

Today on the M&NJ

The loading of containers with contaminated dirt from the Newburgh site continued through March and into mid-April. By the second week of February all the stored intermodal cars had been loaded and shipped out and cars were being reloaded after finishing their first trip cycle between Middletown and Indiana and back. By April 29th it was reported that the dirt move was completed. The trucks were seen running the previous week but not in the current week. Visits to Dolson Ave. on the 28th and 29th revealed no activity and the loading site looked to be cleaned out with just the container loader there. The cars stored behind Playtogs may have been gone also but there still were some cars on the loop track in DG yard on the 28th. On May 3, eight or nine of the spine cars with empty containers were shoved into storage by Uhlig Road. Plastic pellets are being unloaded by conveyor to truck at the former Agway Fertilizer site. A possible customer is Guild Molders (Risdon) on Industrial Drive up in the O&W yards. Circa 1976 they were producing Avon items. The plant had 46 injection molding machines and some of them used 1,000 pounds of resin per day. They used a lot of different plastics and brought everything in by truck. In the late 1980's they trucked plastic from Ridgefield Park, NJ, on the NYS&W. We heard in late May that the soda ash and plastic pellets (reground scrap) are being used in cement production.

Covered hoppers continued to arrive at the M&NJ in March and the line of stored "CHOPS" extended from Slate Hill past Kirbytown Road to Uhlig Road by March 17th.

As of May 21st, the M&NJ has sold most of the motor car parts, the spiker and the caboose. They are going to hang on to the manual crane and the O&W rail grinder because they use them but everything else is up for grabs. The caboose is former NYS&W 0117 and wore Warrenton livery for many years when it was owned by the late Walter Martin whose estate sold it to the M&NJ where it was used occasionally as a hazmat buffer or on the work train. It was posted on Railswap on May 11th with an asking price of \$9,500 or best offer.

By April 27th Norfolk Southern had completed reconstruction of the Wisner Avenue crossing for both the Crawford Secondary (former O&W main line) between the M&NJ interchange and 4-Story Jct. and the side track to the former Rowley Lumber (now Strober King) yard which may still be intact to the former O&W locomotive shops building.

The Times Herald Record reported on March 24th that the CSX River Line main through Newburgh was closed for several hours after a "car-sized section of the face of the trestle wall fell away below the roots of a large tree near the Regal Bag building on the northern edge of the city's waterfront." The Newburgh city engineer "condemned the spot until officials from the rail freight company could examine the tracks and certify they were safe."

On April 18th, the Times Herald Record carried an article about a trail proposed to parallel the Catskill Mountain Railroad right-of-way in Kingston which is leased from Ulster County until 2016. It seems that the segment from Downs Street to Washington Avenue is a haven for drug addicts, prostitution and dumping. An alliance of Kingston officials, residents and open-space advocates believe a linear park would attract walkers, bikers, runners as well as people working and shopping at the Kingston Plaza who could avoid crossing Interstate 587 and Broadway. The CMRR's chairman stated a trail along the tracks would probably require a pedestrian conduit to satisfy federal setback standards. He also stated "We definitely support multi-modal uses of the right-of-way, but the first and utmost priority is safety." The future plans of the CMRR and the trail proponents are both dependent on securing grant money. CMRR wants to connect its Kingston operation (about 3,000 feet near the Kingston Plaza) with its Phoenicia operation at a cost of about \$12.6 million. Sustainable Hudson Valley intends to apply for grants to study the trail concept.

The Times Herald Record reported on April 29th that the MTA adopted a \$26.2 billion capital plan for 2010-2014. The plan must still receive approval from New York State's Capital Review Board which rejected an earlier, less costly plan. The revised plan includes these Port Jervis line projects among the \$1.7 billion allocated to Metro-North Railroad:

- \$68 million to modernize signals
- \$21 million to replace ties and rails
- \$12 million to continue repairs to under-grade bridges
- \$10 million to continue repairs to the Moodna and Woodbury viaducts
- \$7 million to expand the Port Jervis yard
- Undefined expense to inspect the Otisville tunnel and design improvements

On May 10th, the paper carried an article detailing how the size of the yard at Port Jervis limited the number of trains that could be operated on the basically single track line which has a few passing sidings. There is a \$7.3 million plan to expand the yard sufficiently to add two more trains and operate long trains but that is dependent on State funding and no further expansion is possible. Therefore "Metro-North has been scouting for sites for a second yard somewhere east of Middletown." This revelation immediately set off conjecture about possible sites. Could the M&NJ's DG yard which once hosted Erie commuter trains be a candidate? NIMBY's will be a problem at virtually any site selected. However DG yard is rather limited in size and the current owners are utilizing virtually all the track. Passenger trains would have to traverse the 2-mile branch to get to the main line and that would entail a major track and crossing upgrade project. How about the O&W's AV yard? This yard is much closer to the main line and so the connecting track rehab and crossing upgrade project would be a lot cheaper. There may also be more acreage available. How about Campbell Hall which is located strategically along the main line and might have excess capacity due to declining freight business in the region?

Maybrook Yard would also seem to be a candidate with plenty of acreage and an industrial surrounding to minimize residential complaints. It would however require a rehab of the connection to the main line. Finally, there is the former L&HR Warwick yard which has the land but occasioned an outcry when it was touted for a passenger yard years ago. In any case, Metro North has plenty of freight yards, active and dormant to consider as potential sites for a second passenger yard in Orange County. Given the poor economy and the State's dire financial condition, don't look for anything to happen soon.

The Town of Lloyd hosted a groundbreaking on May 4th on an almost \$3.2 million project to connect the downtown area of the hamlet of Highland to the Walkway Over the Hudson, the former New Haven Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge. Town Supervisor Ray Costantino, who is also president of the Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association, said "This section connects our neighbors and our friends together, and our neighborhoods and our schools, ...". The project is funded by the federal stimulus package. The new section extends the rail trail, currently ending at Commercial Avenue, along a route crossing Vineyard Avenue, leading past the Vintage Village building. It allows users to cross either over or under Route 9W. Highland hopes to enjoy a boost in business from visitors to the Walkway Over the Hudson, which has attracted crowds since opening in October. The rail-trail group is also working on expanding the route to the west with the long-term goal of connecting to New Paltz. This article appeared in [The Times Herald Record](#).

Thanks to Randy Stone, Dan Myers and Ed Horan for providing material including articles from [The Times Herald Record](#) .