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# Media Release



**NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND  
PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY**

**For Immediate Release  
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## **Amtrak Downeaster Celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

PORTLAND, MAINE - This week marks the 10th Anniversary of Amtrak Downeaster service between Portland, Maine and Boston, Massachusetts. Since December 15, 2001, more than 30,000 Downeaster trains have operated, transporting more than 3.5 million passengers the equivalent of nearly 300 million passenger miles. Many improvements have been made to the service over the past decade including a 20 minute reduction in travel time, a more convenient schedule and increased frequency. Each improvement has resulted in significant increases in ridership. The current annual Downeaster ridership of more than half a million riders has doubled since 2005. Expanded service to Freeport and Brunswick will start next year.

The Downeaster has developed a national reputation for growth and quality of service with one of the highest customer satisfaction ratings in the country. "Amtrak congratulates our partners at the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) on 10 years of exemplary service to *Downeaster* passengers and we look forward to working together with all of our partners in Maine to provide expanded operations in the coming years," said Joe McHugh, Amtrak vice president of government affairs and corporate communications.

The Downeaster has developed a diversified ridership base which includes commuters traveling to work, students traveling to or from college, school kids on education trips, senior citizens looking for a day out, sports fans, beach goers, tourists and more.

"But, the Downeaster is more than just a train ride," said Patricia Quinn, Executive Director of NNEPRA, "it's an economic engine which connects us to the rest of the nation, fosters a sense of community and has changed the way we think about travel." Hundreds of millions of dollars in private development projects are completed or are underway in Downeaster communities, attracting new businesses and creating new jobs.

NNNEPRA is celebrating the Downeaster's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a series of events and activities intended to recognize the employees, volunteers, passengers, community leaders and policy makers who have contributed to its success. Additionally, volunteers from TrainRiders Northeast, the public

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advocacy group which started the initiative to restore passenger rail service to Maine, will be greeting passengers on platforms this week and distributing Bangor taffy.

A public event will be held at the Portland Transportation Center on Thursday, December 15, 2011 beginning at 10:45am which will include a special presentation highlighting the impact the Downeaster has had on the region, recognizing key contributors to its success and conclude with the arrival of one of the Downeaster's annual Toys for Tots Trains.

To commemorate 10 years of service, a special \$10 Fare valid for travel on specific Downeaster trains during the month of January 2012, will be available for sale beginning on December 15, 2011. For more information visit [www.AmtrakDowneaster.com](http://www.AmtrakDowneaster.com).

**MEDIA EVENT INFORMATION:**

Date: Thursday, December 15, 2011  
Time: 10:45am – 12:00noon  
Location: Portland Transportation Center  
Agenda: 11:00am – Presentation and remarks from NNEPRA and State officials  
11:35am – Arrival of Toys for Tots Train