2010.

Please note that while this biennial transportation project solicitation is an important opportunity for sharing your transportation needs, demands for transportation funding are greater than ever before. Therefore, as you prepare your project priorities please note that MaineDOT must prioritize scarce transportation to meet critical safety needs and make investments with clear regional and statewide benefits. MaineDOT will also consider investments that clearly support job growth or foster innovative opportunities such as public/ public or public/ private partnerships.

