

TODAY ON THE M&NJ

On Friday, October 14th, GE 44 tonner # 2 was trucked off the property destined to a propane facility in Manheim, Pa., where it will replace a trackmobile. The facility is an East Penn customer and will apparently lease the unit. That still leaves # 1 on the M&NJ and ironically it arrived on the railroad about a decade and a half before the # 2 and now it has “outlasted” the # 2 although it should be noted that # 1 has been out of service for over two decades. As of the same date, GP9 773 had apparently been repainted but not lettered.

The Hudson Secondary, the former Lehigh & Hudson main line to Warwick, had most speed restrictions lifted by mid-October and was being used by the M&NJ, NYS&W and NS. The Maybrook and Wallkill branches out of Campbell Hall suffered little damage, mostly downed trees and roadbed scouring from plugged culverts. The washout on the M&NJ near Webb Road was not a priority as long as the stored cars did not have to be accessed. Meanwhile, the rehabilitation project of the M&NJ between East Main Street and Dolson Avenue resumed around October 15th as ties and rail were being replaced.

The Times Herald-Record reported on Sept. 15th that Metro-North Railroad would introduce a new interim service plan the following Monday intended to reduce travel times and lure commuters back to the Irene-damaged Port Jervis line. The plan offers two travel alternatives; five trains from Port Jervis to Harriman connecting with a bus to Ramsey followed by a train to Hoboken or bus departures from Port Jervis connecting directly to a train at Ramsey. The service frequency was to mimic the Port Jervis line’s pre-hurricane schedule. All busing to Beacon will be eliminated. At Ramsey, there will be more trains and more seats, including several “semi-expresses” with fewer stops in New Jersey en route to Hoboken. The evening rush will mirror the morning’s. Metro North’s Harriman to Ramsey segment will remain out of service for months.

As of October 22nd, the Metro North Commuter Railroad website carried the following status report on repairs to the line between Suffern and Harriman.

“Metro-North's efforts to rebuild and restore service on the Port Jervis Line after Tropical Storm Irene are moving forward at a rapid pace. Toward this goal, Metro-North engaged the engineering firm of AECOM to create a rebuilding plan, which takes place in two phases.

Phase I, currently underway, includes all work necessary to restore full train service on at least one track between Harriman and Suffern. Work that has already started includes: Building access roads between the material staging areas and the right-of-way; Rebuilding the track bed sub-grade; Replacing ballast in the washout areas, compacting the track bed and surfacing the right-of-way; Performing repair work on the undergrade bridges and the track slopes adjacent to the river. This work is being performed by both Metro-North Maintenance of Way forces and third party contractors and is scheduled to be finished by the end of the year, weather conditions permitting. If we can improve on this schedule, we will.

What We've Accomplished As of October 10th: With prompt cooperation from the Village of Sloatsburg, an access road was built just north of the Pond Brook Bridge, and property was made available for material and equipment storage. Our Maintenance of Way forces have been working south from Harriman, past Tuxedo Station, and have reached Sloatsburg. (Just south of Sloatsburg, there is four miles of heavily damaged double track from Sloatsburg to Suffern.) An emergency contractor recently completed installation of a reinforced concrete pipe to aid drainage in an area south of Sloatsburg Station. Our forces have done a great job salvaging stone that had washed away and can be reused for fill. Another emergency contractor has been working hand-in-hand with Metro-North track workers to deliver additional stone for fill. At any given time, there are approximately 30 people filling washouts and building up embankments on the line. In addition to the fill work, fallen trees and other debris are being cleared from the track bed. Because of the tremendous progress being made by Metro-North forces, the overall contract completion date has been moved forward from fall 2012 to June 30, 2012.

What's Next? Phase II of the Port Jervis Line reconstruction will begin this month and will entail: Completing the rebuilding of the second track and track bed between Sloatsburg and Hillburn; Repairing the signal system and returning it to service; Completing critical bridge repairs; Stabilizing the river bank along the right-of-way, building retaining walls and other flood mitigations.

Our goal, at the completion of the first phase, is to restore full train service on at least one track with: Some variations in schedule times for off-peak and weekend trains compared to the pre-storm schedule. Periodic off-peak and weekend train outages with busing to allow for the second phase of work to begin.

Until The Project is Completed: Metro-North continues to operate 17 trains daily between Port Jervis and Harriman, representing 65% of regular weekday train service. Trains connect at Harriman with express bus service to Ramsey/Route 17 for trains to Hoboken, Secaucus and Penn Station. Metro-North has marshaled the resources of MTA Bus, which has stepped up during this crisis to provide alternative service for the duration of the reconstruction.”

Thanks to Jim Dent, P. J. Hintz, Ed Horan, Dan Myers and Randy Stone.

CALENDAR

Through November - The Orange County Citizens Foundation is displaying an exhibit called “The Next Stop Is ... Trains & Train Stations of Orange County” at Orange Hall Gallery at SUNY Orange, Middletown campus. For more information, call 845-469-9459 or go to: <http://www.citizensfoundation.org/>

Friday, December 2 – O&W RHS Meeting, Program by Joe Senese - Then and Now on the Port Jervis and Monticello Branches.

Sunday, December 4 – Albany Train Show, 10-4, Empire State Plaza Convention Center just off I-87, 514-371-9164 (I would suggest anyone planning to attend verify the particulars)

Friday, January 6, 2012 – O&W RHS Meeting, Program by Doug Barberio - O&W in Delaware County

Friday, January 13, 2012 – M&NJ RHS Meeting

Sat/Sun, January 28/29, 2012 – Amherst Railway Society Big 2012 Railroad Hobby Show, 9-5 Sat., 10-5 Sun., West Springfield, MA

Friday, February 3, 2012 – O&W RHS Meeting, Program by Doug Barberio – L&NE

Friday, February 10, 2012, M&NJ RHS Meeting

Friday, March, 2012 – O&W RHS Meeting, Program TBA

NOTE: As both the M&NJ RHS and the O&W RHS may be moving their meeting sites in the near future, it is suggested that you check the websites of these groups for particulars.