

History of the railroad

The Old Colony Railroad was chartered by the state in 1844. Regular passenger trains commenced service between Plymouth and Boston on Nov. 10, 1845.

Soon other railroads began offering service in Southeastern Massachusetts. In time, most were absorbed by the Old Colony. By 1893, the company had grown from the original 38 miles between Plymouth and Boston to some 600 miles. That year, the line was leased to the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad, which wanted control of this important link.

After World War I, passenger service declined as trolleys and buses became popular. The Great



Depression followed and the railroad was bankrupt by 1935. World War II brought increased rail patronage and by 1947 the

railroad was solvent again.

During the late 1940s, passenger service was reduced or eliminated in many areas. A few years later, the trend was reversed and the railroad returned service to some communities.

By the late 1950s, the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad was in trouble again. Passenger service on the Old Colony line was to end in 1958 but a \$900,000 state subsidy delayed it by a year. In 1960, the legislature killed a proposal to restore passenger service for \$1.8 million annually.

In 1968, the once-again-bankrupt railroad was forced to merge with Penn Central, which declared bankruptcy two years later.

The Consolidated Rail Corp. was established in 1973 as a "for profit" business, commencing freight service on lines in Massachusetts in 1976. In 1982, financially troubled Conrail surrendered some lines to private carriers, such as Bay Colony Railroad, which operate profitably today.

In 1984, Plymouth County Development Council and the County Commissioners played leadership roles in establishing a coalition to restore commuter rail service between South Station and