

**NRHS**

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

Northstar News

Picnic is a GO! Maiden Rock WI July 18 2020



L1: BN GP20 Freight
leaves Northtown
1987 –Robert Rivard

L2: CB&Q #5632
Galesburg IL Apr 25
1963 –Rich Taylor



R: CRI&P Rocky
Mountain Rocket E6A
Date unknown
-William Brown

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Meeting Notice

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

Next newsletter (August) will be out around August 1, 2020.

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

The Roseville Lutheran Church is closed until Sept 1 2020. Whether we can meet at the church is uncertain if our group can meet at the church in September. The Church Council will make a decision at the end of summer.

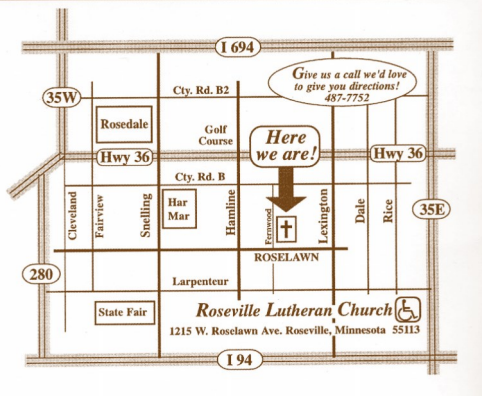
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Meeting Location: From the east or west take MN 36 to Lexington Avenue. Drive south on Lexington Avenue to Roselawn Avenue and turn right. The large lighted parking lot is on your right as you travel west on Roselawn. Use the lower entrance to the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



From the Editor:

Announcement: We plan to have a virtual meeting sometime in early August to determine our railroad trip in August.

The chapter picnic in the park at Maiden Rock WI is on. The chapter will provide NO food or Beverage. Bring your own lunch and beverage. There is a Subway and Quik Trip in Prescott WI. Time is 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The frequency of BNSF Trains due to reduced traffic might be very slim. Your editor has found that mid-day train activity on BNSF is pretty bleak. (most activity is early morning and late afternoon.)

Note from President Bill Dredge, The Hennepin Overland Model Railroad club lost two of it's Board of Directors in May and June 2020. President James Earle Rasmussen Age 72, of Richfield, passed away unexpectedly of natural causes on June 11, 2020 and Vice President John Roban 3/16/1939 - 5/28/2020, Our condolences go out their families and to the Hennepin Overland Railroad Club.

Zoom Meeting Minutes June 20 2020 .

This is truncated since the secretary was late in attending. A transcript of the meeting has not been received by the Secretary. President Bill Dredge called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm (note 15 minutes early) Attendees were Bill Dredge, Richard Tubbesing(late), Russ Isbrandt, Dan Meyer, Roger Meyer, Dawn Holmberg, Frank Wilke, John Goodman, Dave Baniewicz, Joe Fishbein, Wayne Torseth, Mark Quam, Ed Johnson, Roger Libra, Robert Thurn. There is a quorum. Russ Isbrandt gave the Treasures report. The Chapter cash position is much less than last year. John Goodman gave the trip report. It was decided that the picnic will be held in July at Maiden Rock WI. The Chapter will not provide any food or beverage, attendees will have to bring their own lunch and beverages. A trip to the LSRM in August is still a possibility as they will be open. The BOD will decide by the end of July. Other options were discussed, for August and maybe September, but your secretary does not have a transcript. John gave the program report. Dawn Holmberg will present slide show of Dan Meyer and her trip to the 2019 NRHS Convention. Bob Anderson is scheduled for a railroad slide show at the September meeting. Other Program openings for this fall are open. John Goodman and Dawn Holmberg gave the Calendar report. Decision on the 2021 calendar will be made once we get reduced number (350, 400, or 450) of copies estimate from White River Publications on Monday. Dawn will also contact our retail customers to check on how many calendars they will purchase if we publish the calendar. John Goodman gave the Holiday Banquet Report. Guldens is closed and been sold. Other possibilities are Mancini's, JAX café, Golden Corral, Tinucci's and Ed Johnson's Son's restaurant were mentioned. No Library report was done, John Cartwright was absent. Dawn Holmberg and John Goodman gave the NRHS report. No Elections will be held this summer due to the cancellation of the Los Angeles Convention. The NRHS is working on a Convention in Milwaukee WI. Richard Tubbesing gave the Newsletter Report. The last issue was printed with a significant discount by Office Max. The Email distribution had three rejects. *Continued on next page:*

Continued from previous page: Efforts were made to get these recipients by other means their newsletter. There will be a July newsletter and next meeting will be disclosed in that issue.

Meeting was Adjourned at about 7:05 pm. Dawn Holmberg presented an excellent program on Dan Meyer and her trip to the 2019 Convention. Then Richard Tubbesing presented a PowerPoint program on chasing the #4449 to Portland back in October 2009. Respectfully submitted by Secretary Richard Tubbesing

News Bites from the Iron Range: Mega Coal Train

Date: Mon, 01 Jun 2020 16:27:12 PDT

On Saturday BNSF arrived in Superior with a "double" loaded coal train coming off the Brainerd Sub. I recall BN/BNSF talking about (and I think even running a few) super long coal trains a few decades ago but they never became popular as they outstripped siding capacity on much of the route. I'm not sure why this one ran, but here is the scoop:

CDKMSUD0-34A BNSF 9038/8115 & 122 cars, BNSF 9382/4208/6344/9047 & 121 cars, BNSF 9076/6000; total length 13,490 feet and total weight around 34,500 tons (coal weight around 29,650 tons).

Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

Re: Mega Coal Train From: Craig Konopski Date: Wed, 03 Jun 2020 07:11:05 PDT

Interesting indeed. I'm surprised BNSF hasn't tried running this combo traffic earlier, mind you they are the only Class 1 road not adhering to the "PSR" (precision scheduled railroading) model are they not?? Rival UP has been running combo'd unit trains for quite some time [frequently visible on the Kearney (NE) railcam] and both CN and CP have been running combo's up north for at least a couple years now. Up here in Thunder Bay CP occasionally throws a 220-230 car, 30-33000 ton, 12-13000 foot monster "2-1-0" DP or "1-1-1" DP'd grain train off the prairies into the port of T.Bay. Sometimes the empties are also combo'd with a "1-1-0" DP'd 224-car double set! Looks great on paper and might save a few crew starts and fuel, but if something goes wrong watch out! Hope everyone is staying safe & healthy down there! Regards,

Craig Thunder Bay, ON

Verso Duluth

From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Wed, 10 Jun 2020 11:59:55 PDT

Yesterday Verso announced it was indefinitely idling its paper mills in Duluth and Wisconsin Rapids. The Duluth mill will be shuttered by the end of June. This comes after Blandin in Grand Rapids and Sappi in Cloquet announced shut-downs.

Despite the Duluth mill being relatively new (1987), Verso has suggested it might be closed, sold or possibly reopened depending on demand. BNSF switches the mill daily and Verso also trucks product to the port terminal where it is placed into CN boxcars for movement.

This impacts not only paper products by moved rail and truck traffic of raw logs, but also thousands of railroad ties that arrive locally to be chipped and burned at the nearby Minnesota Power Hibbard steam plant that supplies the mill.

Hopefully demand improves or they elect to move ahead with repurposing the mill to make cardboard-type products as was discussed last year.
Dave Schauer

Tilden Restarting

From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Wed, 10 Jun 2020 16:26:18 PDT

From the Duluth News Tribune:

Cleveland-Cliffs is restarting its Tilden Mine in Michigan by the end of June and construction on its hot-briquetted iron plant in Toledo as demand for steel increases, the company announced Tuesday.

The company had stopped construction on the HBI plant in March over COVID-19 guidelines and idled Tilden in April as steel demand dropped during pandemic. Now Cliffs plans on restarting Tilden by the end of this month and has started "remobilizing the workforce to complete" the HBI plant. Both restarts are "earlier than planned," the company said in a news release Tuesday morning.

Cliffs also idled Northshore Mining operations in Babbitt and Silver Bay in April, laying off all but 100 of its 570 employees, with an expected restart in mid-August.

Asked if there were any changes to the Northshore Mining restart day, Cliffs spokesperson Patricia Perisco said: "Currently, we do not have any further updates or changes to the estimated timing for the restart of Northshore Mining."

David Shauer Duluth, MN



Lucky Dock 6 Action

From: Dave Schauer Date: Mon, 15 Jun 2020 18:02:24 PDT

A few weeks ago we were out shooting a nice boat two-fer at Dock 6 with the Manitoulin and Michipicoten both loading. A CN crew was spotting cars on the dock just as a BNSF remote job rolled toward Rices Point with a pair of nice GPs. It is super sweet when everything comes together unexpectedly. June 1, 2020.

<https://www.railpictures.net/photo/739425/> Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

Minntac BFT Running

From: Dave Schauer Date: Mon, 15 Jun 2020 08:01:22 PDT

A train of newer ore cars (NSC style) were loaded at the Minntac rock track yesterday for movement to Duluth. These are limestone cars being loaded with BFT for a back-haul to CN-Hallett Dock 5. Previously the rock had been shipped through Two Harbors Dock 1. BFT is also still being loaded at Largo for Duluth. The low side regular DM&IR ore cars previously in BFT service are now stored at Keenan.

I noticed a difference in BFT sizes (see attached shots). The orange car has BFT (crushed raw taconite rock) loaded at Largo/Thunderbird North while the ore cars have BFT loaded at Minntac. The Largo product is shipped to Indiana Harbor (ArcelorMittal) while the Minntac rock mostly goes to Gary. At first I thought the orange car had ballast, but I don't think that is routed through Hallett Dock 5 where these cars end up. 6/14/2020

Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

Hibtac Idle Extended

From: Dave Schauer Date: Wed, 17 Jun 2020 09:51:21 PDT

The idling of Hibtac has been extended to July 26 with production beginning on August 2. That is a month longer than originally expected. Keetac remains in idle status with a restart unknown. Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

Minntac Restart Earlier

From: Dave Schauer Date: Wed, 24 Jun 2020 09:29:49 PDT

Updated: June 23, 2020 10:27 AM



USW Local 1938 shared some good news for Minntac in Mt. Iron on Tuesday. Union leaders said the company, U.S. Steel, is moving up the restart of production lines 6 and 7 to July, instead of August.

The union says that means maintenance people could be called back to work right after the 4th of July. Still, the union said there's no recall date for the operating personnel.

According to Local 1938, the mine will be getting back to full production sometime in late August. The recall for those workers is still to be determined as well. About 250 hourly people were laid off from the facility back on May 10th, when the company adjusted production levels.

The other U.S. Steel facility, Keetac, remains on indefinite idle.

Also, the U.S. Steel Foundation announced scholarships to 5 students from the Northland. Breena Burgstaler, Devyn Dahl, Kade Laugen, Melissa Nelmark, and Andrew Nelson are receiving money to further their education.

From WDIO Duluth: Restart of production lines moved up to July at Minntac Minntac is restarting production lines in July instead of August. | Photo: WDIO FILE

Updated: June 23, 2020 10:27 AM

https://www.wdio.com/mining-news/mining-minntac-restart-production-employees-united-steelworkers/5769023/?cat=10335&fbclid=IwAR0aMTTrtJootbEeBe466s_8Ud-P0AQUs0ODlmXHT03MmntL1r_cN8YrC9gw Dave Schauer Duluth, MN



Amtrak Service Advisory - Long Distance Trains *June 15, 2020, 09:56:10 PM CDT*

To All Amtrak Employees,

We remain committed to operating a national network that serves our customers across America. However, we need to be smart about how we deliver our service in this market environment. Congress is not going to support us indefinitely to run mostly empty trains. We need to demonstrate that we are using our resources efficiently and responsibly.

Amtrak has made the decision to operate with reduced capacity through FY21. We are planning 32% fewer frequencies on the Northeast Corridor, 24% fewer for our state-supported service and plan to reduce most long-distance trains to three days per week, beginning October 1, 2020.

This is an appropriate response, given the current and near-term market conditions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our ridership has been down by as much as 95% year-over-year. It's climbing back slowly – and it is going to take a long time to return to normal. The demand for our Long Distance service is down by 70%, even as some U.S. states begin to reopen. We expect our systemwide ridership in Fiscal Year 2021 to be only 50% of what it was in 2019.

Low ridership on long-distance trains has significantly increased our operating losses, which already exceeded \$500 million annually on these services before the pandemic. We expect these long-distance frequency reductions will save as much as \$150 million in FY21 vs. the losses that would have been incurred with daily service. These savings are part of our pledge to Congress to reduce costs by \$500 million.

Our goal is to restore daily service on these routes as demand warrants, potentially by the summer of 2021.

We recognize these changes will impact our employees who support the Long Distance Service Line. While we have a broad plan on our FY21 service frequency, we still have work to do to determine how that will impact the employees who support this work. We are sensitive to the uncertainty that this announcement brings to our Long Distance team. We will work quickly to determine what staffing reductions or furloughs will occur, and we will communicate these changes to you as soon as possible.

A few additional points:

The Auto Train is an exception to Amtrak's long-distance reduction plan and will continue its daily operation. The Sunset Limited and the Cardinal are currently tri-weekly and will remain tri-weekly. We expect to run the Silver Meteor four times a week so the stations that are common between it and the Silver Star have daily service.

Amtrak remains concerned about the potential for a second wave of the pandemic in the fall, which could further impact demand across the system. Amtrak is developing specific and measurable metrics to guide our restoration of frequencies and service, and we will share those with you, Congressional staff and other stakeholders.

To ensure all stakeholders understand changes to our service, we will continue to communicate with our union leadership, our state partners, the federal government, the Rail Passengers Association, host railroads, our customers and you.

We appreciate your continued support as we work together to manage Amtrak through this difficult period.

Roger Harris

EVP, Chief Marketing and Revenue Officer



Passenger Rail News

Amtrak Asks Congress for Another \$1.5 Billion in FY2021 *May 25 2020*

Amtrak on May 25th submitted a letter to Congress seeking an additional \$1.475 billion in supplemental funding in fiscal-year 2021 to help the railroad operate minimum service levels and continue capital investments. The funds also would support Amtrak's 17 state partners on the national network and nine commuter and state partners on the Northeast Corridor.

"As the severity and duration of this pandemic and its economic fallout become clearer, we are seeking supplemental funding for the next fiscal year," Amtrak President and Chief Executive Officer Bill Flynn said in the letter.

To help offset the impact of revenue losses during the pandemic, Amtrak has reduced operating costs by about \$500 million, including temporarily reducing train capacity across the system to match demand, restructuring its workforce and controlling discretionary spending, Amtrak officials wrote.

When Amtrak submitted its annual grant request to Congress in February, the railroad was on track to have its first break-even year in the company's history. The railroad's request of \$2.04 billion for the NEC and national network for FY2021 was based on projected needs before the pandemic hit the United States. Since then, Amtrak officials have determined the railroad needs the additional discretionary funds.

"Amtrak now projects that a full-year 50 percent reduction in systemwide revenue is a prudent estimate for FY2021 compared to our original projections for the year," Flynn wrote. "While generating estimates of future demand is incredibly challenging, given the unprecedented nature of our current circumstances and the unknowable trajectory of the pandemic, the data available to us support this assumption."

Amtrak has seen a dramatic decline in demand for service since the pandemic began, and is expecting ridership to return to about 50 percent, or just over 16 million riders, in FY2021, Flynn wrote. "Today, many of our routes are struggling to reach 10 percent of the ridership levels we had only months ago," the letter stated.

Minnesota Streetcar Museum (MSM)

On Friday, June 5, 2020, June 18 2020 - Rick Krenske



After a lengthy restoration, TCRT No. 1239 was dedicated and put into service by the Minnesota Streetcar Museum in 2004.

The motors and trucks weren't prototypical, so refurbishing or replacing has always been a priority. Now, with the motor and truck work on TCRT No. 1300 complete, the time seemed right to proceed. We knew of suitable motors at the Halton County Radial Railway Museum in Toronto. The GE 241-B motors were built by General Electric-Canada and originally installed on Toronto Transportation Commission (TTC) cars delivered in 1922. The photo shows some of these motors sitting in the Museum's yard. A deal was struck and five motors were purchased and delivered to L&S Electric in Minnesota for repair and cleaning. The knowledge our shop crew gained from repairing and refurbishing TCRT No. 1300's trucks is being put to good use on 1239's new trucks.

The trucks that were under 1239 were modified from trucks originally used on Chicago Transit Authority streetcars. Our new trucks will be built "from the ground up" and will be replicas of the trucks that were originally under 1239. All of the major parts are being made based on drawings of the original trucks. Some parts, such as springs and bearings, will be upgraded to take advantage of modern technology and make the trucks more reliable. When the project is completed, we will have a streetcar that is more historically correct and will be more reliable and safer to operate. (photo: Halton County Radial Railway Museum; story: Dick Zawacki)

We bought five 100-year old traction motors from a Canadian rail museum for the new trucks we're fabricating for TCRT No. 1239. The motors had been stored outside for a number of years and didn't look so good (top photo). But just like beauty, rust is only skin deep. We sent the motors to L&S Electric for rebuilding. After disassembly, sandblasting, and fresh paint, the motors look like new. The bigger problem, of course, was electrical performance and mechanical functionality. An electrical check indicated all of our motors had some degree of electrical short circuiting. From being stored outside, water vapor migrated into the spaces in the armature windings creating shorts. Two motors were selected as being in the best condition. They were placed in an oven at about 150 degrees to slowly "bake out" the moisture. This solved the short circuit problems – welcome news because it meant the motors didn't require the expensive, time consuming process of replacing all the armature windings. Next the motors were completely disassembled. Individual components were inspected, cleaned, and needed repairs were made. The armatures were coated with new insulation material to prevent electrical shorts. Then the armatures were rebalanced to ensure smooth rotation. The commutator (the copper part of the armature in the bottom picture) was re-machined to remove any damage or dirt from its surface. The armature shaft was re-machined to remove any defects, make its diameter consistent, and eliminate any wobble as it rotates. Finally, the bearings that support the armature shaft inside the motor housing were repaired or replaced to fit the armature shaft's diameter and ensure smooth rotation. After reassembly, L&S ran each motor for several hours as part of a "break in" period. Then they carried out a number of electrical and functional tests to ensure the motors met their original performance specifications. It was during this testing that one motor exhibited a problem. That problem and its solution will be discussed in a future post. (story: Dick Zawacki)



Rush Line BRT Project Awarded \$1.25 Million for Development Study Along Route

June 24, 2020, 9:34 AM, Rick Krenske

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) last week announced a \$1.25 million competitive grant to support transit-oriented development planning along the [Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit](#) (BRT) route. The grant is the result of strong collaboration between Ramsey County, the Metropolitan Council, FTA and additional local partners. The grant comes from the FTA's Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning, which funds comprehensive planning projects near public transportation that improve access, encourage ridership and spur economic and mixed-use development. The funds will be used for an inclusive planning process with the diverse communities along the Rush Line BRT route to establish a vision for future development near Rush Line BRT stations and determine how communities can implement that vision.

"Locating jobs, housing, education, healthcare and other essential resources near high-quality transit is part of how we enhance quality of life in Ramsey County," said Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County Commissioner and Chair of the Rush Line Corridor Task Force.

"By carefully planning for the future of these station areas, we make the most of the substantial investment in Ramsey County's prosperity that the Rush Line represents." The Rush Line BRT is a future 15-mile transit route with 21 stations between Union Depot in Lowertown Saint Paul and downtown White Bear Lake. The project is led by Ramsey County in partnership with the Federal Transit Administration, the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the cities of Saint Paul, Maplewood, Vadnais Heights, Gem Lake and White Bear Lake, and White Bear Township. The Rush Line BRT project team is currently completing an [Environmental Assessment](#), expected to be published for public comment at the end of 2020. The project is anticipated to be transitioned to the Metropolitan Council in 2021 with construction slated to start in 2024 and service projected to begin in 2026.

"This critical federal support will give residents, businesses and other community members a greater opportunity to shape how the Rush Line BRT will influence development in the areas near stations," said White Bear Lake Mayor and chair of the Rush Line Policy Advisory Committee, Jo Emerson. "Thoughtful development along the Rush Line BRT route can enhance communities and address ongoing challenges like housing affordability and racial disparities in access to jobs, food and other necessities."



Museum and Excursion Trains

RPCA report: June 1 2020

Coronavirus fallout includes tourist railroads cancelling or delaying operations and events. Mt. Rainier and Railroad Logging Museum appears to be the first major heritage operator to call it quits as a result of the pandemic. American Heritage Railways, Inc., says it will close the Mt. Rainier Elbe, Wash., and cease operations there for the foreseeable future. According to reports, since its acquisition in 2016 the railroad has not been profitable and the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the MRRR's forced delayed annual opening also played a factor in this decision.

The Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Depot and Museum has shut down due to lack of visitors. Jackson's Mayor Scott Conger said that the city had been performing cost-benefit analyses of different attractions, and the depot's average attendance was less than 10 a week, at a cost of roughly \$109,000 a year. The closure was in the works before the COVID-19 pandemic. Artifacts will be moved to the Casey Jones Railroad Museum, also in Jackson.

Colorado's Royal Gorge Route Railroad has pushed back its planned reopening from May 23 as it waits for a variance to allow operation to be approved from the state. The tentative reopening date is June 13, The railroad has said it can accommodate up to 300 passengers on a train even with social distancing

Washington's Chehalis-Centralia Railroad & Museum plans to open June 20, in time for Father's Day weekend, and now has tickets on sale. Operations will be reservation-only, and will have reduced capacity of 49 or less.

As tourist-train operations are idled at short line Wisconsin Great Northern Railroad by the COVID-19 pandemic, railroad president Greg Vreeland has kept his entire staff employed, in part by tackling a major track project to improve safety for users of a major trail, as well as rail operations.

VIA Rail Canada has cancelled the summer travel season for its long-distance overnight trains, the Canadian and the Ocean, until at least November 1, 2020. It has suspended Sleeper class on its Winnipeg-Churchill, Man., train until the same date. VIA is using the suspension of service to accelerate an inspection and modernization program for its heritage passenger equipment, and has found structural issues that need to be addressed.

The Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad has received an operating steam locomotive for excursions on a portion of the former Southern Pacific Placerville branch in Northern California. Santa Cruz Portland Cement No. 2, an oil-burning 0-4-0 built by H.K. Porter in 1909, has operated at the Niles Canyon Railway, Roaring Camp Railroads, and Northwest Railway Museum.

Former Norfolk and Western Y6a steam locomotive No. 2156 will soon return home to St. Louis, after spending the past 5 years in Virginia. It has been on loan to the Virginia Museum of Transportation. Discussions were held to potentially extend the five-year loan/lease of the 2156, but the locomotive will be moved in the near future.

Genesee Valley Transportation, parent company of the Delaware-Lackawanna, recently purchased 80-year-old HH660 NIWX 603. The railroad plans on restoring the switcher to its original identity: Delaware, Lackawanna & Western 409 and take it to Scranton, PA. The GVT is home to the largest fleet of Alcos in North America.

Interesting observation on future of Private Railroad cars in [Forbes Magazine](#).



Washout Cuts Durango & Silverton Access to Silverton for Eight to 16 Weeks

Trains News Wire Digest fourth section for June 22: June 22, 2020 -provided by Roger Libra

A washout has cut the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad's access to Silverton **for eight to 16 weeks**, the Durango Herald reports. A log jam on the railroad's bridge at Elk Creek, about five miles from Silverton, forced the creek to overflow and washed out more than 40 feet of the railroad's track. The railroad hopes to begin removing debris this week, but the repair process will be a long one, John Harper, general manager of the railroad's parent company, American Heritage Railways, told the newspaper.

The washout will not affect the shorter trips between Rockwood and Cascade that are set to begin Tuesday [see ["Durango & Silverton to reopen with shorter trips, steam-diesel combinations."](#) News Wire Digest, June 17, 2020], but could delay hoped-for full-length trips or excursions from Silverton to Elk Creek or Needleton.



Amtrak Updates Website, Offers Auto Train Sale June 22 2020 Trains Newswire

Amtrak made significant and long-overdue improvements to its website as of April 1 which help describe and sell sleeping-car space and other premium-fare service. When booked on a computer, photos showing day or night interior accommodations are displayed if a customer selects the room option; on mobile devices they appear as a separate picture.

Given time-consuming screening and community-spread concerns expressed by would-be air travelers, promoting unique privacy attributes of sleeping car travel affords Amtrak an obvious opportunity to grow this high value-per-passenger business as people search for travel alternatives. Amtrak marketing strategists apparently recognize this, as evidenced by [a 20%-off roomette sale](#) good through this Wednesday, June 24, for *Auto Train* travel through August 31.

"Roomettes offer physical distancing in your own clean, private room with comfortable seats by day and sleeping accommodations at night," advised the email to Amtrak Guest Rewards members announcing the sale.

The sale only applies to *Auto Train* — suggesting management has no interest in promoting the accommodations on the overnight trains it plans to cut back.



An auto rack train with BNSF power comes off Indiana Harbor Belt trackage at Blue Island, Ill., on June 7, 2020. Resumption of auto production has helped railroads see an uptick in traffic. TRAINS: David Lassen

Class I Officials say Traffic Shows Early Signs of Recovery

Executives from CN, CSX, KCS, and UP say volume has improved from April lows

By Bill Stephens | June 9, 2020

Railroad volumes are beginning to show signs of early recovery after the sharp downturn that accompanied the coronavirus pandemic, executives from four Class I railroads told an investor conference on Tuesday.

Officials from Canadian National, CSX Transportation, Kansas City Southern, and Union Pacific all said the resumption of North American auto production and its impact on related rail traffic, including auto parts, steel, plastic, and glass, have helped traffic grow slightly week over week.

CN's volumes have shown modest but uneven improvement from week to week. "This tells us that the recovery will be slow, probably choppy, and it will take a while for the improvement in demand to stick," Chief Financial Officer Ghislain Houle says.

CN's traffic bottomed out last month, when revenue ton-miles were down 20% compared to last year. Its June revenue ton-miles are down 17% to date.

Union Pacific, which had expected volume to decline around 25% in the second quarter, now sees traffic coming in at around a 20% decline compared to last year, Chief Financial Officer Jennifer Hamann says.

"As we have moved over the last four weeks or so we have clearly seen what I think at this point in time is the bottom of the volume decline," Foote says. "And we have been inching up week after week after week as we have moved through May and now into June. Clearly the increases are slight but the trend line is promising."

Foote says the economic downturn related to the pandemic is an opportunity for CSX to gain market share by getting more merchandise business from existing customers who also ship by truck from their rail-served facilities.

CSX's improved merchandise service, combined with rates that are lower than trucks, positions the railroad to capture more traffic as customers look to save money, Foote contends.

UP's Hamann echoed those comments. UP has reduced its costs and improved its service thanks to its shift to Precision Scheduled Railroading, Hamann says, which enables the railroad to better compete with trucks.

UP has gained merchandise business in several areas, she says, including shipments of tomato paste, sweeteners, steel pipe, and recycled glass.

Kansas City Southern's volume in May was lower than expected because of the delayed opening of auto assembly plants in Mexico.

But week-over-week volumes rose 13% as of June 6, boosted by the reopening of all but two of the assembly plants the railway serves in Mexico. The remaining two plants are scheduled to open next week.

"We believe that we've bottomed out and we're seeing an upward reflection in volumes," KCS Chief Marketing Officer Mike Naatz says.

Naatz says he expects the volume trend to continue but weekly volume may move up and down a bit as the economy recovers. Mexico, he notes, is a month or so behind the United States on the pandemic curve, which could potentially disrupt volumes.

Overall U.S. rail volume was down 20% in May.

The executives spoke at the Deutsche Bank 2020 Global Industrials & Materials Summit webcast.

AAPRCO Mid-Month Highlights



VOL. 8 ISSUE 6 June 2020 Provided by John Goodman

Washington Update By Ross Capon

Amtrak Proposes Less-than-daily Service for Long-distance Trains. Amtrak deserves credit for maintaining all departures on its long-distance trains through the worst of the pandemic, save for a temporary interruption west of Denver caused by a virus-related crew shortage. The long-distance trains fared better in April (85% ridership reduction from April 2019) than did the NEC (98%) and state-supported services (95%).

However, for FY 2021 that begins October 1, 2020, Amtrak in an unprecedented move now proposes "less-than-daily service" on all long-distance routes except Auto Train even if Congress approves a \$1.475 billion supplemental plus Amtrak's base request of \$2.040 billion for a total \$3.515 billion. As written, this even includes "reduced service" for Cardinal and Sunset Limited although these routes already are tri-weekly. This proposal comes in spite of the just-noted ridership pattern, the anticipated recovery, and even though sleeping cars still can be sold at capacity whereas coaches only at half capacity.

Amtrak's May 25 letter to Congress states, "As demand returns to pre-COVID levels, we would expect to restore frequencies for both our Long Distance and NEC service, subject to adequate funding." However, imposing less-than-daily service on connecting routes would drive ridership still lower and inhibit the return of demand "to pre-COVID levels." Roughly 30% of long-distance passengers change trains; the network effect means loss of reasonable connections would further reduce ridership and revenue. As well, Amtrak and/or the host railroads might impose cost demands that make "adequate funding" unlikely, possibly including heavy expense to restore surplussed equipment not maintained during the reduced-service period.

AAPRCO has been making the case that a return to PV policies that existed at the start of 2018 would enhance Amtrak's revenues. This seems even more relevant now, when Amtrak and all businesses are desperate to maximize revenues. *Continued on next page:*

Continued from previous page: Here is one way to address your legislators. Feel free to adjust the wording to reflect your own style, and add personal stories and insights that strengthen the case:

"It is good that Amtrak maintained long-distance departures through the worst of the pandemic. I support Amtrak's latest supplemental request, but urge that Congress, as you did in 2018 for the Southwest Chief, require Amtrak to maintain existing service frequencies on all long-distance routes. When Amtrak tried less-than-daily service in the 1990s, revenue losses were greater and cost savings less than projected. If Amtrak can show it needs a larger supplemental, I would support that, but it is concerning that Amtrak's supplemental request has just 10% designated for long-distance trains; the question of how much should go to the Northeast Corridor needs close examination. Amtrak is, after all, our national passenger railroad."

All U.S. legislators can be reached via Congress.gov which has easy links to web pages where you can send messages. Contact Ross Capon at rcapon3@gmail.com or 301-385-6438 (text or voice) for more details on the above subject matter or for assistance with Congressional contacts.

Historical Notes: In the run-up to Amtrak's creation, all the less-than-daily services were conceived as pathways for railroads to exit the passenger business. There was one exception. Illinois Central's Chicago-Miami *City of Miami* ran every other day, alternating with the Louisville-Florida South Wind (a Chicago-Florida train on a different route which, at the end courtesy of Penn Central, required change of train in Louisville). Today's Sunset Limited went tri-weekly pre-Amtrak after the National Association of Railroad Passengers under Anthony Haswell agreed to withhold criticism in return for Southern Pacific restoring sleeping cars and diner service to a train that had become coach-and-automat-car-only. They even added a New York-Los Angeles sleeper. And Amtrak's Cardinal after a brief discontinuance was restored in early 1982 as the result of an appropriations law. The Sunset has been tri-weekly for 50 years and the Cardinal for 38 years and have minimal interconnections with each other.

At Amtrak's start in 1971, the railroad provided just tri-weekly service on the Coast Starlight north of Oakland and the California Zephyr west of Denver. In the summer of 1973, Amtrak made those segments daily. This was planned to be summer only, but was so successful in building ridership that daily service was made permanent. Those two trains, of course, have been well patronized for over 45 years.

In the mid-1990s, Amtrak experimented unsuccessfully with less-than-daily service on several routes. The [GAO reported](#) Amtrak's explanation that passengers did not adjust their travel days as planners had hoped, and less-than-daily service "caused less efficient usage of equipment and other unforeseen problems" (p. 13/computer p. 15). Similarly, Amtrak President George Warrington, in September 26, 2000, Senate Commerce testimony, [Senate Commerce Testimony](#) said less-than-daily service "ended up costing [Amtrak] more in lost revenue than we were able to take out in the way of expenses, given the fixed cost nature of the operation" (p. 99, computer p. 103).

New Amtrak Board Nominees May Presage Senate Confirmations, At Last! President Trump for the first time has nominated his first Democrats to the Amtrak Board. This means he is likely to get at least four nominees confirmed - both Democrats and at least two of three Republican nominees. There may be a fourth Republican nominee. The White House on May 7 announced its intention to renominate Todd Rokita, former Republican representative from Indiana. However, as of June 1 this nomination had not appeared on Congress.gov and Rokita is seeking the Republican [nomination](#) for Indiana Attorney General. That nominee will be chosen June 20. The President did renominate the three other Republicans; the Senate Commerce Committee approved them May 20 on these party-line votes: Leon A. (Lynn) Westmoreland (14-12), Joseph Ryan Gruters (13-12) and Rick A. Dearborn (14-12).

The new nominees are Sarah Feinberg, who served President Obama as Federal Railroad Administrator, and Chris Koos, mayor of Normal, Illinois, since 2003. Feinberg and Koos would succeed Yvonne Brathwaite Burke and Thomas Carper, respectively, both of whose terms expired (like all other board members except Chairman Coscia) and who serve until their successors are confirmed.

Koos is no stranger to Amtrak issues. He is on the Advisory Board of Transportation for America, the organization led by former Meridian Mayor John Robert Smith, one of the nation's most prominent Republican supporters of Amtrak's long-distance trains. Smith and Koos founded the Amtrak Mayors Advisory Council. Koos was a big participant in NARP/RPA's first Summer by Rail intern tour and has received an award from that organization. The White House news release says Koos also is "a member of the Uptown Normal Business Association, and, since 1979, has served as the owner and operator of the retail specialty stores Vitesse Cycle Shop and Often Running. During his tenure as Mayor of Normal, development in the Central Business District has included a Multimodal Transportation Center/City Hall, the Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, the Hyatt Place Hotel, the Children's Discovery Museum, and other major multi-use construction. Mr. Koos is a Bloomington-Normal, Illinois, native and attended Illinois State University." [Click here](#) for the Mayor's July 14, 2016, testimony before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee that former Rep. John Mica (R-FL) chaired after he was term-limited off the T&I chairmanship; the ranking member was Rep. (now Senator) Tammy Duckworth (D-IL). Koos dwelt at length on the transportation center ("key to our Uptown Normal master plan") and its positive impact on the city. From his testimony, "Normal's location between the two mega-regions of Chicago and St. Louis benefits immensely from having a passenger rail station served by the Lincoln Service - a four daily round trip state-supported service - and Amtrak's Texas Eagle long-distance service."

The White House said "Sarah E. Feinberg currently serves as the Interim President of New York City Transit. Ms. Feinberg previously served as [head of FRA] and Chief of Staff to the former Secretary of Transportation. Earlier in her career, Ms. Feinberg served as Director of Policy Communications at Facebook and Director of Global Communications and Business Strategy at Bloomberg L.P. Ms. Feinberg is the founder of Feinberg Strategies, LLC, and received her B.A. from Washington and Lee University."

Amtrak Stars in HBO Series. The HBO series, ["Run"](#) features Amtrak's Lake Shore Limited and Southwest Chief and a trip from New York to Los Angeles albeit interrupted by a "jump" presumably from the Chief. A friend who has watched it and ridden plenty of long-distance trains tells me the show reflects first-hand knowledge of riding those trains. My favorite quote from the synopsis [Episode 5, "Jump"]: "Billy and Ruby try to cover their tracks and return to the nearest train station. They are given a ride by Laurel, a friendly taxidermist..."



Branson Scenic Railway's Approach to COVID-19

by Alan A Kamp June 1 2020

Developing employee and operating procedures that include requirements and provisions for the COVID-19 virus is best done after studying and investigating many sources of information including the CARES Act Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). To that end, Branson Scenic Railway (BSR) watched and participated in numerous webinars and zoom meetings and reviewed information available on line or in conversations with others. These aids included:

Information from County and State Health agencies

The FRA regarding reporting employee illness

Regional Employer Assistance Companies

Insurance Brokers and Companies

Rail Events (Agent for The Polar Express)

Dynamic Ticket Solutions (A tourist railroad ticketing company that has been hosting weekly webinars with panelists that have specific industry insight. You may watch these webinars by registering at the website dynamicticketsolutions.com)

Various Branson business owners and operators and RPCA members
BSR's evolution from opening the season in early March until now has been careful and deliberate. After opening in March with fairly good passenger counts and already implementing enhanced cleaning procedures, we were quickly realizing that continuing to operate would not be in the best interest of public health. About the time we were planning to shut down, the City of Branson passed an ordinance that shut down all non-essential business until May 15. This was followed shortly by a similar State directive. Then because of improving COVID-19 case load, the State of Missouri revised its directive and Branson passed a new ordinance allowing reopening in early May with certain restricted group size and social distancing. At first BSR was going to reopen May 20, hoping for a Memorial Day bump, but later decided to wait until June 3 which is more consistent with other Branson venues and public health guidelines. Also, the Missouri State guidelines expire on May 31 and although new guidelines are expected, they may be less restrictive.

Since mechanical work is considered essential, BSR was able to continue servicing the train and in fact completed many small projects. Therefore the train was ready to go at any time. Plastic shields were installed at the ticket windows, at the gift shop checkout and in the food service area on the train.

Signage is being put in place to assist passengers with social distancing, limiting the number of people from the same group in the depot and station we are not liable for COVID-19. Information was also posted for employees regarding their rights and responsibilities under unemployment compensation and CARES PPP. Employee recall timing was communicated to employees.

BSR prepared written employee procedures and trained employees to these new procedures which include provisions for taking temperatures daily; washing/sanitizing hands and wearing gloves; staying home if ill; wearing face masks; social distancing; limiting train capacity; boarding and departure procedures to help maintain social distancing; cleaning of the depot, train, boarding areas and grounds; and using a daily disinfectant spray/fogger.

Since Branson is a tourist destination, we hope people are ready to resume traveling and riding the Branson Scenic Railway train. And we also need to be nimble for making changes as new information becomes available and regulations are modified.

Branson Scenic Railway's Approach to COVID-19 by Alan A Kamp

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FRA/OSHA

COVID-19 contracted in the workplace is an OSHA recordable which prompted the question to our host railroad if COVID-19 was a FRA reportable. Short answer is yes, FRA has exerted jurisdiction, but as you can see they acknowledge that establishing transmission at work can be difficult. Per Mike Lundell, FRA has suggested in separate calls that there will need to be some reasonable connection to work, i.e. extended contact (20 minutes or more) with prolonged exposure of less than 6 feet."

Alan A. Kamp



Amtrak Cutting Service October 1

June 18, 2020, 10:06 AM, Rick Krenske

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Amtrak will cut service later this year on most of its long-distance routes nationwide to three times a week instead of the current daily service because ridership has fallen significantly during the coronavirus pandemic.

Amtrak spokeswoman Kimberly Woods said Wednesday that the cuts will take effect Oct. 1 and remain in place until at least the summer of 2021, but daily service could be restored if demand improves along its long-distance routes.

Jim Mathews, president and chief executive of the Rail Passengers Association advocacy group, said he thinks the cuts are short-sighted and will hurt long-term demand for these routes.

"The long-distance services declined the least among Amtrak's three business lines during the coronavirus-induced slowdown, and its services remain essential to the hundreds of small communities across the United States with fewer options than Philadelphia or Boston or New York City," Mathews said.

The train routes being cut to three days a week include the California Zephyr, Capitol Limited, City of New Orleans, Coast Starlight, Crescent, Empire Builder, Lake Shore Limited, Palmetto, Southwest Chief, and Texas Eagle. The Sunset Limited and Cardinal trains already operate three times a week.

Amtrak said its Auto Train, which runs from the Washington, D.C., suburbs to the Orlando, Florida, area, is the only long-distance route that will continue to operate daily.



Former Chicago, South Shore & South Bend car No. 13, left, and Sheboygan Light Power & Railway No. 26 are posed in East Troy, Wis., for a nighttime photo shoot in 2017. The tourist railroad is re-opening to the public with extra health safety measures on May 29.

Wisconsin Electric Tourist Railroad Re-opens May 29

East Troy Electric Railroad resumes service with cashless ticketing, safety measures.

May 29, 2020 Trains Newswire -provided by Rick Krenske

EAST TROY, Wis. — The East Troy Railroad Museum announces that it will open its 2020 regular season on Friday, May 29th. Trains will depart East Troy at 10 a.m., Noon and 2 p.m. each Friday and Sunday and at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., Noon, 1 p.m., 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. on Saturdays. Social distancing signage will allow for safer boarding. All the volunteers at the railroad will be wearing masks and the railroad will require that our visitors wear masks while riding our trains. Masks will also be for sale in our East Troy Depot.

"We have taken extra time to plan a thoughtful reopening strategy," said Ryan Jonas, President of the East Troy Railroad Museum. "It's crucial that everyone take an active role in maintaining each other's safety."

"We will also be selling and scanning tickets electronically," Jonas said, "so there should be no need for anyone to exchange cash. We have replaced all our bathroom toilets and faucets with 'touch-less' equipment and will have hand sanitizers available in convenient locations in the depot and on the station platforms."

You must purchase tickets ahead of your visit to assure a place on one of our trains, so please go to www.easttroyrr.org/tickets. You will be able to select the date and time you plan to visit, the number of adult, child or senior tickets that you need, purchase the tickets using a major credit card and then print the tickets at home.

As an alternative, you may show the bar code from the tickets on your cell phone when you arrive to board one of our trains. Please note that only this weekend's trains are shown on the ticketing site. We will be adding additional dates in the days ahead.

Continued on next page:

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Dinner Train Update

Dining service will look a bit different this year, as we don't feel it is safe to operate our dining cars with sealed windows and recirculating air. This does not mean we are canceling, only that our dining services team is brainstorming creative ways to still provide a train ride "coupled" with a great meal. More details will be shared when finalized.

About us:

The East Troy Railroad Museum operates 14-mile round trip train rides from its historic East Troy depot and museum to Indianhead Park in Mukwonago, Wis., with a stop at the popular Elegant Farmer store and deli. We are celebrating 113 years of riding the rails through southeast Wisconsin's countryside. Our not-for-profit museum is operated, maintained and managed by over 130 volunteers dedicated to engaging visitors in the heritage of electric interurban railways and trolley systems through restoration, preservation and operation of historic equipment.



www.allaboardmn.org June 15 2020

We are so close, lets get the 2nd Twin Cities to Chicago Train, out of the station!

We are all shocked and saddened by the recent events surrounding George Floyd and hope the state and country can heal. We hope you are all safe.

The Minnesota Legislature is continuing to move forward on June 12 for a special session, however, and that could include finalizing the bonding bill. We know the **Governor and House bonding proposals included \$10M for the second Twin Cities to Chicago train.** A huge win for all of us! Additionally, *The Federal Railroad Administration and Amtrak have rated this new train as a top priority.*

We understand that negotiations are going on right now, especially for the transportation portion of the bill. This is the time to contact our champions, the Governor and Rep Frank Hornstein, reminding them of how much we need the new Twin Cities - Chicago service. However, with so many priorities this year, and the bonding bill amount likely to be smaller than what the Governor or House proposed, *funding for our new train is not guaranteed.*

Make your voice heard - to fund this new and needed service! Please contact the Governor and Frank Hornstein today.

Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan

Staffed office hours are: Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

Telephone Numbers

Telephone: 651-201-3400

Toll Free: 800-657-3717

E-mail - Contact Web Page: <https://mn.gov/governor/contact/>

Rep. Frank Hornstein, Transportation Finance and Policy Chair

Telephone - 651-296-9281

E-Mail - rep.frank.hornstein@house.mn

Some key points to make in your call or email - personalize with your own reason, copy and paste bullets 2-4 if you wish, or add others. More information is on our site, see link below-

Tell them why more passenger rail service is important to you, family, and friends (any of these reasons could be greater mobility, you don't want to drive or fly, convenience, cost, etc.)

Wisconsin is moving forward to fund more rail service, to enable the second train between the Twin Cities and Chicago, with station and track work, Minnesota needs to do the same

The second train alone would reduce car trips by 15M, and generate economic returns eight to ten times Minnesota's spending on the service

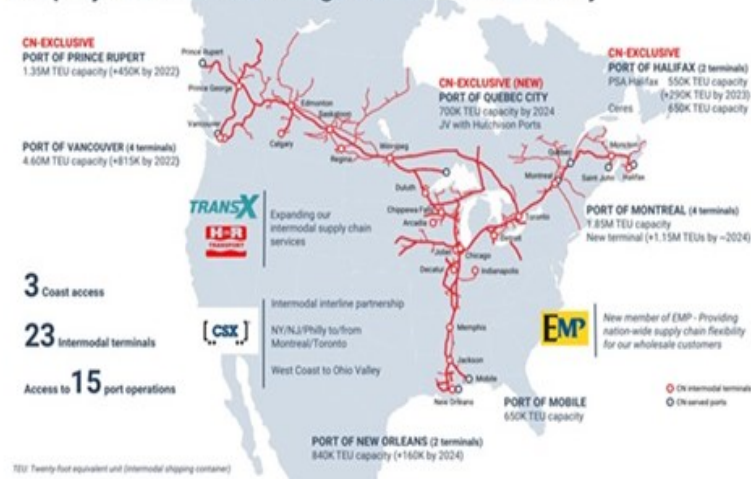
Allow the state to qualify for Federal Matching grants which would cover approximately 70-80% of the capital and operating costs

(all statistics cited above are from MnDOT, Rail Passengers Association, and All Aboard Minnesota)

For more information - we have a page on our website that includes all the materials we promoted at our Rally at the State Capitol in March -

[Click Here to View](#)

Uniquely Positioned to Leverage the Consumer Economy



CN Sees Growth Tied to Intermodal, Consumers

By Bill Stephens | June 17, 2020

MONTREAL — Canadian National will be ready to take advantage of economic changes that have been accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic, CEO JJ Ruest told an investor conference today.

Ruest paraphrased hockey great Wayne Gretzky, saying that CN wants to head where the puck will be rather than where the puck is today. And that means ensuring the railway can reach more consumers through expanded intermodal service as the North American economy becomes less tied to manufacturing that supports carload and unit train commodities.

“Where the puck will be next is going to be increasingly toward the consumer economy,” Ruest says. “At the same time, when we look three, five, 10 years out, other historical segments of the rail industry in North America — like thermal coal for export, like thermal coal for making domestic electricity, crude by rail — they ... are likely to shrink and likely to be less important to our future in the rail industry,” Ruest says.

The COVID-19 pandemic is accelerating trends that were already under way, Ruest says, including a shift of manufacturing out of China and into lower-cost countries in Southeast Asia, the rise of e-commerce, and more automation in many industries.

CN wants to become a bigger player in moving goods to consumers in the U.S. Midwest, Ontario, and Quebec. To do so, CN will use its unique three-coast network — with ports on the Pacific, Atlantic, and Gulf coasts — to take advantage of shifting global trade patterns.

Ruest says CN’s partnerships with ports in Eastern Canada, including Halifax, Nova Scotia, Quebec City, and Montreal, will help the railway handle more international intermodal business that comes to North America from Southeast Asia via the Suez Canal.

Container terminal expansions and modernization projects are under way at Halifax and Montreal, and CN is among the partners building a new automated container port at Quebec City due to open in 2024. CN hopes the ports can snare some of the container traffic currently handled at the Port of New York and New Jersey, Ruest says.

An intermodal terminal expansion also is under way at the Port of New Orleans, allowing CN to capture more container traffic moving from Asia to the Gulf Coast via the Panama Canal. And container terminal expansions are under way at the British Columbia ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert, which in recent years have won market share from U.S. West Coast ports, a trend Ruest expects to continue.

CN also aims continued expansion of its domestic intermodal service, like it did with the acquisition of two Canadian trucking companies that specialize in temperature-controlled food shipments. CN also last year joined the EMP container pool, extending its intermodal reach to more locations in the U.S. And it launched short-haul interline service with CSX Transportation linking Philadelphia and New Jersey with Toronto and Montreal.

Ruest participated in a webcast with TD Securities analyst Cherilyn Radbourne.



NS Confirms Idling of Hump at Bellevue yard

By Bill Stephens | June 17, 2020

NORFOLK, Va. — Norfolk Southern has confirmed that it has idled the hump at Moorman Yard in Bellevue, Ohio, and is converting the largest classification yard in the East to a flat-switching facility. “Due to declining car volumes, NS will..

NORFOLK, Va. — Norfolk Southern has confirmed that it has idled the hump at Moorman Yard in Bellevue, Ohio, and is converting the largest classification yard in the East to a flat-switching facility.

“Due to declining car volumes, NS will idle the yard’s hump and begin flat switching rail cars. This alteration will allow for greater efficiencies and customer service that achieves the goals set forth in the company’s strategic plan,” railroad spokesman Jeff DeGraff says.

“While NS has been implementing strategic changes system-wide since November 2018, the business disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the need for this transition to compensate for lower car volumes.”

The railroad’s merchandise traffic volume is down 32% in the second quarter to date.

NS did not specify how many jobs will be lost at Bellevue.

“NS appreciates the hard work and commitment of all of the men and women on the Thoroughbred Team, which makes these decisions particularly difficult,” DeGraff says. “Furloughed employees may have the opportunity to apply for positions, as available, elsewhere on the NS system.”

Earlier this month, Chief Marketing Officer Alan Shaw told customers that the railroad would be modifying operations at Bellevue. [See ["Changes coming to NS yard in Bellevue, Ohio."](#) *Trains News Wire*, June 6, 2020.]

Bellevue is the second-largest classification yard in North America, trailing only Union Pacific’s Bailey Yard in North Platte, Neb.

The yard, opened by Norfolk & Western in 1967 following its acquisition of the Nickel Plate and Wabash three years earlier, in 2014 underwent a \$160 million expansion that doubled its capacity. The project involved adding a second hump track and a classification bowl with 38 tracks, boosting its maximum daily classification to 3,600 cars from 1,800.

Bellevue becomes the fourth hump NS has idled as part of its shift to Precision Scheduled Railroading. The others are Linwood, N.C., Sheffield, Ala., and Allentown, Pa.

Union Pacific and CSX Vie for Operating Ratio Bragging Rights



*Posted by Bill Stephens
on Tuesday, June 9, 2020*

Lately Union Pacific executives have been touting the railroad's industry-leading 59% first quarter operating ratio. CSX Transportation, meanwhile, noted that its 58.7% operating ratio set a Class I first quarter record. Wait, you say. How can UP's operating ratio be an industry best when CSX's is lower? Well it turns out that the Class I railroads don't calculate their operating ratios in exactly the same way. So it's an apples vs. oranges comparison.

The operating ratio, a key measure of railroad efficiency, is determined by dividing operating expenses by operating revenue. Where the railroads diverge is on whether their calculations also include gains from things like real estate sales.

UP, BNSF Railway, and Canadian National calculate their operating ratios using purely the cash generated from operating their railroads. CSX, Canadian Pacific, and Norfolk Southern, on the other hand, also include gains from selling off property.



Who is in the lead? Union Pacific and CSX Transportation locomotives power an intermodal train out of the Port of Long Beach, Calif., in 2017. TRAINS: David Lassen

The railroads are upfront about this in their financial statements. They're also consistent about the way they report it. And there's nothing improper about including the impact of real estate gains. In fact, the Wall Street analysts I've spoken with don't even bat an eye over the different ways of calculating the industry's single most-watched financial metric.

"Real estate sales are lumpy but a regular part of business," independent analyst Anthony B. Hatch points out. "And remember if they include them when they happen they don't include them when they don't."

True enough. But this is a bit like if the National League calculated batting average one way and the American League used a slightly different formula. How would you crown the batting champ? This is why you can have two Class I railroads saying they have the industry's best operating ratio.

When you crunch CSX's numbers without the impact of real estate gains, its first quarter operating ratio rises to 59.3%. And, on an apples-to-apples basis, that's enough to give bragging rights to UP.

But I wouldn't put much weight on a quarterly operating ratio – or a quarterly anything, for that matter. A three-month look at a railroad is merely a snapshot in time. It's longer-term trends that are important, and the operating ratio should be just one figure among many used to compare railroads.

You can reach Bill Stephens at bybillstephens@gmail.com and follow him on twitter [@bybillstephens](https://twitter.com/bybillstephens)



Rail Contractors Give Surface Transportation Bill Mixed Reviews

News Wire Digest second section for June 22: San Francisco Muni revamps light rail service for restart; few rail projects among latest DOT grants June 22, 2020

NRC expresses mixed emotions on House transportation bill

The National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association has [issued a statement](#) indicating mixed emotions over H.R. 2, the “INVEST in America Act,” the transportation bill passed Friday by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. In the statement, the NRC says it supports efforts to have a surface transportation bill enacted before the Sept. 30, 2020, expiration of the current FAST Act, because the lack of a bill “will undoubtedly create difficulties for all transportation stakeholders and hinder efficiencies.” It is also encouraged by the bill’s proposed funding levels, including \$60 billion for rail projects [see [“House committee releases new five-year transportation legislation.”](#)

Trains News Wire, June 3, 2020.] However, the organization says it has major concerns over labor provisions it says would require railroads to keep some work in-house or could be contracted out under collective bargaining agreements. “These provisions would increase costs and reduce flexibility for states, commuter and passenger rail authorities, and would make it harder to initiate or expand rail service, especially in an era of limited resources,” the statement says. It also says it shares freight railroads’ concerns over certain regulatory requirements, which led the Association of American Railroads to voice a negative opinion of the bill [see [“AAR pans House transportation proposal.”](#) *News Wire Digest*, June 4, 2020].

Muni light rail to see significant revamp when service returns

San Francisco’s Muni is [redrawing its light rail map](#) in anticipation of the resumption of service in August. SFGate.com reports the K and L lines will be combined and will no longer use the subway portion of the system, while J line will also avoid the subway by terminating at Market Street. The M and T lines will also be combined. Full details, including a map of the new system, are available [at the Muni website](#).

Few rail projects among latest DOT grant announcements

A handful of rail-related projects were among the 20 in 20 states announced Friday as recipients of \$906 million in grants under the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Infrastructure for Rebuilding America program. While the vast majority of projects involve highways, projects with a rail component or potential rail benefits include

- Texas: \$79.4 million to the Port of Houston Authority to strengthen 2,700 linear feet of wharf and upgrade 84 acres of yard space at the Barbour Cut Container Terminal.
- Wisconsin: \$6.75 to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to complete rehabilitation of the Wisconsin & Southern’s Merrimac Bridge over Lake Wisconsin, about 15 miles southwest of Portage, Wis., to accommodate 286,000-pound railcars.

Oklahoma: \$6.1 million to the City of Tulsa-Rogers County Port Authority to upgrade an industrial park in Inola, Okla., with new structures and a 3-mile rail spur connecting the park to a freight main line.

Congress will have 60 days to review the proposed awards, after which DOT is free to begin obligating funds. The full list of projects is available [here](#)

Black Bear Spotted in Union Depot Parking Garage in St. Paul, Minnesota

Published 2 days ago Updated 1 day ago St. Paul FOX 9 June 18 2020



Black bear spotted in Union Depot parking garage in St. Paul, Minnesota

A black bear wandered into the parking garage at the Union Depot in St. Paul, Minnesota Wednesday night. Surveillance video captured footage of the bear.

Union Depot said the bear has since moved out of the city.

Black bears are not commonly seen in this part of Minnesota, although the Department of Natural Resources says their range has been slowly expanding southward and westward.



Transit, Commuter Rail Service to Resume Wednesday in Twin Cities, Chicago (updated) Twin Cities Light Rail Still Shut Down; Metra to run Sunday Schedule on Most Lines *June 2, 2020*

Transit cancellations in the wake of protests and civil unrest in Minneapolis-St. Paul and Chicago are easing, with at least some operations planned for Wednesday.

Metro Transit in Minneapolis-St. Paul will resume bus service and Northstar commuter rail service Wednesday at 4 a.m. Light rail remains on hold as damage is repaired; it could resume Thursday.

In a statement on the agency's website, general manager Wes Kooistra said Metro Transit was aware that the suspension of service because of the civil unrest "had the consequence of depriving people access to places they need to go," and that "many of the neighborhoods that rely heavily on transit are also those that were hardest hit by these events. People who use transit to secure groceries and medicine, to get to their jobs, or to make other essential trips suffered twin impacts -- the loss of neighborhood businesses and services they rely on and the experience of being stranded because transit was unavailable.

"We are working as fast as we can to get service back on the street. Our staff is assessing damage to our infrastructure and facilities, making repairs, and developing necessary detours."

In Chicago, after a two-day shutdown, Metra service will resume on most lines on a modified Sunday schedule. The SouthWest Service, Heritage Corridor, and North Central Service will not operate; on other lines the last late-night inbound and outbound trains will be cancelled. The Chicago Transit Authority is set to resume downtown service at 5 a.m., with "possible temporary impacts." Check the CTA website for more information. The South Shore Line, which also has been shut down Monday and Tuesday, is operating with its modified COVID-19 schedule.

In Denver, the Regional Transportation District will continue the limited downtown service it began on Tuesday, with the last trains and buses leaving downtown by 6:30 p.m. to ensure vehicles and riders are out of the area before the 9 p.m. curfew that continues through Thursday

Transport Topics

Special Freight Railcars Could Travel at High Speeds, Federal Researchers Show

April 21, 2020 9:45 AM, EDT



Getty Images

For at least the past decade, America's railroads have been toying with the notion of freight trains moving at speeds approaching some passenger bullet trains.

Now, a new Federal Railroad Administration demonstration study has concluded that specially designed "higher speed freight truck" railcars could be designed for travel on some existing tracks carrying 70 tons per car at speeds of up to 106.5 miles per hour — or even 125 mph using more powerful locomotives.

That would be quite a feat. Trains carrying freight are currently allowed to travel at speeds of up to 70 mph or 80 mph, but unloaded many trains generally only travel from 40-50 mph, according to FRA researchers.

FRA said it could not yet say exactly when such speed freight trains might become reality, but officials say the whole idea is to travel fast enough to open new rail markets and sweeten the revenues of the nation's railroads.

In a statement to Transport Topics, federal rail regulators said that the faster trains would not be aimed at cutting into markets currently serviced by motor carriers.

Instead, the agency's March study, titled Validating a 70-Ton Higher Speed Freight Truck Design: Phase II, was largely aimed at an "analysis of potential opportunities. In other words, it was not designed to compete with trucking motor carriers."

A 2013 study estimated that the potential additional rail revenue from higher speed freight for freight railroads could exceed \$4.6 billion annually, and would add approximately \$460 million to the freight railroads' annual profit stream.

"Additionally, there is at least some percentage of another potential \$28 billion annual market in long distance road transportation that could be converted to rail, if it included higher speed freight service," said the 2013 study.

Potential new markets identified by FRA include dedicated train sets like refrigerator car trains, long-distance produce shipments, and overnight city pairs, in addition to the expected markets such as mail and parcel service, FRA said in the statement.

Darrin Roth, vice president of highway policy for American Trucking Associations, said a major factor in deploying the trains will require capital investment in both track and rolling stock. *Continued on next page:*



Roth

Continued from previous page: j“On the types of high-density lanes where these trains would likely operate, significant new capacity would likely be necessary because they tend to be at or near capacity already,” Roth said. “That capital investment is likely to be very high and may not be cost-effective.” FRA said it could not project when such trains could be put into operation. “The horizon for such trains to begin operation is likely to be driven by market conditions rather than technology availability considerations,” the agency said. “FRA is not in a position to make predictions about market conditions and the resulting horizon for the beginning of operations.”

“In summary, the previous effort [2013] demonstrated good market potential and operating economics for higher speed freight service, and established that the higher speed train prototype could meet the dynamic and structural requirements expected in higher speed freight operations,” the Phase II study concluded. “The purpose of this Phase II effort was to evaluate and confirm the dynamic performance of the prototype higher speed trains through field testing including the higher speed stability regime.”

The Association of American Railroads did not respond to a message seeking comment on this story.

Want more news? Listen to today's daily briefing: Tom Banse | *The (Eugene, Ore.) Register-Guard*
November 13, 2019 4:00 PM, EST

Rail Advocates Push for Pacific Northwest Bullet Train

Seattle Times Nov 13 2019



Washington Gov. Jay Inslee is one of the prominent voices lending support for a high-speed rail.

Last week's vote in Washington state to roll back car registration fees has scrambled transportation budgets. But Pacific Northwest rail advocates are undeterred in pursuing their vision of a bullet train connection among Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, Canada. Microsoft hosted a high-power meeting of state policymakers, train manufacturers and rail supporters at the software giant's headquarters Nov. 7 in conjunction with the U.S. High Speed Rail Association. At the Cascadia Rail Summit, enthusiasm to build a bullet train capable of going from Seattle to Portland — or to Vancouver — in one hour rubbed against an anti-tax message from the passage of Washington Initiative 976.

After bemoaning that the state's highways, bridges, ferries and railcars “are on a glide path to failure,” Washington Department of Transportation Secretary Roger Millar laid out the case for building an ultra-high-speed railway on dedicated track.

“As we regroup here in Washington state and think about investing \$50 billion in ultra-high-speed rail,” Millar said, “do you think we'll ever get to a place where highway expansion keeps up with economic expansion and population? It will not happen. It cannot happen.”

Millar estimated a cost of about \$108 billion to add one additional lane to Interstate 5 in each direction from the Oregon border to the Canadian border.

“One hundred and eight billion dollars and we've got another lane of pavement in each direction, and it still takes you all day to get from Portland to Vancouver,” he told the audience. “Half of that invested in ultra-high-speed rail, and it's two hours. That's game-changing stuff.”

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee added his endorsement of high-speed rail in a videotaped message played at the conference. Democratic state Sen. Marko Liias, who was in attendance, said he doesn't see the anti-tax mood of the electorate as a setback.

“We're going to rely on new tools like public-private partnerships, interjurisdictional cooperation with the B.C. government — maybe with the Canadian federal government,” Liias said in an interview. “We'll clearly need federal partners here in the U.S.”

“I don't see Tuesday's election as a reflection on the viability of this project,” added Irene Plenefisch, director of government affairs for Microsoft, in a separate interview.

Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Microsoft are cooperating on a study of governance and funding options. That study follows up on a business case analysis delivered this summer, which judged the project as viable and conservatively estimated ridership of at least 1.7 million passengers per year.

Neither the states nor the province are committed to actually building a high-speed train at this point. The vision painted by the feasibility studies entails trains traveling at speeds up to 250 mph on a newly acquired right-of-way that features extensive tunneling and elevated trackway.

We do know car tabs will not work to pay for it, quipped a strategic consultant during a panel discussion. Lots of other financing ideas were tossed out including revenue sharing from a possible carbon tax, congestion pricing, business partnerships or special property tax assessments on development around future stations.

“This is going to be a huge lift,” Democratic state Rep. Jake Fey, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, told the conference audience. The ranking Republican on Fey's committee, state Rep. Andrew Barkis, suggested to invest in upgrades to the existing regional Amtrak service to achieve higher speeds and frequency.

“In the short- and medium-term, prioritize Amtrak Cascades at a fraction of the cost and get similar results,” Barkis said in an interview. The current Amtrak Cascades service maxes out at 79 mph and runs on tracks owned and heavily used by freight railroads.



Millar



Liias



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

Amtrak projects \$700 million Loss due to COVID-19

Progressive Railroading Apr 24 2020

[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. 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.

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.

FILE PHOTO: An Amtrak passenger train sits in New York City's Pennsylvania Station, U.S. April 27, 2017. REUTERS/Mike Segar
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.](#)

AAR Pans House Transportation Proposal *June 4, 2020 Trains Newswire*

AAR 'extremely disappointed' in Transportation Bill

The Association of American Railroads is [voicing its disapproval](#) of the transportation bill unveiled Wednesday by Democratic members of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. AAR CEO Ian Jefferies says in a statement that “America’s railroads are extremely disappointed in the House surface transportation reauthorization released today. When all of us should be working together toward common-sense solutions, this partisan legislation falls far short of what this moment demands.” The INVEST in America Act includes \$60 billion for rail projects and \$105 billion for transit, but would also require two-man crews for freight trains and block shipment of liquefied natural gas by rail, among other provisions [see [“House committee releases new five-year transportation legislation.”](#) Trains News Wire, June 3, 2020.]. “Smart policies have helped railroads continue to deliver for their customers during this pandemic,” Jefferies continues. “Now is not the time to retreat from these, much less impose wish-list policy riders or unnecessary operational requirements, such as mandating crew size, barring the streamlining of operations, and constraining the already limited capacity of the rail network.”

House Committee Releases New Five-year Transportation Legislation

Bill includes \$105 billion for transit, \$60 billion for rail, would triple Amtrak funding; provisions would require two-man freight crews, take aim at aspects of Precision Scheduled Railroading By David Lassen | June 3, 2020



The southbound Illini arrives in Kankakee, Ill., on May 20, 2020. The new House transportation bill would triple Amtrak funding, while also seeking more transparency in cost allocation for state-supported services. TRAINS: David Lassen

WASHINGTON — Members of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure have released [the text of a new surface transportation bill](#), the “INVEST in America Act,” which would authorize almost \$500 billion for infrastructure. [It includes \\$60 billion for rail projects](#), but would also impose significant regulations, including requiring two-man crews for most freight trains. The bill would include \$105 billion for transit, including strengthening of “Buy America” provisions to increase domestic jobs in rail and bus manufacturing. The \$60 billion in rail funding includes \$29 billion for Amtrak, a tripling of the current amount; a new \$19 billion grant program devoted entirely to passenger rail projects; an increase in the current Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant program to \$7 billion for passenger and freight projects, and a new \$2.5 billion grant program for grade-crossing improvements.

The bill was announced by Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and cosponsored by chairs of two subcommittees, Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-District of Columbia), and Dan Lipinski (D-Ill.). In the statement announcing the bill, DeFazio said, [“After holding nearly 20 Committee hearings, receiving testimony from dozens and dozens of witnesses and members of Congress, and engaging with hundreds of advocates and transportation agencies, I am proud to bring together the ideas and the needs into one transformational bill that will catapult our country into a new era of how we plan, build, and improve U.S.”](#)

The legislation drew immediate fire from three ranking Republican committee members, Sam Graves (Mo.), Rodney Davis (Ill.), and Rick Crawford (Ark.). In a statement, they said Republican members of the committee were not involved in developing the bill. “For example,” they said, “today’s partisan bill lacks critical flexibility for the states, its outsized funding increases for urban areas will leave rural America even further behind, and numerous new green mandates and extreme progressive goals are woven throughout the fabric of new and existing core programs. ... Although today’s bill does not reflect our input, committee Republicans will continue to work with the Senate, stakeholders, and any member of both parties to ensure our priorities are addressed as the legislative process moves forward. Along with the funding provisions, the bill [would prohibit Amtrak from imposing mandatory arbitration](#) as part of its ticket policy; address costs assigned by Amtrak to state-supported services by seeking to improve methodology and increase transparency; and require the passenger railroad to offer reduced fares for certain groups including veterans and current members of the military and their families. *Continued on next page:*



A Canadian National train on the former Elgin, Joliet & Eastern crosses under the former Illinois Central at Matteson, Ill. The new transportation bill proposed by House Democrats requires two-man crews for most freight trains, and also includes a new program to improve grade crossings. TRAINS: David Lassen

“We look forward to working with both the House and the Senate as the process moves forward and hopefully culminates in the enactment of a long-term, bipartisan bill,” Baker said. “There will be many policies considered in this bill that are crucially important to the ability of the short line freight railroad industry to meet the evolving needs of our customers, enabling thousands of important agricultural, energy, and industrial shippers in small-town and rural America to remain connected to the national and global economies.”

The bill’s full name is the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America Act. Some \$319 billion of its \$494 billion in funding, or 65%, is for highway-related projects.

Continued from previous page:

It also addresses Amtrak food service by requiring all passengers traveling overnight to have access to a hot meal, rather than just sleeping-car passengers; preventing outsourcing of onboard food and beverage service, and creating a working group to issue a report within a year on how to improve food and beverage service.

The bill’s two-man crew requirement has limited exemptions for short lines. It also establishes a 10-minute limit for blocking grade crossings, and directs the DOT to develop a national strategy to deal with the issue. It would rescind any Department of Transportation special permits allowing transport of liquefied natural gas by tank car, and prohibit any further permits until the DOT conducts further safety evaluations.

It also takes aim at Precision Scheduled Railroading by requiring a study on the safety impact of trains longer than 7,500 feet and directs the General Accounting Office to look at the impact of Precision Scheduled Railroading on shippers, Amtrak, commuter railroads, and rail employees. Also included are provisions requiring the DOT, Amtrak, and railroads to consider recommendations made by the National Transportation Safety Board in the wake of the fatal 2017 Amtrak *Cascades* derailment in DuPont, Wash. Chuck Baker, president of the American Short Line and Regional Rail Association, said in a statement that the group welcomes release of the bill.

AAR: Carload and Intermodal Traffic Remains Down, but has Begun to Rebound

June 3, 2020 RELATED TOPICS: INTERMODAL Trains Newswire

U.S. Rail Traffic¹

Week 22, 2020 – Ended May 30, 2020

	This Week		Year-To-Date		
	Cars	vs 2019	Cumulative	Avg/wk ²	vs 2019
Total Carloads	179,973	-24.2%	4,713,757	214,262	-14.7%
Chemicals	26,714	-15.2%	686,149	31,189	-3.5%
Coal	46,144	-34.7%	1,271,149	57,780	-26.1%
Farm Products excl. Grain, and Food	13,439	-9.5%	333,373	15,153	-3.0%
Forest Products	8,255	-12.8%	206,330	9,379	-6.0%
Grain	21,246	2.0%	454,752	20,671	-6.0%
Metallic Ores and Metals	12,637	-40.1%	413,995	18,818	-13.3%
Motor Vehicles and Parts	6,629	-54.8%	224,619	10,210	-37.7%
Nonmetallic Minerals	27,345	-17.3%	656,790	29,854	-9.8%
Petroleum and Petroleum Products	8,770	-32.4%	257,433	11,702	-8.0%
Other	8,794	6.7%	209,167	9,508	2.0%
Total Intermodal Units	215,741	-10.6%	5,186,630	235,756	-11.3%
Total Traffic	395,714	-17.3%	9,900,387	450,018	-13.0%

¹ Excludes U.S. operations of Canadian Pacific, CN and GMXT.

² Average per week figures may not sum to totals as a result of independent rounding.

WASHINGTON — The Association of American Railroads today reported U.S. rail traffic for the week ending May 30, 2020, as well as volumes for May 2020. U.S. railroads originated 740,171 carloads in May 2020, down 27.7%, or 282,965 carloads, from May 2019. U.S. railroads also originated 912,922 containers and trailers in May 2020, down 13%, or 136,241 units, from the same month last year. Combined U.S. carload and intermodal originations in May 2020 were 1,653,093, down 20.2%, or 419,206 carloads and intermodal units from May 2019.

Continued on next page:

Continued from previous page: In May 2020, one of the 20 carload commodity categories tracked by the AAR each month saw carload gains compared with May 2019. It was farm products excluding grain, up 324 carloads or 10.6%. Commodities that saw declines in May 2020 from May 2019 were coal, down 127,201 carloads or 40.7%; motor vehicles & parts, down 49,341 carloads or 75%; and crushed stone, sand and gravel, down 18,196 carloads or 19.4%.

“Overall traffic levels last week were down from the prior week as would be expected for a week which includes a national holiday” said AAR Senior Vice President John T. Gray. “However, it is somewhat heartening to note that 11 of the 20 carload categories, including several major commodity areas, improved their showing versus 2019 when comparing their current loading rates to those we have seen the last four weeks. Perhaps most notably, automobile loadings improved to about one-third the normal level as assembly plants began the intricate process of reopening. While this is still a long way from where we would like to be, it is far better than the ten percent of norm of only two weeks ago.”

Excluding coal, carloads were down 155,764 carloads, or 21.9%, in May 2020 from May 2019. Excluding coal and grain, carloads were down 150,701 carloads, or 24.3%.

Total U.S. carload traffic for the first five months of 2020 was 4,713,757 carloads, down 14.7%, or 815,413 carloads, from the same period last year; and 5,186,630 intermodal units, down 11.3%, or 661,703 containers and trailers, from last year. Total combined U.S. traffic for the first 22 weeks of 2020 was 9,900,387 carloads and intermodal units, a decrease of 13% compared to last year.

Week Ending May 30, 2020

Total U.S. weekly rail traffic was 395,714 carloads and intermodal units, down 17.3% compared with the same week last year.

Total carloads for the week ending May 30 were 179,973 carloads, down 24.2% compared with the same week in 2019, while U.S. weekly intermodal volume was 215,741 containers and trailers, down 10.6% compared to 2019.

Two of the 10 carload commodity groups posted an increase compared with the same week in 2019. They were miscellaneous carloads, up 555 carloads, to 8,794; and grain, up 410 carloads, to 21,246. Commodity groups that posted decreases compared with the same week in 2019 included coal, down 24,551 carloads, to 46,144; metallic ores and metals, down 8,470 carloads, to 12,637; and motor vehicles and parts, down 8,052 carloads, to 6,629.

North American rail volume for the week ending May 30, 2020, on 12 reporting U.S., Canadian and Mexican railroads totaled 264,612 carloads, down 22.8% compared with the same week last year, and 293,159 intermodal units, down 9.9% compared with last year. Total combined weekly rail traffic in North America was 557,771 carloads and intermodal units, down 16.5%. North American rail volume for the first 22 weeks of 2020 was 13,698,214 carloads and intermodal units, down 11.6% compared with 2019.

Canadian railroads reported 68,657 carloads for the week, down 17.8%, and 63,195 intermodal units, down 5.2% compared with the same week in 2019. For the first 22 weeks of 2020, Canadian railroads reported cumulative rail traffic volume of 3,059,717 carloads, containers and trailers, down 7.3%.

Mexican railroads reported 15,982 carloads for the week, down 26% compared with the same week last year, and 14,223 intermodal units, down 19.3%. Cumulative volume on Mexican railroads for the first 22 weeks of 2020 was 738,110 carloads and intermodal containers and trailers, down 9.3% from the same point last year.

— *From an Association of American Railroads news release. June 3, 2020.*



Union Pacific CEO Lance Fritz TRAINS: David Lassen

Union Pacific CEO Fritz Calls for More Action to Address Racial Injustice

June 3, 2020 Trains Newswire

In a statement posted Wednesday on the railroad’s website, Union Pacific CEO Lance Fritz addresses racial inequality underlying the nation’s recent protests and social unrest, saying it is time for the railroad, its people, and the nation “to stand up and speak out.”

“The racial injustice within our country deeply saddens and sickens me as an American, a father, and a business leader,” Fritz writes.

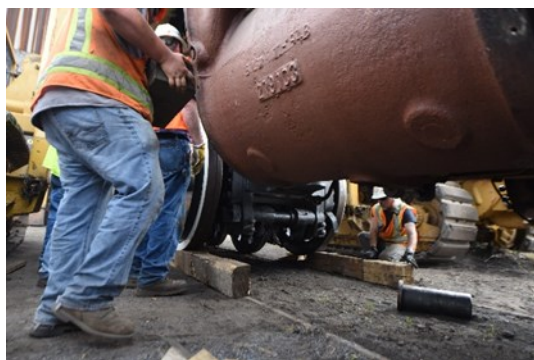
After recounting the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, and other recent racially motivated incidents, Fritz writes, “It is incredibly sad that the accused must defend themselves with video posts of the incident to ensure the facts are reported. The assaults and accusations should never occur in the first place. This behavior is not acceptable in America, and not acceptable at Union Pacific Railroad. ... We, meaning me and my team at Union Pacific, need to stand up for our beliefs, our ethics and our fellow citizens. Every American has the right to be treated equally and with dignity. The social injustice must stop, and we have to play a part.”

Fritz, who began the statement by recalling that UP workers formed the Black Employee Network 40 years ago “to help leadership better understand and respond to the concerns of our African American employees,” concludes by saying, “Union Pacific took action 40 years ago to better understand and promote diversity. Forty years is too long to still be having this conversation. We will intensify our efforts to listen and learn from those suffering racial injustice and bias; and we will continue to lean into our communities, lending a hand and getting engaged. This is on all of us – see something, say something, do something.” The complete statement is available [here](#)

Rewheeling the Last Baldwin: Of Cranes, Heroes, and Invocations



Posted by Jim Wrinn
on Thursday, June
11, 2020



RIDGELEY, W.Va. – In 1995 when Steamtown opened as a National Park Service site in Scranton, Pa., after years of debate and derision, there was a ceremony. At the conclusion of the speech making, ribbon cutting, and other hoopla, a priest was invited to the podium to give the benediction. I recall well that in his blessing he specifically called out a certain group for scorn. “

And to those who said this day would never come,” he said to a breathless crowd on a hot humid July day waiting to see what words this clergyman might dish out. After a suitable pause, he blurted out: “We say, ‘God bless you.’” We all got it.

There was no ceremony or benediction Wednesday at Western Maryland Scenic Railroad’s shop in Ridgeley, W.Va., on Wednesday. There was still heat and humidity as crews from Diversified Rail Services and Hulcher lifted the restored boiler and frame of former Chesapeake & Ohio 2-6-6-2 No. 1309 and placed the locomotive on its two sets of drivers. And there was plenty of sweat and hard work to reunite the 150-ton boiler of Baldwin’s last domestic steam locomotive (1949) with its running gear after six years of work, twists and challenges, and plenty of critics. But enough of that. The day was about making progress to steam one of the most impressive engines ever restored in the Eastern U.S.

I have seen locomotives craned before, and it’s always a nerve-wracking, amazing experience, but I had not seen an articulated placed back onto its wheels until Wednesday. My first impressions were of two sideboom cranes lifting the engine’s cab high in the air so that the rear engine could be pushed into place. That was a breathtaking view. That process was downright simple compared to installing the front engine. To make the hinge pin fit, the crew had to put down wood blocks and wood shim ramps for the rear driver of the front engine to close a 9-inch gap between the hinge and the pivot point. Yes, I said, nine inches. Then there were still pipes to brake cylinders and the yoke for the valve gear that had to be maneuvered around so that steam pipes, furnace bearers, and a million other details that Baldwin packed into this monster would clear each other. By my best estimation, the whole process of installing the rear engine was as simple as walking down the street on a sunny day. The installation of the front engine was like walking backwards while juggling a Rubik’s Cube that you are adjusting before each toss in the middle of a whirlwind. But they did it. A little finesse here, a little tug there. A little on the crane. A torch here. And once it was done, and the sidebooms backed off, there it was: The complete engine for the first time at Western Maryland since it arrived in 2014. The shop crew posed with the engine and then stood back and admired their work, as they should.

There is much to say about the restoration of No. 1309. There will be time to write about that as the restoration moves forward. The heroes are what matter at this moment: the shop crews, the railroad, and the Trains readers who donated almost \$120,000 to get Wednesday’s crane lift done. Another \$1,200 was raised by generous viewers watching our Facebook live coverage. For now, the best thing to say is that like Steamtown in 1995, on June 10, 2020, Western Maryland did something that critics said could not be done. No. 1309 is 95 percent complete. There is still lots of money to be raised (\$180,000 for the engine and an additional \$100,000 for facilities) still tremendous work to be done (hang the air pumps, run piping, finish the cab, set the valves, test everything, etc.), but the good thing is that it will steam again. To those who said this day would never come, the folks at Ridgeley proved you wrong. To that, since I’m from the south, I’ll just say what needs to be said: “Bless your heart.”

To help steam the last Baldwin, send your donation marked for 1309 to Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, 13 Canal Street, Cumberland, MD 21502, or you can donate online at www.wmsr.com/1309.

Colorado Railroad Museum on the Restoration of Rio Grande Southern 20

The Colorado Railroad Museum is restoring a legendary Centennial State narrow gauge locomotive to operation. Rio Grande Southern No. 20, a 3-foot gauge 4-6-0 built in 1899 for the Florence & Cripple Creek and last run in 1951 when the RGS shut down, is nearing completion. Schenectady Locomotive Works built the engine, and the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club saved the engine. In 2006, the club transferred ownership to the museum, and a significant donation began a restoration the following year. For 12 years, the engine was under restoration at Pennsylvania’s Strasburg Rail Road, and it returned last June for final assembly. The \$1.5 million restoration is one of the most remarkable in the annals of American railway preservation. *Continued on next page:*



Posted
by Jim
Wrinn
on Wednesday,
June
3, 2020



Continued from previous page:

We checked in with Colorado Railroad Museum Curator of Rolling Stock & Equipment Jeff Taylor earlier this week. Here's our Q&A with Trains. Thanks to Dave Schaaf of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club for photos of Roundhouse Foreman Dusty Thomson with the stack and No. 20 in the roundhouse, the photo of three people showing Jeff Taylor, Norm Acker, and Dusty Thomson, and the close up of the stack base.

What percentage of completion is the locomotive at?
95%.

What tasks have been done in the year since it's returned?

The answer is quite long. Short answer is as follows. Since her return from Strasburg we have: installed the new cab, smoke stack(several times), rebuilt and fitted the boiler tube pilot, completely replaced the entire air brake system with new copying the original piping, she retains the authentic brake valves, finished assembling the locomotive driver brakes, finished installing and plumbing all the appliances, finished our portion of restoration work on the tender, applied a 22 gauge sheet metal roof to the cab, installed the electrical conduit and started wiring the locomotive, and we passed our State and FRA hydrostatic test.

What's left to do?

We still need to finish the electrical wiring, re-install the throttle, re-install the master mechanics front end in the smoke box (removed for FRA inspection), paint and lettering, and the big one — a steam test. I'm sure we will run into the typical leaks and minor issues that we will have to tinker with.

What's the operating boiler pressure going to be?
180 psi.

What sort of expectations do you have for the completion of the restoration?
If you are asking for a date, we are planning for August if this year.

Are there any mechanical upgrades that have been made to make the engine more modern?

Not much really, we are going to use 34v LED bulbs in the cab; Strasburg added oil cups connected to lube lines to the oil cellars on the driving and pony truck boxes. This will allow us to "top off" the cellars without having to go underneath and disassemble anything. We added a modern water trap/particulate filter inline to the brake stands to help eliminate dirt build up. Other than that, she is very traditional.

How original is the engine at this point?

I would say if you include the tender she is about 90% original from the end of service on the RGS.

What's the new smokestack story?

Well it's not a new smokestack but a new saddle. The saddle is bolted to the smoke box and the stack then bolts to it. After the second time we installed the stack while tightening the hardware one of the 4 ears that hold the bolts broke off the saddle. Where it broke you could see half of it had been cracked for a very long time. We didn't overtighten it we were just snugging the bolts up. After looking it over talking to some of my peers and exploring our options we decided a new casting would be best. New would be the strongest and give us the peace of mind that the other 3 would not break as well.

About what time period are you going to present the locomotive as?

I get asked this a lot. She will be finished in the time period between 1944, just after she returned to service after her 1943 wreck and early 1947. She will be black with the sunrise herald on the tender. This time frame also allows for 2 whistle options.

When you're around the engine, what is the feeling you get?

Pride, excitement, honor, and a little fear. A large part of why I took this job in 2016 was that I was told 20 would be my project to finish. Having watched the restoration from afar for many years and then given the opportunity to finish it was something I couldn't pass up. The whole shop crew is excited to be a part of bringing this narrow gauge legend back to life.

Given that it cannot go back to the RGS again, are you excited to take it on the road?

Very excited, this will be our first foray into traveling with one of our steam locomotives. We have taken all 3 of our famed Galloping geese out on the road. Taking a steam locomotive is something that has been talked about at the for years. Most folks thinking it would never happen. 20 can't return to the RGS but she did run on the D&RGW Silverton branch for the filming of "A Ticket to Tomahawk," and go over Cumbres pass on her way to delivery to the RGS.

When the C&TS Iron Horse Festival was postponed to 2021, did that inspire you to work toward that?

Yes, but this is a recent development. We were thinking about it in 2019, but we didn't want to rush the job. We want to finish the restoration and do it right first time out. We want to show her off to the public and railfans, but that needs to happen at the museum first, and it will. Because our projected completion date was so close to the 2020 Iron Horse Festival we had planned not to attend. Now that the Festival is postponed we can continue with our plans to debut 20 at the museum in 2020 and work towards attending the Festival in 2021.

what's one word to sum up the restoration of No. 20?

I would rather use 2 words. Challenging and rewarding.



Central Service train prepares to leave Antioch, Ill., on May 1, 2020, the last day before service on the line was cut to one round trip daily. Metra will add express trains on the North Central and SouthWest services as part of service increases on three lines beginning June 29.

Metra to Add Service on Three Lines

News Wire Digest for June 23: Report blames operator error for 2019 DC Metro collision; MTA chief says agency could run out of money in August June 23, 2020

Metra will offer express trains on the North Central Service and SouthWest Service lines — the first time express service has been offered on either route — as part of an [increase in service on those two lines and the Heritage Corridor](#) beginning Monday, June 29. “Although the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted service across the Metra system, we’ve used this time as an opportunity to reevaluate our service,” Metra CEO/Executive Director Jim Derwinski said in a release announcing the new schedules.

“As the residents of the Chicago region return to their work commutes and Metra ramps up service, we’re examining where and when the demand is, and using this information to make changes that we believe will better serve our customers.

That’s why we’re offering these new express trains, which our customers have long requested, as a pilot project.” Since a second round of COVID-19 related cutbacks on May 4, the North Central and Heritage have had one round trip on weekdays, while the SouthWest Service offers two round trips.

The North Central’s express trains — a 6:38 a.m. inbound departure and a 5:01 p.m. outbound train will create a second round trip. Three round trips are being added to the SouthWest Service schedule, including a 7:45 a.m. inbound departure from the Orland Park/179th Street station and a 3:45 p.m. departure from Chicago Union Station. The Heritage Corridor line to Joliet will also receive a second daily round trip.

Trainfest Cancels 2020 Show at Wisconsin State Fair Park, Citing 'Uncertainty' Over COVID-19 Situation this Fall. *June 16 2020 -Rick Krenske*

Railfan Events (Thanks to Rick Krenske, Bill Dredge)

None to report for now			
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Address Correction Requested

