

THE BOWDOIN ORIENT

THE NATION'S OLDEST CONTINUOUSLY PUBLISHED COLLEGE WEEKLY

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News

All aboard: Fed funds allocated for Amtrak

January 29, 2010

By [Will Jacob \(authorpage.php?authorid=372\)](#)

ORIENT STAFF

[\(images/2010-01-29/large_amtrak.jpg\)](#)

[TIFFANY GERDES, THE BOWDOIN ORIENT \(authorpage.php?authorid=576\)](#)

Picture 1 of 2

GRAVY TRAIN: U.S. Congresswoman Chellie Pingree spoke of the business a train route between Boston and Freeport would attract at yesterday's conference.



[\(images/2010-01-29/large_amtrak.jpg\)](#)

"If you build it, they will come," said U.S. Congresswoman Chellie Pingree yesterday at a Maine Street Station conference, officially announcing Amtrak's anticipated passenger train service that will connect Portland to Brunswick by 2012.

The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) received a \$35 million allocation from the Federal Railroad Administration as part of the \$8 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The money will fund the necessary upgrades to 30 miles of rail lines, owned by Pan Am Railways. The Amtrak Downeaster passenger line, currently running from Boston to Portland, will then extend its service up through Freeport and into Brunswick.

"It's great news, it's the best news Brunswick has had in a long time," said Senior Vice President for Planning & Development and Secretary of the College Bill Torrey, who explained that there will be benefits to both Brunswick and the College.

"Everybody's happy, and they should be," he said.

In her announcement at Maine Street Station, Pingree said that work on the rails will begin "right away," and Amtrak service is expected to arrive by the end of 2012. The proposed schedule would see at least two round trips to Boston each day, with one additional round trip to Portland.

Initial rail improvement work will create over 200 jobs, and new businesses surrounding the Freeport and Brunswick stations could create more. The news is particularly important given that the Brunswick naval air base officially closes its runways today.

"This is a very exciting day for us in Maine. It's an economic boost," Pingree said. "These days there's nothing more important than creating and preserving jobs."

U.S. Senators Olympia J. Snowe and Susan Collins praised the planned Amtrak extension for its "tremendous benefits to Maine, including reducing road congestion, cleaner air, commuting options, and easier access to the state for tourists and economic development opportunities," according to a joint statement released yesterday.

According to a press release issued by Pingree's office, Chairman of Trainriders Northeast Wayne Davis said, "Nearly five million people go from the Boston area to Freeport to go shopping. That's a big market that the Downeaster can tap into."

Executive Director of the NNEPRA Patricia Quinn stressed how competitive the application process was, as \$50 billion worth of projects competed for \$8 billion in federal stimulus funding.

"It was extremely gratifying last night to get that call that with this announcement being made around the country, that Maine and the Downeaster service was selected to lead the country in this...renaissance for rail transportation service," she said.

Quinn said that some orders and requests for bids and rail have already gone out for construction, and that all involved are eager to tackle the project. She speculated that the completion of this project may lead to later connection to the western part of the state from Yarmouth junction.

President Barry Mills said there are many reasons the train is exciting for Bowdoin. He explained how convenient the train will be for students who can take the train home or to Logan airport in Boston. Students, faculty, and staff can also make easy trips in and out of Boston.

"But the second important point for the College is for us to be able to say to the world that there's train service to Bowdoin College. It makes us a whole lot more accessible in people's minds, and that will attract students who might think that we are at a place that's just harder to get to," he said.

Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Scott Meiklejohn said that, in his experience, prospective students consider Maine as more "remote and inaccessible" than other areas of New Hampshire, the Berkshires or Vermont. He said that mentioning the possibility of Amtrak coming to Brunswick from Boston during information sessions, however, appeases those concerns.

"I think it could be a great thing for us, and we've been talking about it for a while, as a possibility. You could tell it's something during information sessions that makes eyebrows go up, so I think it's a winner for us," he said.

While Bowdoin was not directly involved in the application for funds, Torrey said the College was very interested in supporting the infrastructure of Brunswick, acknowledging the service the train will provide to students, visitors and community members.

With the naval air station closing and the economic downturn, Torrey said that the Maine Street Station project "was a tremendous risk for the town," and a difficult investment for the College. He said it was a real "joint effort" between the state, the congressional delegation, the town and Bowdoin.

"The College was supportive, we did our share, and I think everybody can feel good. It helps validate all the money that's been spent," said Torrey.

Senior VP for Finance and Administration & Treasurer Katy Longley said the project has been discussed for 30 years, so it is exciting to "see it come together so quickly after Maine Street Station was built."

"The expansion of Amtrak train service to Brunswick will greatly enhance available transportation options and will make Brunswick a multi-modal community," said Longley.

"While some alternative transportation options currently exist such as Zipcar...the College and Town have been working together for a number of years to promote additional public transportation initiatives," she said.

Longley said the Brunswick Explorer, a public bus route scheduled to begin in the fall of 2010, will offer reliable transportation five days a week between Bowdoin, downtown Brunswick and Cook's Corner. Adding the train service will help students, faculty and staff "reach destinations ranging from Boston to Rockland," she said.

The last train to connect Portland to Brunswick, operated by Maine Central Railroad, went on its final run in April of 1959.

State Representative and Bowdoin alumnus Alex Cornell du Houx '06 was excited about the prospect of the Amtrak arriving in Brunswick.

"I think the train service to Brunswick would be a tremendous boost economically, and it opens up many opportunities," he said. "I certainly wish we'd had a train station and service when I was at Bowdoin.

Quinn left those at the conference with an optimistic message and an invitation.

"Hopefully the next time I'm here...we're going to be standing here waiting for that train to come and arrive right at this platform," she said.

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In the current Orient

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[Our Challenge \(article.php?date=2010-02-05§ion=2&id=1\)](#)

During a Wednesday night meeting to discuss the presence, prevalence, and perils of alcohol on campus, one consensus was clear: identifying the crux ... [Read \(article.php?date=2010-02-05§ion=2&id=1\)](#)

[NEWS \(section.php?section=1\)](#)

[Student arrested, alcohol use a concern \(article.php?date=§ion=1&id=1\)](#)

After being released from Parkview Adventist Medical Center early Sunday morning, Marc Seligson '12 was arrested on an assault charge by Brunswick ... [Read \(article.php?date=§ion=1&id=1\)](#)

[FEATURES \(section.php?section=3\)](#)

[From New York to Maine: The origins of Bowdoin food \(article.php?date=§ion=3&id=1\)](#)

Associate Director of Dining Services and Executive Chef Ken Cardone is excited about the tomatoes in the salad bars of Moulton and Thorne. "We get ... [Read \(article.php?date=§ion=3&id=1\)](#)

[OPINION \(section.php?section=2\)](#)

[America's new, dangerous tyranny of the supermajority \(article.php?date=§ion=2&id=2\)](#)

Consider this: fifty years ago, over a two-year session of Congress there was exactly one cloture motion filed, the motion the Senate files to ask ... [Read \(article.php?date=§ion=2&id=2\)](#)

[ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT \(section.php?section=4\)](#)

[Theodores showcase passion for community and design \(article.php?date=§ion=4&id=1\)](#)

The work of Adjunct Assistant Professor of Art Wiebke Theodore and her husband Steven Theodore, both architectural designers and co-partners of ... [Read \(article.php?date=§ion=4&id=1\)](#)

[SPORTS \(section.php?section=5\)](#)

[Men's basketball beats NESCAC adversaries in weekend thrillers \(article.php?date=§ion=5&id=1\)](#)

After a period of inconsistency, the men's basketball team appears to be on the verge of finding its rhythm. As the Polar Bears prepare to take their ... [Read \(article.php?date=§ion=5&id=1\)](#)

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