

Today on the M&NJ

On August 31st, the Middletown & New Jersey Railroad, LLC filed a Notice of Exemption and a final Lease Agreement between M&NJ and Norfolk Southern with the Surface Transportation Board. Basically the M&NJ is going to take over the local freight service out of Campbell Hall on or about October 1st while NS will continue to deliver cars via a road freight to Campbell Hall.

“M&NJ is proposing to lease the following rail lines from NSR: (1) the Hudson Secondary located between Mileposts LX 2.1 and LX 20.6 (18.5 miles in length); (2) the Walden Secondary located between Mileposts DJ 5.0 and DJ 10.5 and WI 29.1 and WI 32.9 (9.3 miles in length); (3) the Maybrook Industrial Track located between Mileposts RT 1.3 and RT 7.5 (6.2 miles in length); (4) the Greycourt Industrial Track located between Mileposts IL 52.5 and IL 53.4 (1.0 mile in length); and (5) the EL Connection Track located between Mileposts QK 0.0 and QK 0.8 (0.8 mile in length). In conjunction with the lease of these lines: (1) NSR is granting M&NJ incidental overhead trackage rights over NSR’s rail line located between Mileposts JS 67.50 and 63.14 (4.36 miles in length); (2) NSR is subleasing to M&NJ NSR’s lease operations over the connecting track owned by the NYS&W located between Milepost JS 63.14, at Hudson Jct., NY, and Milepost LX 2.1 at Hudson Jct., NY (approximately .35 mile in length); and (3) NSR is partially assigning to M&NJ all of NSR’s rights under the NYS&W Trackage Rights Agreement for NYS&W’s continued trackage rights operations over the Hudson Secondary track between Hudson Jct., NY and Warwick, NY.”

In total, the above transaction involves M&NJ leasing and subleasing approximately 36.15 miles plus gaining incidental trackage rights of 4.36 miles. One important line not listed is the former O&W main from East Main Street, Middletown, to 4-Story Jct., the Crawford Industrial. I believe, as I remember what Pete Rasmussen told me, that the operation of this segment is governed by an agreement by the railroad and Orange County. So M&NJ will succeed NS which succeeded CR in this regard.

Rumors have abounded about the motive power to be used by the new operation at Campbell Hall. Candidates have included former NYS&W GP-18’s purchased some months ago by Regional Rail from the NYS&W, a pair of GE’s (a B23-7 and a B30-7) or some other power on the Regional Rail roster.

NS employees at Campbell Hall apparently have the option of using their seniority to move to other jobs on the NS system or they may accept jobs, if offered, from the M&NJ. The status of the original M&NJ, the remaining line and facilities between Middletown and Slate Hill plus equipment and personnel, will become clear over time. Certainly, the original M&NJ will no longer be Regional Rail’s sole focus in the region as it will be just one of a number of lines operated by the larger entity.

As of June 11th, with the exception of a few cars on the loop track, the soil cars have gone off to the Gulf evidently to be used in the cleanup of the mess from the British Petroleum oil well. There had been quite a few stored on the M&NJ. However, the M&NJ was quick to pick up new

business as the James E. Straits Show unloaded on Wisner Avenue that day and the flats are going to stay on the MNJ for a month or so while the passenger cars are stored in Port Jervis. The circus went off to Connecticut for an engagement at Danbury and will then return for the Orange County Fair in late July, so the cars will be there until then. Cars are stored between Webb Road and County route 78 and the balance of the cars may be spotted between Dolson Avenue and Webb Road. In previous years, the circus had stored its cars by the site of the former fairgrounds at Danbury, now the Danbury Mall, but the circus train derailed on the Housatonic Railroad last year and this incident may have contributed to the decision to store the train on the M&NJ and use I84 to reach Danbury.

The Webb Road crossing was rebuilt in late June. On the 28th, it was reported that Webb Road was closed as the old crossing had been removed and new ties already had been placed. 100 lb. rail was used in the crossing and had to be connected to the 80 lb. rail in the main line.

The conveyor at the former Agway Fertilizer site belongs to Crop Production Services in Pine Island which is unloading pellets of fertilizer. Soda Ash is being unloaded for RSR (Revere Smelting and Refining) out by the mall at Crystal Run. They used to recycle car batteries. Fly ash is going into concrete, possibly for Tetz or Dick's. Evidently this has been coming to the Port of Albany by ship and the concrete people have been trucking it down.

There is also more talk about Brookfield Auto Wreckers. Supposedly they want to start by crushing large volumes of cars and shipping them out by rail. They would accumulate a quantity of material and then call for a big batch of cars to load the stuff out.

Jeff Otto bought the caboose and it was scheduled to move out by truck to the Catskill Mountain Railroad on July 1st. The # 2 fires right up with new batteries in a new battery box. Radiators from the # 1 are evidently installed in the # 2 as well. # 2 might ship out and be placed on East Penn's trucks on another short line.

Meanwhile the restoration of the No. 11 progresses in Cumberland, MD, at the shops of the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, where on May 27th it was reported that the driver tires have been removed from the drivers. No. 11 is ultimately projected to move to the Everett Railroad for tourist service in central Pennsylvania.

While the Walkway Over the Hudson is enjoying tremendous popularity to the point the New York State Thruway will soon post signs directing motorists to the former New Haven bridge, another railroad bridge that is also part of a trail is not faring as well. The Times Herald Record reported on June 12th that the "railroad trestle above Rosendale will be shut down next week because engineers have decided it's unsafe for walkers, bikers and others who use it. The two open-space groups that own the 114-year-old trestle said it will be closed for roughly a year while repairs are made to the deck and railings, which are made of wooden planks that aren't sturdy enough for pedestrian traffic. The metal support structure and trusses are in good condition, the owners said. The trestle was part of 11.5 miles of rail trail obtained by the Wallkill Valley Land Trust and the Open Space Institute last summer. They took control after former owner John Rahl lost the property to foreclosure.

The acquisition nearly doubled the length of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail, stretching it some 24 miles from Gardiner to the Kingston city line. But the 940-foot-long trestle must be repaired first. Even now, only half the trestle is open to the public because the northern portion has no decking. Open-space groups said it will cost between \$500,000 and \$1 million to refurbish it. The two groups said they're about to receive a \$150,000 grant from the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to jump-start the project. They hope fundraising and additional grants will cover the balance. In the meantime, volunteers and town employees will spruce up the rail trail, cleaning brush and installing drainage to make it more passable. "The improvements on the ground will be done in small pieces," said Tally Blumberg, vice president of external affairs at OSI. "It's our intention that the rail trail remains open while repairs are made to the trestle."

A pedestrian bridge over Vineyard Avenue in the Town of Lloyd was to open July 16th while a bridge over Mile Hill Road is scheduled for completion this August. At that point the Hudson Valley Rail Trail will extend 3.8 miles from the Walkway Over The Hudson to Tony Williams Park.

On July 28th it was reported that the former West Shore/NYC passenger station in Newburgh is well along in an extensive project that will convert it into the "Railroad Playhouse". It will house a café and bar slated to open in September plus "an approximately 99-seat black-box theater that will offer theatrical performance, music and dance. Events are scheduled to begin in October." The project appears to be privately funded.

At the recent Middletown Railroad Days event a City official indicated the City was interested in acquiring the derelict O&W station which continues to deteriorate after a fire several years ago.

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