

OLD COLONY RAILROAD

ABOLITION OF RAILROAD

SERIOUS MATTER FOR BUSINESS MEN, PROPERTY OWNERS

DUXBURY---MARSHFIELD

The announcement of the Trustees in Bankruptcy of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company, that they would apply to the United States District Court for authority to petition the Interstate Commerce Commission to authorize the Trustees to discontinue railroad service between Greenbush and Kingston, Massachusetts threatens seriously property values of Duxbury and Marshfield.

The Officers of the Railroad, as well as the Trustees in Bankruptcy regret the necessity for such action, but under the law are compelled to do so to protect creditors.

Some years ago, when the Railroads sought to consolidate the large number of local independent lines, the argument was that they could be operated as a whole to a better advantage and more economically ~~and~~ ^{separately}. As a ~~whole~~ ^{single} unit, the losses sustained in a given locality would be covered by excess earnings in another, resulting in the greatest good for the greater number.

The increasing use of motor vehicles, combined with the decreased volume of business during the past seven years of depression left the Railroad without profit anywhere, with resulting bankruptcy.

Judge ~~Hinkley~~ granted the request of the Trustees to petition the Interstate Commerce Commission for the abandonment of the Greenbush-Kingston line, Tuesday, February 9, 1937.

The Interstate Commerce Commission has advised ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~Commission~~ "In the event such an application is filed with this Commission it will be necessary for the applicants to publish notice thereof once a week for three successive weeks in some newspaper of general circulation ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ each county in which the line proposed to be abandoned is located. Protests against the proposed abandonment may be submitted to the Commission informally in the form of letter and should any protest be offered arrangements will be made to assign the case for hearing at some point convenient to the protestants. The hearing would be in the nature of a formal proceeding and all interested parties should be present with a view to presenting testimony or other evidence in support of their opposition. The Commission is confined by law to consideration of the record made before it in such case."

~~In view of the above, it behooves every property owner of Duxbury and Marshfield to immediately address letters to the Interstate Commerce Commission, Washington, D.C., protesting the granting of such a petition, and pointing out that Duxbury and Marshfield are, to an unusual degree, dependant for a livelihood upon the business of and employment by persons who, as property owners or tenants favor the two towns with their presence during the summer months only. These two towns are about the limit of distance from Boston that permits of daily commuting without discomfort, and while for special or particular reason some may use the automobile for the entire distance, the greater number have learned to prefer the quick and comfortable service provided by the Railroad at a price of a little more than 1/2 per mile.~~

M. Anderson Halfcents

In as much as this particular Hearing will concern that part of the Railroad only that lies within the towns of Duxbury and Marshfield it may be that the residents of Duxbury and Marshfield would request the Interstate Commerce Commission to hold their public hearings in one of the towns so that the citizens may avoid the loss of time and the expense of a visit to Boston.

Consideration has been given to many plans for solution of the problem.

Should the Interstate Commerce Commission determine that public necessity and convenience of the residents of Duxbury and Marshfield does not warrant inflicting on other communities the whole, or any part of the excessive cost of operation through Duxbury and Marshfield it may be possible that they would consider it a public necessity, and convenience would equitably be served if the communities would tax themselves to provide funds to pay part of the deficit, if any. The words "if any" are added because the business is increasing; freight receipts are much larger than for many years; and, if patrons realizing that every dollar spent for railroad service perceptibly reduced their taxes and the burdens of their neighbors, the passenger receipts would soon reduce the deficit.

Public funds are now expended for many purposes unheard of in past years. Almost untold millions are expended for highways. On the other hand, it is many years since public funds were expended for Massachusetts railroads, and to make the matter worse, the railroads have been compelled to contribute millions in taxes for the benefit of those who took from the railroads the possibility of earning, not alone a dividend for the stock holders, but interest on their bonds and now even to pay ordinary operating expenses.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts appropriates ~~money~~ ^{money} for advertising its attractions. Cities and towns are authorized to spend money for many features intended to attract residents. One town has appropriated \$2000. to support a Base Ball team.

If necessary to secure such a universally acknowledged public service as is a railroad, any town should be authorized to raise and appropriate money for the purpose.

It has been proposed before that the Select Men of Duxbury and Marshfield petition the Legislature for an act authorizing the towns to raise and appropriate if necessary a sum not exceeding one dollar (1.) per thousand of the valuation charge, under proper restrictions, and for definitely stated purposes may be paid to the Railroad or expended for other purposes that will equally serve to secure adequate freight and passenger service in Duxbury and Marshfield.

Again, it may be possible that should the Interstate Commerce Commission permit the discontinuance of service on the road in question local interest might secure it and operate it for freight and possibly passenger transportation at a cost of a mere fraction of the present cost of operation which is governed by very stringent laws as to the number of persons to be employed, what they ought to do, number of hours of service etc.

In one locality where the railroad was abandoned, the operation was undertaken in this manner, and where one man now provides the service that takes the place of what here-to-fore required ten or more.

Another suggestion considered was that the State of Massachusetts take over all Branch lines abandoned by the Trustees of the Railroad Company and ~~operate~~ ^{operate} them for the benefit of its citizens in the same manner as the state now operates the Boston Elevated Railroad.

Another suggestion offered is that the abandoned road be operated by the two towns Duxbury and Marshfield as a W.P.A. project with U.S. funds.

Really this plan offers many advantages for it will give employment to Skilled as well as Common labor.

Engineers, Firemen, Brakemen, Telegraphers, Electricians, Clerks, Carpenters, Masons, Truckmen, Gardeners, all would perform useful necessary work profitable to the community by improved conditions and appearances with the not impossible result of financial success.

Under any plan in which the public participates Station and other Buildings can be put in order attractively painted advertising signs removed, interiors decorated, attendants constantly on duty at a Bureau of Information about Duxbury and Marshfield and all the South Shore and with all the facilities of a station for public ~~convenience~~

Station grounds, Highway Crossings, Yards and Terminals could be allotted to Garden Clubs and Civic Associations for improvement and beautification and thus give citizens a personal interest in enterprise. When a Railroad can be thought of as public property it could come under supervision of town authorities like the Highways.

It is estimated that present cost of operation and maintenance for the fifteen miles of Railroad between Greenbush and Kingston is thousand dollars.

It must be borne in mind that the service of both men and equipment laps over into the other parts of a great system it is not possible to confine figures to each individual mile.

Therefore, the cost of a section can be ascertained only by formulas which long experience has shown to be substantially accurate. For example our own "Standish" summer schedule does business in Duxbury and Marshfield only but its cost of operation and maintenance begins with the cost of the equipment and its maintenance. It is housed and cared for in Plymouth, it has the benefit of trucks, signals, switches etc. Plymouth to South Duxbury through Kingston and the Engineer, Fireman, Conductor and Brakemen are paid for their service prior to entering the Duxbury-Marshfield section. So beyond Marshfield Hills it collects no revenue but incurs the costs Truck Maintenance, Train service and the cost for ~~operation~~ interest upkeep and operation of the ~~great~~ thirty eight South Station Terminal, which even after ~~years~~ is considered the equal of any.

It is the same with the receipts. A patron pays Seventeen dollars for a monthly ticket, but a large part of that amount inures to the mileage between Marshfield and Boston. Carloads of Coal and Lumber on arrival in Duxbury or Marshfield may produce a payment of several hundred dollars each but the net amount accruing to the less than fifteen Duxbury-Marshfield lines is infinitesimal almost after paying the charges for hundreds of miles from mines, or perhaps a thousand miles for lumber. Therefore, to ascertain the facts the knowledge experience and records available to railroad officials is necessary.

If it be thought that Railroad Officials sometimes distort, ~~the~~ the records it should be borne in mind that the Public Utilities Commission of Massachusetts examine those reports and the Commissions of the other States also and last, but by no means least the I.C.C. passes final judgement unless Congress or the Legislature of a State conducts "An Investigation."