

FAST SERVICE TO MEET COMPETITION

Motor Trucks co-ordinated with *MAINE BULLET*, New B&M-New Haven Freight Train speeds operations at 500 New England Points

(From the June 27, 1931 *Railway Age*, pages 1257-1258)

Co-ordinated rail and freight operations which offer New England and New York City patrons an overnight freight service - the convenience of which, railroad officials believe, "is not even approached by other means of transportation," was inaugurated on June 15 (1931) with the joint operation by the New York, New Haven and Hartford and the Boston & Maine of a new fast freight train, the *Maine Bullet* between Portland ME and New York. The new train operates between New York and Portland, about 340 miles, on a thirteen and a quarter hour schedule in one direction and a twelve and a quarter hour schedule in the other: - reducing by 24 hours or more the transit time of freight moving between New York and New England as well as between points in Northern New England and Southern New England.

New Haven & B&M officers anticipate that the speeded service will be an effective means of meeting highway and steamboat competition. Interest in the new train is especially keen. Assurances of patronage are already being received from shippers who have been employing other agencies of transportation.

The direct runs of the train between New York and Portland, however, are but a nucleus around which has been built a coordinated transportation plan to serve some 500 communities in New England. Motor trucks of the New England Transportation Company (*NET*) and the Boston & Maine Transportation Company (*BMT*), the highway subsidiaries of the New Haven and B&M respectively, coordinating with the *Maine Bullet*, operate in territories surrounding designated concentration points along the lines of the two railroads. Cars are added to or cut out of the *Bullet* at such of these concentration points as are located along its route. Cars loaded at or destined for off-route concentration points are switched at strategic junctions. The trucking service is, at present, a station-to-station movement, with no store-door collection or delivery involved.

There are 17 concentration points: - two located in Boston - one to serve patrons of the New Haven while the other to serve those of the B&M. Trucks of the NET serve 61 stations surrounding the New Haven's concentration in Boston, while the BMT's trucks operate between Boston and 50 outlying stations. Cars from these Boston concentration points are forwarded to Lowell where they join the *Bullet*. Likewise in the return direction, the Boston cars are set off at Lowell. (*By 1938, Boston did not have Bullet service: - it was easier to truck the shipments cross town to the New Haven.*)

Connection is also made at Lowell to and from Concord NH on the B&M and Fall River and New Bedford on the New Haven. Out of Concord, BMT trucks serve 16 New Hampshire points while the NET trucks at Fall River and New Bedford serve 15 and 22 outlying stations respectively.

Other concentration points located off the *Maine Bullet's* route are those at Providence and Waterbury. Cars to and from Providence connect with the train in Worcester while those to and from Waterbury connect at Hartford (*and Putnam CT*). Providence serves as the concentration point for a greater number of stations than any other concentration point excluding the combined stations in Boston. From Providence, 82 outlying stations are served. There are seven stations served by trucks operating around Waterbury.

Other large concentration points - all located along the *Bullet's* route - are: Bridgeport with trucks serving 39 stations; New Haven with 41; Hartford 47; Putnam 27; Lowell with trucks serving 26 Massachusetts communities; and Lawrence with trucking service to 36 outlying stations (*southbound, Merchandise Cars were forwarded to Lowell for connection to the Bullet*). Minor concentration points are Nashua and Manchester (*Cars connected to and from the Bullet are made at Lowell*).

It will be seen that the two interested railroads have evolved around the *Maine Bullet* a co-ordinated service touching every important producing and distributing point in the New England territories which they serve. (*Not mentioned by Railway Age was service between New York and the Connecticut River Valley north of Springfield. This was done via trains to and from White River Junction connecting with the Bullet in New Haven.*) The *Maine Bullet* is the second fast freight train inaugurated recently in which the New Haven participated. On April 27 (1931), the *Speed Witch* was inaugurated in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Railroad between Boston and Baltimore. The popularity of this latter train thus far indicates that it is attracting merchandise traffic which formerly moved by highway or water. (*In late June, the B&M and MEC inaugurated the Maine Meteor providing overnight service between Boston and Bangor with connections to most outlying stations in Maine.*)

The inaugural of the *Maine Bullet* on June 15 was attended by appropriate ceremonies in New York and Portland. Civic and business leaders of the Bronx participated with railway officials in the dispatch of the eastbound train from the New Haven's Harlem River Yards. Likewise at Portland, a dedication of the westbound train was held, while similar ceremonies greeted the trains at the larger cities along the route.

On June 15th, 1931, the B&M and New Haven Railroads inaugurated the *Maine Bullet* which promised overnight delivery between Portland and New York. On July 13th, 1931, the B&M and Maine Central got together to start the *Maine Meteor* which promised overnight service between Boston and Bangor with next day service to most outlying points in Maine.

**OUR FREIGHT CARS NOW WEAR BETTER THAN SEVEN LEAGUE BOOTS
"THE BULLET" AND "THE METEOR" REVOLUTIONIZE FREIGHT TRAFFIC**

The proverbial seven-league boots of the giant who was once reputed to have moved from city to city in a hop-skip and jump would have little to boast about today (*August 1931*) if they were compared with what the "The Bullet" and "The Meteor," newest of our fast freight trains, are doing every day.

With "The Bullet" providing overnight service in both directions between Portland and New York City (and its speeded-up connecting trains and coordinated highway truck operations extending overnight service to much of Massachusetts and all of New Hampshire), and with "The Maine Meteor" moving freight overnight between Boston and points as far north as Bangor, the past six weeks has marked a revolution in the movement of freight traffic in New England.

"The Bullet" was established on June 15th, in cooperation with the New Haven RR. "The Maine Meteor" followed on July 13th in cooperation with the Maine Central and Bangor & Aroostook Railroads. The service of the two trains has been hailed by shippers and the press as "The greatest improvement in New England freight service to date," and "a decided boost to our industries."

The trains (and their coordinated connections) were established to provide new standards of service to shippers and receivers, and to obtain for ours and other railroads shipments now moving by motor truck. They have already secured much new business for railroad shipment. Every railroadman (or woman, too) can help by telling them. Nothing like this service has ever been offered New England (and probably any other section) and no other form of transportation of freight approaches its convenience and speed.

The inauguration of "The Bullet" made history in New England railroading. At the Rigby Yards in Portland, representative leaders of New England communities and industry gathered to mark the departure of the first run of "The Bullet," and to take part in the ceremonies attendant. A somewhat similar occurrence took place at the New Haven's Harlem River yards. Just before the train was due to leave Rigby, there was a message from Governor Gardiner of Maine. It read:

"I regard the starting of new freight service between Maine and New York by the Boston & Maine and New Haven railroads as the foremost link in the transportation system of our state and of New England. Such an important step cannot fail to be appreciated by all citizens and to be accepted as a material asset by our agricultural, business and industrial businesses. My best wishes to you on this occasion."

With an airplane circling overhead, from which President Fred D. Gordon of the Portland Chamber of Commerce dropped a bouquet of flowers with ribbon carrying the well-wishes of Maine's business and industrial men, "The Bullet" was ready for her dash to New York from the Rigby Yards. A big "4000" (*Lima*) class locomotive of the B&M's newest fleet with Engineman HF Briggs and Fireman FL Hazard at the head-end. Five seconds before the scheduled leaving time, our vice-president and general manager JW Smith fired a pistol. Out went the "The Bullet," and the train was on its way. The airplane escorted it for a mile or so and then dipped in salute as the train roared on.

On board, in an extra buggy, were representatives of all the Boston newspapers, other reporters from Portland and officials of the B&M and New Haven. The buggy in which they rode was probably the first working newspaper office ever set up on an American freight train. Operating department officials had erected wooden benches, the electrical department through the courtesy of the Exide Battery Company had wired the caboose for electric lights. All the way to New York, the reporters worked under electric lights fed by a series of storage batteries. The newspaper stories of the first trip of "The Bullet" were filed from the train as it sped through the night, and appeared in all the New England newspapers the next morning; some of them before the train arrived in New York.

"The Bullet" arrived at Dover at 6:45 PM, twenty minutes ahead of schedule. There, Mayor T. Jewett Chesley and City Clerk Fred E. Quimby and a group of representative citizens into the Dover yard to "wait for the train." They were greeted by Vice-President Smith and Superintendent Twombly. After a short chat, they bid "The Bullet" *bon voyage*. At Dover, cars containing shipments of auto tire fabric for Mexico were added to the cars from Maine which contained live fish, lobsters, beans, canned brownbread and other products from Portland.

Virtually bisecting New England and picking up more New England products in cars "The Bullet" picked up at Lawrence, Lowell and Worcester. Much of the freight collected in these cities came by motor truck from as far away as Concord NH, Gloucester, Boston, Fall River, New Bedford and other places. "The Bullet" roared on through the night, being greeted with whistles and cheers as it passed through towns.

"The Bullet" went off the B&M at Worcester 35 minutes ahead of schedule. There, New Haven officials were on hand and the train was whisked to New York where it rolled into the Harlem River yards in the murk of a foggy dawn 55 minutes ahead of its fast schedule of 12 and a half hours on its maiden voyage.

There were similar ceremonies on the eastbound run of the first day's run of "The Bullet." These took place in the Harlem River yards. Newspaper and magazine representatives rode the "bullet" on the New York-Portland run, and, on their arrival at Portland, were met by District manager EW Abbott of the B&M and were shown the transportation facilities and the scenic beauties of Maine's largest city.

The furor among the shipping and receiving public created by the inauguration of "The Bullet" had scarcely subsided when announcement was made of "The Maine Meteor," with its 24 hours faster service between Boston and points as far north as Bangor. This is a joint operation of the Bangor & Aroostook, the Maine Central and the B&M.

Reaching in and out of practically all stations between Boston, Portland and Bangor, and also establishing a much faster service to and from points in Aroostook County, "The Maine Meteor" also extended the service of "The Bullet" into northern Maine, thus, speeding service to and from the Pine Tree State and New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

Again, there was a loud expression of approbation from shippers and receivers. "The Maine Meteor" has provided Maine with its fastest freight service in history, for the first time establishing overnight service between Boston and Bangor.

A day later came further surprises for shippers in western Massachusetts and in New Hampshire when freight train schedules of our railroad were again speeded up so that the service of "The Bullet" was extended through new connections to five to 24 hours faster service to and from New York to western Massachusetts and extended New Hampshire points. It further extended the overnight schedules between New York and Brattleboro VT and White River Junction.

The last improvement practically finished extension of the overnight New York service to and from the territory that we serve north to White River Junction on the New Hampshire Division; and westward on the Fitchburg Division so that all the larger points and practically all of the smaller points on our road now have, by train or by coordinated highway motor service, a connection with the overnight "Bullet."

August 1931 *Boston & Maine Employees Magazine*

One of the first of the generally favorable reviews of the *Maine Bullet Service* was published in the *Amesbury Daily News*, which was reprinted in the August 1931 issue of the *Boston & Maine Employees Magazine*.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

THE "MAINE BULLET" - A REAL HELP TO LOCAL BUSINESS

(From the *Amesbury MA Daily News*)

The Boston & Maine Railroad "Maine Bullet" fast freight train from Portland ME to New York City is going to be a great help to the local manufacturers. This was tested out on the second day (*June 16th, 1931*) the freight ran. The Amesbury Manufacturing Company Co. received a wire in the forenoon from a party in Connecticut who wanted a sample Powow Craft boat just as quick as they could possibly get it. The company got in touch with the B&M and found that got the boat to the freight office before noon to have it go to Connecticut on the new fast freight "Maine Bullet." The boat was crated and at the freight office in time for the Carter's truck which handles the B&M freight (*from Amesbury at least*) that feeds the "Maine Bullet" at Lawrence. They delivered it at Lawrence in time for the "Maine Bullet" to take it in the early evening, and the boat was delivered in Connecticut the next morning just 18 hours after the wire was received. This is pretty quick work, really faster than a letter would be delivered between the two places, made possible by the "Maine Bullet" making 50 miles per hour, as good a time as the Pullman trains make.

It was most favorable for the local company, for they received their sight draft and got their money a few days after the boat was delivered. Such service as this is going to help build up our local industries.

Reprinted in the August 1931 *Boston & Maine Employees Magazine*

In the early 1920's, railroad freight service in New England particularly could best be described as a disaster. By the end of the Decade, after massive capital investment and "rethinking" their freight operational scheme, there were enough improvements to allow for the *Maine Bullet* and *Maine Meteor* experiments. Those experiments lasted for more than thirty years.

(From *Industry*)

In the midst of a period in which it has become the fashion to paint pessimistic pictures of the future of the railroads and discourse mournfully on the extent to which their control of their destiny has been circumscribed by extensive regulations, comes a joint announcement of the Boston & Maine and New Haven railroads which is refreshing impetus to the thought that there is ample room left for initiative and ingenuity on the part of railroad management...

The accomplishment of the New England railroads in the past eight years - in which the plants have been practically built anew, operating performances have attained a degree of efficiency which has become the envy of railroads west of the Hudson - is well known to all. When, to that admirable record, the railroads show a real disposition to add a lively spirit of initiative and understanding of the needs of the shipping public, plus the intention to meet their competitive forces in sound economic ground of improving the quality, quantity and price of their own product, the future of New England railroads is indeed secure.

Reprinted in the August 1931 *Boston & Maine Employees Magazine*

INAUGURAL SCHEDULE OF THE "MAINE BULLET"

	WESTBOUND M-7		EASTBOUND M-6	
	Schedule (Read Down)	Station Work	Schedule (Read Up)	Station Work
Portland ME – Rigby Yard	lv. 4:15 PM		ar. 6:30 AM	
Dover NH	lv. 5:45 PM	pick up	ar. 5:15 AM	drop
Lawrence MA	LM-1 lv. 5 PM	drop at Lowell	ar. 3:55 AM	drop
Lowell MA	lv. 8:10 PM	pick up	ar. 3:10 AM	drop & p/u
Ayer MA			ar. 2:20 AM	drop & p/u
Worcester MA – B&M/NH	ar. 9:45 PM		lv. 1:05 AM	
Worcester MA – B&M/NH	lv. 10:45 PM		ar. 11:59 PM	
Putnam CT	ar. 11:55 PM		lv. 11:15 PM	
Cedar Hill CT	ar. 2:25 AM		lv. 8:20 PM	
Cedar Hill CT	lv. 3:15 AM		ar. 6:50 PM	
New York NY – Harlem River	ar. 6:00 AM		lv. 5:15 PM	