The first line of railroad tracks in Maine, and the second in New England, was completed in 1836 by the Bangor and Piscataquis Canal and Railroad Company stretching from Bangor to Old Town – a distance of 12 miles. Throughout the following century, railroad lines expanded across the state primarily to transport timber, paper and agricultural products. In 1924, Maine railroad service reached its peak with 2,380 miles of tracks. Since then, over 50% of those tracks have been abandoned or dismantled. The tracks in this map illustrate the current rail service in Maine, totaling 1,165 miles, with most being used solely for freight.

In 2002 passenger rail service was restored in Southern Maine by AMTRAK operating a line known as the Downeaster. This line connects Brunswick to Boston with 10 stops along the way. Downeaster has been successful in gaining ridership, which has sparked plans for the expansion of passenger rail further north. City officials in Augusta, Auburn, Lewiston and Waterville have all voted to consider the return of rail service to these cities, and in 2014 Maine DOT drafted a plan to invest $125 million in passenger rail as well as a range of projects proposed to boost freight rail service. Though there is currently no political consensus, if passenger rail were to be extended it would greatly improve public access to many of Maine’s destinations.