

CORAM BOND, right, was interviewed Tuesday morning by anchorman John Donovan of WMTW television in Poland Springs, Maine. The Whitefield selectman is trying to return

passenger rail service to northern New Hampshire, by way of Portsmouth, Dover and Portland, Maine.

(Photo by Jon Seaver)

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Whitefield Man Seeks NH Passenger Train Service

By JON SEAVER

Union Leader Correspondent

WHITEFIELD — "I'll probably never get to first base, but I'm going to try it," said Coram Bond, a selectman here who is trying to revive passenger train service through northern New Hampshire.

"What behooves me is that roads are so full of trucks and cars, airports are so full of planes that no one can get in, and they make hundreds of times the pollution that one diesel engine would produce," Bond continued. "And all this while there's thousands of miles of tracks all over the country going to waste."

The 67-year-old selectman is trying to revive an idea he proposed more than four years ago when he started to inquire into the possibility of a Boston-to-Montreal passenger service route that would go up the Maine and New Hampshire coast and across the North Country.

"We're so smart and progressive these days, I can't understand why we're so far behind on railroads," Bond said. "Look at Japan and the European countries. Their trains are fast and efficient, with fantastic roadbeds that trains can travel on at over a hundred miles an hour. If they can do it, why can't we?"

Bond's proposal would extend Am-

trak service from Boston to Portland along the B & M line forming a seacoast route. Passenger service trains would stop at Portsmouth, Dover and Durham and go on up the Maine coast to include Biddeford, Old Orchard Beach and other tourist areas.

From Portland, a link with Maine Central would make connections possible through the following towns: Sebago Lake, Bridgeton, and other summer resorts, to the Conway-North Conway area, through Bartlett, Crawford Notch and Bretton Woods, to Whitefield, providing access to buses north to Colebrook and the Balsams Inn and south to Twin Mountain. From Whitefield, service would continue into Vermont—through St. Johnsbury to the Canadian Pacific Railroad for service to Lydonville, Orleans, Newport and the 40 miles to Montreal.

"And the ride through Crawford Notch is spectacular!" says Bond. "It's a breathtaking ride on what is basically a shelf cut into the mountain."

"Young people haven't had the opportunity to travel in passenger trains that used to run through this area," Bond stated. "Given that since western and Canadian railroads promote the Rockies, there's no reason why this state and organizations in the White Mountains can't promote Crawford Notch."

"The railroad didn't want to run the passenger service any longer," Bond explained, "so they did everything they could to discourage it. They had to show the Department of Commerce they were losing money so they could abandon the line."

In his effort to bring back passenger train service, Bond has written letters to Sen. John Durkin (the only N.E. senator on the Senate Commerce Committee), the N.H. Transportation Commission, the New England Commission on Rail Planning and Rail Rehabilitation, to the mayors of Portland, Boston and Montreal and has involved Congressman James Cleveland's office in his project.

"I urge all selectmen or governing bodies on this route to contact me by letter," Bond says.

Rep Cleveland's office told the Union Leader that they have had "some discussions with Mr. Bond" and "are lending support to his effort."

According to Gov Hugh Gallen's press secretary Dayton Duncan, the governor is interested in reviving passenger train service in New Hampshire and is ready to give some priority to it.

According to Duncan, the pilot study Gallen has called for will be looking into where the trains might run and the feasibility of bringing back passenger service once again.

Rep. Wight Reappointed To Data Unit