

The Goodwin line — 'a decent little railroad in New Hampshire'

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CENTER HARBOR, N.H. (AP) — It's the kind of railroad whose two-man crew pulls up to a grade crossing at lunchtime, sets the brakes, locks the cab and ambles through the snow to the diner.

The two-year old Goodwin Railroad links a paper mill in Lincoln with the outside world, via the Boston & Maine railroad yard in Concord — a distance of about 70 miles.

Seven people run the entire non-union line, each doing a bit of everything.

The railroad owns one locomotive, a 1,600 horsepower Alco built in 1953.

The track more or less belongs to the state, which is taking it over from the B&M through condemnation, although it technically is the Northern Railroad, once part of the Concord & Montreal. B&M filed to abandon it several years ago.

Now, where passenger trains once high-balled along the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee, Goodwin's engine pulls out of Lakeport daily, coupled to a half-dozen freight cars rumbles southbound to Concord on day, north to the papermill the next.

Above Northfield Hill, the engine idles while Brian "Woody" Woodward and Dick Mauser down cheeseburgers at Jimmy's Drive-In, a quick walk away.

ON A RECENT snowy day they entertained some visitors in the wood-floored locomotive cab. "Come in here, I can't see where I'm going," complains Woody as a photographer clambers outside on the running board.

"Never bothered you before" counters Mauser.

The train wobbles along the old roadbed, most of which has been repaired at a cost of more than \$2 million, largely in federal money.

On a recent morning the train squealed out of Lakeport for Concord to pick up a string of cars and have the two crewmen attend a lecture on hazardous cargoes.

Woodward sums it up with scorn. "Not only do we haul flammable fumes, we'll have to haul flammable government paperwork."

As the train rocked along, motorists waved.

"There's something instinctive about it," says Mauser. "They see a train and the arm starts to flap."

Some of the route parallels Interstate 93 and truckers toot their horns. Woody blasts back with the whistle.

"Summah's ovah," he yells in a thick New Hampshire accent out the cab window to laborers working under a bridge being rebuilt near the track.



Rolling down

Goodwin Railroad engineer "Woody" Woodward peers ahead as he rolls his train southbound from Lakeport, New Hampshire, with freight cars bound for the rest of the country.

THE TRAIN LURCHES forward, teetering along curves banked to accommodate high-speed passenger trains but which seem to threaten the slow-moving little freight.

The worst speed is around 15 mph, Woodward explains, when a harmonic oscillation occurs as the weight of the locomotive resonates with the rails and the train vibrates mercilessly.

"Your knuckles turn white," says Mauser. "You ought to see them at night — they glow in the dark," says Woodward.

The train connects with the Boston & Maine Railroad in Concord on what once was the Northern Railroad, which ran from New Hampshire to Montreal.

Herbert Goodwin runs the railroad that bears his name. The quiet owner of a Hooksett construction company, he says that if more federal dollars are approved for track rehabilitation, the railroad could turn a profit later this year.

The state funnels "a little in excess to \$100,000 a year" to make up the railroad's deficits, says Charles Chandler, executive director of the New Hampshire Transportation Authority.

"There are a lot of pluses right now on the line,"

says Chandler, whose agency reviews the line's operations monthly.

New England Pulp and Paper Co. in Lincoln takes in pulp from Canada and ships out paper. Along the line are about 30 other customers that receive grain, lumber, propane, scrap metal and other commodities.

THE GOODWIN LINE is a "decent little railroad providing a service to rail-dependent customers," says Chandler.

Some of them could be served by trucks without the public money involved in the rail subsidies, he says.

"I don't know if it's really a matter of life or death, but they'd be in a really diminished financial position if the customers didn't have it (the railroad)," he says.

"The loads that a train can carry compared to what a truck can carry are so different that the differential in cost between train and truck on these larger, bulkier, heavier commodities (is such) that there is an economy to it that without it, I'm sure the companies would be hurting," Chandler says.

Aboard Goodwin locomotive No. 1, Woodward and Mauser tell of encountering deer and livestock along the track. "A cow isn't very intelligent, we figure," Woody says.

"We keep gaining on them and they finally figure out that's not the place to be," he adds.

The Goodwin has had its share of minor derailments. But as Woody says: "Getting the train back on the tracks is twice as easy as filling out all the federal forms."

AS THE AIR-POWERED windshield wipers click back and forth, he and Mauser speak of plowing through deep snows of winter. The locomotive has steel plows bolted to both ends and in snow a rubber extension is attached that clears the top of the rails.

But it didn't help one wintry day when Woody slammed the train into a snowdrift and got dead stuck in the middle of the track. "It was embarrassing," he said, to have to hire a contractor to drag out the engine with a front-end loader.

But railroading is in both men's blood and they'll probably keep at it. Mauser is University of New Hampshire engineering graduate.

Woodward, who lives in a parked caboose in Meredith, went to college for a semester, but traded the pursuit of entymology for keeping the bugs out of his locomotive cab.

"He's the Billy Carter of the Woodward family," says his brother, Ellis, New England public relations spokesman for President Carter's re-election committee.



AP Wirephoto

Bending the iron

Goodwin Railroad brakeman Dick Mauser opens a switch to clear his train, which was about to rumble north to Lakeport, New

Hampshire, out of Concord on a recent run. He and engineer "Woody" Woodward make up the entire crew of the 74-mile shortline.



AP Wirephoto

Ready to roll

The Goodwin Railroad freight waits for traffic to clear at a crossing in Tilton, New Hampshire, on a recent snowy day. Brian "Woody"

Woodward, right, and brakeman/conductor Dick Mauser handle the daily train on the seven-employee railroad.