

B&M Railroad enters new era

By James B. Goldsmith
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With the sale of Boston and Maine Corp. commuter lines to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, the B&M entered a new era. It is hoped that it will be one of progress and growth for both the railroad and its customers.

From the time the Boston and Maine Corporation was declared bankrupt, in March, 1970, U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Murray, the railroad's two trustees, Robert W. Meserve and Benjamin H. Lacey, the Interstate Commerce Commission, and the B&M's President, Alan G. Dustin, were involved in making decisions which will affect the railroad for many years.

On Dec. 27, 1976, the sale of 270.1 route miles of Boston and Maine Corp. tracks to the MBTA for \$39,500,000 marked a milestone in the history of the railroad. Robert W. Meserve, a Boston attorney and B&M trustee, explains that now the MBTA owns the 270.1 miles of track, and the Boston and Maine Corp. operates equipment with its employees and the costs incurred now are the MBTA's. Attorney Meserve further stated that as a private corpora-

tion, the B&M wasn't eligible to receive federal money, but the MBTA can get such financial aid. (U.S. Dept. of Transportation — Urban Mass. Transportation Administration)

The B&M trustee added that \$53-55,000,000 has been set aside by the railroad to implement its reorganization plan which was submitted to the U.S. District Court over a year ago. The court has set a target date of January, 1978, for the railroad to have its reorganization plan finalized, but Attorney Meserve feels that date may be adversely affected by the nation's slow economic growth.

Another phase of the Boston and Maine's progress involves its setting up a new corporation whereby new stock will be issued, and creditors will be paid with newly-issued stock and cash. Thus, explained Meserve, the railroad will eventually be free from all indebtedness.

Under provisions of the Boston & Maine Corp. purchase and sales agreement, the railroad is responsible for operating its equipment and providing commuter service for the MBTA for five years. Under the agreement, the railroad retains an important easement which stipulates that the B&M can operate its

freight cars over track owned by the MBTA, and the railroad must reimburse the MBTA for such usage.

Basically two deficit operations have merged with the sale of track, diesel cars, signals, bridges, buildings, shops, towers, rights, leases, and easements to the MBTA. David Gunn, director of operations for the MBTA, said that the projected debt to be incurred by his agency for 1977 is \$147,000,000.

Addressing himself to MBTA rapid transit extensions, Gunn said that the Red Line from Harvard to South Braintree and north to Davis Square, Somerville, will be finished in the next two years. Meanwhile, work on the Orange Line, moving riders from Boston to Forest Hills, will be completed within five years. This ambitious project will utilize Penn-Central track in Boston's Back Bay area over territory designated by the MBTA as the South-West Corridor. The third MBTA extension project is currently in the planning stage; the Blue Line extension to Lynn is described as a "feasibility study." Gunn reports the three rapid transit extensions will cost more than \$1 billion.

The Boston and Maine Railroad started serving South Shore commuters

March 15, when Conrail (Consolidated Rail Corporation) terminated service between South Station, Providence, R.I., and 18 Massachusetts communities. Today, Frank G. Fotta, general manager, commuter services, B&M Corp., reports the transition has "gone very smoothly, and 65,000-70,000 paying commuters utilize the line weekly."

While commenting on the new Fiat railroad cars, in use since July 1976 by the B&M, Gunn said "It is a fine car and hasn't broken down once, except when rocks have been thrown at it."

David Hughes, vice president and assistant to Alan G. Dustin, president, Boston and Maine Corp., reported the B&M's executives are pleased with the Fiat car's "operating performance and mechanical aspects" and added that some primary modifications to the car's body and interior configuration would have to be made if the railroad were to buy these cars. He also stated that the Fiat cars need greater passenger capacity.

Hughes, when asked to comment on the Boston and Maine Corp. purchase — sale agreement, said the the railroad's ex-

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executives are "pleased that it was consummated." He also said that the sale will hopefully generate better service and make more federal money available to improve commuter services. Hughes said "it is our hope and expectation that actual commuter rail deficit will decline because of the MBTA's ability to rehabilitate equipment and reinvest money to make capital improvements to property."

Trustee Meserve stated he hopes the purchase-sale agreement will enable the Boston and Maine Corp. to move forward to create a railroad that will make money. Attorney Meserve added "I have spent six or seven years of my life helping to get the B&M back on its feet, and I am just stubborn enough to want to see it through."

Meanwhile, the City of Lawrence lost its railroad commuter service with Boston when the last B&M train discontinued in June, 1976. The MBTA has no current

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plans to give Lawrence commuter service, thus the only other mass transportation between Lawrence and Boston is bus service owned and operated by the Trombly Motor Coach Company.

Frank Trombly, owner of this corporation, reports he provides Lawrence residents 36 single trips per day between Lawrence and Boston; 19 trips to Lawrence and 17 trips to Boston. Further, he said his corporation provides 13 trips into Boston and 13 to Lawrence on Saturdays. The Sunday-holiday schedule includes seven trips to Boston and seven to Lawrence.

Trombly added that he picked up two extra trips a day (buses going from Lawrence to Boston) when the last train to Boston was discontinued.