Rail Freight Traffic Increase Attributed to Three Factors

By MIKE FOLEY
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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 deliveries 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 Concord.

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 . . . so it's a greater commitment to Concord."

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