

**NRHS**

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

Northstar News

Our Country Continues to Get Tested –We Will Recover!



L: BN GP20 EB Freight Van
Buren St Mpls Aug 1988 –Bob
Ball

R: CP Wabasha Patrol April 23
2020 –Bob Ball

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Meeting Notice

Virtual Meeting Scheduled June 20 2020
See details in this newsletter

**Stay tuned for future meeting and activity
announcements in the next newsletter!**

Next newsletter (June) will be out around **July 3, 2020**.

Zoom has been used by multi-millions of people this year!

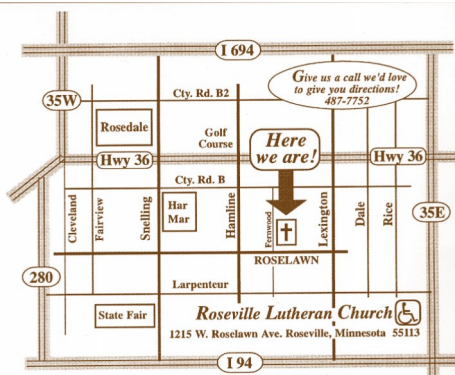
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Meeting Location: From the east or west take MN 36 to Lexington Avenue. Drive south on Lexington Avenue to Roselawn Avenue and turn right. The large lighted parking lot is on your right as you travel west on Roselawn. Use the lower entrance to the church and turn left through the commons area. We'll be in room 40, The Diamond Room.



From the Editor:

Please consider using ZOOM for our 2nd virtual meeting. Even for non-computer literates, it is easy to use.

Announcement: Virtual Meeting June 20 2020 6:30 PM

We will have a “virtual meeting” using the freeware “Zoom” on Saturday June 20 2020 6:30pm. All members are invited to join. You can join our meeting if you have a personal computer, tablet, laptop or cell phone! Even if you do not have a microphone/camera for your PC you can join the meeting, They can be purchased easily online for \$20-30. Most cell phones and tablets have cameras and microphones. To join our meeting, our meeting director Dawn Holmberg and her assistant Dan Meyer, dan@meyer-family.net (763) 784-8835 will send an Email Invite to all members that have email addresses. Use the Email Meeting ID to enter in your copy of zoom to join the meeting. If you have zoom installed on your computer by clicking on the Invite ID to join the meeting, Zoom will automatically join you to our meeting. After the Business part of the meeting, there will be a slide show program by Dawn Holmberg. Your Zoom Software will need to be updated. Dan will provide instructions in his Email Invite.

This will be an Official Meeting. -The Editor

Light Rail Trip CANCELLED

To the Editor:: There is no way that we can consider even the thought of having either the June light rail/heavy rail trip to Big Lake, nor should we consider the July picnic at Maiden Rock, WI. This Covid-19 and the current situation with the unrest in the Twin City area, (which may go on for while) makes any gathering of people not a good idea. With Duluth LSRM opening on/about July 1st of this year, maybe we might have another look at something for mid-August, but that decision is several weeks away for now.

John Goodman

Father and Son Team Up for 'Very Rare' Ship Photo in Port of Duluth-Superior

David and Gus Schauer will always have the memory of photographing twin 1,000-foot lakers as they docked side-by-side.

Written By: Brady Slater Duluth News



Interlake Steamship Co. vessels James R. Barker and Mesabi Miner were docked side by side on Memorial Day for a crew change at the Midwest Energy Resources Co. dock in the port of Duluth-Superior. The rare image, taken by a father and son from Duluth using a drone, is making rounds on social media. (Photo by David and Gus Schauer)



Boat photographers Gus, 14, and David Schauer pose in Canal Park Wednesday with the Julie C. anchored in the background. (Steve Kuchera / skuchera@duluthnews.com)

Gulls cried overhead on another perfect day as David and Gus Schauer met the News Tribune at the Duluth Ship Canal on Wednesday. The meeting came two days after the father-son duo posted to social media one of the rarest ship photos in memory. On Memorial Day, David and Gus launched their drone from Rice's Point under the Blatnik Bridge and captured a pair of 1,000-foot lake freighters side by side at the port's coal dock.

"We saw it happening on marinetraffic.com and were, like, 'Oh, they're next to each other. That would be cool to get a picture of that,'" said Gus, who at 14 years old is likely the youngest of the port's two dozen or more serious ship photographers. "So we sent our drone up, flew out to them and got a picture of them tied together."

Gus flew the drone and snapped the photos while David, 56, spotted as they photographed two Interlake Steamship Co. ore boats, the James R. Barker and Mesabi Miner. Interlake had [profiled young Gus earlier this year on its website](#), and were among the folks who began commenting about the unique nature of the photo.

"We love this shot of our 1,004-foot fleetmates and sister ships," [Interlake Steamship Co. tweeted](#) after the photo was posted to social media Monday.

"Some of the others on Facebook who have been watching longer than I have said they have never seen that in 44 years or more," said David, a self-employed marketing and advertising consultant. "They'd never seen two 1,000-footers lashed together at the dock." The ore boats were kissing close while located at the Midwest Energy Resources Co. dock.

"This is very rare," Interlake spokesperson Chrissy Kadleck said. "It just happened to work out with the timing." She explained why the ships were side-by-side, confirming Interlake did a small crew changeover from the Mesabi Miner to the James R. Barker. Because of the economic downturn from COVID-19, the Barker had been at Midwest Energy in a short-term layup. "The Miner was taking a delay to wait for a boat to depart the CN Dock, so she came alongside the Barker to make the changeover," Kadleck said.

The Barker's layup ended, and it was under way again Wednesday, loading with ore at the Canadian National Dock — movements the Schauers also photographed.

Gus goes to school at Stella Maris Academy's St. James campus in West Duluth, and the family of five, including twin older sisters, lives in the Smithville neighborhood. Gus started photographing boats in 2013.

"I like the ship's salute," Gus said. "That's what brought me to the canal to start taking pictures."

He enjoys the foreign ships best for their colorful paint jobs and elaborate self-unloading mechanisms. He's already had a cover shot for the Duluth Seaway Port Authority's North Star Port magazine, and shares his images regularly on the Lake Superior Ports & Shipping Facebook page. "It's nice to have a son who chooses to follow in his dad's footsteps," David said, describing how he started photographing the port in the late-1970s. The Two Harbors-based tugboat Edna G was his first subject.

Gus enjoys what he called "the golden light" of summer. Provided good lighting and attractive boats, the duo can be found photographing every day in summer. "We probably prefer winter shooting, because of how the ice floes play off the boats, and the dynamics on Lake Superior," David said. Their drone, a DJI Mavic 2 Zoom, allows them to safely fly out over open water and get close to ships, showing views of hatches and decks that were harder to get before. In the past, David would drive over the Blatnik Bridge while Gus took photographs out the open back window of their van.

Of capturing the two ships side-by-side, Gus said, "I was pretty excited to see it, knowing that's never happened before to our knowledge. It was an exciting picture to get."

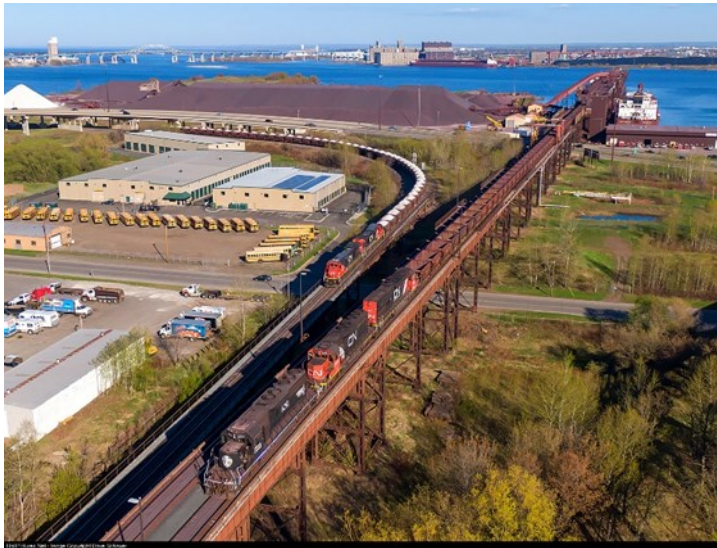
News from the Iron Range First Minntac/Granite City All-Rail



From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Sun, 10 May 2020
With Keetac shuttered due to the soft demand for steel, Granite City Works is now getting ore from Minntac to supply its one operating blast furnace (its other one was recently idled). The first empty BNSF ore train to be delivered to Keenan arrived Saturday via Kelly Lake. CN will load the train and bring it back to Keenan where a BNSF crew will take it south, again via Kelly Lake.
Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

GE & EMD

From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Thu, 21 May 2020



With all the BNSF horsepower payback units floating around CN's Missabe Subdivision, it was nice to see these EMD and GE power sets in Duluth last night. The EMDs were dumping pellets while the longest vessel on the Great Lakes, M/V Paul R. Tregurtha, loaded for Indiana Harbor. On the ramp up from Missabe Junction was a nice looking pair of C40-8s with limestone for Minorca, loaded at Lakehead from the pile on the far left.

<https://www.railpictures.net/photo/736880/>

Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

Port Container Traffic

From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Fri, 22 May 2020



The port of Duluth recently constructed new track at their expanded container facility. I had yet to catch a CP crew pulling cars there until Wednesday when a single locomotive retrieved some cars. Oddly, this is a rail to road transload versus rail to sail, despite it being at the port and on Lake Superior (cheaper to rail the small number of containers from Montreal to Duluth versus over water). The three tugboats add some color.

<https://www.railpictures.net/photo/736976/>

Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

Duluth Trains Scheduled For July 1 From John Goodman May 20, 2020

As the world we once knew, very slowly starts to return to its new normal, a tentative opening date for the Lake Superior Railroad Museum and resumption of passenger service on the North Shore Scenic Railroad has been set for **July 1, 2020**. This coincides with the opening of the St. Louis County Depot, home to the Museum and Railroad.



The July first date was chosen by the State of Minnesota as the day its 26 historic sites, run by the MN Historical Society, will also open to the public. St. Louis County, which owns the Depot, decided to follow the State guidelines. We'll open the same day as Split Rock Lighthouse, the MN History Center, James J. Hill Mansion and other historic attractions. The Duluth Zephyr Operates daily until mid-October

The Duluth Zephyr is our most popular trip! Great for all ages, this train operates daily in the summer and offers a 75 minute trip (1hour, 15 minutes) through downtown, along the shoreline of Lake Superior, through the historic Congdon Neighborhood wooded area, until it reaches a siding where we stop briefly to turn around and return to the Depot.

The Music & Pizza Train Evening Excursion

A 2-1/2 hour trip up the North Shore with pizza and fun for all ages! One 8" Domino's Pizza plus soda included with every ticket. The first part of the ride is narrated as we pass by all the sights of Duluth, on the way back jam out in the concession car with live music from local musicians. Beverages and snacks are available onboard the train; Pepsi products, juice, water, as well as Beer, wine, and seltzers. Light snacks available for purchase such as candy and chips.

The Music & Pizza Train operates Friday/Saturday only after Labor Day.

The Two Harbors Turn Operates weekends to Mid-October

A six-hour full day up the North Shore with a layover-stop for lunch (food not included in ticket price), touring and shopping in beautiful Two Harbors. Return to Duluth between 4 and 5pm. Click here to view a map of the route.

Entrance to the Lake Superior Railroad Museum is included with your ticket prior to departure. Doors open at 9am. This trip is usually not wheelchair accessible. Pets are not allowed.

NP GP9 #245



From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Mon, 11 May 2020

This morning I was at the canal photographing the arriving laker Michipicoten when I noticed LSRM's newest addition, former NP passenger GP9 245, hauling a small passenger train. Not knowing what was going on, I headed for Fitgers (a difficult task given Lake Avenue is closed) and grabbed a few quick shots with AMO (Air Missabe One). Kent Rengo would later tell me it was a press event to welcome 245 into the family (I really need to get on Ken's press release list). Of the images I made this morning, this one I liked the most because it shows the construction cranes for Essentia's massive expansion project (one of our large local medical providers). Our skyline won't be the same here after work is done in a couple of years. This GP9 looks fabulous.

May 11, 2020 Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

U.S. Steel Agrees to Sell 25% Interest of Minntac to Stelco

Updated: April 30, 2020 07:14 PM From David Schauer



U.S. Steel announced they are selling interest in Minntac to Stelco, a Canadian steelmaker. U.S. Steel announced they have offered interest in Minntac to Stelco, a Canadian steelmaker. According to the 1st quarter earnings statement from U.S. Steel, Stelco will pay the company \$100 million this year, and \$500 million at a later time. Minntac is U.S. Steel's largest mine. Under the deal, U.S. Steel will remain the operator and majority owner, according to the statement.



One Dead, Several Injured as 'Empire Builder' Hits Tractor and Derails in Montana (second update) Four Aboard Train Treated, Released at Hospital

May 29, 2020 From Roger Libra



Here are some pictures of the Builders derailment, the lead locomotive really took it on the nose.



At least by the pictures it looks like the passenger cars themselves did not sustain a lot of damage. thank heavens so it looks like the cars will all be back in service after being checked.

The third picture looks like what is left of the farm sprayer that Amtrak hit, not much left of it. These things are really high wheeled vehicles, and that's probably why the damage on the nose of number nine goes so high up.

Interesting that it derailed all the passenger cars, because these sprayers are really kind of flimsy looking . When you see them working in the fields.

At least none of the passenger cars physically tipped over. And also looks like no fire got started. One person is reported dead and passengers and crew were injured after the westbound Amtrak *Empire Builder* hit a John Deere sprayer tractor east of Wolf Point, Mont., shortly before 11 a.m. today. The [Billings Gazette reports](#) the accident occurred near Bainville at an ungated grade crossing, and that the operator of the tractor was killed. Initial reports from the Roosevelt County, Mont., emergency planning agency reported multiple cars derailed; Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari said in a statement that the train "remained upright as it lost contact with the tracks," and that there were no reports of life-threatening injuries to the 64 passengers and 10 crew members.

One passenger and three crew members were treated and released at a local hospital. Roosevelt County Sheriff Jason Fredericks told the Gazette that all of the passengers onboard sustained injuries. Passengers were taken to Culbertson (Mont.) High School for triage, [according to Great Falls TV station KRTV](#). Magliari said in an email that the passengers remained sheltered there as they await substitute transportation. With the BNSF Railway tracks closed for investigation and repairs, the eastbound *Empire Builder* that departed Portland and Seattle on Thursday will terminate at Wolf Point, and return to its points of origin with the passengers from the westbound train.

Bainville is about 28 miles west of Williston, N.D. and about five miles west of the Montana/North Dakota state line.

State Wins Grant for Twin Cities Train Wednesday, May 6, 2020, -From Rick Krenske



Passengers on the Amtrak Empire Builder in January 2019. Photo by Jeramey Jannene.

Federal grant will add second daily roundtrip on Amtrak Empire Builder from Chicago to St. Paul. Doubling train service between Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul took a step forward Tuesday with the announcement of a \$12.5 million federal grant to support a second daily roundtrip.

The plan, known as the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago (TCMC) passenger train service, would add a second daily Amtrak Empire Builder train with 12 stops.

The Empire Builder currently provides service from Chicago to Seattle and Portland, but east-bound trains are frequently delayed before arriving in St. Paul and the once-a-day departures limit the desirability of the service. The TCMC plan calls for a second train that doesn't go west of St. Paul, reducing delays and providing enhanced connectivity between the communities along the route.

"In the past few months, we have heard from all of the station communities, counties, and members of the business community of their desire and support for the TCMC second daily round-trip, stating that it would improve their travel options and the ability to use the service as a tool to attract and retain businesses, jobs, employees, and residents to their communities," said [Arun Rao](#), passenger rail implementation manager for the [Wisconsin Department of Transportation](#), in February. *Continued on next page:*

Continued from previous page: A 2015 study says TCMC service is projected to provide between 117,800 and 155,500 additional annual rides based on the selected schedule, more than doubling the number of trips in the corridor.

While the long-distance Empire Builder is federally funded, the TCMC would need state support. The study says the service would cost approximately \$12 million per year to operate, with approximately half the funding coming from fares and an operating subsidy from Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin. The states may also need to pay for new trainsets, with an estimated cost of \$1 million per year.

Total capital costs for the project are estimated at \$72 million in Wisconsin and Minnesota, in addition to improvements already underway between Milwaukee and Chicago.

The \$12.5 million Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) grant will help pay for operating the line over its first three years of operation.

WisDOT told Urban Milwaukee via email that it intends to also apply for a FRA grant for capital support to construct necessary infrastructure improvements for the service. Minnesota also recently budgeted \$10 million to support the effort as part of a bigger infrastructure spending package.

The train would stop in Chicago, Glenview, IL, Sturtevant, Milwaukee, Columbus, Portage, Wisconsin Dells, Tomas, La Crosse, Winona, MN, Red Wing, MN and St. Paul. A light rail line operates out of St. Paul Union Station with service to downtown Minneapolis.

The train currently takes approximately six hours in each direction between Milwaukee and St. Paul.

Between Milwaukee and Chicago the Empire Builder currently overlaps with the Amtrak Hiawatha Service and would continue to do so. Passengers going between the two cities are not currently able to ride the Empire Builder and must use the Hiawatha.

Wisconsin has been working on expanding the Hiawatha from seven to 10 daily round-trips as part of a \$195 million project. WisDOT received a \$26.6 million federal grant to pay for a freight yard bypass in the Menomonee Valley in March, \$2.7 million to fund a signalization project to speed up trains through downtown Milwaukee in June 2019 and a \$5 million award to build a second platform at the Milwaukee Airport Rail Station in March 2019. All three grants required a state match. The Illinois-portion of the project remains on hold.

By Jeramey Jannene - May 6th, 2020



Metro News - Train Days Is Going Virtual

May 27, 2020, 9:58 PM, Rick Krenske

Union Depot in St. Paul, Minn., will take its annual Train Days event online with a six-part video miniseries because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The depot's marketing manager, Lindsay Boyd, told the St. Paul Pioneer Press that it was clear in March that the event, which drew 11,000 people in 2019, would have to take a different form, "so we had some time to plan the virtual series." The first part of the online series, detailing the history of the station and railroading, was produced in collaboration with the Friends of the 261 and Minnesota Transportation Museum.

It will debut June 7 at 5 p.m. CDT on the Union Depot website. After much discussion and careful consideration, we have made the decision to move this year's Train Days event to a virtual format. Follow Union Depot on social media for more information on Virtual Train Days and updates on ways you can participate in a video series, coloring contests, social giveaways and more!

Memories of Union Depot Video Series

Do you or someone you know have a unique memory involving Union Depot? Did you attend or have a wedding at Union Depot? Have you taken the train from Union Depot or eaten at Leeann Chin, Christos, or Station 81? Have you gathered on the front steps to watch the Holiday Tree Lighting or attended Train Days? We want to hear from you! As part of our six-part Train Days video series, we're looking to you to share a 2-minute video describing a treasured memory from Union Depot for a chance to be featured in our "Memories of Union Depot" video. We hope to hear from you!

Amtrak Needs \$1.5 Billion Bailout, Prepares to Cut Up to 20% of Workforce

BUSINESS NEWS MAY 26, 2020 / 9:44 AM David Shepardson

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. passenger railroad service Amtrak said on Tuesday it needs a further \$1.475 billion bailout and disclosed plans to cut its workforce by up to 20% in the coming budget year.

Amtrak said it also plans to reduce its operating costs by approximately \$500 million.

The company, which has been devastated by the coronavirus pandemic, in April received \$1 billion in emergency funding from Congress.

Ridership and revenue levels are down 95% or more year-over-year since the pandemic began, Amtrak said.

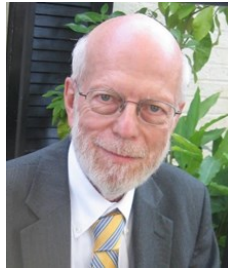
"It is clear we have no choice but to reduce our overhead structure to better align our costs with our revenues," CEO Bill Flynn told employees Tuesday in a memo seen by Reuters. "This reduction is necessary to ensure we have a sustainable Amtrak that can continue to make critical investments in our core and long-term growth strategies, while also keeping safety as our top priority."

Without the additional emergency funding, Amtrak said it would need to suspend some long-distance routes, and that others would operate on a thinned-down schedule. It would also need to greatly reduce its high-speed Acela service. Amtrak said it now expects the massive travel demand fall-off due to the pandemic to result in a full year 50% reduction in system-wide revenue. It expects passenger demand will fall from 32 million in 2019 to 16 million in the 2021 budget year. House Transportation Committee chairman Peter DeFazio said Congress "must make sure that Amtrak, its states and commuter rail partners, and the Amtrak workforce get the support they need."

Even with new funding from Congress, Amtrak still plans to extend some service cuts. Amtrak projects revenue to fall by \$1.6 billion and to run a \$1.4 billion loss after it nearly broke even last year. The \$1.475 billion request, for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, is in addition to an annual \$2 billion in support it has been receiving from Congress in recent years. Reporting by David Shepardson; Editing by Bernadette Baum and Rosalba O'Brien Our Standards: [The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles](#).

AAPRCO

Mid-Month Highlights



Washington Update
by Ross Capon
Provided by John Goodman

May 2020

Virtual Capitol Hill meetings continue. The goals are appropriations report language on charter trains, and reauthorization language aimed at undoing some of the damage that current Amtrak policies have inflicted on the private car community. Again, please contact me at rca-pon3@gmail.com or phone or text 301-385-6438 if you would like me to arrange a conference call with one or more legislators. I and/or an AAPRCO board member can join you on the call at your discretion.

Intercity Passenger Train Service Standards. The Federal Railroad Administration released its proposed "Metrics and Minimum Standards for Intercity Passenger Rail Service." The docket number is FRA-2019-0069. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking was published in the Federal Register on March 31. The 60-day public comment period will end June 1. For more information, [click here](#).

RPA said it generally supports the proposal but wants "additional customer metrics that do not depend on survey data, as well as more focus on the needs of elderly, disabled and rural travelers. We also continue to push for even more transparency on passenger operations and more effort to measure the financial benefits of service to individual communities, especially those smaller rural communities that are underserved." RPA's full comments are available [here](#).

Amtrak service continues with the same suspensions previously reported. All long-distance trains are running. As always, [check with Amtrak](#) for updates before traveling.

William Flynn took over as Amtrak's President and CEO on April 15. Read excerpts from his April 23 news conference [here](#). Flynn was introduced by Chairman Tony Coscia and accompanied by Senior Executive Vice-President Stephen Gardner. Amtrak is accelerating work on "our core infrastructure" to take advantage of extra track time due to reduced service. Ridership is down roughly 95%. A loss of \$750 million in adjusted operating earnings is anticipated, but that could worsen. Amtrak is conducting research on what a ramp-up of service would look like. They expect only a "modest" return of traffic in the summer. Management has talked with labor about delaying the July 1 pay increase, "so far no one has taken us up on that request."

More: AAPRCO NEWS BRIEFS

Amtrak Commemorates 49th Anniversary Established May 1, 1971

"On our 49th anniversary, we look to come out of this crisis ready to meet your transportation needs."

CEO William Flynn



An Amtrak train was involved in a fatal accident with a backhoe operating near Chester, Pennsylvania, in April 2016. Photo - NTSB accident report

NTSB: Amtrak Modified Safety Rules after Backhoe Accident

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) announced on April 20 that three more of its top safety recommendations have been implemented, including one related to a fatal rail accident that occurred in Pennsylvania in April 2016.

After an Amtrak train struck a backhoe, killing two workers in April 2016 near Chester, Pennsylvania, the NTSB recommended that train dispatchers not be allowed to participate in potentially distracting activities, including making phone calls, while responsible for safe train operations. Amtrak has since modified its rules to satisfy the NTSB's recommendation, agency officials said in a press release.

The other two recommendations that the NTSB marked as "closed, acceptable action" involved air and highway transportation.

Transportation is safer than it was before these recommendations were implemented," said NTSB Chairman Robert Sumwalt. "But there is still so much more to do. There are still 230 recommendations from our 2019-2020 Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements that have not been addressed."

Amtrak Extends Downeaster Service Suspension

Amtrak's Downeaster service from Brunswick, Maine, to Boston will remain suspended through May 31, the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) announced earlier this week.

NNEPRA officials are working with Amtrak, Pan Am Railways Inc., and station communities to prepare for the return of service later this spring, authority officials said in a press release.

Meanwhile, Pan Am Railways has expedited track improvement and maintenance projects along the Downeaster corridor. This spring, the regional will replace timbers on the Fore River rail bridge in Portland, Maine, and 15,000 railroad ties in New Hampshire, as well as perform grade crossing and surfacing work. Also, train equipment is also undergoing enhanced cleaning.

Amtrak Scales Back Traditional Dining Until May 31 as COVID Slashes Ridership



Amtrak scales back Traditional Dining until May 31 as COVID slashes Ridership Photo - Business Insider

With only 4,000 people now riding Amtrak nationwide each day across all of Amtrak's operating services -- versus 90,000 on a typical day before the coronavirus pandemic -- for at least six weeks [Amtrak is substituting its Flexible Dining pre-packaged meals on Western trains that normally offer a Traditional cooked-to-order dining experience](#). The change takes effect today.

Sleeper passengers traveling on the California Zephyr, Coast Starlight, Empire Builder, Southwest Chief, Sunset Limited and Texas Eagle will choose either room service or going to the dining car using the Flexible Dining pre-packaged option; Amtrak will offer Coach customers Café service in the Sightseeing Lounge.

The Auto Train, which has seen very strong ridership as travelers leave Florida heading north, will retain Traditional dining service as an exclusive Sleeping Car amenity.

The dining change is only one of many coronavirus-related adjustments Amtrak has had to make. Seven routes have suspended service entirely due to the pandemic, including the show-piece Acela service between Boston and Washington, D.C. Twenty other routes and services, including Amtrak buses, are running but on drastically reduced frequencies.

[Long-Distance business line VP Larry Chestler told Rail Passengers CEO Jim Mathews earlier this week](#) that the objective is to minimize the number of crew exposed to potential infection while Amtrak provides essential transportation service. He also said that management will keep re-evaluating safety and medical guidance with an eye toward restoring traditional dining as soon as May 31.

Chestler emphasized that the dining change -- which provoked ire among many customers who were previously relieved that Amtrak chose not to implement the Flexible food-service model on Western trains -- is truly temporary and driven by coronavirus safety concerns.

The overarching objective is to protect passengers and crew at a time when transportation and food-service workers are getting sick from coronavirus at higher rates than the general population.

Instead of a chef, a food-service specialist and an attendant to run the dining car on each of 30 trains operating each day across the Network (one in each direction for each route), Flexible dining can be delivered by a single employee. This lets Amtrak move those other employees on to the Extra Board and off the train, where they can keep getting paid but not worry about getting sick or getting others sick.



Amtrak Projects \$700 Million Loss Due to COVID-19

[Amtrak](#) expects to lose \$700 million in adjusted operating earnings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Amtrak officials said in an April 23rd teleconference with reporters.

Chairman Anthony Coscia said losses could be climb higher as ridership drops to 95 percent across the network

Earlier this month, Amtrak received \$1 billion in federal funding to address the impact of the pandemic.

The pandemic came on the heels of a record-setting year in ridership and operating revenue for Amtrak. Photo - Amtrak

Coscia said the funds - approved as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act - will protect the railroad from having to dip into its capital reserves and avoid employee layoffs.

The pandemic arrived on the heels of a [record-setting year](#) in ridership and operating revenue for Amtrak, Coscia said. The railroad was "on track" to break even in operating earnings by fiscal-year 2021 for the first time in the railroad's history.

Now, Amtrak has been forced to defer capital projects deemed non-critical and suspend or modify 57 percent of its routes.

For example, Amtrak's Hiawatha Service between Milwaukee and Chicago will be replaced with bus service beginning today through May 25.

Still, the national intercity passenger railroad is taking advantage of the lower ridership period to perform essential track work and other "critical" projects, Amtrak President and Chief Executive Officer Bill Flynn said.

Baltimore's Penn Station redevelopment, for example, is continuing as planned.

Flynn, who succeeded Richard Anderson as CEO on April 15, also deferred his salary.

As the railroad shifts to recovery, Amtrak officials will explore investment into touchless technology at fare gates and for food service, they said.

RAILROADFORUMS.COM



Mt Rainier Railroad Terminates All Operations Indefinitely

[May 18, 2020](#) [Railroad News](#) [Railroad Preservation](#)

To: The partners and contractors of Mt Rainier Railroad and Logging Museum

Subject: Termination of All Operations

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

American Heritage Railways Inc. has decided to permanently cease operations and close Mt. Rainier Railroad for the foreseeable future. Due to the pandemic COVID-19 and the complications with the WFIM not-for profit, American Heritage Railways Inc. can no longer continue to fund MRRR. MRR and AHR management teams will immediately implement a plan to close the railroad in as orderly manner as possible. As such, we will be closing the doors and canceling all future events and train excursions for the foreseeable future, expected to remain through and beyond the end of the year.

We have contacted our staff and have begun reaching out to Business partners, groups, vendors, partners, and contractors. We will be terminating all marketing, web, advertising, and other vendor support for this location effective immediately. We are currently working on a communications plan and will be focused on messaging our current and future customers directly. Refunds for existing riders are began May 18, 2020, and the closure of all reservations online and by phone started Friday May 15, 2020.

We truly appreciate the hard work, effort, and support everyone has put into Mt. Rainier over the last three years. From John and Al Harper, "It is with great regret and sorrow that this must happen. Each one of you have done your best to make Mt. Rainier Railroad prosper and delight our customers. It just seems we could not overcome all the surmounting roadblocks."

On behalf of Mt. Rainier Railroad, we wish you well and hope that our paths will meet again in the future.

Sincerely Yours,
American Heritage Management Team
Last edited: May 20, 2020

File photo: Bob Harbison



American Heritage says it Will Work to Find a New Owner for Mount Rainier Scenic |

[Trains Magazine](#) [trn.trains.com](#)

"It is with great regret and sorrow we make this announcement today, as everyone associated with this historic railroad has worked extremely hard to make it prosper and delight guests from all over the world," said John Harper, general manager of American Heritage Railways, Inc. "With still many financial and operational unknowns to work through, AHR will announce further details in the near future regarding its plans for the facility, including finding a new owner and overseeing the divestiture of its famed locomotives and other important infrastructure assets. In the meantime, we wish to thank all of our loyal employees and volunteers who helped us celebrate the rich industrial history of the Pacific Northwest's late 19th and early 20th-century settlement and growth."

NE: Railroad Days, Which Celebrates the Omaha-Council Bluffs Area's Railroad Heritage, is Canceled

Wednesday, May 20, 2020 From John Goodman

Railroad Days, an event held at a half-dozen locations around Omaha and Council Bluffs that celebrates the region's railroad heritage, have been canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic, organizers said Tuesday.

Officials with Lauritzen Gardens, the Durham Museum, Union Pacific Railroad Museum, RailsWest Railroad Museum and the Historic General Dodge House "made the difficult decision to cancel the event for the safety of the community," according to a press release.

More: https://www.omaha.com/livewellnebraska/health/railroad-days-which-celebrates-the-omaha-council-bluffs-areas-railroad-heritage-is-canceled/article_fce21668-bf0f-51dc-acd7-4654951c42c7.html

Gary R. Kazin



Before and after. On the right is a newly remanufactured Norfolk Southern AC446M at the GE Manufacturing Solutions (now Wabtec) plant in Fort Worth, Tex. William C. Vantuono photo.

RailwayAge

Does Rebuilding Locomotives Beat Buying New?

Written by *Jim Blaze*, *Contributing Editor* May 21, 2020

Ever check out the list prices of brand-new main line diesel-electric locomotives? They are expensive, about \$3 million each. Are you mesmerized by the horsepower quoted? Nah! You want tractive effort. Hauling heavy, long freight trains is the North American business model. You need to purchase tractive effort. There are cheaper capital outlay ways to buy locomotives. The lower-cost option involves stripping down older units that have good frames and rebuilding them as upgrades. It usually begins by selecting a locomotive that is about 20 years old. Here are the simple economics that drive the program. This modernization business model started to evolve about a decade ago:

- ☐ Obtain 10 to 15 percent fuel efficiency gain
- ☐ Reduce long term maintenance costs by ~ 20 percent
- ☐ Reliability improvement of at least 40 percent
- ☐ Improve tractive effort by 40 to 50 percent.



GE (now Wabtec) plant in Fort Worth, Tex. William C. Vantuono photo

Locomotive rebuilding is no small task. A typical six-axle locomotive is more than 73 feet long, about 16 feet tall and weighs more than 200 tons. There may be as many as 210,000 internal parts, including more than six miles of wiring. One critical aspect of rebuilding is to use modular construction techniques. Most rebuilding involves five main sub-assembly modules. Each is pre-assembled and tested on its own assembly line. and then moved around the factory with a network of heavy-duty overhead cranes. (New locomotive manufacturing typically flows in one direction on the final assembly line.)

The remanufacturing process begins with a complete teardown of the older carbody and its components. Overhaul activity takes place in the same general plant assembly area as where some of the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) build new locomotives. However, there is some floor reconfiguration.

For a modernization, arriving locomotives are initially washed and drained of fluid. Then they are completely stripped. Even the wiring is removed. Skilled crews remove the cab, the truck assemblies, the prime-mover (diesel engine), traction alternator and other parts. Employees then sand off old paint and check for and repair any signs of corrosion.

If possible, the modernization process tries to retain the original locomotive platform (think of it as a chassis), which is fabricated from about 80,000 pounds of structural steel and also holds under-slung fuel tanks.

Before sub-assemblies begin coming together, they are checked and rechecked to ensure that components fit properly.

For comparison, here are several different baseline OEM locomotive types that may be candidates for modernization: (*see table next page:*)

There are regulatory rules that determine how a unit is rebuilt. Specifically, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency federal pollution rules apply.

The EPA also mandates that locomotive upgrades can't exceed more than 50% of a locomotive's value. Therefore, most locomotive rebuilds are fitted with a remanufactured engine instead of a new one.

Engine remanufacturing is a specialty for companies like [NRE](#). The old engine is removed, and everything is remanufactured or replaced—power assemblies, cylinder heads, crankshaft, etc. NRE remanufacturing to “essentially like new” helps meet EPA parts content standards.

Which railroads have used locomotives in good condition for rebuilding? *continued on next page:*

Continued from previous page:

Locomotives (Diesel Only): Mainline and Shunters

Below: Comparison of select characteristics for six very common shunting and mainline locos

Name / Producer	SW-1200 EMD (US)	SD-1500 EMD (US)	SD-40-2 EMD (US)	SD-60 EMD (US)	Dash 8 CW40 Gen Elec (US)	Dash 9 CW44 Gen Elec (US)
Function(s)	shunting, short haul	shunting, short haul	main line, long haul	main line, long haul	main line, long haul	main line, long haul
Build dates	1954-1966	1966-1974	1972-1989	1984-1995	1987-1994	1993-2004
Power	1,200 hp 890 kW	1,500 hp 1,120 kW	3,000 hp 2,240 kW	3,800 hp 2,800 kW	4,000 hp 3,000 kW	4,400 hp 3,280 kW
Maximum speed	65 mph 105 kph	65 mph 105 kph	65 mph 105 kph	70 mph 113 kph	70 mph 113 kph	74 mph 119 kph
Tractive Effort (start) (@25%)	74,000 lbf 337 kN	62,000 lbf 282 kN	115,000 lbf 522 kN (@31.5%)	98,250 lbf 446 kN	106,800 lbf 484 kN @	142,000 lbf 644 kN
Tractive Effort (continuous)	36,000 lbf 164 kN @ 11 mph/18 kph	38,000 lbf 173 kN @ 11 mph/18 kph	82,100 lbf 372 kN @ 11 mph/18 kph	100,000 lbf 454 kN @ 10 mph/16 kph	92,700 lbf 420 kN @ 11 mph/18 kph	105,600 lbf 479 kN @ 13 mph/21 kph
Total Length	44 ft 5 in 13.54 m	44 ft 8 in 13.61 m	68 ft 10 in 20.98 m	71 ft 2 in 21.69 m	70 ft 8 in 21.54 m	73 ft 8 in 22.45 m
Width	9 ft 11 1/2 in 2.92 m	10 ft 3 in 3.12 m	10 ft 3 1/8 in 3.13 m	10 ft 3 in 3.12 m	10 ft 2 in 3.10 m	10 ft 3 in 3.12 m
Height	14 ft 6 1/2 in 4.43 m	15 ft 0 in 4.57 m	15 ft 7 1/8 in 4.75 m	15 ft 7.5 in 4.76 m	15 ft 4 in 4.67 m	16 ft 0 in 4.88 m
Loaded weight	245,000 lb 111,100 kg	248,000 lb 112,500 kg	368,000 lb 167,000 kg	386,000 lb 166,900 kg	391,000 lb 177,300 kg	425,000 lb 192,800 kg
Weight per axle	61,300 lb 28 tonnes	62,000 lb 28 tonnes	61,300 lb 28 tonnes	64,300 lb 29 tonnes	65,200 lb 30 tonnes	70,800 lb 32 tonnes
Engine type (all diesel)	567C V12 cyl	645E V12 cyl	645E V16 cyl turbocharged	710G V16 cyl turbocharged	7FDL V16 cyl turbocharged	7FDL V16 cyl turbocharged
Traction motors	D37B (total: four)	D77 (total: four)	D77 (total: six)	D87 (total: six)	752AG / 752AH (total: six)	752AH (total: six)
Fuel Capacity	600 US gal 2,250 lit	600 US gal 2,250 lit	3,200 US gal 12,000 lit	4,400 US gal 16,600 lit	5,000 US gal 19,000 lit	5,000 US gal 19,000 lit

Table courtesy of Jeffery.Whitney@Interres.biz

Here are the environmental rules that are important, based upon a Rail Equipment Finance 2020 rail equipment presentation by NRE experts:

- ☐ If a railroad wants to use remanufactured locomotives
- ☐ Using a post 1973 OEM Switch Engine
- ✓ With a 50% previously used parts, the engine retains its original date of build and requisite EPA Tier Level
- ✓ BUT if refurbished with 25% \geq x < 50% used parts, that locomotive is subject to the Tier 3 EPA standards
- ✓ If refurbished with a < 25% previously used parts, that locomotive is considered freshly manufactured and is subject to the Tier 4 EPA standard

Which railroads have used locomotives in good condition for rebuilding? *Continued on next page:*

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• ~ 1,450 SD 70M type EMD units	Mostly Union Pacific
• ~ 1,800 Dash 9 GE units	Mostly BNSF fleet
• ~ 1,200 Dash 9 GE units	Norfolk Southern fleet
• @ ~ 300 DC2 AC conversions	

Another critical part of an upgrade involves upgrading the traction motors. One of the ways to obtain higher productivity is to replace direct current (DC) traction motors with alternating current (AC) technology. AC traction motors, which have fewer moving parts, improve rail adhesion and reduce wheel slip. Also, AC technology is heat-resistant, and has a much longer service life before failure or repair. The DC-to-AC modernization also usually involves digital technology. This can include upgraded Positive Train Control (PTC) in-cab units and communications modules that connect with a rail company's remote train dispatching centers.

The mid-May outlook for 2020: New locomotive orders will be depressed. It's possible that fewer than 100 new units will be delivered. However, selective rebuilding/modernization will continue, albeit at perhaps a 25% lower rate than budgeted for the year as railroad boards of directors approved Class I capital budgets at year-end 2019.

Remanufacturing costs are about 50% to 60% of the cost of a new locomotive. Those savings are meaningful. The end result is a lower capital recovery cost and an improved operating ratio.

This capital approach supports the return on asset goals of today's Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR) business model: "Save more than one-third of the investment cost."

Here are a few recent rebuild examples:

The BNSF AC44C4M is a GE (now Wabtec) C44-9 rebuilt with AC traction motors. The internal controls are like those of the newer ES44C4, at a lower price.

Norfolk Southern now has about 160 of its [AC44C6M](#), a GE Dash-9 upgraded to AC traction. This program is expected to continue into 2023. But, check the second-quarter NS investment report for an update sometime in July.



Rebuilding a GE (now Wabtec) prime-mover in Forth Worth. William C. Vantuono photo



Independent railway economist, *Railway Age* Contributing Editor and [FreightWaves](#) author Jim Blaze has been in the railroad industry for more than 40 years. Trained in logistics, he served seven years with the Illinois DOT as a Chicago long-range freight planner and almost two years with the USRA technical staff in Washington, D.C.

Jim then spent 21 years with Conrail in cross-functional strategic roles from branch line economics to mergers, IT, logistics, and corporate change. He followed this with 20 years of international consulting at rail engineering firm Zeta-Tech Associated. Jim is a Magna cum Laude Graduate of St Anselm's College with a master's degree from the University of Chicago. Married with six children, he lives outside of Philadelphia. "This column reflects my continued passion for the future of railroading as a competitive industry," says Jim. "Only by occasionally challenging our institutions can we probe for better quality and performance. My opinions are my own, independent of *Railway Age* and *FreightWaves*. As always, contrary business opinions are welcome."



William C. Vantuono photo



Norfolk Southern GE (now Wabtec) Dash-9 conversion to an AC44C6M type from DC to AC in 2015. Photo: Mike Ray



Norfolk Southern AC44C6M, Fort Worth. William C. Vantuono photo

RPCA/Amtrak Conference Call April 24, 2020

Provided by John Goodman



RPCA Members present:

Brad Black
Burt Hermey
Mike Stickel

Amtrak members present:

Mike DeAngelo
Steve Robusto
Beverly Davis
Theresa Smith
Necho Terry

Amtrak does not have any proposed PV moves on the books until mid-June, and only a few through the end of summer.

Amtrak wants the PV business and welcomes movement requests.

Please DO NOT FAX movement requests, as all personnel in the special movements and charter trains are working from home, and have no means to retrieve faxes. Use the email address instead!

All long distance trains are running, albeit with reduced consists. In most cases, locomotives have not been reduced, so consist limitations should not generally pose new access issues for PV's.

Some services, such as Hiawathas, may not be available. Hiawatha service has been converted to bus at least through May.

These changes are very fluid, so please check with your representative for details.

Full service dining has been replaced with simpler options on all long-distance trains for the duration of the COVID19 crisis.

Amtrak's web site has been updated with the new long-term parking agreement, which reduces the term from 6 months to 3 months. Also on the site is the special discounted rate for Los Angeles during the upcoming summer months.

Inspections: The requirement that an inspector can only inspect a car twice in a row before a new inspector must be sought has been waived through the end of the year due to the COVID19 crisis and restrictions on travel.

Burt Hermey

Legislative

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is making more than \$1 billion under the recently enacted Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act available to Amtrak "to support the railroad's activities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the spread of COVID-19) in the U.S. and its impacts on operations and business."

FRA will make or amend existing grants to Amtrak to provide approximately \$1.02 billion: \$492 million for the Northeast Corridor and \$526 million for National Network Grants, as authorized by sections 11101(a) and 11101(b) of the FAST (Fixing America's Surface Transportation) Act, the multimodal surface transportation legislation that provides statutory parameters for FRA's execution and oversight of grant agreements with Amtrak for federal funds appropriated by Congress. At least \$239 million of the CARES Act funds will help mitigate the cost of providing service on Amtrak's 28 State-supported intercity passenger rail routes, where, under PRIIA (Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008), State governments are required to pay for ticket revenue shortfalls. These funds will be used in lieu of any increase in States' payments.



Union Pacific Lays off De Soto Car Shop Employees

By Gordon Bess May 1, 2020



Union Pacific car shops in De Soto Gordon Bess photo

The Union Pacific railroad car shops in De Soto, one of the oldest and largest employers in Jefferson County, informed its hundreds of employees Thursday afternoon (April 30) that they were being laid off, effective immediately but subject to a potential recall on June 1, De Soto City Manager Todd Melkus said.

Melkus said he was unsure exactly how many employees were laid off.

"Don't (hold me to) these numbers, but I know there's 200-300 people that work there," he said. "I would have to guess a lot of them are from the De Soto area, whether they live in the city limits or not. I personally know a lot of people who work there who live within 10 or 15 miles of here and are local people."

Melkus said he received phone call Thursday afternoon from Ben Jones, a company spokesman, who advised him of the move by Union Pacific, whose presence in De Soto dates back to 1872 with the creation of the Iron Mountain railroad machine shops on 55 acres of land donated by the city.

"He (Jones) was just letting me know the situation, and said they were going to be unfortunately laying everybody off, and they were going to review the situation on May 18; and best-case scenario, they'll open back up June 1. But there's no guarantee on that," Melkus

As of this afternoon (May 1), neither Jones nor another company spokesperson could be reached for comment.

Melkus said he pressed Jones about whether UP would make the move permanent and close the shops, which perform maintenance and repairs. "I did flat-out ask him, is this serious enough to where we're talking about, it could go on for a long time, or possibly even shutting down for good, and he said he had not had anyone confirm that with him, from above his main position in management," Melkus said. "They just pretty much said that they're going to revisit it May 18 and see what they can do."

Melkus added that Jones told him of other cost-cutting measures at Union Pacific, which is headquartered in Omaha.

"He said he's having to take a week off a month, unpaid," Melkus said. "So they're definitely cutting costs across the board, but unfortunately it does affect a lot of people in our community, and hopefully this doesn't last very long. But he really didn't have much insight on that. It's kind of a week-by-week situation, it sounds like." *Continued on next page:*

continued from previous page: Although the car shops technically are outside city limits, the city has provided them water, sewer, police and fire protection services for many years and even exempts the company from paying double on water rates as required of non-resident customers by city ordinance. The city has tried twice in recent years (2013 and 2018) to annex the car shops but was unsuccessful both times after legal battles with the De Soto Rural Fire Protection District, which provides fire protection for the shops and in return collects about \$125,000 a year in property taxes.

Last week, Union Pacific reported strong financial results for the first quarter 2020, with net income of \$1.5 billion, \$100 million higher than the first quarter last year. Chief Executive Officer Lance Fritz also reported that the company had achieved "an all time best operating ratio of 59 percent."



Amtrak Daily News Briefs - May 8, 2020 From John Goodman

[Amtrak will Require Passengers to Wear Face Masks Beginning Monday](#)

USA Today

Byline: Rasha Ali

Amtrak is the latest transportation entity to require passengers to wear face masks when traveling to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The rail company announced Thursday that starting Monday, all patrons in stations, on trains and thruway buses (Amtrak's transit buses) will have to wear a face covering that covers their nose and mouth in order to protect customers and employees.

[Amtrak to Require Face Coverings Beginning Next Week](#)

ABC News - Go.com

Amtrak will require passengers to wear face coverings beginning next week. The national railroad service announced Thursday that the new rules will go into effect on Monday.

[Amtrak Requiring Face Masks on Riders Starting Monday in COVID-19 Response](#)

6abc Action News

Amtrak is requiring all riders in stations, on trains, and on thruway buses wear facial coverings beginning Monday. "The safety of Amtrak's customers and employees is our top priority and requiring a facial covering is one more way we can protect everyone," Amtrak President and CEO Bill Flynn said Thursday. "Amtrak continues to operate as an essential service for those who must travel during this public health crisis. Our services will be even more critical as our nation recovers."

[Woman Struck, Killed By Amtrak Train In Fairfield](#)

CBS Sacramento

A woman was struck and killed by a train in Fairfield on Thursday morning, police say. The incident happened around 6:30 a.m. near E. Tabor and Railroad avenues. Fairfield police say an Amtrak train with passengers onboard struck the woman. She was pronounced dead, officers say. Investigators believe the accident was accidental, but exactly what led up to the woman being on the tracks is unclear at this point.

[Travel, Tourism Could Take Years to Recover From COVID-19](#)

The Washington Times

Byline: Deborah Simmons

The roads, seas and skies are less traveled these days, as the travel and tourism industry hear the incredible sucking sound of the global COVID-19 pandemic. No lounging about the white sands of the Mediterranean's largest Island, Sicily, or indulging in the food and beverage of Europe, cultural beckonings of West Africa around Caribbean delights of soca and percussion-driven music.

[Americans More Worried About Reopening Too Quickly Than Not Opening Quickly Enough, Survey Shows](#)

USA Today

Byline: Rebecca Morin

As states around the country begin reopening, a new survey shows the majority of Americans are more worried about social distancing measures being loosened too quickly than are worried about the country not reopening quickly enough. Nearly three out of four Americans — 71% — say they are more concerned by the government lifting social distancing restrictions too quickly, according to a survey from the Democracy Fund + UCLA Nationscape Project. That's more than double the 29% who say they are worried restrictions are not being lifted quickly enough.

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Republicans Not Sold on New Round of Relief Checks

The Hill

Byline: Jordain Carney

Senate Republicans are pouring cold water on including another round of stimulus checks in the next coronavirus relief bill. The record \$2.2 trillion pandemic bill signed into law March 27 mandated one-time payments of \$1,200 for people making up to \$75,000 a year, but most of the checks have already been distributed.

Amtrak Daily News Brief - May 15, 2020 From John Goodman

Amtrak Releases New Train Travel Guidelines as America Begins to Reopen

News 10 ABC - WTEN

Amtrak is reassuring customers by implementing several cleanliness and convenience measures as America gradually reopens to help simplify and safeguard the travel experience. "Now more than ever, we stand ready to play a critical role as our nation recovers. We are doing everything we can to offer vital transportation services in a way that prioritizes employee and customer safety and well-being," said Amtrak President and CEO Bill Flynn

Second Amtrak Train From Twin Cities to Chicago Could be Less Than Two Years Away — if State Agrees to \$10 Million in Bonding

TwinCities.com

Byline: Frederick Melo

An Amtrak train, the Empire Builder, makes a single daily round-trip through the Twin Cities to Chicago. Transit advocates have long advocated for a second train on the same route, a proposal that could now be within two years of becoming reality. Wisconsin has obtained \$12.6 million in federal funding to help pay for the first three years of start-up operating costs for the "Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago Intercity Passenger Rail Service Project," and Amtrak agreed to add \$5 million.

Amtrak Daily News Brief -May 19 2020 From John Goodman

President Trump Taps Normal, Illinois, Mayor to Amtrak Board Following Sen. Durbin's Recommendation

Chicago Sun-Times

Byline: Lynn Sweet

President Donald Trump on Monday tapped Chris Koos, the mayor of downstate Normal, for the Amtrak board of directors, with the move coming after Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., recommended him for the position. Many other Trump nominations have stalled because of ongoing partisan warfare. Having the support of Durbin and Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., means the Senate Democrats will not block his appointment once Trump formally sends his nomination to the Senate for confirmation.

A Lawmaker Wants Fast Trains to Rev Up the US Economy

Wired

Byline: Aarian Marshall

Accuse Representative Seth Moulton of loving trains too much at your peril. Yes, the Massachusetts Democrat worked for a time on a high-speed-rail project in Texas, one that is now finally inching towards a groundbreaking ceremony. He's pressed for a new rail tunnel in Boston. He's a booster for commuter rail. But ask him why he loves trains, and he'll correct you, firmly. "It's not that I just like trains so much," he says. "We should have a transportation system that's balanced and gives people options."

Trump Taps Interim MTA Exec Sarah Feinberg to Join Amtrak Board

New York Post

Byline: Steven Nelson

She's getting back on track. President Trump has tapped MTA transit chief Sarah Feinberg to rejoin the board of Amtrak. Feinberg, 42, has served as the interim president of MTA New York City Transit since March 9. She was previously an MTA board appointee of Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

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Amtrak Daily News Brief - May 22, 2020 From John Goodman

Amtrak to Restore Pennsylvania Service on June 1, 2020

WeAreCentralPA.com

Byline: Bill Shannon

He said a lot of people have shown interest in Letchworth and other nearby parks. Murray said trips on Amtrak trains may also be possible soon. "People later in the summer that want to go out west and see the national parks and travel a little bit, their [Amtrak's] sanitation has really been up to raised to a different level."

Amtrak and PennDOT Collaborate to Restore Pennsylvania Services

Abc 27

PennDOT and Amtrak are partnering to fully restore Pennsylvanian and Keystone train services on modified schedules starting June 1. Modified Keystone services include nine weekday roundtrips and six on weekends. Operations will only be in service throughout Philadelphia and Harrisburg, temporarily halting New York and Philadelphia.

Amtrak Announces Re-opening of Some Pa. Service, with New Safety Guidelines

PennLive.com

As parts of Pennsylvania begin to re-open under Governor Tom Wolf's color-coded plan, so too are some branches of mass transit - but not without precautions. Amtrak has announced that two of its rail lines will be opened once more starting on June 1. The announcement states that the Pennsylvanian (New York - Philadelphia - Pittsburgh) and Keystone (New York - Philadelphia - Harrisburg) services will be restored, though operating on modified schedules.

Amtrak Will Restore Keystone and Pennsylvanian Service on June 1

Fox43

All trains will be reservation only to allow for social distancing, and other COVID-19 safety modifications will be in place, Amtrak said.

Travel Agents Focusing on Helping People Plan U.S. Vacations

RochesterFirst

Byline: Kayla Green

He said a lot of people have shown interest in Letchworth and other nearby parks. Murray said trips on Amtrak trains may also be possible soon. "People later in the summer that want to go out west and see the national parks and travel a little bit, their [Amtrak's] sanitation has really been up to raised to a different level."

Biloxi Man Dies After Being Hit by Train Near Louisiana State Line

WLOX-TV

Byline: Lindsay Knowles

The body of a Biloxi man has been found after he was hit by an Amtrak train Monday while walking on a railway bridge near the Louisiana state line. Lonnie Reynolds, 34, and a woman were walking on the rail trestle around 8:30 a.m. when they were both struck by the train.

Virgin Trains USA Says Florida Rail to Stay Shut for Months

Gary Kazin via groups.io <gkazin@yahoo.com@groups.io> May 21, 2020

(Bloomberg) -- Virgin Trains USA said Wednesday that it won't restart its fledgling railroad service in Florida for months, even as the state begins reopening and mass transit reemerges from the coronavirus shutdown in other parts of the country.

The company, which is backed by private-equity firm Fortress Investment Group and billionaire Richard Branson, suspended its Miami-to-West Palm Beach service in March, shortly before Florida's stay-home order.

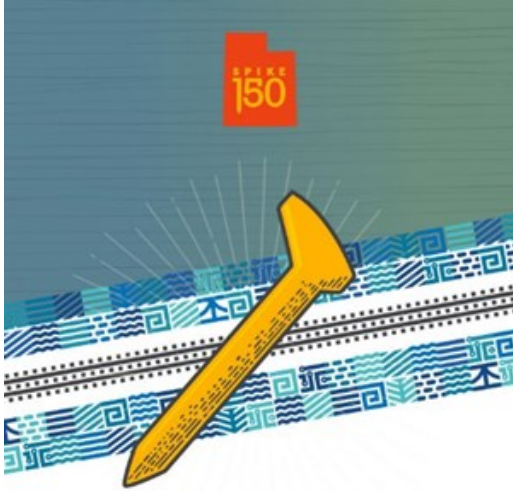
"We do not anticipate resuming operating in the coming months," the company said in a statement.

"It is expected to take a long period of time for service demand to return to pre-virus levels," the company said, citing social distancing guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and work-from-home policies at many U.S. firms.

More: <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/virgin-trains-usa-says-florida-185756831.html>

Can You Believe it's Been a Year?

Sunday, May 10, 2020 from Spike 150 <aimee@spike150.org> provided by John Goodman



One year ago today, on May 10, 2019, people from around the world—18,000 plus—descended on the newly designated Golden Spike National Historical Park to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Golden Spike. It was a celebration punctuated by tributes to the tens of thousands of workers whose dedication, hard work and sacrifices made the completion of the transcontinental railroad a reality. Utah's statewide events last year changed the historical narrative about this iconic and destiny-shaping event that brought together the east and west and forever changed the way goods and people travel.

Last year's celebration reminded us that great things are possible with vision, hard work, dedication, innovation and collaboration.

This year there will be no public anniversary celebration at the Golden Spike National Historical Park. Out of respect for the health of all people, the Park remains closed, and we continue to practice social distancing to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Despite not being able to celebrate side-by-side this year, we still stand together, and the spirit of Spike 150 continues to ring true.

In 1869, railroad workers whose hard work and dedication, despite seemingly impossible terrain and meager work conditions, made the transcontinental railroad a reality. Today front-line workers, whose hard work and tireless dedication to their professions during this pandemic, risk their health for the betterment of all. We extend our unwavering support, respect and gratitude to them all.

Today, as we mark the 151st anniversary of the Golden Spike, our state, the nation and the world are again forever changed.

We invite you to spend a moment to reflect on the lessons brought to light during the 150th anniversary celebration of the transcontinental railroad and watch the 2019 commemorative musical "As One". Also browse Spike 150 pictures that showcase Utah's statewide celebration events. If you are in town, go visit the Golden Spike National Historical Park and see "Distant Thunder." The 3,000 pound bison sculpture was officially installed outside the visitor center on May 7, 2020.



MTM Looking Good - Thanks to You! May 4, 2020

Thanks to Everyone

Last Saturday's work day at MTM was a huge success. We patched up flooring, did carpentry repairs on the Rutledge Depot, started exterior concrete work, and did some yardwork. Thanks to everyone who volunteered and showed up to help. There is a lot of more work to do at the Jackson Street Roundhouse before we reopen to the public. Let's make our building and grounds look better than ever. With your help, we will do it! It was also great to see our shop crew back at work, staying distant, and maintaining our trains. Thanks to you as well!



We need your help again.

This next Saturday, May 9th is another big work day event. We need your help and skills, so please plan to stop by and help. We have masks, gloves, goggles and sanitizer to help you stay COVID-19 free! This week will again focus on carpentry and masonry work, but yard work is al-

Let us know if you can help

Please let Dennis Danich know if you can help this Saturday by emailing him at the link to the right. If weekdays are better for you, please let us know.

On another subject - We need a webmaster!

MTM still needs a volunteer to manage our websites and social media. Please contact Scott Hippert at scott@trainride.org ASAP if you can help. *Continued on next page:*

Continued from previous page:

DONATE

If you can't join us on Saturday, but still want to help, please make a donation to help cover the costs of supplies and equipment to make Jackson Street shine

Dear MTM Friends and Members,

For more than 50 years, the Minnesota Transportation Museum (MTM), a nonprofit, volunteer led organization, has been preserving the history of railroading in our region, and providing you with engaging experiences such as the Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway and the Museum at Jackson Street Roundhouse. Today, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we need your help to preserve the solvency of MTM so it can remain vital for another 50 years.

Like other cultural and historical preservation organizations, MTM has had to shutter the museum for the past two months, and we have delayed our vintage train ride operations until late summer or early fall. This means we have had no earned income for two months, and there is uncertainty about when full operations will resume.

While income is at a standstill, the costs of maintaining our equipment, buildings, and limited staffing continue. We are doing everything possible to reduce expenses, raise grant funds, and to be good stewards of the mission entrusted to us. We are also using this time to engage our incredible volunteers to donate their valuable time and efforts to make improvements on our equipment, buildings and grounds. But we need the help of each of you who enjoys what MTM offers.

This letter is going to over twenty thousand of you who have enjoyed a ride on the Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway, spent time enjoying the stories and collections at the Museum at Jackson Street Roundhouse, and to those of you who have built lasting friendships while serving as crew on our trains. If each of you will give what you are able to support this emergency fund request, it will have a tremendous impact on our ability to continue operations. Please help us to preserve MTM collections and experiences so that you, your families, and future generations can participate as well.

If you enjoy riding the train, if you get excited at the museum, if you have fun serving on a train crew, or if you just love vintage trains, please make a donation today to help preserve the Minnesota Transportation Museum for your post pandemic enjoyment, and for future generations.

To make an online contribution, click on the button at the bottom of this page.

Personal checks can also be sent and made payable to:

Minnesota Transportation Museum Sustainability Fund
193 Pennsylvania Avenue E.
Saint Paul, MN 55106
Best wishes for health and safety,

Scott Hippert
Executive Director

Minnesota Transportation Museum
scott@trainride.org
www.trainride.org



While the LS&M went into receivership in 1875, it completed building a roundhouse on Rice's Point in 1876. The next year The railroad was reorganized as the SP&D. Image Minnesota Historical Society.

May 5, 1861: May 5, 1861: Creation of the Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad

From Chuck Lavallee

On this day in 1861, the charter for the Nebraska & Lake Superior Railroad Company, designed to run from St. Paul to Omaha, was changed to instead create the Lake Superior & Mississippi (LS&M) from St. Paul to the westernmost tip of Lake Superior. Construction of the LS&M—designed as a portage railway to connect the Twin Cities to Jay Cooke's Northern Pacific (NP) railway from the Head of the Lakes to Puget Sound—began in 1863 in St. Paul but was stopped by 1866 due to lack of funds.

In 1867 Cooke became the LS&M's chief investor and construction was revived. Both Duluth and Superior wanted the railroad, knowing that it would bring success to the city in which it terminated. Because St. Louis County helped Duluth come up with more money than Superior, Cooke chose Duluth. Construction from Duluth southward did not begin until 1868.

Starting in downtown Duluth, laborers laid track essentially alongside the St. Louis River to Fond du Lac and on to Thomson. It was in Thomson on August 1, 1870, that the final spike was driven, completing the road. The LS&M failed following the Panic of 1873 and later reformed as the St Paul & Duluth Railroad Which was later swallowed up by the Northern Pacific.



May 06 in Railroad History: EMD FT

From: Joseph Lechner Date: Wed, 06 May 2020

Eighty years ago today, Electro-Motive delivered GM #103, an ABBA lashup of FT freight diesels, to the Western Pacific Railway at Salt Lake City. WP was impressed with the demonstration and ordered three sets. Previously, management had contemplated purchasing ten 4-8-8-4 articulated steam locomotives. Another large western railroad was not so easily impressed. “When you can equal the *Big Boy* up there, come around and we’ll talk business”, said Union Pacific’s president to an Electro-Motive salesman, pointing to a picture of UP’s 7000-hp articulated on the wall.

Richard M. Dilworth, Electro-Motive’s chief engineer who had helped design the FT, was sure that his 5,400-hp diesel could hold its own against the *Big Boy*. Dilworth phoned the railroad official and said, “If you’ll put our four-unit freight locomotive alongside your big boy on that hill out in Utah, we’ll push your big boy so far back into Lionel’s window with the rest of the toys that no one will ever talk about it again.”

EMD sold 555 FT A units and 541 B units, but not a single one to the Union Pacific.

The “F” in FT stood for *fourteen*. Each unit developed 1350 horsepower, but EMD’s publicist rounded up to 1400.

Joseph Lechner

May 10 in Railroad History: DD40X

Sunday, May 10, 2020 from Rick Krenske

From: [Joseph Lechner](#) Date: Sun, 10 May 2020

Horsepower-hungry Union Pacific needed big diesels to replace the last of its 8500-hp gas turbines. UP already owned a fleet of thirty 5000-hp DD35s (built in 1963-1964) but wanted still more muscle. In 1969, Electro-Motive obliged with the 6600-hp **DD40X**. “D” meant four powered axles on each bogie; “X” stood for *experimental*.

With two turbocharged V16 prime movers, the DD40X was the most powerful single-unit diesel-electric ever produced. Its 98-foot-long frame had to be built in Chicago by the John Mohr Company because EMD’s shop was not long enough.

UP dubbed them *Centennials* because they began arriving in time for the Golden Spike 100th anniversary. The first DD40X, UP #6900, rolled into Salt Lake City with the *Gold Spike Limited* on this date in 1969. Over the next two years, UP acquired 46 more of the behemoths.



R: Photo by Nate Beal



The DD40s racked up two million miles apiece before they were retired in the mid-1980s. Union Pacific retained one example (#6936) which it uses in excursion service.

Eleven others have been preserved as static displays, including #6913 at *Museum of the American Railroad* (Frisco TX), #6916 at *Utah State Railroad Museum* (Ogden), #6930 at *Illinois Railway Museum*, and #6944 at *Museum of Transportation* (St. Louis). Action videos of DD40s: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khVD-Q8CxxM>

Joseph Lechner

Amtrak To Return *ACELA* Service On the Northeast Corridor MAY 8, 2020

New safety initiatives will continue to be in effect for customers and employees

WASHINGTON – Beginning June 1, Amtrak is restoring *Acela* service on the Northeast Corridor on a modified schedule in response to anticipated increased demand. Modified service will include the restoration of three weekday *Acela* roundtrips. *Northeast Regional* frequencies will also be increased from eight to 10 roundtrips.

“We are dedicated to doing everything possible to return service safely. We want everyone to feel comfortable as they navigate this new normal,” said Amtrak President and CEO Bill Flynn.

Amtrak continues to take extra steps to sanitize stations and trains. Additional measures include the following:

Facial coverings: As part of Amtrak’s ongoing commitment to protect customers and front-line employees in response to the coronavirus pandemic, Amtrak is requiring that all customers in stations, on trains and thruway buses wear facial coverings. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the use of simple cloth facial coverings or masks to slow the spread of the virus and prevent transmission.

Limiting bookings: To help maintain CDC recommendations for physical distancing onboard trains, we have temporarily reduced Coach, Business, and *Acela* First Class sales to 50% capacity.

Cashless service: As an added measure to ensure the health and safety of our customers and employees, we are temporarily accepting only cashless payments in stations and on trains.

Physical distancing: Signage has been displayed at several of our busiest stations to indicate safe distances in high customer traffic areas such as waiting rooms, in front ticket offices, at the base/top of escalators, lounge entrances, etc. In addition, clear protective barriers have been retrofitted at stations where there are no current glass barriers.

Food and beverage service: We are temporarily offering [Flexible Dining](#) service in the dining or lounge car on all long distance routes (except Auto Train) and encouraging all Sleeping Car customers to select optional room service for their meals. In addition, we are limiting seating in dining and café areas.

While some services were reduced or suspended, Amtrak has and will continue to operate as an essential service as our nation recovers. In addition to the *Acela* and *Northeast Regional*, trains will be restored to service by monitoring demand, working with state partners and continuing to prioritize customer and employee safety.

Tickets are currently for sale and can be found, along with current schedules on [Amtrak.com](#) and through the [Amtrak app](#). Amtrak continues to evaluate current practices and pilot new opportunities to support personal safety. Visit [Amtrak.com](#) for more information about how Amtrak is maintaining a safe environment.

While some services were reduced or suspended, Amtrak has and will continue to operate as an essential service as our nation recovers. In addition to the *Acela* and *Northeast Regional*, trains will be restored to service by monitoring demand, working with state partners and continuing to prioritize customer and employee safety.

Due to Track Work Being Performed by BNSF, Empire Builder Service was Affected as Described Below: Provided by John Goodman May 12, 2020

Effective May 12 - 27, 2020

Monday - Friday, May 12 through 27 (Except May 25)

Train 7 which normally operates between Chicago and Seattle, will terminate at Spokane. Alternate transportation will be provided to the missed station stops of Edmonds, Everett, Leavenworth, Wenatchee and Ephrata.

Bus 3007 will operate from Spokane to Seattle connecting with **Train 7** at Spokane.

Train 8 which normally operates between Seattle and Chicago, will originate at Spokane. Alternate transportation will be provided to the missed station stops of Ephrata, Wenatchee, Leavenworth, Everett and Edmonds.

Bus 3008 will operate from Seattle to Spokane connecting with **Train 8** at Spokane.

There will be no track work Saturdays, Sundays or Monday, May 25.



VIA Rail Extends the Suspension of the Canadian and the Ocean

VIA Rail May 6, 2020

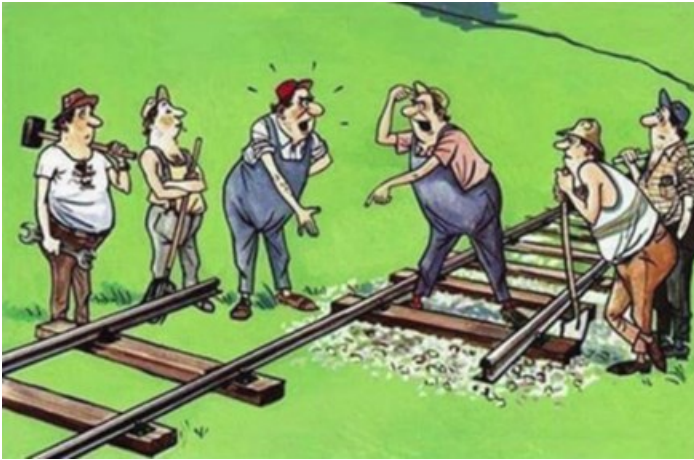
MONTREAL, May 6, 2020 – As the COVID-19 crisis continues to disrupt its passenger services from coast to coast, VIA Rail Canada (VIA Rail) announces the extension of the suspension of the Canadian and the Ocean services, its long-distance routes, and the suspension of the Sleeper class on the Winnipeg-Churchill route until November 1, 2020. While there is still a great deal of uncertainty as to when both domestic and international travel will resume, VIA Rail will continue to assess how it can support the recommendations of the public health authorities in their response to the pandemic and in preparation for the progressive service recovery.

VIA Rail is also accelerating a previously established comprehensive program for the inspection and repair work regarding its Heritage Modernization Program that started in 2018. At that time, the Corporation undertook initiatives to renovate VIA Rail’s HEP equipment which have logged millions of kilometres since being put into service. In the course of recent weeks, some new structural issues have been discovered which will need to be addressed. “As a result, we will be in a position to progressively bring back our renowned long-distance services to full capacity for the upcoming 2021 peak season,” said Cynthia Garneau, President and CEO.

“This was not an easy decision to make but, given the current circumstances, the health and safety of our passengers, crew members and local communities must come first. As the travel industry grapples with the effects of COVID-19, we will use this extended pause to assess and identify

When Truth is Stranger Than Fiction... Tuesday, May 26, 2020 from Rick Krenske

From: [Joseph Lechner](#) Date: Mon, 25 May 2020



Tuesday, June 2, 2020, 11:21 AM, Rick Krenske <rick@usjet.net> wrote:

Scale Model Supplies has been closed due to the unrest in the area BUT today they are back open from 10AM to 4PM.

For the time being, that will be their hours. Bruce will decide on Saturday if he will extend his hours more. Just letting everyone know because he can use your business. You can always check by calling the store at 651-646-7781. Thank-you!

Railfan Events (Thanks to Rick Krenske, Bill Dredge)

None to Report for now			
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Northstar News
1515 Creek Meadow Dr NW
Coon Rapids MN 55433 3768
Address Correction Requested

