

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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STATE OF MAINE

ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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RAILROADS

HOUSE

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REP. FRANK R. KADOFFMAN, KITTERY
REP. FREDERICK D. LUNT, PRESQUE ISLE

Legislative Council
107th Legislature
State House
Augusta, Maine 04330

Gentlemen:

In accordance with your order directing the Committee on Transportation to study the feasibility of the Resumption of Rail Passenger Service in Maine, I enclose herein the final report of the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Edwin H. Greeley

Edwin H. Greeley, Chairman
Committee on Transportation

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JAN 31 1985

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
ON TRANSPORTATION ON
ITS STUDY OF
RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE

December, 1974

Senate:

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House:

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STUDY ORDER

The Joint Committee on Transportation of the Maine Legislature was ordered by the Legislative Council on November 28, 1973 to conduct a study concerning the "Feasibility of Resumption of Rail Passenger Service in Maine".

COMMITTEE PROCEDURE

Pursuant to this Order, the Committee, by means of a public hearing on January 23, 1974, attempted to discern interest in rail passenger service resumption among the public and representatives of the three railroads in Maine as well as AMTRAK, the National Rail Corporation. Since specific cost estimates could not be made available by the participants in the hearing, the Committee decided to survey available information from recent previous studies by State and private groups. This information was sought, in particular, because of the negative response to requests for service by AMTRAK, to all levels of State government. Even though it appears that AMTRAK service may be instituted in Maine in a few years, the committee felt its findings in analysis of former studies were supportive of its recommendation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that no expenditures of Maine public revenues be made at this time for the resumption of rail passenger service.

This recommendation is based on:

1. the wide variation of cost estimates;
2. the absence of market analyses;
3. the need for alternative means by many Maine citizens who have no transportation for access to basic services;
4. the many millions of dollars required to institute service at a minimum level;
5. the fact that the corridor where the train would operate presently has the best and several alternate means of travel;
6. pollution emissions caused by commuter-type trains are not sufficiently lower than diesel buses nor is energy consumption;
7. terminal and station facilities would have to be constructed or refurbished at significant cost; and
8. rail service should be considered as part of an overall transportation plan.

BACKGROUND

Among those who favor the resumption of rail passenger service, a large segment feels that tourist trade would be greatly benefitted. Others prefer rail travel or see it as a necessary alternative to the present means of travel in Maine. Energy conservation and reduced air pollution as compared to the automobile and airplane are additional valid arguments for resuming passenger service. However, the urban areas which would be served by rail passenger service already enjoy the best highways and the best available inter-city public transportation in the state. They do not now need an additional transportation alternatives as compared to the needs of the rural areas, where half of the population resides.

" Reasons for the loss of rail passenger service are well known - primarily competition from the automobile with its privacy, flexibility and comfort. Buses carry former rail passengers, but the preponderance of travelers by bus are the young, old or poor - those who have no alternate means. For fast intercity commuting or long distance travel, the airplane is preferred."

Estimates for the cost of upgrading track and operating trains vary greatly - from several to many millions of dollars. No authoritative cost analyses can be obtained without on-site investigation of existing facilities. Market analyses need to be made. However, barring unforeseen events, it appears that AMTRAK will be required to institute experimental service to at least Portland within the next few years. Cost and marketing figures will then be available of necessity. Plans for

complementary facilities can be made, such as terminal facilities, taxi and limousine service and connecting bus service.

Hopefully, the economic impact of such service can be assessed to determine what benefits Maine citizens will derive from expenditures necessary. The wide variation in cost estimates, in spite of several reports demonstrating public interest, leads the Joint Committee on Transportation of the 106th Maine Legislature to recommend that no expenditure of Maine public revenues be made at this time for the resumption of rail passenger service. The Committee recognizes that future energy available for travel will decline but rail service is not seen as the best means for providing transportation for the many Maine citizens who will need it.

PAST EFFORTS AND STUDIES ON RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE RESUMPTION

The attached maps provided by the Department of Transportation show the decline of rail passenger service in Maine between 1960 and 1966. Abandonment of the service was permitted by the Public Utilities Commission and the court (in one case) upon evidence that the service was not being used sufficiently to make continuance of service economically feasible. Today, only one line continues in service, the Canadian Pacific, with one round trip per day.

Prior to the current interest in restoration of rail passenger service, a study in 1963 by the Joint Select Committee on Railroad Passenger service, concluded that resumption of rail passenger service would be too expensive. At that time, railroad officials indicated that they would provide the service at a nominal charge to the state if the state would purchase the equipment and pay the net operating costs of the

service. At that time, it was felt that a start up appropriation of \$1,750,000 would be necessary to provide service between Portland and Bangor. The minority report of the Committee felt that the service was needed and was a state obligation as was the support of other forms of transportation. The majority report was accepted by the Legislature.

A proposal to restore train service as part of Maine's effort in the Bicentennial Celebration of 1976 was made in the summer of 1973 by a group named Atlantic Design Fellowship, "Maine Train '76". The Maine Central Railroad, over whose tracks the train would run, conducted a cost feasibility study for operating one train daily from Portland to Rockland and return from May 1 to September 30, 1976. In addition to what it considers major impediments, i.e. lack of station facilities, impractical scheduling and questionable revenues, the Maine Central estimated the cost of operating over the proposed route would be \$800,000 plus 20% for supervision and administration, or nearly \$1,000,000 or \$6,000 per day. The train would consist of one diesel locomotive, five coaches and one baggage car. The cost estimate did not include station facilities, parking, rental of coaches and baggage cars. Maine Central stated that it had no passenger cars and doubted that they could be obtained. Based on the assumption of capacity patronage (375 passengers per day) daily revenue, at a \$3.64 (\$7.28 RT) ticket cost, would amount to \$2,730. Thus, a daily deficit of \$3,270 or a total of \$500,000 for the five months was estimated.

During 1974, several meetings of the Maine Mid-Coast Route 1 Association were held in Maine to actively pursue the possible resumption of train

service to Maine in face of the energy crisis and the resulting expected drop in tourist travel. Plans for a weekend excursion train from Boston to Portland were made but abandoned at the last minute by withdrawal of agreement to the use of its tracks by Maine Central Railroad because of insufficient insurance coverage by the operators of the excursion.

In "A Comprehensive Plan for the Revival and Development of Boston and Maine Rail Lines, Phase II, Detailed Investigation of Individual Lines, Report of Their Viability" prepared for the New England Rail Passenger Office, Jaffrey Center, New Hampshire, in February 1972, the authors state that the Boston-Portland-Bangor-St. John market is twice as big as Boston-Montreal (which had a 1968 volume of all modes [auto-air-bus] in the Boston-Montreal area of just over a million passengers a year, half of it over the entire distance). The distance represented by Boston-Portland is a distance so short (96 miles by air) that high speed rail service has little chance to demonstrate its effectiveness. A 90 mile per hour average would require an hour and a quarter, only 45 minutes less than driving time. Since 45 minutes is not enough to compensate for getting to the station, and since schedule departures are limiting, the advantage of high speed is lost.

Passenger volume figures: (all figures in thousands)

	Auto	Air	Bus	Other	Total
Boston-Portland	693	78	292		1063
Boston-Augusta/Waterville	185	44	58		287
Boston-Bangor	304	92	87		483
Boston-St. John and Maritimes	250	51	15	144*	460
Totals	1432	265	452	144*	2293

* ferry

The Boston-St. John (450 miles) trip was considered to be too great a distance to compete with air for high speed travel. For the Boston-Portland-Augusta-Waterville-Bangor distance the necessary signalling and upgrading was estimated to cost \$7 - 25 million. "The reason for the wide range of the estimate is the necessity for detailed checking out of capabilities of the vehicles chosen against the characteristics of the track before the cost can be determined." Operating costs of about \$1.1 million were estimated to be defrayed by 5.6% of the market including Portland but as explained reliance on the Portland market is unsafe. "On the other hand, a high speed service to Augusta-Waterville-Bangor charging \$15 to Bangor could cover operating costs if it captured half the non-auto traffic, well within reasonable expectations based on experience elsewhere." A \$4 surcharge on the fare would finance the lower estimate of required capital.

The benefits of resumption of travel by rail are described in the report as follows:

1. Reestablishment of public transportation to those cities of a relatively non-polluting mode to those which now have service by other modes.
2. Convenience of access to major centers is one of the conditions which influence decisions to locate industrial, commercial or cultural activities.
3. The provision of the service described would therefore enhance the development potential of the areas covered while tending to reduce pollution.

A study, Maine Transportation Needs - Rail Element, prepared in conjunction with the U. S. Department of Transportation "1972 Transportation Needs Study" September 10, 1971 by the Maine State Planning Office, among other determinations, estimated that a potential market existed equivalent

to 4,000 passengers a day traveling the entire length of the 184 miles of trackage within the State of Maine from Boston to Bangor in 1975 with increments of 200/yr projected to 1990.

In terms of operating 10 trains a day along the route (about the level of service in the 1930's) income would be \$13.5 million and expenditure (based on operating costs of \$5.58 per train mile, Boston-New York, 1968) of \$3.75 million - 16 trains a day would cost about \$6.0 million.

The estimated cost of a new and upgraded railroad for the 184 miles of track was estimated at \$441 million with additional costs of \$18 million for capital costs or a total of \$459 million. The estimated state share of the total was \$82.3 million (1/3 of the sums not raised by revenues). The patronage on such a line was estimated at 4000 per day, starting in 1975, with increments of 200 passengers per year.

A questionnaire sent to each major ski area during the height of the energy "crisis" during January, 1974, elicited only one response, that from Sugarloaf/USA. The management was enthusiastic about rail service to Sugarloaf and the revival of the "ski train" of former times. They pointed out that the narrow gauge line running between Kingfield and Bigelow Station could be restored to provide a historic tourist attraction as well as area transportation. The respondents to the questionnaire revealed the following information: The numbers in parties varied from 1 to 46 of those who stayed weekends at the resort - a total of 261 skiers were represented. They travelled 50 to 600 miles each way. Most were Maine residents with Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Brunswick the residence of most out of state travellers.

In answer to the question:

"If available, would you travel by train if management met the train?"

eighty percent responded yes. Two groups who stated they would not use rail service if provided were those who had traveled only 50 or 60 miles or who had come in a large group by chartered bus. One group staying in a nearby camp saw difficulty in "commuting" to the resort area.

Of a separate group whose stay was 5 to 9 days who had travelled 12 to 1200 miles, 60 percent said yes. Of the forty percent that said no, the major reason given was that no means for travel in the resort area would be available to them.

Conclusions on the basis of this limited survey could be drawn that rail passenger service to skiing resorts for weekend visitors is preferable and would be utilized. Less interest was shown by those staying for longer periods. Pick up service at the end of the line would be necessary. Car rental for those staying longer periods would be desirable, or alternative "jitney" service.

Northeast Markets, Inc. of Yarmouth, Maine, recently surveyed the interest in rail service in Maine. The following question was asked with the answers given in percentages of those responding.

Question: "In the course of a year how likely would you be to use rail passenger service if provided for the major cities in Maine and connected to rail lines serving the rest of New England."

% of Respondents

	State wide	York	Cumb	Mid Coast	Down East	Andros	Kenn	Penob	Aroos
Likely	24	29	29	29	14	21	24	25	12
Somewhat Likely	19	16	23	20	13	18	19	19	23
Not very likely	25	25	23	22	30	20	26	26	29
Unlikely	30	29	24	27	38	38	31	29	27
Dont Know	2	1	-*	1	4	3	1	1	9

* - less than .50%

The Maine Department of Transportation recently made available the results of a study conducted for them by Thomas K. Dyer, Inc. consulting engineers. The study included these findings and estimates of costs:

(The N.E. Regional Commission recommended that Boston-Portland-Bangor diesel car service be instituted and the overnight sleeper service Boston-St. John be restored.) The following financial data for these routes was computed as follows:

Service	Total Annual Operating Costs (\$ millions)	Passengers per trip	Load Factor
Boston-Portland-Bangor	1.1	35	43
Boston-St. John	.7	52	52

On the Boston-Portland-Bangor (via Brunswick) route, it would cost \$6,000,000 to \$8,000,000 to rehabilitate the railroad sufficiently to achieve former passenger speeds. Equipment costs would be \$800,000 per train set of a locomotive and two coaches.

Conclusions of a Rail Passenger Survey conducted by the Northern Maine Regional Planning Commission in mid 1974 demonstrates the following market analyses and interest in rail passenger service among Aroostook County residents:

1.) Considerable travel volume between northern Maine and southern points; travel for business, visiting, shopping and other services not available in the northern Maine area.

2.) A projected figure of 208,000 trips annually by northern Maine households to the Bangor-Boston Corridor, with a total passenger volume of 580,000 including:

a) 7.5 trips per household

b) 6 trips per capita

3.) In answer to the question whether they would be likely to use the train - one round trip from northern Maine to the cities on the I-95, Maine Turnpike corridor to Boston

a.) 46% responded very positively - "definitely" with an additional 10% "likely";

b.) 36% conditional positive responses were made such as depending on price and available end point transportation;

c.) 8% answered negatively.

4.) Response to the question "what do you consider a reasonable price for a round trip to Bangor and return" indicated 7¢ to 10¢ per mile was considered a reasonable fare.

The Commission stated that;

"There was an overwhelmingly positive reaction to the possibility of getting rail service back again. Most people stated unequivocally that they would ride it, while others would have to be shown the advantages over car travel. People would appreciate the convenience of not having to drive, safety, and ability to travel in all kinds of weather. On the other hand, a way to get around at the destination is of concern, pointing to the need for local buses, etc. as part of a comprehensive transportation system".

PROPOSED AMTRAK SERVICE

Efforts during late 1973 and 1974 to interest AMTRAK in auto-train service on an experimental route Boston to Portland or Bangor by Governor Curtis, the Maine Congressional Delegation, other New England governors and congressmen did not prevail. AMTRAK officials were supplied with some

supportive data during preliminary correspondence by the Maine Department of Transportation and the Joint Committee on Transportation prior to the public hearing on their study.

AMTRAK determines the feasibility of selected routes by the following criteria:

1. Market Opportunity: i.e. adequate population along the routes and major passenger traffic between major cities enroute.
2. Cost economics: Evaluation of losses experienced over current routes.
3. Ridership: Current and past ridership along routes and on specific trains.
4. Physical characteristics: Current condition of track and roadbed as it may affect speed, safety and future capital demands.
5. Alternative modes: Adequacy of other means of travel along the route, with 1, 3 and 4 given most weight.

In its proposed national route AMTRAK declared it would serve 87% of the national population. In addition to this proposed route, AMTRAK stated that it would cooperate with any state which agreed to assume at least 2/3 of the cost of maintaining specific routes requested. AMTRAK contracts with the private line owner to provide the service according to AMTRAK's specifications when the train is not owned by the National Railroad Corporation. Also, AMTRAK was authorized to institute one "experimental route" per year. Recently passed legislation provides that:

"In carrying out the provisions of the subsection, the Secretary shall give priority to experimental routes designed to extend intercity rail passenger service to the major population area of each of the contiguous 48 states which does not have such service to any large population area designated as part of the basic system."

This amendment has been interpreted to mean that Idaho will receive the first of the "priority" experimental routes and Maine the second since Senators Church of Idaho and Hathaway of Maine were sponsors of the amendment. The experimental route to Maine has been predicted for 1976 or 1977.

The experimental route request has been made by the Governor and the Maine Department of Transportation. The request includes service to Bangor from Boston. Such an experimental route would be operated by AMTRAK for at least two years. Subsequent to that time, AMTRAK could incorporate the service into its national system or in the alternative the state could continue the service by subsidizing the losses.

At the Public hearing of the Joint Committee on Transportation held on January 23, 1974 the statement of Paul Carey, Regional Representative for AMTRAK can be summarized as follows (eliminating references to history and record of service):

1. Additional new cars take 18 months for delivery. All cars presently useable are in use.

2. To institute service under 403 (b) AMTRAK would contract with the state or other governmental body in the state prepared to guarantee the required 2/3 reimbursement of the losses. A contract must be signed and adequate funds must be authorized and appropriated prior to the beginning of operations.

3. Some of the difficulties Mr. Carey foresaw in operating 403 (b) service to Maine were as follows:

a. Unavailability of equipment and no additional equipment is available for the immediate future.

b. The future of the Boston and Maine Railroad is in doubt. AMTRAK has no overall contract with B & M and would have to negotiate one prior to initiating any service to Portland.

c. AMTRAK does not currently use the North Station, the station where trains from Boston to Portland would originate.

d. Service from New York would be possible only through Providence, Worcester and Lowell since there is no connecting rail between the South and North Stations in Boston. Such a route would be circuitous and more importantly by-pass Boston.

e. A detailed engineering study would be necessary over the B & M track which has not been used for passenger service since 1965 and has not been maintained for passenger train speeds and comfort. The estimate for improving the track was several millions of dollars.

Car train service to Maine as proposed by the Maine Department of Transportation has received no encouragement from AMTRAK. The following reasons are given for declining to consider such service:

1. Too costly.
2. The height of the cars will not permit them to use existing tunnels between Washington, New York and Boston.
3. There is no connection between Boston's North and South station.
4. The potential for year round traffic is unknown.
5. Inadequacy of rolling stock.
6. An automobile loading and unloading terminal is not available.

Such a terminal is estimated to cost about \$800,000.

7. The road beds need repair.

8. AMTRAK presently has no contract with the Boston and Maine, Maine Central and Bangor & Aroostook Railroads.

It is estimated that many millions of dollars would be necessary to improve the underpasses and track to permit this kind of service.

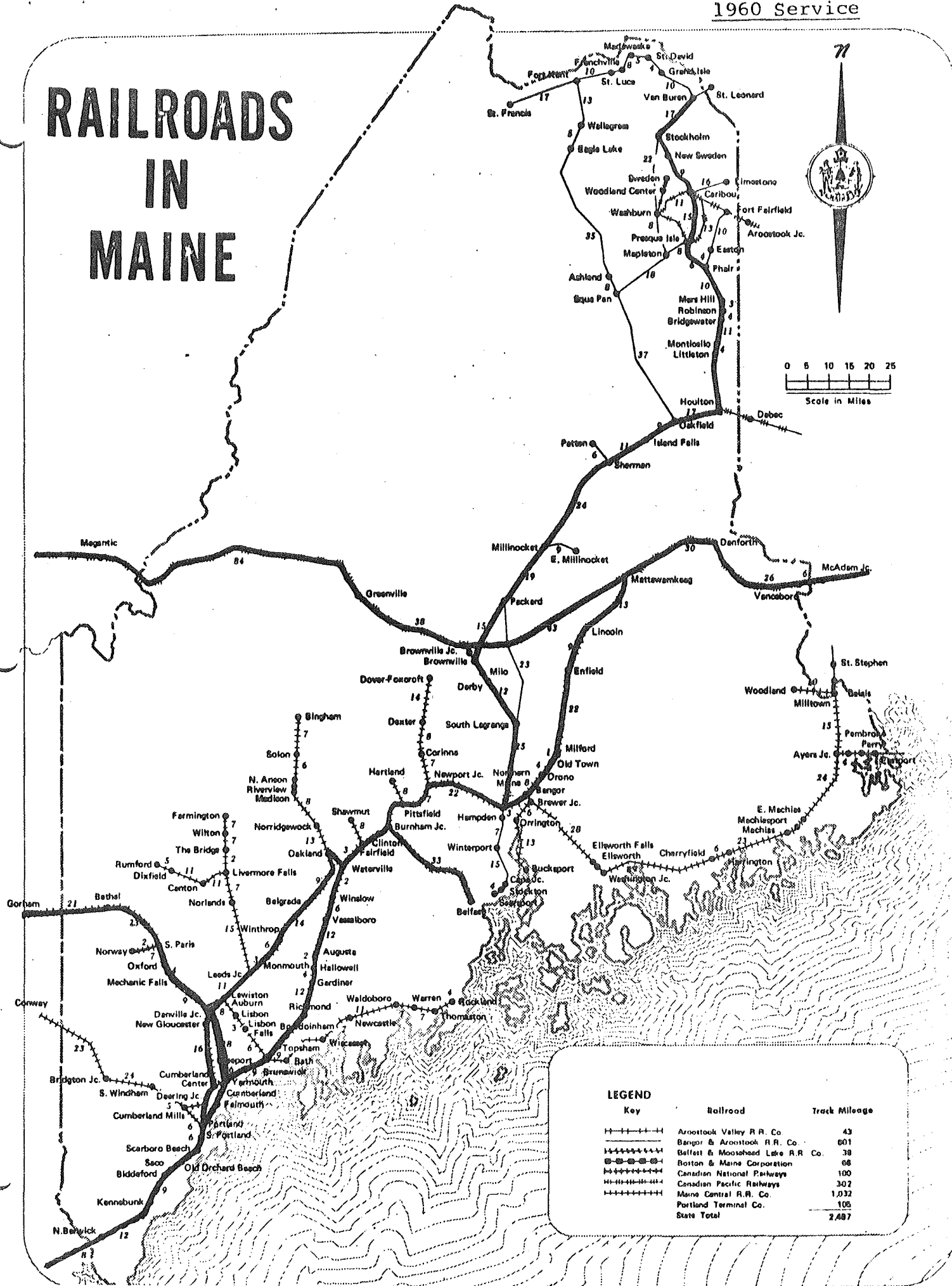
Also, at the public hearing, a B & M railroad spokesman said the railroad was in no position to acquire equipment unless the money were available first. It would take two to three years of engineering and planning before a system with adequate speeds (70 MPH) could be established. Tracks to Maine are presently maintained to speeds of 40 MPH. Definite figures on costs of upgrading track are hard to estimate but usually are stated to be millions of dollars. Estimates of Maine's need for operating costs for its 2/3 share of operating costs was estimated by David Watts of AMTRAK to be \$300,000 exclusive of costs of upgrading track and equipment costs. For these kinds of proposals AMTRAK expects the state to do market studies and economic impact studies.

Maine Central Railroad declined to estimate costs of resumption of rail passenger service until approached with a firm proposal from the State or AMTRAK.

At the public hearings, the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad expressed its willingness to cooperate with AMTRAK or other entity desirous of resuming passenger service. As the other railroads represented emphasized, no equipment is available. The tracks have been maintained for a maximum of 40 MPH freight traffic. Upgrading to a minimum of 70 MPH would be necessary. The Bangor and Aroostook is unable to make capital expenditures for the resumption of rail passenger service and did not see such service necessary for the near future, especially since any participation on their part would necessitate service first to Bangor.

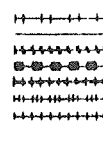
No department of State Government was found to have made market studies related to the need for or interest in rail passenger service. AMTRAK will apparently determine the market in conjunction with the proposed experimental route.

RAILROADS IN MAINE



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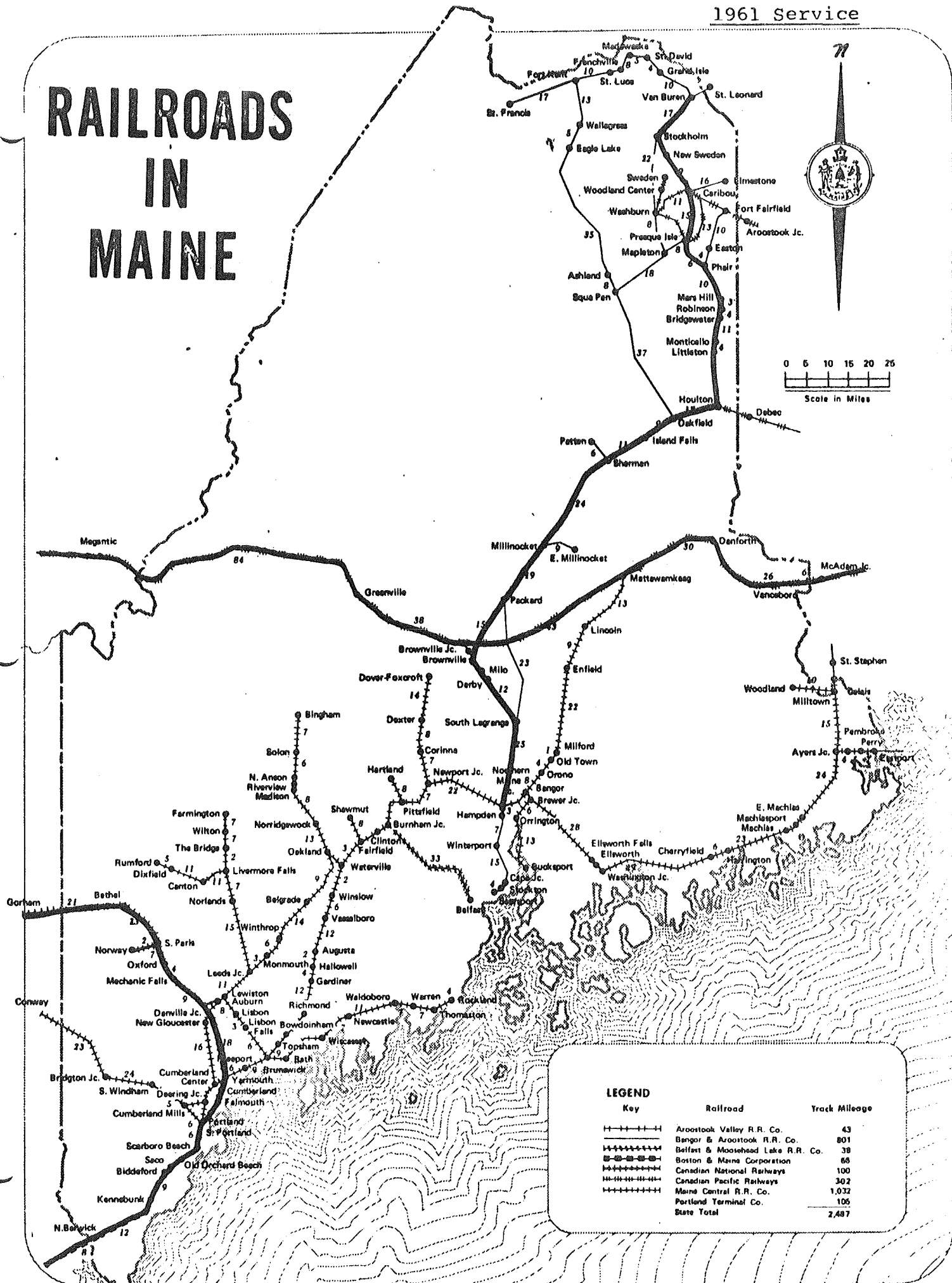


Railroad

Track Mileage

Arroostook Valley R.R. Co.	43
Bangor & Arroostook R.R. Co.	601
Belfast & Moosehead Lake R.R. Co.	38
Boston & Maine Corporation	68
Canadian National Railways	100
Canadian Pacific Railways	207
Maine Central R.R. Co.	1,032
Portland Terminal Co.	106
State Total	2,487

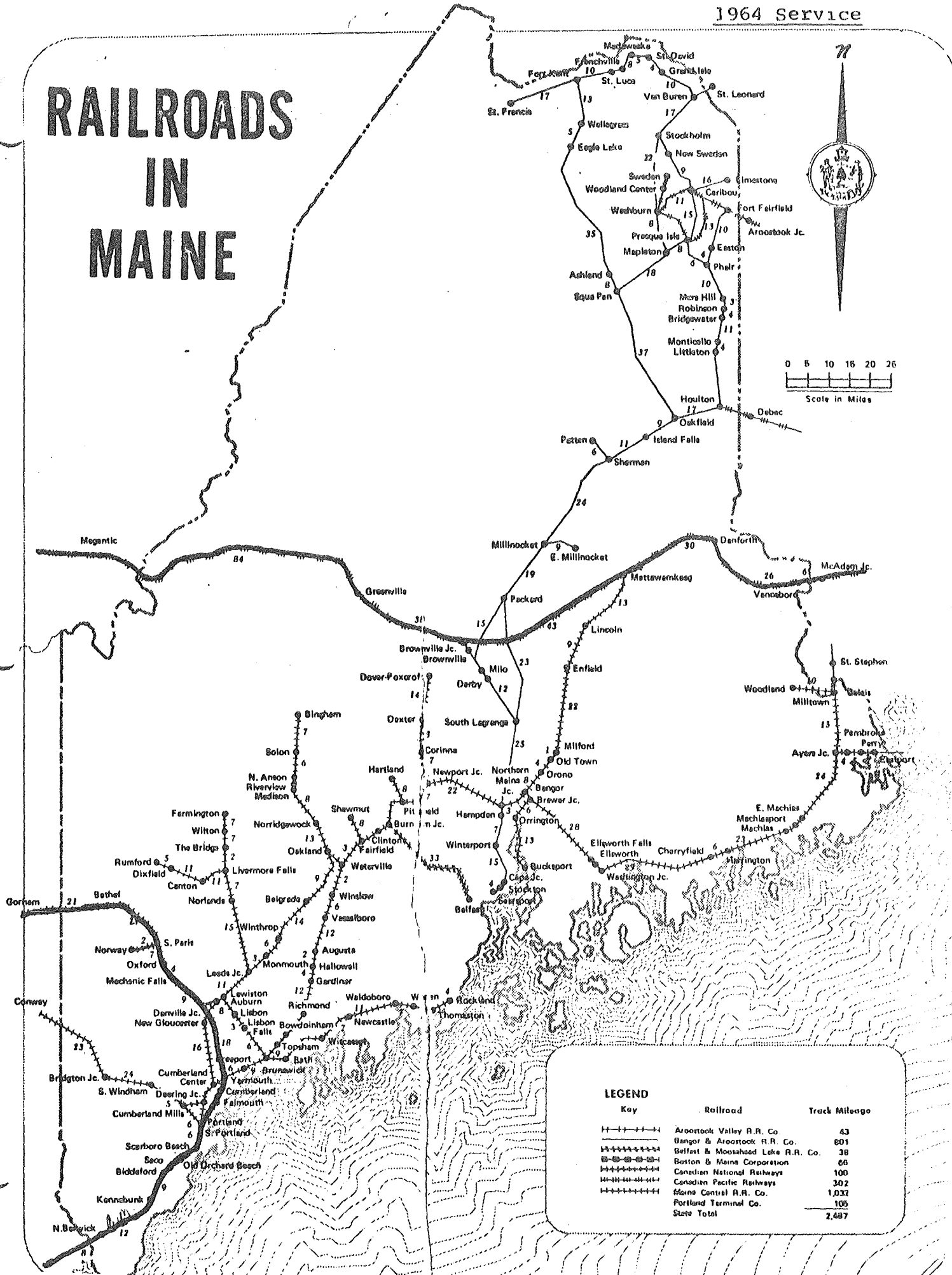
RAILROADS IN MAINE



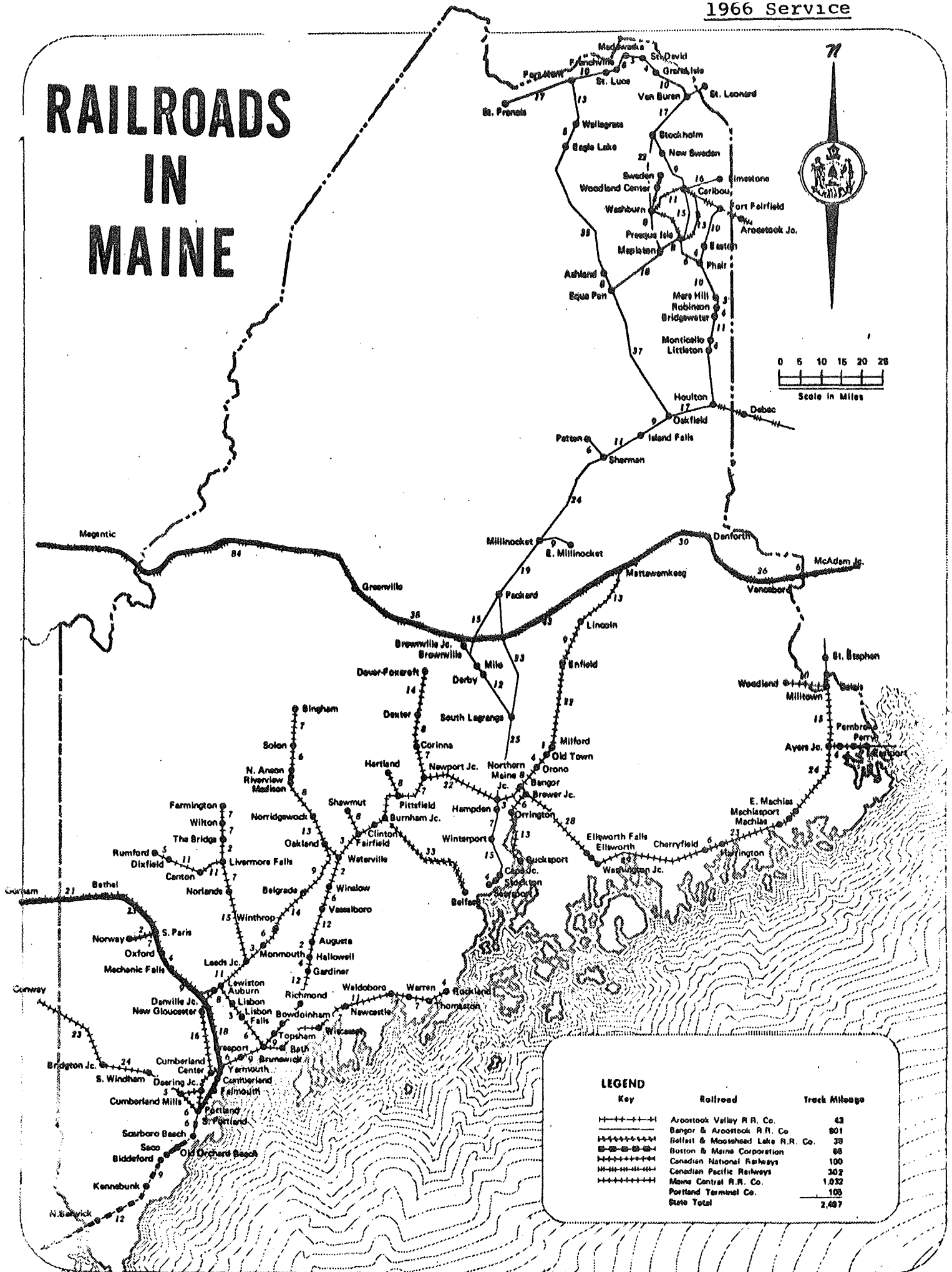
RAILROADS IN MAINE



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Scale in Miles



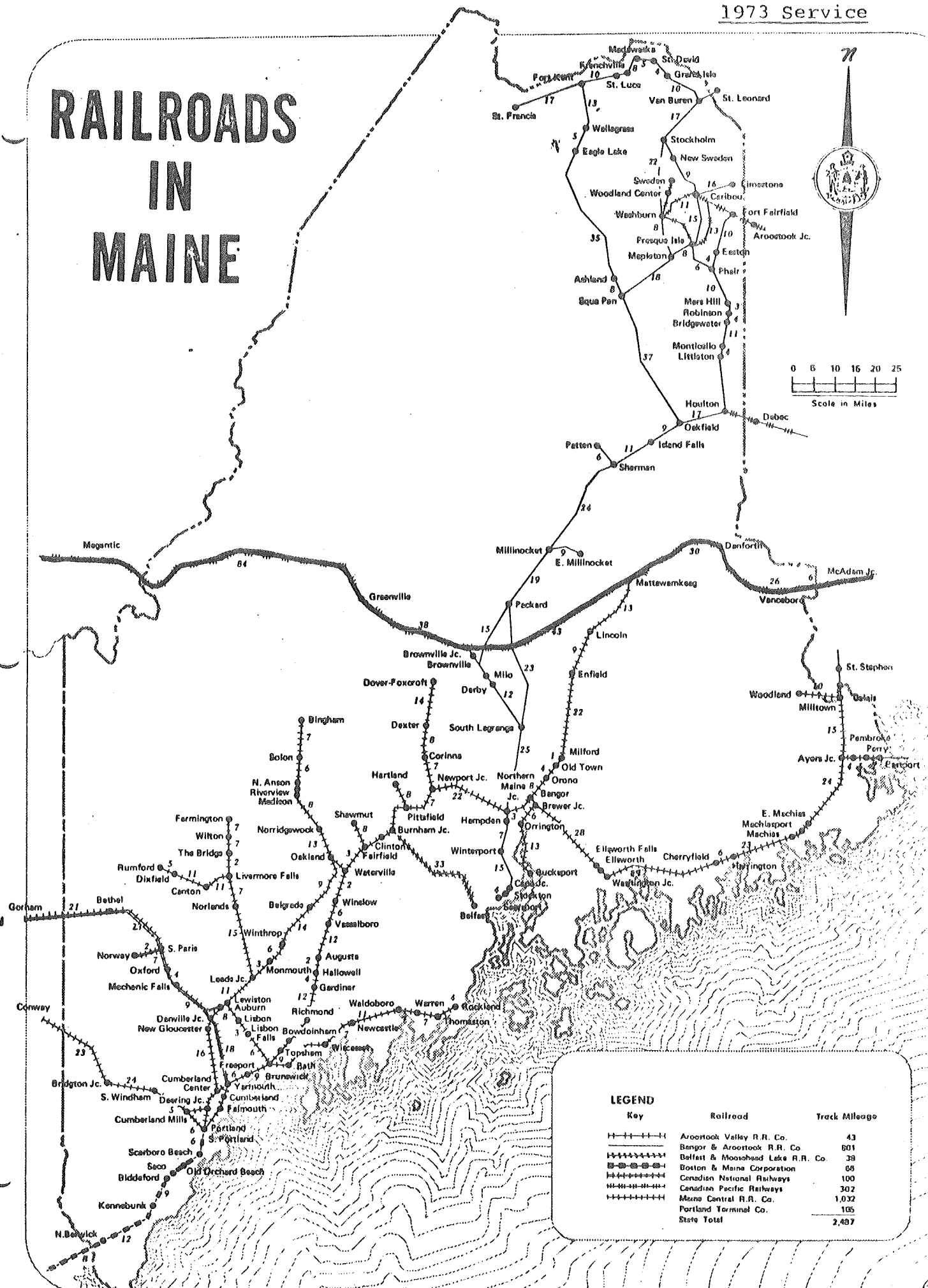
RAILROADS IN MAINE



RAILROADS IN MAINE



0 5 10 15 20 25
Scale in Miles



LEGEND

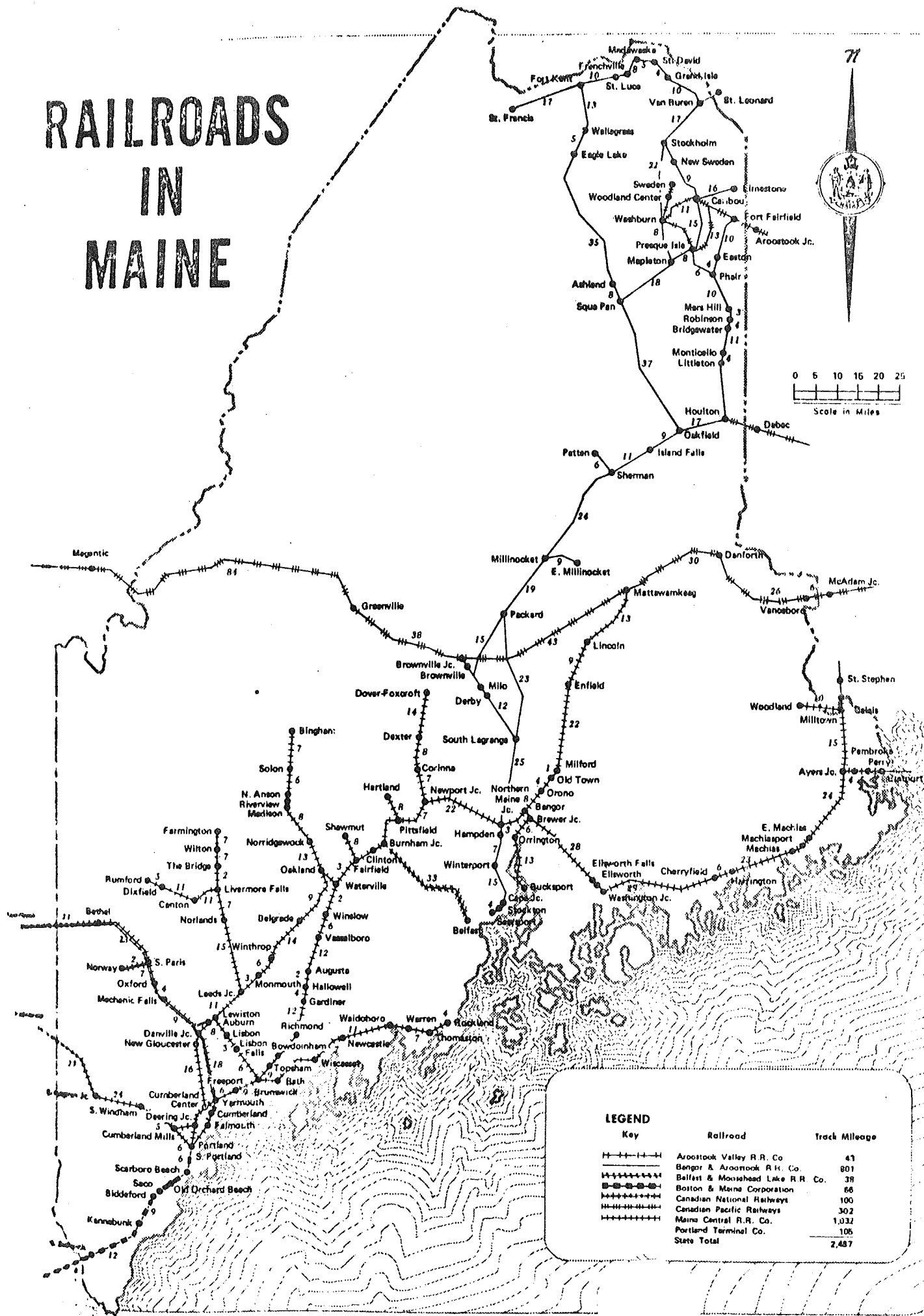
Key	Railroad	Track Mileage
—+—+—+—	Aroostook Valley R.R. Co.	43
—+—+—+—+—	Bangor & Aroostook R.R. Co.	801
—+—+—+—+—	Belfast & Moosehead Lake R.R. Co.	38
—+—+—+—+—	Boston & Maine Corporation	68
—+—+—+—+—	Canadian National Railways	100
—+—+—+—+—	Canadian Pacific Railways	302
—+—+—+—+—	Maine Central R.R. Co.	1,032
—+—+—+—+—	Portland Terminal Co.	105
	Total	2,487

RAILROADS IN MAINE

77



0 5 10 15 20 25
Scale in Miles



LEGEND

Key	Railroad	Track Mileage
—+—+—+—	Aroostook Valley R.R. Co.	43
—+—+—+—	Bangor & Aroostook R.R. Co.	801
—+—+—+—	Belfast & Moosehead Lake R.R. Co.	38
—+—+—+—	Boston & Maine Corporation	66
—+—+—+—	Canadian National Railway	100
—+—+—+—	Canadian Pacific Railway	302
—+—+—+—	Maine Central R.R. Co.	1,032
—+—+—+—	Portland Terminal Co.	106
	State Total	2,487