

Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society
19 *Incorporated* 71

NEWSLETTER

Meeting/Membership telephone: 978-454-3600

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September–October 2017

Visit the B&MRRHS on the web at www.bmrrhs.org



Boston & Maine No. 443 (0-6-0) Class G-11-b at Springfield, Massachusetts in an undated photograph from the Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society Archives. The B&M was one of three railroads to call at Springfield Union Station until the 1960s, the others being the Boston & Albany and the New York, New Haven & Hartford. Springfield Station was reopened in June after a dramatic restoration. Please see story on page 7.

B&MRRHS CALENDAR

Meetings commence at 3:30 pm on the second Saturday of the month at Rogers Hall, Lowell, Mass. unless otherwise indicated. Please see page 2 for directions to the hall.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 3:30 PM

Presentation by Henry Marrec, Woburn resident and well-traveled railroad video photographer. Henry leads with digital video of Super 8 films,

which feature B&M, MEC, BAR, D&H, and EL during the 1960s and 1970s. These have voice narration and visual captions. He concludes with fully digital action along the Columbia River, highlighting UP, BNSF, and Amtrak in a display of modern railroading in majestic scenery, shot in 2007.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21. PLYMOUTH, NH RAILROAD STATION, 1:00 PM

Presentation by Bruce Davison on The Claremont and Concord Railways. See details in enclosed flyer.

NEWSLETTER

The Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society *Newsletter* is published six times a year.

The editor welcomes articles, photographs, and news items about the B&MRRHS and the Boston & Maine Railroad, the B&M's predecessors and successors, as well as news about other New England railroads. It is best to query the editor before submitting material. We reserve the right to edit all material submitted for publication.

Opinions expressed in the *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent the views of the Society, its officers, or members. Reference in the *Newsletter* to commercial products or services is for the convenience of the membership only, and in no way constitutes an endorsement by the Society.

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MEMBERSHIP DUES

Dues are payable by check, money order, postal money order, or cash (in person only). Sorry, but we cannot accept credit cards. All payments in US dollars. Please allow four to six weeks for processing.

Basic	\$35	Sustaining	\$50
Basic & Spouse	\$38	Supporting	\$75
Contributing	\$40	Benefactor	\$100
Canada & Overseas	\$55	Corporate	\$500

Please send membership requests and questions to Membership, B&MRRHS, PO Box 469, Derry, NH 03038-0469.

All other correspondence — including catalogue orders, correspondence with the Board of Directors, Archives, Historian, or Bulletin — goes to B&MRRHS, PO Box 469, Derry, NH 03038-0469. You can also e-mail bmrrhs@gmail.com.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please let the Society know your new address before you move. Returned and forwarded mail costs the Society money.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

- Please renew your membership within the 90-day renewal period or you will be deleted from the membership list.
- All renewing members are provided a preaddressed renewal envelope with their membership data on the flap.
- Payment is by check or money order only. You may pay by cash if you attend a membership meeting or train show at which the society has a presence.
- A red dot on your address label indicates that this is the last item you will receive from the Society, as you have not renewed within the allotted timeframe.

DIRECTIONS TO SOCIETY MEETINGS

Meetings are held at Rogers Hall, 196 Rogers St., Lowell, MA 01852. From Rt. 495 take exit 38, which is Rt. 38. Turn right; this is Rogers St.

If you come from the north or south there are six and seven sets of lights respectively. Approximately 1.3 miles from Rt. 495 are the last set of (working) lights. Bear to the left here. Rogers Hall is 0.3 miles on your right. Directly across the street is Rogers Fort Hill Park, where parking is available.

If you come from Rt. 133 (Andover St.), follow that until you intersect Rt. 38 in Lowell. Go through the intersection and take your third left, which is High St. Continue to the end, and take a left. This will take you to Rogers Hall on your left and Rogers Fort Hill Park on the right.

If you come from Rt. 38 or Rt. 113 you need to get off at the overhead traffic circle as if going to St. Johns Hospital. Follow this to the intersection of Rts. 38 and 133 and follow the above directions to High St.

EDITOR'S NOTE

I had occasion a few weeks ago to meet a colleague in Boston for lunch. Living these days in Northampton, I thought the obvious: Once upon a time I could have taken a B&M train over the Massachusetts Central line from Northampton Union Station, a mile from my house, and that would have been that. Equally, and for a few decades longer, I could have ridden the B&M up the Connecticut River Line to Greenfield and from there east to Boston. Or I could have taken the B&M to Springfield and transferred to a South Station–bound Boston & Albany or New Haven train. Or I could have taken a New Haven train from Northampton to Westfield, where I could connect with a B&A train to Boston. But how do I get to Boston by train in 2017?

I could catch Amtrak's Vermonter from Northampton to Springfield, cool my heels for three hours at the splendidly refurbished station (see page 7), then board the eastbound Lake Shore Limited, due in from Chicago at 5:33. I suppose I could even pay \$112 to book a roomette for the two-and-a-half-hour ride. That would be six hours of travel from Northampton to Boston — much of it pleasant — but I would miss lunch and have to stay the night.

More practically, I could drive to Worcester (67 miles, 75 minutes), park my car, and take the MBTA commuter train to South Station. Or I could be true to my B&M roots and drive the same distance to Wachusett Station in Fitchburg and take the MBTA train to North Station, which is what I did. But why the heck can't I take a convenient train at reasonable cost from Northampton — or from anywhere else in Western Massachusetts? If you draw a line connecting Fitchburg and Worcester, you will see that the western two thirds of the state have no practical eastbound passenger train options. As we have all mused, why can we no longer do what was routine and easy 60 or more years ago?

Other people are asking the same question. And while there is great progress on north–south service from New Haven to Springfield (see news item on page 5), the east–west connection remains a dotted line on the map.

Massachusetts State Senator Eric P. Lesser, who represents the First Hampden and Hampshire District in Western Massachusetts, has been pushing for a study to consider the feasibility of passenger service from Springfield to Boston. He even went on a Boston to Springfield whistle-stop tour in June to publicize his proposal, although he made half the tour by car after he ran out of trains. He argues that the issue is largely one of fairness, both in transportation options and economic development. "Our taxes paid for the Big Dig, our taxes pay for the Green Line extension," Lesser said. "We do want and expect fairness in return."

His amendment to fund a Massachusetts Department of Transportation feasibility study passed the senate handily in a 38 to 0 vote in May, but the item was dropped during a closed-door House-Senate conference committee in July. It isn't because of the money, Lesser told us; another item was approved to study seasonal rail service between New York City and Pittsfield from Memorial Day to Columbus Day weekends, along the lines of the MBTA's Cape Cod Flyer. Rather, Lesser blames "entrenched interests." That is interpreted in Western Massachusetts as pressure from the owner of a regional bus company based in Springfield, pressure from whom was said to have killed the study last year. Lesser said he will continue to push for legislation to require the study.

"At a minimum," Lesser told us, "we are looking to increase the transportation options for people in western Massachusetts and to have service that is reliable and efficient. We would like the study to look at costs, ridership, what kinds of fares we would need to charge, and so on. We are simply trying to understand what this undertaking would look like and what the economic impact would be on the state generally and on western Massachusetts in particular."

There are groups pushing for real passenger rail service in Western Mass, a region that is rich in rail trails, as it happens. Trains in the Valley is one organization, and it runs an informative website. Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop is another group.

US Senator Ed Markey went on record in early August at a town hall in Springfield in support of high-speed service between Boston and Springfield. "So you can get in and out of Springfield in a way that reflects a modern transportation system," he said. "If that happens, the sky is the limit for Springfield, and I want to be a part of making that happen."

And I might make it to lunch with my colleague.



This issue is my first as editor of the *Newsletter* and I am pleased to be part of an organization I have been following with interest since the early 1970s. I used to buy copies of the *B&M Bulletin* at Eric Fuchs on Tremont Street in Boston and at the Hobby Caterers shop in Danvers. They and the B&M are long gone; the Society is making sure that the B&M doesn't completely fade away.

I want to thank Bob Warren, who edited the *Newsletter* since 2004 and who will continue to edit *Modelers Notes*. Bob has run the publication on a solid roadbed, and he has made it easy for me to climb into the cab and nudge back the throttle.

Michael B. Shavelson
Editor

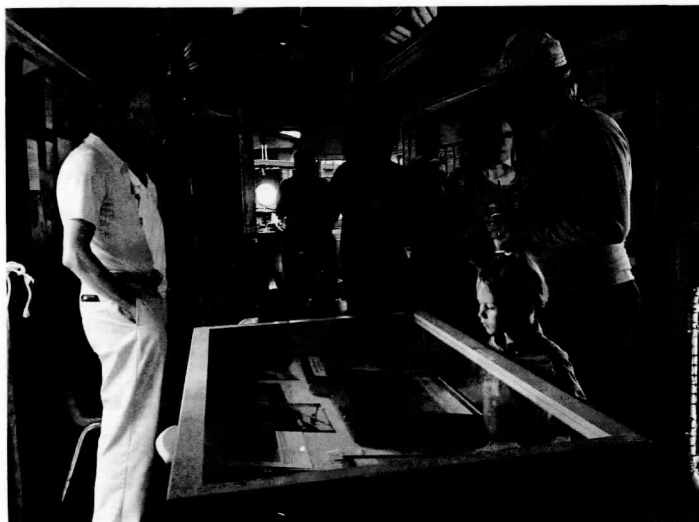
LOWELL FOLK FESTIVAL

The Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society participated in the annual Lowell Folk Festival on July 29 and 30. Volunteers manned the exhibit at B&M steam locomotive No. 410 and in the combine. The combine has an exhibit and HO layout depicting the history of the Boston & Maine Railroad in the Lowell area. Our volunteers fielded questions about the railroad and our society. People of all ages enjoyed the exhibit and the model trains. This event showcases the society and helps us in our mission to reach out to the public, educating them about the railroad and railroad history. More than 2200 people toured the exhibit, and we had brisk sales of shirts and hats. This event would not have been possible without Society volunteers Paul Kosciolk, David Hampton, Russ Monroe, Dan Hyde, Carl Byron, Rick Hurst, Richard Nichols, Peter Victory, Rick Conard, Rick Nowell, Steve DeFrancesco, and Donald Hampton.

Jim Nigzus



Visitors to the Lowell Folk Festival examined exhibits in the B&M combine and talked with Society members. Photos by Richard Nichols.



HARDWARE COMMITTEE REPORT

The Hardware Committee, Mal Sockol and Richard Nichols, held a work session on July 13.

Member Carl Byron has been proofreading the Hardware Collection inventory and updating information to the website files, along with Richard K. Hurst.

The following donations have been recently received:

Eleven framed 16" x 20" Photographs:

B&M E7A No. 3800. B&M F2A No. 4224A. B&M E7A No. 3811. B&M E7A No. 3813. B&M FTA No. 4202A. MEC E7A No. 707. B&M Budd Car with B&M Mogul. B&M E7A No. 3800. B&M FTA No. 4210A. B&M E7A No. 3813. B&M Flying Yankee 6000.

Six framed 12" x 16" Photographs:

Print "New England Spring Snow" with No. 3713. B&M 4-6-2 Pacific No. 3713. B&M 4-6-2 Pacific No. 3717. B&M BL2 No. 1551. B&M 2-6-0 Mogul No. 1495. B&M 2-6-0 Mogul No. 1451. From the Henry Marrec Collection.

B&MRRHS Website Hardware Collection

The following Files have been updated to the website:

- File 1. Badges, Buttons, Uniforms & Related Equipment
- File 3. Dinning Ware China, Silverware, Glassware
- File 6. Railroad Hand Tools & Related Equipment
- File 7. Railroad Lanterns
- File 8. Miscellaneous Railroad items
- File 9. Photographs, Posters, Notices & Maps
- File 10. Rails, Ties, Spikes & Related Equipment
- File 11. Switching & Related Equipment
- File 12. Railroad Signals
- File 13. Tickets & Station-Related Equipment
- File 14. Railroad Station Signs & Related Equipment
- File 15 Railroad Signs
- File-15-2 B&M HO-Scale Steam Locomotives Collection
- File-15-2 B&M HO-Scale Diesel Locomotives Collection
- File-15-2 B&M HO-Scale Freight Car Collection
- B&MRRHS Rail Car Exhibit – HO-scale layout 2017
- B&MRRHS Rail Car Exhibit – Scheduled to open 2017

The Hardware Committee received 106 items in 2016. We now have registered, photographed, and tagged 1880 items since July 2013.

Richard Nichols, Hardware Committee

HARTFORD LINE OPERATORS NAMED

TransitAmerica Services and Alternate Concepts were named on July 24 as a joint venture to operate and manage non-Amtrak service on the Hartford Line, the passenger service now under construction from New Haven to Hartford and Springfield. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) awarded the \$45 million, five-year contract. Service is to begin in May 2018.

Amtrak owns the line and will continue to maintain track and signals and handle dispatching.

Currently Amtrak operates six round-trips from New Haven to Springfield. The new service will add its own trains, giving the public 17 weekly round-trips from New Haven to Hartford, 12 of which will continue north to Springfield. CTrail is overhauling some locomotives from the Shoreline East to cover Hartford Line service and is working with the MBTA to obtain coaches.

The former New York, New Haven & Hartford line is being rehabbed and double tracked. Some older stations are being made ADA accessible and other stations are being built new. Stations in communities without current service are being planned as well. “For the sake of our economy and our future, we cannot sit and let our infrastructure deteriorate,” said Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy at the Wallingford station when he announced the contract. “We are stepping up, moving forward, and getting this project done.”

Annual ridership is projected to be around 700,000 passengers per year.

“To have the beautifully restored Springfield station as one of the anchors in this service makes the whole rider experience that much better,” John Bernick, assistant rail administrator for CTDOT, told the *Newsletter*.

“That’s the vision of the northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative,” he said. “I see in the future overlapping services. With additional infrastructure, the Hartford line could support up to 25 trips a day. You can imagine a separate service coming down from Northampton or points north in Vermont or Montreal. You can imagine trains coming from Boston into Springfield going in different directions overlapping that. That would really be the golden spike.”

MBTA COMMUTER RAIL STUDY

The MBTA issued a request for proposals in June for a study to examine and identify current and future commuter rail needs and improvements.

According to the MBTA, current commuter rail service limits the potential to increase ridership during off-peak times with the overwhelming majority of trips made during

peak commuting hours and in peak directions. Current service also limits the potential to encourage reverse commuting and to provide frequent connections between gateway cities and Boston. In some instances, infrastructure is a barrier to expanded or different types of transit service.

The study is planned to examine a wide variety of topics, such as the type of fleet needed to optimize the existing network and deliver new service, the system upgrades needed to accommodate various service expansions, whether or not some sections of the network should be electrified, and where potential new stations should be located.

The MBTA expects to award a contract for the study in September, with the study anticipated to begin several weeks later. The work should take place over two to two-and-a-half years, with project funding of \$3 million coming from the MBTA Capital Budget.

DOWNEASTER BEATS RIDERSHIP GOALS

Amtrak’s *Downeaster* exceeded ridership goals in fiscal years 2016 and 2017 by 8.8 percent, according to the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA). Ridership was 511,422 in fiscal year 2017 (which ended on June 30, 2017). Ticket revenues of \$8,620,119 for the same period exceed fiscal-year 2017 goals and fiscal year 2016 performance by 7 percent. All-time ridership records were exceeded in the months of July and September in 2016 as well as January, February, April and June of 2017.

The *Downeaster* had its highest fiscal-year ridership of 518,572 in FY2014 (July 2013–June 2014) when gas prices averaged about \$3.60 per gallon. The July 2017 average was about \$2.41 in New England.

Although Boston is the primary destination for *Downeaster* riders, there have been increases in visitors travelling to Maine as well, according to the NNEPRA. Ridership on trains typically used by visitors have shown the largest increases, and trends indicate that travelers are coming for more than just one day.

NNEPRA attributes the ridership increases to improved reliability, changes to schedules, increased frequency to Freeport, and repeat customers. Amtrak customer satisfaction scores rate the *Downeaster* among the best in the nation.

Service on the Boston–Portland route, once handled by the B&M, was restored on December 15, 2001.

NNEPRA is the Maine public transportation authority that provides passenger rail service between Maine and Boston and points within Maine. NNEPRA holds a 20-year agreement with Amtrak to operate the *Downeaster* and is party to agreements with Pan Am Railways and the MBTA.

WWII FRENCH BOXCARS COULD BE BOUND FOR NH VETERANS CEMETERY

By Shawne K. Wickham
New Hampshire Union Leader

Tucked away on a dead-end street on Manchester, New Hampshire's West Side sits a nearly forgotten bit of history that serves as a testament to peace and friendship among nations. The "Merci Train" boxcar was a gift from the French people in reciprocity for America's generosity after World War II ended.

It was American newspaper columnist Drew Pearson who came up with the idea: Sending freight cars filled with supplies to European nations devastated by the war.

"It was called the Friendship Train," said Tony Rabbia, a 71-year-old Navy veteran of the Vietnam War who lives in Contoocook. He is the "commissar intendant" — "a fancy French name for treasurer," he said — for the Forty & Eight, the organization that takes care of the Merci boxcar.

The Friendship Train far exceeded expectations. Eight railcars left Los Angeles on November 7, 1947, collecting donations all along the way to the East Coast. And 11 days later, more than 700 railcars filled with donated food, medicine and supplies arrived in New York City, Rabbia said. "The goods inside were worth \$40 million at the time."

A grateful French nation responded by sending a "Merci" train back to the U.S. in 1949. Its 49 cars — one for each state and one to be shared by Washington, D.C., and what was then the territory of Hawaii — were filled with letters and tokens of thanks from the French people.

A photograph archived at the Manchester Historic Association shows large crowds welcoming the New Hampshire boxcar to Manchester.

And it seems only fitting that the Forty & Eight group stepped in to take care of it. An honor society started by American Legionnaires in 1920, La Société des Quarante Hommes et Huit Chevaux was named for what the boxcars used for transporting troops in World War I could hold: "Forty men or eight horses," Rabbia said. "It wouldn't hold both."

The Forty & Eight in New Hampshire built the structure on Reed Street that houses the Merci boxcar, on property donated by Msgr. Napoleon Gilbert from St. Jean the Baptist parish. The only thing the priest asked in return, Rabbia said, was for the group to hold a service every year to commemorate France's gift. And so they have, all these years, on the last Sunday in September.

The boxcar itself bears the coats of arms of the French

provinces that sent gifts: Bretagne, Dauphiné, Provence, and Bourbonnais, 29 in all.

Displayed inside are memorabilia related to the boxcar's history, including a photograph of American soldiers leaving the front lines heading for Bordeaux in just such a car. Two of the men were from Manchester: Sgt. John Cavanaugh and Elsworth Roukey, looking young and handsome in the black-and-white photo. An oil painting depicts the boxcar's arrival in New Hampshire; and a plaque honors members of "La Société des Quarante Hommes et Huit Chevaux." A collection of medals commemorates the group's past conventions.

Manchester Eagle Scout Phillippe Ouellette recently redid the walkway leading up to the building, and a Boy Scout troop affiliated with the Jutras Post of the American Legion keeps the grass mowed.

The ranks of the Forty & Eight have dwindled over the years. As of May 1, the organization counts 130 Granite Staters among its 23,000 members, according to the national organization. Four members are women, Rabbia said.

You no longer have to belong to the American Legion to join, he said. "Now you just have to be an honorably discharged veteran."

Rabbia remembers when 200 members used to turn out for the annual parade from the American Legion's Jutras Post to the boxcar. "That was years ago," he said.

He knows that common knowledge of the boxcar's role in history, and even its current location, is slipping away as members of the Forty & Eight pass. That's why he hopes the car someday can be moved to property owned by the New Hampshire State Veterans Cemetery in Boscawen. He doesn't feel it belongs within the cemetery proper, but there is land right across the street where the boxcar could be installed so it would be easily noticed by visitors, he said. "At least people will see it."

The New Hampshire Veterans Cemetery Association has been spearheading a project to create a Veterans Heritage Learning Center at the cemetery. The space will house educational kiosks and interactive, multimedia exhibits to explain New Hampshire's military history to visitors, said Mike Horne, director of the veterans cemetery.

Horne said having the Merci boxcar in Boscawen would dovetail nicely with the cemetery's expanding role as a focal point for veterans' activities in New Hampshire. "I think it could help to keep it visible in the future."

Reprinted with permission of the New Hampshire Union Leader. Originally published May 29, 2017.

SPRINGFIELD STATION REBORN

By Keith Scarlett

What is old is new again. Springfield's Union Station, closed since 1973, reopened for business on June 25, 2017 to much fanfare with an open house for the general public. The station, built in 1926, had lain dormant and moldering in downtown Springfield for 44 years, but thanks largely to the 40-year-



long efforts of US Representative Richard Neal, the station has come back to life and is slated to be a major piece of the revitalization of downtown Springfield.

Since 1973, Amtrak has used only one small corner of the station on the elevated track level; the rest of the structure had been sealed off. However, with \$94 million in funds from federal and state sources, the station now houses offices and other commercial space and has become an intermodal transportation hub. The long-abandoned express building adjacent to the station was demolished, and its place is a new parking garage and bus terminal, with Peter Pan and regional bus Pioneer Valley Transit Authority as its chief tenants. Two or three more bus companies are expected to use the facility by Labor Day. The station will also house a restaurant and travel-related retail shops.

Murals and artifacts are displayed to tell the story of Springfield and of the station's heritage. The clock in the handsomely restored lobby is the original, as is an old chalkboard showing trains from the three railroads that formerly served the station: The Boston & Albany, the New Haven, and the Boston & Maine.

The centerpiece of the station is visible as soon as one enters the newly reopened main entrance on Frank B. Murray Street. The main lobby, with its original terrazzo floors reflect-

ing the large electronic arrivals board, leads again through to Lyman Street, encouraging north-south foot traffic through the facility. The station is bright and welcoming.

Springfield is served by Amtrak's Lake Shore Limited and the Vermonter, as well as by trains to New Haven. By next year there will be 14 round-trip trains a day, and many hope to see the resumption of regular service to Boston. In its hey-day, Springfield saw up to 100 trains arrive and depart daily.

Leaving the ground-floor splendor today, though, Amtrak passengers still need to use the tired and grimy upper-level station. New railroad ticketing and passenger facilities are expected to be open within six to nine months. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation is funding construction of high-level platforms, which should be done by 2018.

Springfield Mayor Dominic Sarno sees the station as a key component to the city's revitalization along with the new MGM Casino that will open in 2018 some 10 blocks away.



Left: The main lobby shortly before Springfield Union Station reopened. Above: The grand opening in June, showing the restored main entrance. Below: Workmen prepare to install the station's original arrivals board as part of a mural about Springfield's railroad heritage. Interior photos courtesy Springfield Redevelopment Authority. Exterior photo by Michael B. Shavelson.



SALEM-BEVERLY BRIDGE BACK IN THE SWING

Full service on the MBTA's Newburyport and Rockport commuter rail lines resumed on August 14 with the completion of work to replace the railroad drawbridge over the Danvers River between Salem and Beverly. Service north of Salem had been curtailed for the project on July 17, and the MBTA provided shuttle busses to all stations on the line during the \$16.2 million project.

The work involved replacing the steel superstructure swing span, along with the replacement of mechanical components, such as the hydraulic rail system and bridge wedges. A new electrical room and rehabbed control house are part of the work, according to the MBTA.

The work was massively complicated by the age of the bridge, which dates to 1885, and the fact that much of the work necessarily took place in the middle of an active navigation channel. The span is 104 feet long.

The project was divided into two contracts. Middlesex Corporation rehabbed the approach spans and J.F. White Contracting Co. removed the old swing span and replaced it with a new span built by G&G Steel fabricators in Alabama.

The bridge has had plenty of headaches in its second century. On November 16, 1984 a fire on a portion of the wooden

trestle approach knocked the bridge out of commission for a year. MBTA F40PH No. 1007 and ex-BN Geep No. 1921, two sets of passenger equipment, and freight cars at various locations were stranded north of the bridge. The engines were trucked back to Danvers and rerailed in March 1985. Test runs over the repaired bridge were made beginning November 18, 1985. No. 1007 made the first official trip on November 29 with Governor Mike Dukakis aboard. After a day of free rides on Sunday, December 1, regular service resumed on Monday, December 2.

In December 2007, a barge struck and damaged the span while it was in the open position. There have been more than a dozen other major and minor mechanical failures over the years, three in 2015 alone, making the bridge a weak link in the chain of North Shore commuter rail. A 2008 MBTA plan to modernize the bridge came to nothing.

While trains are now running again, the final work on the project will not be completed until February 2018.

The MBTA scheduled federally mandated Positive Train Control work on the Newburyport and Rockport lines to coincide with shutdowns related to the bridge work. This will eliminate separate closures on the lines for PTC installation.



A gantry looms over the railroad bridge spanning the Danvers River in late July, a few days before crews used it to lower a new swing

span in place. We are looking south toward Salem. Salem News staff photo by Hadley Green, used with kind permission of the newspaper.