

REBUILDING TO RIVERSIDE 1973-1975

Lawrence D. Mills photos

The Highland Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad was rebuilt from a commuter railroad line to a light rail line during the late 1950s. Construction began on June 29, 1958 and the line opened for service on July 4, 1959. It was done on time, within budget, and without Federal funds. It pioneered the light rail concept in the modern era. But there was a price - the roadbed and track structure was not up to the heavy service demands. Thus it was determined that it needed to be rebuilt before newer light rail vehicles could use it. This was done between 1973 and 1975. It was done in three phases in a manner to minimize service disruption. It was also done in an era when the service was provided by single ended PCC cars requiring use of loops in several places.

Phase 1 in late 1973 involved temporarily suspending service between Newton Highlands and Riverside between September and December, 1973.



Notice was posted and a temporary loop was laid at Cook St south of Rt 9. It was hastily but well built and served until December 28, 1973. It was a tight curve but three car PCC trains could negotiate it.



The loop site (above) in August.



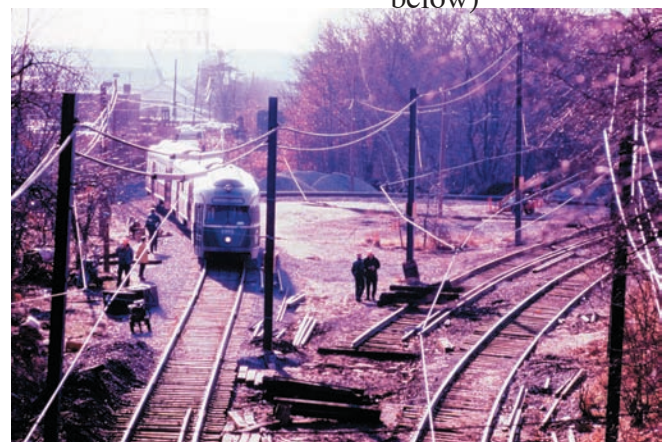
Quick track change on September 8th.



PCCs on the loop (above & below)



The loop was removed after the work was complete. The surplus loop track ultimately went to the Seashore Museum in Maine where you can still ride over it in Boston PCC cars. Right photo is last day of loop. Original Charles River Railroad alignment went through to Needham and beyond from this location.



ELIOT STATION



July 2, 1965 original construction.



September 23, 1973



December 1, 1973



December 29, 1973 - service restored



LRV
May 23, 1983

These views show how Eliot Station evolved. Photos at top are of outbound cars looking southeast; bottom scenes were taken looking northwest to Riverside.



December 1, 1973



February 22, 1966 inbound picture
window PCC cars



December 29, 1973 (right)

PHASE 2-REBUILDING IN BROOKLINE OPERATING ON BEACON STREET



To rebuild the Brookline section the entire line from Reservoir to Kenmore was shut down for the summer of 1974. Riverside service was diverted to Beacon Street and rebuilding took place on the unused line. The diversion required the building of a tight loop in the upper Reservoir Yard and the rerouting of trains up to three cars over the connecting tracks to Beacon Street. The loop (above) was built during the late spring of 1974 with the operational change taking place the second week of June.



Riverside cars were routed via Beacon between Kenmore and Reservoir. Mixed with regular Beacon cars they gave Beacon Street the best service in its history but did slow the through ride. Commonwealth class PCCs are shown at St Mary's St on June 14 (left) and at Strathmore Road on September 5th (right).



Upon reaching Cleveland circle the Riverside bound cars would take the connecting ladder track to the Reservoir turnback loop and then proceed down the incline as if heading eastbound. They would take the tight loop to reverse direction and then follow go through the switch heading out to Riverside. The loop was thus used by all Riverside cars whether going inbound or outbound.



Cars headed inbound would come through the short tunnel, stop at Reservoir, loop and proceed up the incline. They would then take the ladder track to Beacon Street and thus function like the regular Beacon service. This arrangement was in effect from mid June until mid September. A decade later the entire Reservoir complex was rebuilt and the overhead loop was replaced with crossovers. The replacement ladder track is at grade level. The entire carhouse on the Beacon end was also replaced.

BROOKLINE VILLAGE



May 23, 1966 (original view) left; June 28, 1974 (right)

The changes on the Brookline end are shown by this series of views of Brookline Village. This had been the original end of the line as a railroad in 1847. It was extended to Needham during the next decade and gravel trains used it for decades to fill in the Back Bay. In 1886 the New York Central took control of the line and built the connection from Cook St in Newton (site of the temporary loop in late 1973) to Riverside.



July 21, 1974 (left) August 10, 1974 (right).



August 31, 1974



Line car 3283 was brought out for wire work just before service resumed in September. This car was badly damaged five years earlier just west of here in a head on collision with another work car. The early morning wreck resulted in one fatality and several serious injuries.



Service returned in mid September as shown on September 9th with two Commonwealth class PCCs. LRVs came in late 1976 and the May 20, 1977 view at right shows how the project looked when complete.

PHASE 3 - SINGLE TRACK OPERATION FROM CHESTNUT HILL TO NEWTON HIGHLANDS



The final phase from Reservoir to Cook St involved single track operation. Shown is Newton Highlands on September 13, 1974 and September 29, 1975. The ballast being installed on the new outbound track shown in 1974 proved to be of the wrong size stone forcing it to be replaced the following winter. That led to weekend closure of the line over several weekends. The new inbound track installation is shown at right a year later.

CHESTNUT HILL STATION



Chestnut Hill station was done with through service running single track. It is shown on September 16, 1967. Tremont PCC 3005 is in the lead. This 1941 built car was one of the system's oldest PCCs having seen service on the Watertown, Egelston-North Station, and Cummins Highway line before coming to Riverside in 1959. Right view is April 11, 1975.



After the new outbound track was complete it saw both directions. View at left was taken June 7, 1975 at right on June 21.



July 4, 1975(left); full service July 24, 1975 (right)



Second day of LRV service December 31, 1976



Meet east of Chestnut Hill July 24, 1975. Single track with flags



Single tracking at the Reservoir in 1975. New outbound track installation on May 23, preparing inbound on July 24. LRV in August of 1980 as upper yard track is relocated.

