

Rail Freight Traffic Increase Attributed to Three Factors

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An improving economy, the coming of winter and a change in railroad companies have combined to increase freight train traffic between Manchester and Concord.

Dennis Coffey, spokesman for Boston and Maine Corp., said train traffic to the Public Service Co. plant in Bow had slowed down somewhat in July, but "now they're picking up a little, bringing their inventories up to date."

Coffey said a normal coal train has about 70 cars and the trains don't run on a fixed schedule, although some do go through communities early in the morning.

John Cavanaugh, a PSNH spokesman, said normal de-

liveries were about three a week, although one week recently had four trains going to the Merrimack station in Bow.

Another factor in the increased traffic was the taking over of the Manchester to Concord run from the B & M by New England Southern Railroad in mid-July.

Coffey said there's been "a natural growth of rail traffic in the region . . . and he (Peter Dearness) is attempting to attract rail users, new business."

Dearness, 46, is the president, general manager and principal stock owner of New England Southern Railroad, which is based in Belchertown, Mass. The railroad has been operating in New Hampshire since 1982, he said, and currently runs on about 100 miles of track, from Manchester to Con-

cord, to Lincoln and up to Penacook.

He said his firm took over from B & M primarily because it was already working in the Concord area and the small amount of track that his trains run on gives him greater flexibility in scheduling.

From Manchester, Dearness said, his railroad is basically making one run a day to Concord, which is what B & M did, but his operation has added one run every Sunday, and there are some days when two trains go from Manchester to Concord.

Dearness said the reason for a train every day six days a week is to keep an even flow of goods to the shippers, rather than having two or three trains a day in the beginning of the week.

Standing in the train yard behind Dunkin' Donuts on Elm Street Tuesday, Dearness said, "This is a record day for us."

He explained the afternoon train that was about to pull out had a record 40 cars, including 30 cars of salt, which required two 1,500 horsepower locomotives.

Asked about complaints of increased train activity, Dearness replied, "Well, there actually has been an increase in train activity, our traffic levels are up.

"Part of it, I think, we can attribute to the flexibility that we have, but a good deal of it has to do with the economy, and the season itself."

He explained, "Salt moves during this season, until the end of October or so, then it will drop off so you have the affect of our operation combined with additional shippers.

"We've got larger car numbers, because we've got more customers, plus the customers we do have are using rail a little bit more."

Dearness continued, "There's no spectacular increase . . . but we're winding up with longer trains, more frequent trains and that may be the reason some people are noticing the trains more."

As for his goal of attracting more customers, Dearness said, "The response has been, I think, very good. Partly because we now keep a switcher and crew available in Concord. Our operating base, if you will, is in Concord, our freight office is there . . . it's a greater commitment to Concord."



NEW ENGLAND Southern Railroad President Peter Dearness in front of a locomotive. (Staff Photo by John Clayton)