

**NRHS**

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

Northstar News

Happy Train Watching!



L: Cumbres & Toltec steam train
Antonito CO Fall 2008 -Photo R Tubbesing

R: Rock Island GP9 at the IRM May 2019
-Roger Libra photo

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Meeting Notice

Hello Everyone

Stay Tuned for Future Meeting and Activity Announcements in the Next Newsletter!

Next newsletter (March 2021) will be out around March 2, 2021.

Hello Everyone

The Northstar Chapter NRHS will be having a ZOOM meeting Saturday night, February 20th at 7 pm. The Zoom meeting will open around 6:30 or so. Information about joining the meeting is below and will also be e-mailed late afternoon on Saturday the 20th.

If you know someone that may be interested in the meeting, please have them send a quick e-mail to dan@meyer-family.net and I will add them to the mailing list.

Thank you, and we hope to see you Saturday evening on Zoom!

Use the following information to join the meeting with your ZOOM app: Meeting ID: 868 0909 8361 / Passcode: 0261032

To Join the Zoom Meeting with your browser, use the following URL:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86809098361?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86809098361?pwd=bXBVL2x3RCtKMzI0bzFmQm1RS0pWQT09)
[pwd=bXBVL2x3RCtKMzI0bzFmQm1RS0pWQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86809098361?pwd=bXBVL2x3RCtKMzI0bzFmQm1RS0pWQT09)

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Chapter memberships for 2021 are OVERDUE!

**If you have not renewed your membership by
March 1 2021, this will be your last newsletter.**



Amtrak #8 Lake City MN Feb 2019 –Bob Ball

From the Editor: We will continue to have virtual (Zoom) meetings into next year. It looks like Spring in 2021 that we might resume our monthly meetings at Roseville Lutheran Church.

**The 2021 Minnesota Rail Calendar is Sold Out.
I hope you got your copy.**

If you have any railroad slides or photos in your collection, it would be great to have you share your experiences and photos in a future meeting. Our members would truly enjoy what you have experienced and collected! Please contact Richard Tubbesing at Tubbesing32a@yahoo.com or leave a voice message at 763-757-1304.

Meeting Minutes Jan 16th 2021 (Zoom)

The meeting was called to order by President John Goodman at 7:04 pm with 17 members and guests attending. A quorum was present. President Goodman thanked Bill Dredge for his 2 years of service as president. John Goodman asked for approval of the December Meeting minutes as written in the January Newsletter. Motion by Frank Wilke and Dan Meyer to approve the minutes was carried. Russ Isbrandt gave the treasurers report. Our Cash position of the Chapter account and the Calendar Account is better than last years. There are 34 members, 2 family and 16 subscribers that have renewed their membership, and there are 11 regular members, 1 family membership and 10 subscribers that have not yet renewed their membership. Russ will give the non-renewal members list to Dan Meyer and John Goodman to see if we can get those non-renewals to rejoin the chapter. Dawn Holmberg gave the calendar report. The Calendar has been sold out. We have had to return some orders received. Dan Meyer gave the Web Report. The Web site is up to date. There is an order form on the website to join the NRHS and our Chapter. Dan said you can send him an email if you have any questions about membership. Program report was given by John Goodman in leu of absent Richard Tubbesing. Russ Isbrandt will give a slide presentation of his 1960's train trip to the World's Fair at the February 2021 meeting. John Goodman gave the Cheer committee report. John visited Cy Svobodny and Cy is home bound but seemed to be in good spirits. No one has heard from Dave Norman so Dave Herbert was going to attempt to contact him. He said he is in contact with member Bob Clarkson but has not heard from Dave Norman. He will call Dave Norman but needs his phone number. Russ Isbrandt has Dave's phone number and Dave Herbert will contact him. Old Business. President Goodman stated that we will continue to have monthly Zoom meetings at least thru April of this year depending on the Vaccine distribution for COVID19. We hope to have a banquet at a restaurant sometime after we are able to resume in-person meetings. Dan Meyer will continue to send out Zoom meeting Invites to join our meeting and will have Richard Tubbesing publish how to join the meeting from the Zoom invites in the next newsletter. John Goodman reported the death of Minnesota Commercial President John Goman. Bob Ball was asked to comment. He does not know who will run the commercial or what will happen to the Commercial's collection of vintage diesels and cars. Bob Ball said he has been taking photos of some of the vintage equipment that the Commercial owns. John Goodman spoke of a NRHS Heritage grant request for the restoration of the NP Buhle WI Depot. John stated that we only are allowed one endorsement each year to the NRHS Grant program.

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Continued from previous page: John Cartwright gave some information of the line and towns that the depot was a part of. John Goodman stated we will wait until Grant request deadline is close to consider the endorsement from our chapter. Dawn Holmberg gave the National Directors Report. We have received a membership Envelope from the NRHS. She has been busy doing updates to the NRHS Web site. John Goodman stated that the next NRHS meeting will be held Mar 21, 2021 and the BOD will decide whether to fund and plan Rail-Camps for this year. New Business. John Goodman stated we are reviewing 8mm movies from the Marv Mahre collection at the Library. We have four reels and have reviewed two of them. Thanks goes to Dan Meyer on getting an old projector of Dave Herbert's to work to view the films. We hope to show these vintage 1950's to 1970 films of the Minnesota Railfan Association trips at some future meeting. Bob Ball gave information on a web site that track the whereabouts of railroad heritage units. John Goodman welcomed the president of the Wisconsin Chapter Mike Neuhaus at our meeting. No other New Business was noted. President John Goodman adjourned the meeting at 7:27 pm. Ken Zieska gave an excellent photo show of vintage railroads around the GN Station in Minneapolis where he used to hang out as a youth. Thanks to Dan Meyer for recording this meeting. Respectfully submitted by Richard Tubbesing Secretary.

Recent Trip on Amtrak Trains 7-8 to/from St Paul and Milwaukee. Trip Report

John Goodman jhgoodman2001@yahoo.com Thu 1/7/2021 7:47 PM

All: I recently rode on the Empire Builder from St. Paul to Milwaukee on the day after Christmas (26th) and due to the tri-weekly schedule of these trains, I was forced to spend 2 nights in a hotel in Milwaukee.

Train 8 (24th) departed St Paul station on time. An announcement was made by the dining car LSA for sleeper passengers to come to the dining car for breakfast. (I was in an economy bedroom) and I found that since the train arrived into St Paul very early, most sleeping car passenger had already eaten the wonderful breakfast that Amtrak provides. I ordered the McMuffin and hot tea with a water. It was close to uneatable. The sandwich was hot, but no taste at all. The tables should at least have a white piece of butcher paper on top of the bare table.

The passenger loading was very heavy, but no MSP set out coach was operated.

As the crew changes at Winona, I noted an all female crew boarded there to go to Chicago. Upon leaving Winona one of the crew got on the speaker system and announced Amtrak's rules (and I assumed her rules also) and said that if anyone goes to the lounge car and purchases food or beverages and either eats them in the upper part of the lounge car or takes them back to their seat, they must keep their face mask on while chewing their food. It appears that you may not remove your mask even to eat your just purchased food. I would expect that she must patrol the cars to find violators. She must threaten them with removal if they don't follow her rules.?

I went to the diner for lunch and ordered the meatball/spaghetti option and found it terrible. I had it on my last trip in September and actually likes it then, but not now. Amtrak got ride of the large sized chocolate cookie as a desert. You now are offered vanilla pudding or a brownie.

We arrived into Milwaukee on time. Track #1 had a MKE-CHI trainset on it already, so we were on track #2 and this requires that on you must take the elevator up to the walk over ramp to track #1 and take the escalator or elevator back down to get into the station.

Monday, December 28th I again had an economy room booked, but this time I was in the dorm car in room 20. The sleeping car attendant told that Amtrak now opened up more rooms in this car. Originally, they were only selling 4 rooms (17-18-19-20) but now they sell 4 additional rooms and staff a sleeping car attendant in this car. However....this person also helps out in the dining car for dinner (and if necessary for breakfast and lunch if needed)

I went to the dining car for the 6:30pm setting and got the beef entrée which was hot, but it was terrible. This food is just crap. Train 7 was very full in both coaches and sleeping cars. Again, no MSP set out coach operated.

Train #7 arrived into St Paul on time this evening. John H. Goodman



Digest: Eau Claire, Wis., Votes for Commission to Pursue Rail Passenger Service

News Wire Digest second section for January 13, 2021 Trains Newswire

Eau Claire approves formation of rail commission for passenger service to Twin Cities

The city of Eau Claire, Wis., has voted to create a commission to lead development of passenger rail service between the city and St. Paul, Minn. The Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission seeks to connect the city of more than 65,000 to St. Paul using Union Pacific tracks for a route of about 80 miles, with possible intermediate stops in Menomonie, Baldwin, Hudson, and Stillwater [see "[Digest: MBTA details increase](#)" *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 12, 2020]. [WQOW-TV reports](#) city officials hope to collaborate with other communities and the West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition on the project.



Southwest LRT Construction Bulletin: January 8 - 14, 2021

From John Goodman

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Web: swlrt.org

Twitter: [@SouthwestLRT](https://twitter.com/SouthwestLRT)

Construction Hotline: 612-373-3933

2021 Construction Has Started.

After a brief break for the holidays, construction for the Southwest LRT project has resumed in all five corridor cities. While many of the sites along the project will be quieter in the winter months, it is still important to keep safety in mind near construction sites. Trucks continue to move material through the corridor, please be mindful of construction equipment at construction site entrance points and adjacent trail facilities. Remember to follow road and trail detour signage in the corridor. For your safety and for the safety of our crews, please stay out of construction sites, even when workers are not present. The following highlights some of the major work activities for the week, the bi-weekly construction update will return next week.

City Highlights

Eden Prairie: The SouthWest station area remains a busy construction site with ongoing piling and concrete work. Other minor activities are expected along the Eden Prairie segment.

Minnetonka: Work in the Opus area continues with retaining wall work north of Bren Road West, near Smetana Road. Bridge work at Smetana/Feltl roadways is advancing with foundation and wall construction. Continue to expect LRT tunnel construction south of Highway 62 in the City West station area.

Hopkins: Crews continue to work on Excelsior Boulevard LRT bridge piers.

St. Louis Park: Pile driving for retaining walls near Wooddale Avenue should be expected over the next few weeks.

Minneapolis: The press-in-piler near Lake Street has finished sheeting installation and is being moved out of the corridor. The press-in-piler working to the east, near the Cedar Lake Channel, will complete the piles in this area in February. This will complete press-in-pile work in the Kenilworth corridor. Piling at the Cedar Lake Channel concluded this week for the winter; however, piling continues in the Glenwood Avenue area.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, January 14: Minneapolis 2021 Construction Overview of Southwest LRT Project, Town Hall from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM. [For more information and to join the meeting, visit our website.](#)



With windows installed, interior work is continuing through the winter on the Mark Twain Zephyr's observation car, the Tom Sawyer, shown Dec. 22, 2020, in Trego, Wis. Steve Smedley

'Mark Twain Zephyr' Restoration Continues with Focus on Observation Car

By [Steve Smedley](#) | January 4, 2021 Trains Newswire

TREGO, Wis. — As winter holds an icy grip on Northwestern Wisconsin, the restoration of the Wisconsin Great Northern Railroad's *Mark Twain Zephyr* continues. One of nine Zephyrs built by the Budd Co. for the Chicago Burlington & Quincy Railroad, the Wisconsin Great Northern acquired the train last year and is restoring it to operation.

Boat-tail observation-lounge-parlor car No. 573, the *Tom Sawyer*, is the focus of current interior restoration work. After a thorough interior cleaning, windows have been installed, with electric heat allowing work to continue through the winter months. Electrical cable runs and a new electrical control cabinet have also been added.

Carpentry is nearing completion, along with lighting and a paint scheme closely representing the original scheme. Researching exact colors has been difficult since few interior color photos have been located.

"We are going to give it every bit of Zephyr flavor as we can, using Zephyr floor plans and interior colors and decoration that befits the Zephyr period," said Wisconsin Great Northern president Greg Vreeland.

Robert Tabern, the railroad's director of passenger development, has been able to locate and acquire several items including the original Mark Twain end medallion [see ["Mark Twain Zephyr" medallion followed long road to rejoin train.](#) *Trains News Wire*, Nov. 2, 2020].

"After 60 years of being in private ownership. I am glad to see the Mark Twain Zephyr is getting the respect and place in history that it deserves," Tabern said. "I am proud to be part of Greg's team who took on and will accomplish this project. It gives us all hope in a year when there has not been a lot of positive news out there."

The train was trucked to Trego from Madison, Ill., in fall 2020. The railroad has said it aims to complete the restoration this year.



BNSF Plans \$2.99 Billion in Capital Spending

January 20, 2021 Trains Newswire

FORT WORTH, Texas — BNSF Railway says it will spend \$2.99 billion on capital improvements in 2021, nearly equaling its \$3.08 billion capital plan of 2020.

The vast majority of funding — \$2.41 billion — will go to maintenance. The railroad plans to replace 428 miles of rail, approximately 2.6 million ties, and will undertake nearly 11,000 miles of track surfacing or undercutting. Another \$400 million is for capacity and efficiency projects, including new double track in eastern Kansas, part of a multi-year effort to add 50 miles of additional main track on the Southern Transcon between Chicago and the West Coast, and an ongoing bridge project near Sandpoint, Idaho.

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“Every year through our capital plan, we work to ensure we are able to continue to operate a safe and efficient rail network, provide our customers with the level of service they have come to expect from BNSF as well as position ourselves for future growth opportunities,” Katie Farmer, the railroad’s new CEO, said in [a press release](#). The plan also includes \$180 million for freight cars and other equipment.



New York-bound Acela no. 2166 speeds through Odenton, Md., in July 2019. Five Acelas were among the 19 north-bound departures offered from Washington on Sunday. Bob Johnston

Analysis: Coach Sellouts Hinder Amtrak Long-distance Travelers

Northeast Corridor trains show pattern of late booking

By [Bob Johnston](#) | January 4, 2021 Trains Newswire

CHICAGO — In a period when the COVID-19 pandemic has made travel more of a last-minute decision than it has been in the past, a *Trains News Wire* review shows Amtrak passengers on the Northeast Corridor continued to purchase tickets throughout the New Year’s holiday weekend. Such late decisions are not an option for passengers on many long-distance routes, where the move to triweekly operation has been exacerbated by limited coach-seat availability. Although Amtrak has expanded sleeping-car capacity on some trains in an effort to meet increased demand, sellouts in coach are still depriving the long-distance segment of revenue and ridership. These are factors the company [says it will evaluate](#) on a route-by-route basis to determine whether to restore daily service. Amtrak permits coach occupancy at no more than 50% capacity on all trains as part of its current health safety protocols.

This means those not traveling with someone else are guaranteed to have a seat by themselves, greatly enhancing their onboard experience at a time when airlines and other public transportation providers have dispensed with previous commitments to guarantee social distancing. The company has repeatedly stressed this advantage in advisories, advertising, and social media posts. The percentage of each train’s seats sold are displayed on Amtrak’s website for the segment passengers seek to book.

Northeast corridor: Late bookings increase patronage

Trains News Wire checked throughout the New Year’s holiday weekend to track available capacity for Jan. 3 on Northeast Corridor trains leaving Boston, New York, and Washington. This followed a similar effort in November for the Sunday after Thanksgiving [see [“Amtrak sees only scattered Thanksgiving sellouts.”](#) News Wire, Nov. 29, 2020]. Early in the weekend, fares and percentages of seats sold for 22 south-bound trains from New York and 19 northbound trains from Washington, both Acelas and Northeast Regionals, were generally lower than they had been on the post-Thanksgiving trains of Nov. 29. But as sales continued over the course of the weekend, occupancy rates and ticket prices both increased. This reflects the yield-management practice that encourages early booking while maximizing revenue.

With some exceptions at the beginning and end of the travel day, seats sold wound up in the 35-45% range (45% is the maximum displayed). This was also the case for the 11 New York-Boston round trips. The only trains with no coach seats available north of Washington on Sunday were the *Carolynian* to and from Charlotte, N.C., and the north-bound *Silver Star* from Miami.

Availability was far different on most trains operating only three times per week. News Wire recorded coach sellouts for at least a portion of 15 long-distance routes for trains departing Jan. 2-4, calculating where choke points occurred. In addition to expected sellouts near a train’s terminals, there were some surprises, as indicated in this table.

New Years weekend 2021 Amtrak long-distance sellouts

Route	Departure	Day	Date	Departing	Sellout between
California Zephyr		Sat	Jan 2	Chicago	Chicago-Denver
		Mon	Jan 4	Chicago	Chicago-Burlington, Ia.
		Sun	Jan 3	Denver	Denver-Lincoln, Neb.
Southwest Chief		Sat	Jan 2	Chicago	Kansas City-Topeka
Empire Builder		Sat	Jan 2	Chicago	Chicago-Portage, Wis., Leavenworth, Wash.-Seattle
Capitol Limited		Sat	Jan 2	Chicago	Chicago-Pittsburgh
		Sun	Jan 3	Washington	Pittsburgh-Sandusky, Ohio
Cardinal		Sat	Jan 2	Chicago	Chicago-Lafayette, Ind.
Lake Shore Limited		Sat	Jan 2	Chicago	Chicago-Toledo, Ohio
		Sun	Jan 3	New York	Albany-New York
Texas Eagle		Sun	Jan 3	Chicago	New York-Syracuse
		Sun	Jan 3	San Antonio	St. Louis-Little Rock, Ark.
City of New Orleans		Sat	Jan 2	Chicago	Little Rock-St. Louis
		Sat	Jan 2	Chicago	Chicago-Champaign, Ill.
Crescent		Sun	Jan 3	New Orleans	Atlanta-Greensboro, N.C.
Silver Star		Sat	Jan 2	Miami	Richmond, Va., -Washington



Canadian Pacific Leads Industry Volume for Second Straight Year

By [Bill Stephens](#) | January 4, 2021 Trains Newswire

In a year when all of the big Class I railroads lost volume due to the economic impact of the pandemic, Canadian Pacific came out on top.

CP’s volume declined 2.2% in 2020, well above the average 6.8% decline of the big six systems, according to a *Trains News Wire* review of the railroads’ weekly carload reports. CP led the big six systems in volume growth in 2019, too.

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Percentage Change in 2020 Class I Railroad Traffic				
Railroad	Total	Intermodal	Carload	Coal
Canadian Pacific	-2.2	0.3	-3.7	-14.5
CSX Transportation	-5.7	1.5	-6.8	-25.8
Canadian National	-6.1	-1.5	-9.2	-13.6
Union Pacific	-7.0	-4.0	-7.3	-22.0
BNSF Railway	-7.6	-1.4	-9.5	-22.0
Norfolk Southern	-11.9	-5.9	-13.3	-37.0
Average	-6.8	-1.8	-8.3	-22.5

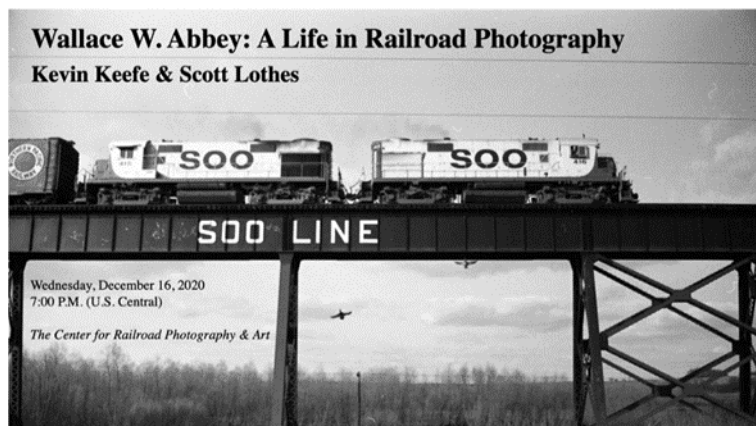
Source: Weekly AAR carload reports. Carload includes everything except coal and intermodal.

CSX Transportation, which placed second with a 5.7% decline in overall traffic in 2020, posted the largest intermodal gain in the industry. The railroad's intermodal volume grew 1.5%. CP, at a 0.3% gain, was the only other railroad in positive intermodal territory.

Canadian National, with an overall volume decline of 6.1%, was the only other railroad above the industry average.

In the western U.S., Union Pacific edged out BNSF Railway. UP's traffic fell 7% for the year, while BNSF's declined 7.6%.

The cellar dweller for the year was Norfolk Southern, which suffered the deepest declines in intermodal, carload, and coal traffic. Its overall volume was down 11.9%.



The Center for Railroad Photography & Art is hosting regular online events, often tied to its collections. Center for Railroad Photography & Art

When restaurant dining was basically closed by the state of Virginia, there were no meetings for four months, from March through July, according to Chapter President Rick Johnson. Subsequently, when restrictions were eased, meetings commenced again, with participants wearing masks, and practicing "social distancing."

According to Johnson, prior to the 2020 pandemic, typical attendance was 25 to 30 people; under the new rules, the maximum number of participants to date has been 10 people. Rick states that the overall impact on the membership has "been hard to determine," and, although there has not been a significant effect on the operating budget, cancellation of Rail Day has eliminated the ability to make donations to other organizations.

Online presentations were considered, but Johnson says that the Chapter concluded that it did not have sufficient resources to undertake this. Post-pandemic, the group expects to return to a normal schedule of in-person meetings.

Further north, the Potomac Chapter of the NRHS, which typically met in county government offices in Rockville, Md., had to cancel its March, April, and May meetings due to a county facility closure. It also had to eliminate a planned 50th anniversary event, and a joint picnic with the Baltimore Chapter, according to Chapter Secretary Bill Holdsworth.

They have since elected to use Zoom software to have virtual meetings, including presentations. Holdsworth says that, "Zoom has worked out surprisingly well, with attendance strong, including out-of-town members." In addition, quarterly board meetings are also held using Zoom. He indicates that "there has been no negative feedback about online presentations; some members have noted that they are of higher quality than those that previously utilized projection in the county meeting space"

While typical in-person attendance had been about 20, the Zoom meetings are attracting about 25 to 30 participants, although Holdsworth notes that there seems to be less participation by members that are not "computer savvy." Financially, the Potomac Chapter has benefitted by not having to pay rent for the space used previously for its meetings.

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Rail History Organizations Mixed on Effects of COVID-19

Meetings move online in response to 2020 pandemic

By [George W. Hamlin](#) | December 28, 2020 Trains Newswire

LYNCHBURG, Va. – The COVID-19 pandemic, and associated restrictions on travel and large group meetings has played havoc with a number of railroad-oriented events in 2020. Both the annual Summerail and Winterrail photography-oriented events were cancelled, as was the annual National Railroad Historical Society's national convention. In some cases, local and even national railroad groups have found ways to continue operating, albeit utilizing different concepts and techniques than what they and their members have been used to in the past.

The Blue Ridge Chapter of the NRHS, based in Lynchburg, held monthly meetings at a local restaurant that typically included a presentation, as well as an annual "Rail Day" show and sale that generated revenue the Chapter could distribute to entities engaged in railway preservation.

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While typical in-person attendance had been about 20, the Zoom meetings are attracting about 25 to 30 participants, although Holdsworth notes that there seems to be less participation by members that are not "computer savvy." Financially, the Potomac Chapter has benefitted by not having to pay rent for the space used previously for its meetings. Holdsworth believes that going forward, in-person meetings will resume, but planning for this has not been finalized yet, pending knowing more about when people will feel comfortable about attending these events, and when there will not be significant restrictions constraining them.

On a larger scale, the Wisconsin-based Center for Railroad Photography & Art typically held an annual meeting with multiple presentations attended by about 180 participants prior to the Pandemic, as well as other smaller events. This was cancelled for 2020, but as indicated by Scott Lothes, the Center's president and executive director, the organization "became an early adopter for online events," replacing the planned spring 2020 in-person conference with a well-received "virtual" conference.

Two notable benefits were that "this included attendees from all over the world", and that rather than being limited to 180, over 400 people participated. Lothes was "really amazed" at the support for the video conference: "I was blown away by the reception."

As a result, he adds that "Participation is way up; costs are way down," and that the Center has gained an "Expanded member base, as well as greater brand recognition." Financially, results are close to 2019, which was a record year for the Center.

Lothes sees the future as including a "hybrid of in-person and online events" and hopes to have an in-person event by the fall of 2021, conditions permitting. Meanwhile, the Center continues to present monthly online programs at no charge, although donations are welcome. Typical participation has been about 150 people.

It has been apparent for some time that people enjoy getting together to see presentations about railroads, either in-person or now, online. It looks like when the pandemic is over that in-person events will resume, and it's likely that we will also see a proliferation of online presentations on a



CSX GP40-2 No. 6498 leads an eastbound train through River Forest, Ill., on the Union Pacific in November 2019. CSX and Union Pacific will begin earnings announcements for Class I railroads on Thursday. TRAINS: David Lassen

Class I Earnings Expected to Rise

Union Pacific, CSX reports Thursday to begin earnings announcements

January 20, 2021 Trains newswire

The publicly traded Class I railroads will begin reporting their fourth-quarter and full-year financial results Thursday, when Union Pacific and CSX Transportation release their earnings. As a group, earnings for the six Class I systems are expected to rise 5.5%, according to I/B/E/S consensus estimates. That's far better performance than is anticipated for the large companies on the S&P 500 Index, whose earnings are expected to tumble 12% due to the economic impact of the pandemic.

A key question to watch for during the railroads' earnings calls: Will railroads fully reinstate earnings and volume guidance for 2021? At the onset of the pandemic last year the Class I systems joined most other companies in suspending their financial outlooks amid the economic uncertainty.

UP, which will release results on Thursday morning, on Jan. 8 announced preliminary operating results as part of a regulatory filing that disclosed the railroad's \$278 million impairment charge for its investment in Brazos Yard. [See ["Union Pacific writes down Brazos Yard investment."](#) *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 8, 2021].

UP expected its operating income to fall 4.8% in the quarter compared to a year ago. The railroad's operating ratio, adjusted for the impact of the Brazos Yard charge, was 55.6%, a 4.1-point improvement from the fourth quarter of 2019. Analysts expect UP's earnings per share to rise 10.8% for the quarter.

CSX is expected to report a 1% increase in earnings when it reports its financial results on Thursday afternoon.

Kansas City Southern, the smallest Class I, is expected to report a 5.5% boost to its earnings. It will release its financial results on Friday morning.

Canadian National's earnings are expected to surge 13.5%. CN will hold its earnings call on Jan. 26.

On Jan. 27, Norfolk Southern and Canadian Pacific will close out the fourth-quarter earnings reports. NS, which reports in the morning, is expected to see its earnings fall 2.7%. Analysts expect CP, which releases its financial results in the afternoon, to show a 5.2% increase in earnings. BNSF Railway is expected to report its fourth-quarter and full-year earnings alongside its corporate parent, Berkshire Hathaway, on Feb. 22.



TCMRM Volunteers and Guests,

Happy New Year!

Thursday, January 7, 2021,
provided by Rick Krenski

Museum Reopening January 16th! The museum is reopening on Saturday, January 16th! Tickets for regular daytime admission and our Night Trains™ events are available at tcmrm.eventbrite.com. You must purchase tickets in advance and our previous capacity limits, mask requirements and social distancing practices will all be in effect for the time being. We are excited to reopen the museum to the public and we hope you are excited to come back and visit! As always, stay home if you aren't feeling well and if you need to cancel your visit simply email us at tcmrm@tcmrm.org and we will help you out. The shifts will be split "DAY" shift 10am to 2pm, Closed 2pm to 3pm, and "NIGHT" shift from 3pm to 7pm. If you are not a member and want to visit the museum, you can go to the website www.tcmrm.org and order tickets. So you can visit the Gift Shop "Hobby Sale" this Saturday from 10AM to 5PM. And you can visit the museum and see all the trains running again on January 16, 2021.

AAPRCO

Mid-Month Highlights

Washington Update

January 2021 by Ross Capon

President-elect Biden cancelled his planned Inaugural Special from Wilmington after the FBI "over the weekend reportedly briefed the transition team about plans of armed protests at all 50 state capitals and in Washington, reported the Associated Press." Click [here](#) for *The Independent's* (UK) report. See below for a discussion of President-elect Lincoln's train ride to his inaugural.

Political Fundraisers. A number of companies have paused either all political contributions or contributions to legislators who voted to reject some of Biden's electoral votes. Dow Chemical's suspension "will remain in place for one election cycle, meaning it will last two years for lawmakers in the House of Representatives and six years for senators, the chemical maker said in an email" January 11 (Bloomberg). The ban includes contributions to candidates' re-election committees and affiliated PACs, Dow said. However, "many executives [at other companies] acknowledged they expect to start re-engaging in campaign contributions to Republicans once the latest political crisis passes, perhaps by the spring" (*Politico*).

The Senate in the 117th Congress will switch to Democratic control following Biden's win and the Dems' twin Georgia Senatorial wins. It is possible that committee memberships, as in the similar situation in 2001, will be evenly split, with Democrats as chairs. (In 2001, Republicans were chairs as Bush 43 was President.) Also, possibly as in 2001, in event of a committee deadlock, a bill could still be brought to the floor. With 51 votes, Democrats could confirm Biden's nominees for Cabinet positions, for federal judgeships, and - if one came open - for a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court. They could also use the legislative mechanism known as "[reconciliation](#)" to pass legislation *if it is related to budgets or spending*.

Lincoln's Train Trip to the 1861 Inauguration. This came while the nation was falling apart, with states seceding. Lincoln's detective, Allan Pinkerton, confirmed an assassination plot in Baltimore, so - after telegraph lines were cut - Lincoln (code name "Nuts") boarded a one-car train that raced to Philadelphia (code name "Barley") where he boarded a sleeping-car near the back of the last train south. Detective Kate Warne bribed a conductor with a half dollar "explaining that she would need four berths cordoned off so that her invalid brother could rest in peace." The railroad cars crossed the Susquehanna River by steamboat and traversed Baltimore during the night. A city ordinance required trains in the night to be horse-drawn from President Street Station to Camden Street Station. According to Ted Widmer, in his superb 2020 book, *Lincoln on the Verge*, "The assassins believed that Lincoln was coming from Harrisburg into Baltimore's Calvert Street Station and intended to attack him there, in a narrow vestibule." The History Channel got this wrong, and also incorrectly claimed that Lincoln "later regretted the caper," dropping the crucial bolded part of this Lincoln quote: "I did not then, nor do I now believe I should have been assassinated had I gone through Baltimore **as first contemplated, but I thought it wise to run no risk where no risk was necessary.**" The [full quote](#) is on p.458 in *Abraham Lincoln in Illinois, Part II*, by Lincoln's friend, E. B. Washburne, the Illinois Congressman who met Lincoln at the station in Washington.

Passenger News: Unions, Flynn Ask Feds to Beef Up Security on D.C. Amtrak Service

In the wake of last week's riot at the U.S. Capitol, Amtrak CEO Bill Flynn and the leaders of two major unions representing railroad workers have asked the [Federal Railroad Administration](#) (FRA) and [Department of Homeland Security](#) (DHS) to address security vulnerabilities for [Amtrak](#) workers and riders in and around Washington, D.C.

The International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers-Transportation Division (SMART TD) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) were joined by Flynn in asking the FRA and DHS to take immediate executive action to tighten security and enhance punishments, and to increase personnel to a level that brings passenger-rail security more in line with aviation security overseen by the Federal Aviation Administration.

"We are demanding that significant changes to passenger-rail protocol be granted immediately to protect against the imminent threat of danger that exists today," said Presidents Jeremy Ferguson of SMART-TD and Dennis Pierce of the BLET in a letter to federal authorities. "It is our recommendation, as a minimal standard, that any regulation granted to prohibit the interference of a train crew's duty be in line with that of aviation statutes and regulations."

The security concerns are being raised as the U.S. Capitol gears up for next week's inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

Some of the rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6th are now on the FAA's "No Fly" list, which prevents them from traveling by air.

Flynn and union leaders asked that a "no ride" list that mirrors the FAA's list be enacted immediately. Moreover, they called for additional law enforcement presence in the form of Amtrak police, U.S. Marshals or Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers to protect Amtrak riders and workers on trains.

"We stand ready to assist FRA, TSA and Homeland Security to help ensure the safety of our members and the traveling public," Pierce said. In a prepared statement, Flynn said, "In addition to limiting ticket sales and requiring masks to be worn at all times, we are increasing our police enforcement to ensure strong compliance, remove noncomplying customers and ban those that don't follow our policies. This includes deploying additional Amtrak Police officers onboard our trains and in our stations to support our front-line staff, and utilizing additional support from TSA and partner law enforcement agencies."

As a member of the steering committee for next week's inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, the Amtrak Police Department has prepared a "robust strategy to secure our stations, trains and infrastructure," Flynn said.

[AllAboardRailDiscussion] FL: Here's When Brightline Trains are Expected to Restart Service

From: Gary Kazin via groups.io <gkazin@yahoo.com@groups.io>> Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021

Provided by John Goodman

Here's when Brightline trains are expected to restart service

By David Lyons South Florida Sun Sentinel

After a hiatus that started nine months ago, Brightline's high-speed rail service is likely to come to life again in South Florida toward the end of this year, the company now says.

The rail line, which halted service among the downtowns of Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Miami last March due to COVID-19, has used the down time to firm up new plans for local stations and build out its 170-mile expansion to Orlando, said spokesman Ben Porritt.

In the meantime, the company has commenced a plan to gradually restore nearly 250 jobs that were cut when the line shut down.

"There is a rolling plan to bring back positions," Porritt said. "Some of this has started and will continue throughout the year. As it relates to station and operations staff, we expect them to be brought on board between 30 to 60 days prior to resuming service."

According to a memo sent to investors late last year, the company said it was continuing to reassess its business plans amid the pandemic, including the best time to get its trains running again. But it offered no details on what events or conditions would trigger a resumption of service.

In December, the Bond Buyer, a trade publication, quoted the memo as saying service would resume in the third quarter of 2021. But on Thursday, Porritt would say only that a restart of service would happen sometime in "late 2021."

Trains to reappear for signal tests

While trains won't resume service for the public until later this year, you still might see the trains on the tracks. Brightline says it is upgrading its corridor between Miami and West Palm Beach with a series of signal tests that will start Sunday and last through the end of May.

That means that for the first time in months, Brightline's trains, which are housed in West Palm Beach, will be passing through South Florida communities.

Rail workers will operate along the corridor and train horns will sound overnight and in quiet zones, the company said in a recent statement.

Residents who live near the Florida East Coast Railway line and motorists who drive over its rail crossings will start seeing Brightline trains. The first round of tests will be in Miami-Dade on Sunday and continue through Jan. 30.

In Broward County, the tests will start next month, a spokeswoman said. The first will start on Feb. 14 with the other beginning on April 25. Each test will last between five and seven days.

http://enewspaper.sun-sentinel.com/infinity/article_share.aspx?guid=d4a4bbec-7251-46f4-8dfe-a423eb61eccb

Gary R. Kazin

China: How Ending Adobe Flash Thwarted a Railroad From Operating for 20 Hours

From: Gene Poon <sheehans2016@gmail.com> Saturday, January 23, 2021, 07:00:15 PM CST

Provided by John Goodman

One annoying aspect of Flash was how Adobe sent out updates very often, sometimes only a few days apart and at least once on consecutive days. I don't miss that at all (I did not opt for automatic install of updates, preferring to be notified and download/install them myself). At some point there was probably a "sunset code line" written into the software update, which prevented its running after the final day. Now, if the Chinese had simply NEVER UPDATED THEIR FLASH, would nothing have happened?

However, the Firefox browser and maybe others include programming that prevented Flash from running at all unless it was a fairly recent version. You could skip a few updates but finally it wouldn't work. So the Chinese probably did have to install a oddball browser anyway to get the trains running.

On Sat, Jan 23, 2021, 3:14 PM Gary Kazin via groups.io <gkazin@yahoo.com@groups.io> wrote:

The news has already made the rounds (for one last time) that on December 31, 2020, Adobe [stopped supporting Flash Player](#) and on January 12, 2021 blocked any sort of content from running on Flash Player altogether. The firm had been working on this [decision since 2017](#) and "strongly" recommended all users immediately uninstall Flash Player to help protect their systems.

For most of us, this change meant nothing. Adobe Flash was mostly used for some rather *simple* games that most of us did not really play. However, for the city of Dalian in China, it meant that their railroad stopped working.

More: <https://interestingengineering.com/how-ending-adobe-flash-thwarted-a-railroad-from-operating-for-20-hours> -article next page

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A tram in Dalian, China.

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RELATED: THE END OF ADOBE FLASH AND THE HEIGHT OF THE WAR OVER PRIVACY

Yes! You read that right, an entire city was running its railroad network on Flash. This may sound a little less surprising if you consider that YouTube ran its site on Flash till about 2015.

Still, however, it seems like a risky move. What is even riskier is that despite many warnings that Adobe was going to stop working, the city did not make changes in its infrastructure.

Instead, they continued to run on Flash until the web browser was blocked two weeks ago.

Once that was done, the railroad found itself unable to function and remained inactive for 20 hours. We can imagine that many people found themselves inconvenienced by this turn of events.

So, how did the railroad fix this issue? You would venture a guess that they might have switched to a more current management system.

No! They simply installed a **pirated version of Flash** along with an older version of the web browser that worked well together. This pirated version, known as "Ghost", was still operational and unblocked.

One has to wonder how long their *solution* might last. After all, with Flash no longer being operational, where will they go for support? You do, however, have to admire their ingenuity.

This story was first reported by *AppleDaily*.



STB Extends Uinta Basin Railway DEIS Comment Period

Written by *Marybeth Luczak*, Executive Editor January 28, 2021 Railway Age



The FRA's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) issued the Draft EIS for the proposed Uinta Basin Railway in late October 2020.

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) is extending until Feb. 12 the comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed 85-mile Uinta Basin Railway in Utah. Eagle County, Colo., requested the extension on Jan. 25 due to concerns about the Tennessee Pass Line in Colorado.

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What's the connection? The [Seven County Infrastructure Coalition](#) is project applicant for the Uinta Basin Railway, and [Rio Grande Pacific Corp.](#) is the proposed operator. Rio Grande is also owner of [Colorado, Midland & Pacific Railway Company \(CMPR\)](#), which recently requested STB authority to lease and operate the Tennessee Pass Line. CMPR entered into an agreement with Union Pacific (UP) to lease the majority (163.1 miles) of the rail line between Parkdale and Sage, Colo.

According to the [FRA's](#) Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) —which issued the Draft EIS for the proposed Uinta Basin Railway in late October—Eagle County stated “stakeholders in Colorado are concerned that rail traffic from the Uinta Basin Railway, including unit trains carrying crude oil, could travel on the Tennessee Pass Line if both the proposed construction and operation of the Uinta Basin Railway and the proposed lease and reactivation of the Tennessee Pass Line were to move forward.” The comment period extension will give stakeholders more time to

In Jan. 26 statements to STB, the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition and the Rio Grande reported that “there are no plans to transport oil originating from the proposed Uinta Basin Railway on the Tennessee Pass Line” and the “primary objective of the proposed lease and reactivation of the Tennessee Pass Line would be to provide passenger rail service, and it would not be practical or economical to transport oil on the Tennessee Pass Line,” STB said.

The comment period for the Uinta Basin Railway DEIS closes Feb. 12. OEA will then prepare a Final EIS that responds to the Draft EIS comments.



NS 4Q20: 'More Opportunity Ahead'

Written by [Marybeth Luczak](#), Executive Editor January 27, 2021 Railway Age

For Norfolk Southern (NS), fourth-quarter net income of \$671 million rose nearly 1% from the year-earlier period's \$666 million, and its 61.8% operating ratio was “all-time quarterly record,” the Class I railroad reported Jan. 27. Among other fourth-quarter highlights:

- Railway operating revenues of \$2.6 billion fell 4% vs. fourth-quarter 2019, “driven by a 1% decline in volume, lower fuel surcharges and differing business mix,” according to [NS](#).



“We have set the stage to drive further efficiency and profitable growth in 2021 through our precision scheduled railroading operating plan, which will deliver long-term value for both our shareholders and customers,” Norfolk Southern Chairman, President and CEO James A. Squires said.



Railway operating expenses were \$1.6 billion, falling 8%, or \$139 million, compared with the same period last year.

“Lower fuel costs, compensation and benefits, and purchased services were partially offset by lower gains on property sales,” the railroad said.

- Income from railway operations was \$1.0 billion, up 2%, or \$22 million, year-over-year.

2020 Results

Full-year net income was \$2.0 billion, down 26% vs. \$2.7 billion in 2019. The operating ratio for 2020 was 69.3% vs. the record of 64.7% set in 2019. Excluding a first-quarter-reported non-cash locomotive rationalization charge of \$385 million and a third-quarter-reported non-cash investment impairment charge of \$99 million, adjusted 2020 net income was \$2.4 billion and the adjusted operating ratio improved to 64.4%, vs. 2019.

Fourth Quarter Highlights

Q4 2020 vs. Q4 2019 / favorable / unfavorable
\$ millions

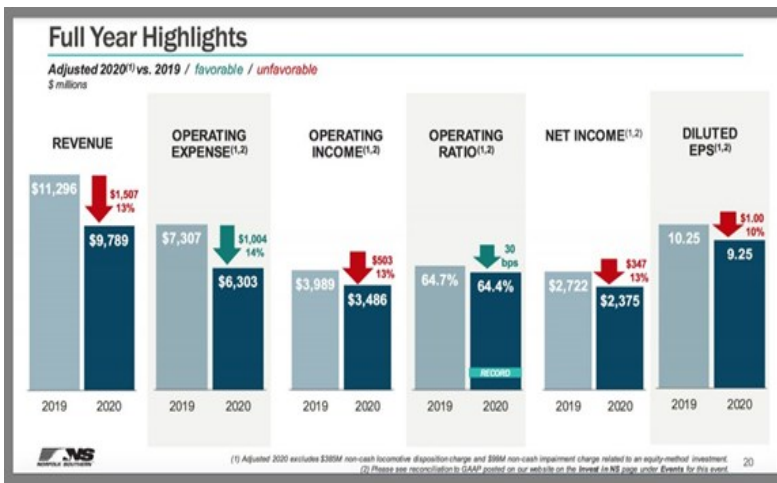


⁽¹⁾ Please see reconciliation to GAAP posted on our website on the latest NS page under Events for this event. 17

NS Chairman, President and CEO James A. Squires

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Among other 2020 highlights:

- Railway operating revenues of \$9.8 billion declined 13% “as volume was down 12% year-over-year, reflecting declines in all major commodity categories driven by the global pandemic,” the railroad reported.
- Railway operating expenses of \$6.8 billion decreased \$520 million, or 7%, vs. 2019. Lower fuel costs, compensation and benefits, purchased services, and materials costs were partially offset by the non-cash locomotive rationalization charge and non-cash impairment charge related to an equity-method investment, NS said. Excluding the charges, adjusted operating expenses decreased by \$1.0 billion, or 14%, compared to 2019, according to NS.
- Income from railway operations was \$3.0 billion. Excluding the non-cash locomotive rationalization and investment impairment charges, it was \$3.5 billion, adjusted.

“As we take stock of what we achieved in 2020 while managing both the pandemic and energy market challenges, including the successful idling of four additional hump operations while driving productivity to record levels, we see much more opportunity ahead,” Norfolk Southern Chairman, President and CEO James A. Squires said. “We have set the stage to drive further efficiency and profitable growth in 2021 through our precision scheduled railroading operating plan, which will deliver long-term value for both our shareholders and customers.”

2021 Outlook

NS reported capex of approximately \$1.6 billion for 2021. The railroad also said it expects to see an approximately 9% year-over-year growth in revenue, with intermodal and merchandise as the “leading growth drivers.” For coal, a “secular decline continues,” the railroad noted. As for operating ratio, the railroad said it expected a “greater than 300 basis point improvement in 2021, vs. 2020 adjusted OR.”



UP's 'True Potential' Shown in 4Q20 Results

by Marybeth Luczak, Executive Editor
January 21, 2021 Railway Age

UP's 2020 capital program totaled \$2.8 billion. One of the railroad's projects was the Dec. 29 installation of a new master retarder in Houston's Englewood Yard; work took close to

Union Pacific (UP) reported Jan. 21 that it earned \$1.38 billion, or \$2.05 per diluted share, in fourth-quarter 2020—comparable to fourth-quarter 2019's \$1.4 billion, or \$2.02 per diluted share. Excluding a previously announced \$278 million pre-tax, non-cash impairment charge related to its Brazos yard investment, adjusted fourth-quarter 2020 income was \$1.6 billion, or \$2.36 per diluted share. For fourth-quarter 2020, UP operating revenue of \$5.1 billion was down 1% vs. the same quarter in 2019. Business volumes, as measured by total revenue carloads, increased 3% compared with 2019; premium volumes increased 5% compared with 2019, while bulk was flat (up just 1%) and industrial declined 7%.

“These outstanding results demonstrate the true potential of our franchise as we leveraged all three profitability drivers simultaneously—volume growth, productivity and pricing,” said Lance Fritz, Chairman, President and CEO of UP, the first Class I out of the gate to report its results. “The women and men of Union Pacific persevered throughout the pandemic to provide our customers with a safe, reliable and consistent service product.”

UP announced its fourth-quarter impairment charge in a Jan. 8, 2021, 8-K filing, noting that “investments made to date [in the Brazos yard] will be used for freight car block swapping activities, rather than proceeding with additional investments required to complete the freight car classification yard. While the company's long-term growth outlook in the Southern region of its network remains unchanged, the implementation of Unified Plan 2020 [Precision Scheduled Railroading, PSR] has created capacity at existing facilities to effectively handle that growth.”

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Fourth Quarter Adjusted Income Statement

\$ in Millions (except EPS)

	2020 Reported	2020 Adjusted*	2019	Variance To 2020 Adjusted	
Operating Revenues	\$5,141	\$5,141	\$5,212	(1)	%
Operating Expenses	3,135	2,857	3,112	(8)	
Operating Income	2,006	2,284	2,100	9	
Other Income	66	66	56	18	
Interest Expense	(279)	(279)	(278)	0	
Income Taxes	(413)	(482)	(475)	1	
Net Income	\$1,380	\$1,589	\$1,403	13	%
Weighted Average Diluted Shares	674.1	674.1	694.9	(3)	
Diluted EPS	\$2.05	\$2.36	\$2.02	17	
Operating Ratio	61.0%	55.6%	59.7%	4.1	pts

15 * 2020 Adjusted excludes Brazos non-cash impairment charge. See Union Pacific website under Investors for a reconciliation to GAAP.

Among other fourth-quarter 2020 results:

- Freight revenue fell 1% from fourth-quarter 2019, “as volume growth and core pricing gains were more than offset by decreased fuel surcharge revenue and a less favorable business mix,” UP reported.
- The operating ratio was 61.0%. When adjusted for the impairment charge, it hit a record 55.6%, or 410 basis points lower than fourth-quarter 2019, according to the railroad. Lower fuel prices, UP noted, positively impacted the operating ratio by 90 basis points.
- Freight car velocity was 223 daily miles per car, improving 1% compared with fourth-quarter 2019.
- Locomotive productivity was 142 gross ton-miles per horsepower day, a 13% improvement vs. the comparable 2019 quarter.



Lance Fritz, Union Pacific Chairman, President and CEO

- Quarterly workforce productivity was 1,032 car miles per employee, an 18% improvement vs. fourth-quarter 2019.
- Average maximum train length was 9,154 feet, a 12% rise over fourth-quarter 2019.

2020 Full-Year Results

UP reported net income of \$5.3 billion, or \$7.88 per diluted share, for 2020. Adjusted full-year net income—excluding the effects of the \$278 million pre-tax, non-cash impairment charge—was \$5.6 billion, or \$8.19 per diluted share. This compares to \$5.9 billion, or \$8.38 per diluted share, in 2019.

According to the railroad, total operating revenue was \$19.5 billion vs. \$21.7 billion in 2019. Operating income was \$7.8 billion, a decline from 2019.

Among other highlights:

- Freight revenue was \$18.3 billion, falling 10% from 2019. Carloadings were down 7% compared with 2019, as bulk, industrial and premium declined “due to the economic conditions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic,” UP reported.

- The operating ratio was 59.9%. When adjusted for the impairment charge, UP said, it “is a best ever” 58.5%, 210 basis points lower than 2019. Lower fuel prices positively impacted the operating ratio by 130 basis points, the railroad noted.
 - The reportable personal injury rate of 0.90 incidents per 200,000 employee hours was flat compared with full-year 2019, UP said. The FRA-reportable rail equipment incident rate of 3.54 per million train miles improved 17% vs. full-year 2019, it added.
- Additionally, UP reported that through continued implementation of PSR principles, it made year-over-year improvements in freight car velocity (6%), average terminal dwell (8%), locomotive productivity (14%), workforce productivity (11%), train length (14%), intermodal car trip plan compliance (6 pt.), and manifest/autos car trip plan compliance (6 pt.). The railroad’s fuel consumption rate, measured in gallons of fuel per thousand gross ton miles, improved 2% in 2020 vs. 2019.

UP’s 2020 capital program totaled \$2.8 billion. It also repurchased 22 million shares last year, at an aggregate cost of \$3.7 billion.

2021 Outlook

For 2021, the railroad reported that it anticipates full-year volume growth of 4%-6%; 150-200 basis points of operating ratio improvement; and first-quarter volume growth in the low single digits.

“While the economic outlook for 2021 remains uncertain, we will build off our solid 2020 performance to produce continued strong productivity through operational excellence,” Fritz said. “We expect our enhanced service product will support both solid core pricing gains, while also increasing our share of the freight transportation market. Our confidence in our ability to drive value for all of our stakeholders has never been greater.”



Amtrak’s PTC systems are expected to be interoperable with its host and tenant railroads by year’s end, but the Amtrak OIG



Amtrak OIG: Ensure PTC Reliability

Written by Marybeth Luczak, Executive Editor December 16, 2020
Railway Age

The Amtrak Office of Inspector General (OIG) has recommended in a new report that Amtrak should “better measure” PTC (Positive Train Control) system reliability. It also noted that Amtrak faces two risks that may diminish the safety benefits of PTC.

OIG assessed the operations of Amtrak’s systems—for which implementation was completed in August—and their interoperability with Amtrak’s host and tenant railroads, including New Jersey Transit. Interoperability is expected by the Dec. 31, 2020 deadline. The OIG report found that Amtrak cannot fully measure PTC reliability because “it does not have the electronic tools to easily access the data necessary for it and the FRA [Federal Railroad Administration] to monitor system performance.”

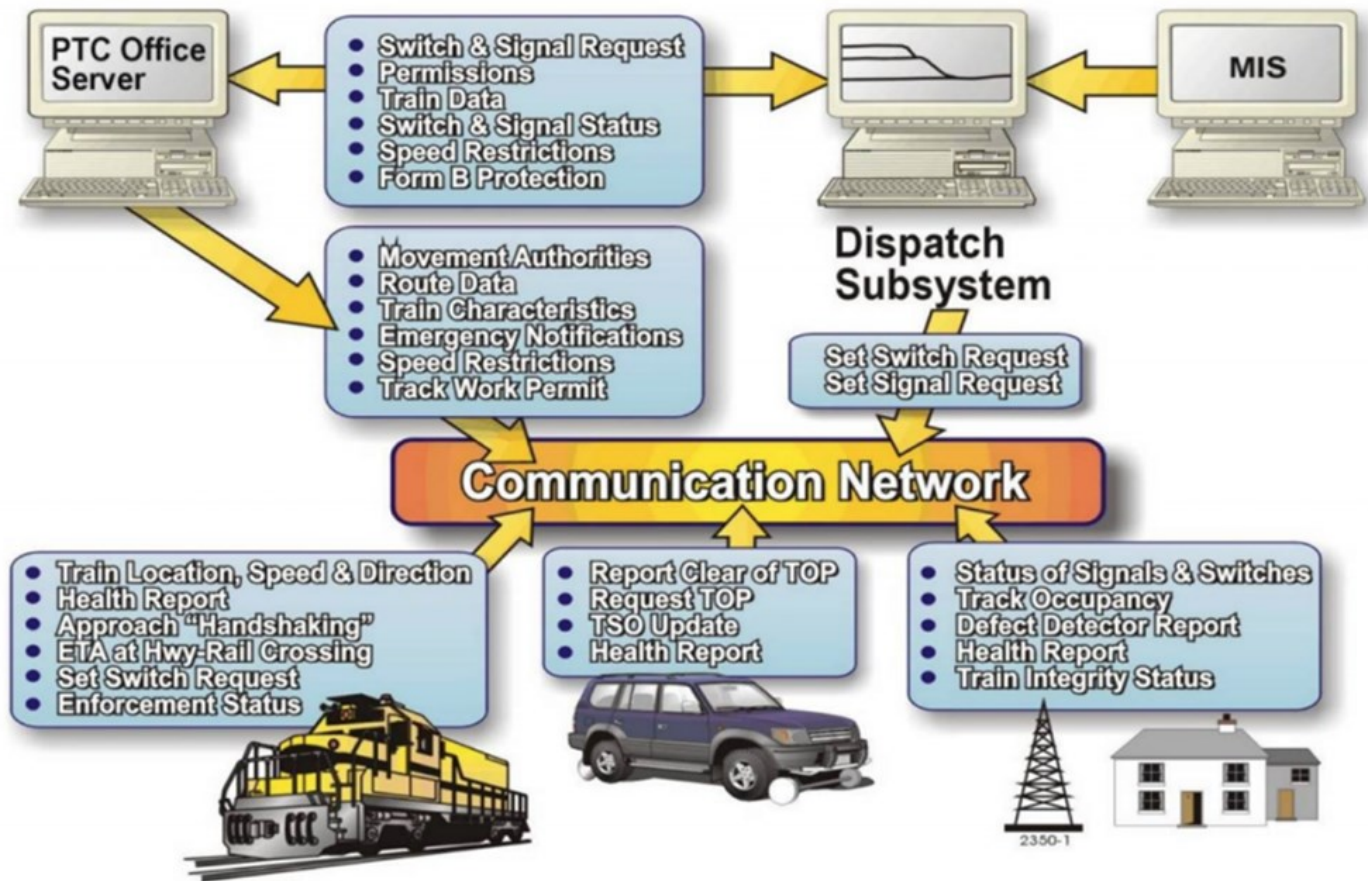
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Instead, Amtrak must manually compile it, a process the OIG found to be “inefficient and error prone.” For example, OIG auditors identified at least twice as many reliability incidents in a month than Amtrak officials identified after reviewing the same source of information. As a result, “reports on PTC reliability are incomplete and Amtrak cannot easily identify potential problems it may need to address promptly or longer-term.”

While Amtrak program officials have acknowledged the need for electronic tools, they told OIG “they have not fully researched available options because they have been focused on meeting the implementation deadline. They also cited funding constraints because of the pandemic.” Without these tools to effectively track system performance, the report noted, “Amtrak may not realize the full benefits of its investments in PTC.”

Amtrak has “invested hundreds of millions of dollars” in PTC, including about \$370 million from fiscal years 2008 through 2020, according to the report. (Amtrak has three PTC systems: the Advanced Civil Speed Enforcement System on the Northeast Corridor and connecting corridors it owns; Incremental Train Control System in Michigan; and Interoperable Electronic Train Management System onboard locomotives that operate on the freight railroad national network, where it is a tenant.)



Communication Network is the backbone of PTC systems

The report also found that Amtrak faces two risks that may diminish PTC’s safety benefits. They are:

1. “The [PTC] systems sometimes do not initialize prior to departure, or they disengage en route.” When such incidents occur, program officials told OIG, “trains must still abide by traditional measures to ensure safe operations, such as obeying signaling systems and rules that guide engineers.” OIG noted that Amtrak “has not consistently implemented the more stringent practices FRA will begin enforcing in January 2022 to mitigate risks when such incidents occur. These practices include not departing if the system did not initialize or requiring slower speeds.” For example, “when Amtrak’s newest PTC system, the Interoperable Electronic Train Management System, does not initialize prior to a train’s departure, Amtrak permits dispatchers to decide if the train can still depart if addressing the failure will cause more than a 10-minute delay.” Amtrak officials told the OIG “they agreed that a more detailed assessment could help identify whether additional actions are needed in the interim and said a review was underway to assess the company’s processes when PTC does not operate as intended.”

2. “The systems require accurate data on when to enforce temporary speed restrictions or prohibit trains from entering work zone locations, but dispatchers must manually enter these data into the systems. [Amtrak] takes steps to help ensure that the data dispatchers enter are accurate, but there is still a risk of human error.” According to OIG, “Amtrak officials said they intend to assess the level of risk this situation poses and if it warrants mitigation.”

What are the next steps? OIG has recommended that Amtrak:

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- Research electronic tool options to “access data needed to monitor PTC performance and submit what it selects for funding consideration.” Amtrak management has agreed and the target completion date is June 30, 2021, according to the report.
- “Determine if additional mitigations should be implemented when PTC does not operate as intended.” Management has agreed; completion is expected by Feb. 15, 2021.
- “Initiate its plan to assess the risk of incorrect data entry related to PTC.” Again, management agreed and targets the end of the year for completion.



Total orders for 2020 were 17,275—a stark contrast to 2018’s 77,478 and 2014’s peak of 138,234.

ARCI: 4Q20 Railcar Orders, Deliveries Sink

Written by Marybeth Luczak, Executive Editor January 25, 2021
Railway Age

Fourth-quarter 2020 freight car reporting statistics from the Railway Supply Institute’s (RSI) American Railway Car Institute Committee (ARCI) show drops in orders, deliveries and backlog. All came in lower sequentially as the “industry continues to grapple with economic challenges as a result of COVID-19,” ARCI noted Jan. 25.

Carbuilders took orders for 3,397 cars in fourth-quarter 2020, a 60% falloff compared with 8,464 in fourth-quarter 2019, and a 41% decline from 5,783 in third-quarter 2020. Total orders for 2020 were 17,275—a stark contrast to 2018’s 77,478 and 2014’s peak of 138,234.

Railcar Orders, Deliveries & Backlog

Current Quarter & Trailing Four Quarters

	12/31/2020	10/1/2020	7/1/2020	4/1/2020
Backlog	34,598	37,417	39,612	46,330

	4th Quarter 2020	3rd Quarter 2020	2nd Quarter 2020	1st Quarter 2020	4th Quarter 2019
Orders	3,397	5,783	1,923	6,172	8,464
Deliveries	6,216	7,953	8,441	10,824	14,727

Twelve-Month Year-End Comparison

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Orders	17,275	37,196	77,478	38,750	22,879
Deliveries	33,434	58,026	50,803	44,963	62,433

Figures that do not track reflect revisions to a prior quarter made subsequent to that quarter’s reporting.

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The fourth-quarter 2020 backlog of 34,598 cars was down 8% from 37,417 at the end of third-quarter 2020; and down 25% from 46,330 at the end of first-quarter 2020.

Deliveries during the last four months of 2020 were 6,216 cars, falling 58% compared with 14,727 at the same point in 2019, and dipping 22% from the previous quarter's 7,953. Total deliveries for 2020 were 33,434—down from a high of 62,433 in 2016 and 82,296 in 2015.



Chuck Baker



Perseverance, The Short Line Hallmark

Written by Chuck Baker, President, ASLRRRA January 21, 2021 from Railway Age

Perseverance is a virtue, and 2020 required all the perseverance one could muster. The pandemic, the disruption of the workplace and of ordinary commerce, trade disputes, our unsettled politics—all contributed to a year that affected every American citizen and business.

Perseverance has been the hallmark of the short line industry, and as difficult as 2020 was for our industry, it was the year that perseverance paid off on our top legislative priority. After nearly two decades of hard work, 45G, the short line rehabilitation tax credit was made permanent.

Our first tax credit legislation, introduced in 2003 and passed in 2004, was extended seven times before being made permanent by the 116th Congress. During that 17-year period, short line railroaders conducted more than 1,000 meetings per year with Members of Congress and amassed more than 2,100 House and 389 Senate co-sponsors over 8 bills. We organized a customer coalition, *Saving our Service*, that secured more than 1,000 shippers who publicly supported our legislation in the media and through meetings with their elected officials. We organized the first Railroad Day on the Hill, and with the help of the entire railroad industry turned it into one of the largest and most successful lobbying events in Washington D.C. We ended this marathon race in the most uniquely troubled year imaginable.

While this space does not allow us to name the many Congresspeople that made success possible, there are some that persevered with us from the beginning and without whom we would not have succeeded. Senator Moran (R-Kan.), then a Member of the House, was the original sponsor of the 2003 legislation. Rep. Camp (R-Mich.) was the first Member of the House tax writing committee to sponsor the bill. Our chief Congressional sponsors at the end, Reps. Blumenauer (D-Ore.) and Kelly (R-Pa.) and Sens. Crapo (R-Idaho) and Wyden (D-Ore.) were there from or near the beginning and never wavered in their support. The Chairmen of the tax writing committees, Sen. Grassley (R-Iowa) and Rep. Neal (D-Mass.) played key roles in pulling 45G over the finish line.

Each of these members and many more took the time to learn about the needs of our industry and the importance of track rehabilitation to our shippers. They were our Congressional missionaries, and they never missed an opportunity to proselytize on our behalf. Likewise, their staffs gave generously of their time and talents. They helped us communicate effectively with their bosses. They facilitated our thousands of Congressional meetings in Washington D.C. and in their Districts when travel was possible, and then in the virtual world when it was not. Perhaps most important, they helped us navigate the treacherous terrain of the legislative process.

The 45G tax credit has and will continue to be one of the most important tools short lines have to make our infrastructure safer and more efficient for the huge areas of rural and small town America that we serve. For the perseverance of our Congressional allies, we are forever grateful. In the beginning, ASLRRRA created a Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) to focus our time and resources on our legislative agenda. Our current LPC Chairman, G&W's Jerry Vest, reminds us, "While this was a tremendous accomplishment for short lines and the customers and communities that depend on us, we need now to quickly pivot to engage with the new President, his Administration and the new Congress."

We will work to ensure robust short line eligibility for grant programs such as CRISI, BUILD, INFRA and others included in future infrastructure/stimulus proposals. We will work to educate a whole new set of regulators about the impact of new regulations—their costs and their benefits, or lack thereof. We will seek a realistic balance between resources devoted to passenger transportation vs. freight transportation. We will work to do a much better job than we have done highlighting the significant environmental benefit of shipping by short line rail and the innovative work our companies are doing regarding fuel efficiency and adoption of new green technology. We will ensure our Short Line Safety Institute remains an effective contributor to workplace safety. We will strive to hold the line against any unwarranted truck size and weight increases. Even before it becomes clear if there will be a "next 45G," we will begin working with the new Administration and Congress to develop the relationships and trust that are the key ingredients of legislative and regulatory success. In that regard, we are well under way with planning our 2021 Railroad Day on the Hill. It will be held in April. The pandemic requires that it will be a virtual event, and we are exploring every avenue for making it as successful as past Railroad Days. Having already conducted several Congressional Zoom meetings since the election, we have found that they expose the Members of Congress to a much larger and varied audience of participants on the ground than might otherwise be able to leave their posts for travel to Washington D.C.

The 1948 film *The Naked City* popularized an iconic American phrase intoned by the narrator at the end of the film—"There are eight million stories in the Naked City. This has been one of them." So it was with the short line industry in 2020. We are but one of millions of stories of perseverance during a very difficult time. They are stories of individuals, families, organizations and businesses. Many were surely more harrowing than ours. Yet we remain proud of what we have accomplished, and we look forward with confidence to the industry's progress in what we sincerely hope will be less troubled times. -American Short Line Railroad Association

Metro News - Biden Announces \$20 Billion For Transit

Trains Newswire January 15, 2021 Provided by Rick Krenske



An MTA Metro-North train approaches 125th Street Station in Harlem. The MTA could be a major beneficiary of President-elect Joe Biden's plan providing \$20 billion in coronavirus aid to transit agencies. TRAINS: David Lassen

Friday morning rail news:

Biden coronavirus plan includes \$20 billion for transit

Some \$20 billion in "relief for the hardest hit public transit agencies" is part of a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief plan released by President-elect Joe Biden on Thursday, a wide-ranging legislative package including \$1,400 per-person payments to most households, a national COVID-19 vaccination program and increased testing program, aid to schools, a \$15-per-hour minimum wage, and expanded access to health care. [The document outlining the plan](#) says the transit aid "will keep agencies from laying off transit workers and cutting the routes that essential workers rely on every day." [The Washington Post reports](#) the plan is meant to be passed quickly and will be followed by a broader recovery package. Transit officials welcomed the news, with American Public Transportation Association CEO Paul P. Skoutelas saying [in a statement](#) that the transit funding "is vital to the industry's survival and will help prevent massive labor cuts and drastic service reductions." Patrick J. Foye, Chairman of New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority said [in a statement](#) that Biden "has always been an ardent supporter of mass transit, and we're gratified to see it continues to be one of his key priorities as he prepares to take office next week. ... It's clear the new administration believes in transit and understands that these investments will jumpstart our economic recovery. Because without a robust MTA powering New York's revival, there can be no national rebound."

**RAILFAN
& RAILROAD
MAGAZINE**



From the February 2021 Issue of Railfan & Railroad

Wednesday, January 27, 2021, 2:15 PM, Frederick Krenske

Canadian National has announced a new inland distribution terminal in New Richmond, Wisconsin, that will include an automotive compound for finished vehicles and an intermodal terminal to serve container shippers and receivers in the Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota metro area. A March 1 opening is planned for the new terminal that will provide direct CN Intermodal service to the Twin Cities market.

News from the Iron Range OreRail@groups.io

Marquette Range Photo Request

From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Wed, 06 Jan 2021 17:14:29 PST

Hello group.

Greg Stahl is working on a detailed history project that covers DSS&A and Soo Line operations between Marquette and Michigamme and is looking for images on that line that are iron ore related or freight and passenger trains with a focus primarily on the original route through the Marquette Range, west to the Ohio Mine circa 1945 - 1972. If anyone has shots or knows of a good source please contact Greg directly at gregoryscottstahl@gmail.com

Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

New Great Northern Iron Ore Properties Book

From: [Bruce K](#) Date: Fri, 22 Jan 2021 17:00:27 PST

I just saw an ad in Mining Engineering magazine for a new book about Great Northern Iron Ore Properties (GNIOP) published by the Ramsey County (MN) Historical Society.

It can be ordered from:

Greatnorthernironbook.com

The cost is \$65.00 including shipping and handling.

I ordered a copy and will review it when it comes.

It apparently includes a full set of GNIOP maps on paper.

GNIOP was spun off from the railroad in 1906 and was a major landholder on the western Mesaba Range. The trust was dissolved and title to the land went to Conoco Phillips, the successor to BNSF's mineral land holdings, a few years ago.

Bruce Kettunen Mt. Iron MN

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CN L-555

From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Sat, 23 Jan 2021 08:57:13 PST

Apparently the last run of CN's local (L-555 "Triple Nickel") based out of Stone Lake, WI operated yesterday (1/22/2021). This job worked the WGNS interchange at Hayward Junction, among other things. Now road trains will pick up and set out there. If business picks up I would guess the local could be reinstated.

Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

Coal Update

From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Sun, 24 Jan 2021 10:08:23 PST

Minnesota Power recently announced it would cease burning coal at its large Cohasset plant near Grand Rapids by 2035. This announcement, coupled with Detroit Edison having a similar timeline for its Belle River and Monroe (Mich) plants, would spell the end of coal traffic in our area as we know it.

The future of the Brainerd Sub would be in question as that line has very limited local traffic and serves mainly as a conduit for coal to MERC in Superior (and also for Cohasset on occasion). The peak years for coal traffic to MERC was during 2006-09 when over 22 million tons were delivered by train during each of those years (on some days 5 coal trains would arrive in Superior during a 24-hour period). This past year the port only handled around 5.3 million tons of coal, partially impacted by COVID closures of auto plants in Michigan.

Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

Re: Coal Update Boswell Plant

From: [Chuck Corwin](#) Date: Tue, 26 Jan 2021 08:12:02 PST

The Minnesota Power Boswell Energy Center currently has two units running. They had originally had four units. Units 1 and 2 were shutdown at the end of 2018. They were the smallest of the units and were built in the 1950's. Unit 3 which is about 350 megawatts was built in the early 1970's. Unit 4 was built and came on line about 1980. I have to check my reference for exact dates.

Tentatively Unit 3 is supposedly going to be shut down permanently about 2030 or earlier. Unit 4 is going to be converted from coal to natural gas by 2035. Unit 4 is about 450 megawatts.

It appears that Boswell Energy Center is getting about 4 trains a week (plus or minus a few). Last summer they were down to one train a week as they were working down a large stockpile of coal to feed the plant.

The coal trains coming into the Boswell Energy Center at Cohasset have almost exclusively been coming into the plant from the east. The trains coming from the east has been this way for the last couple of years. The empties that leave the plant almost exclusively head east. Chub Lake (Carlton) is the destination for the empties. The Brainerd sub appears to be the main conduit for the Boswell coal trains. The loaded coal trains appear to come from the Brainerd Sub into Carlton (Chub Lake). The two lead units at the front of the train are facing east. The train crew then switches ends and goes into the DP unit which is facing west and gets a new warrant to go up the Lakes Sub. The train identifier is also changed at that time.

The train then heads west up the Lakes Sub to Cohasset (MPL Boswell Energy Center). It then goes into the MPL East Leg of the Wye into the plant. The loaded train then goes around the loop at the plant. The tail end units or unit gets pulled off the train and parked on the side near the dumper. The lead unit or units stay on the train. After getting permission from the MPL dumper, the train then pulls into the dumper and is spotted. The train crew stays on the train until the dumper is indexing and dumping the cars properly. The train is then released to MPL. It usually takes about 8 to 10 hours to dump the train. If the temperature is really cold then the cars are heated before they are dumped. The lead unit stays on the head end of the train to maintain air pressure. The car dumper then positions the train and locks the train in place while the rotary dumper rotates the car and dumps the coal from the car. One car is dumped at a time. It takes about 3 1/2 + minutes to cycle one car through the dumper. The normal train length is usually about 123 cars plus or minus a few.

After the train is dumped MPL notifies BNSF and lets them know the train is empty. MPL probably notifies BNSF prior to the train dumping being done. A train crew comes up from Superior (most of the time) or Grand Forks (on occasion) to MPL to retrieve the empties. The crew arrives at Boswell and reassembles the train (putting the units which were parked on the track next to the car dumper) onto the empty train. Which locomotive will be the lead one depends on much trouble it takes to get the units to work together. Some times the locomotives are wyed. It also depends on if they are going east or west. Almost 98% or more of the empties go east. I was able to follow one train west late last fall. A PTI (crew) van usually follows the train and is used to shuttle the crew back home after the train is released.

Lately some coal trains will arrive at Boswell late in the afternoon and they are dumped right away. The train might sit at Boswell until the following morning before a crew comes up to pick it up.

On rare occasion some loads are parked at Superior and sometimes the empties will go into Superior. Most of the time the crew change takes place at Carlton (Chub Lake).

Chuck Corwin Cohasset, Minnesota

New Orleans Ore Update

From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Sun, 24 Jan 2021 09:27:40 PST

With the resumption of trains of export ore from Minnesota to New Orleans (Javelin), another set of cars is being placed into service. This one has 93 B&LE ore cars (the newer black Ortner-style) and will load at Minntac sometime this week (U702). At least one set of leased cars is already in service from UTAC to New Orleans, U700.

Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

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NSM Warranty Work

From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Sun, 24 Jan 2021 09:44:12 PST

Two of NSM's new (used) SD70ACe units have been returned to MEI for additional work. Taking their place as loaners are PRLX 2636 (ex-NS SD70M) and 4695 (ex-CSX SD70M). The two sent off the property in December are 674 and 675, both sporting burn marks on their long hood.

Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

Re: NSM Warranty Work

From: [mark lynn](#) Date: Sun, 24 Jan 2021 13:47:28 PST

Or still in transit.

CP is having performance issues with their SD70ACu's as well as the SD70ACe-T4's that Progress sent as protection power. Seems to be a trend here. **MRL**

Re: New Orleans Ore Update

From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Mon, 25 Jan 2021 16:08:10 PST

Keep in mind these are for pellets produced at U.S. Steel's Minntac mine and likely are headed overseas to a mill that already receives Minntac pellets through existing supply chains using the St. Lawrence Seaway (some of which has been routed through Conneaut this year). U.S. Steel ships quite a bit of ore overseas.

Re: New Orleans Ore Update

From: srubeerman@yahoo.com Date: Mon, 25 Jan 2021 15:59:36 PST

Very interesting on the BLE cars.

Typical class one short sightedness. With iron production up here in the Mon Valley the winter ore storage pile is already being cut into because CN is short on cars to haul ore from Conneaut. US Steel would be interested to know this is because the cars purchased by CN to satisfy USS/CN shipping contract demands are off hauling ore for foreign competition.

Ah got to love it! Bob

For Freight Railroads, 2020 was the Strangest of Years Rail and the Pandemic: Coronavirus Clobbered Rail Traffic; Then Came the Rebound By [Bill Stephens](#) | December 28, 2020 Trains Newswire



CSX eastbound container train Q022 crosses the New England Central diamond at Palmer, Mass., as New England Central train No. 608 waits to head south on Feb. 24, 2020. Intermodal traffic would prove to be crucial to railroads' re-



An eastbound Union Pacific train approaches Winfield, Ill., on Aug. 22, 2020. Union Pacific is giving a \$1,000 bonus to employees who worked during the pandemic. TRAINS: David Lassen

Perhaps no one has summed up the pandemic's impact on rail traffic and operations in 2020 better than CSX Transportation CEO Jim Foote. "The last six months have truly been surreal," Foote told investors and analysts on the company's earnings call in October. "On last quarter's call we discussed the largest and most rapid sequential volume declines in CSX's history. Now, just three months later, record sequential increases. Think about that: Volume declines and increases twice as steep as the largest swings we experienced in the Great Recession in the span of just a few months."

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Rail traffic was clobbered as pandemic-related lockdowns spread in March, including a roughly six-week shutdown of auto assembly plants across North America. Then came what few expected: Traffic rebounded quickly, led by a surge in intermodal volume. For the most part, the industry handled volatile volume well. And Foote says that just a few years ago, a large volume swing would have tied railroads in knots.

"If you'd had this kind of traffic surge across the rail network in North America four or five years ago, we would be now talking about gridlock across all the major cities in the country," Foote says. "And now with the common mindset of how you run a railroad, we're able to respond, we're able to pivot, we're nimble, we can add capacity, we can shrink capacity, we can right-size our business and we can do that much more effectively and much more logically and thoughtfully."

A combination of tight truck capacity, retailers restocking depleted inventories, and a rise in imports through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach contributed to the recovery in intermodal volume.

Rail service held up relatively well overall, based on intermodal train speeds remaining above the long-term averages. Pinch points emerged, however, in Southern California, Chicago, and elsewhere as intermodal volume spiked, prompting BNSF Railway, Norfolk Southern, and Union Pacific to put limits on loads at certain intermodal terminals in California and Chicago at various times during the summer and fall.

Consumers shifted their spending from experiences – such as dining out and travel – to goods such as appliances, electronics, and home improvement projects, all of which boosted intermodal.

But carload volumes have yet to fully recover from the pandemic, mostly due to the collapse of energy prices that affected crude by rail, frac sand, and ethanol shipments. Industrial production, which feeds carload volume and has been sluggish for more than a year, remains stuck below pre-pandemic levels.

The pandemic also reduced demand for electricity, which propelled the continued decline of coal traffic. The other major bulk commodity – grain – grew in both the U.S. and Canada, driven largely by exports.

Short line railroads' carload traffic held up much better than Class I volumes, provided that their business was not tied to energy markets.

The traffic downturn accelerated trends already under way on Class I systems, including moving tonnage on fewer but longer trains, using fewer locomotives, and storing freight cars. As a result, the big systems operated with fewer train crews, smaller locomotive fleets, which led to furloughs for the mechanics who work in locomotive and car shops.

When traffic bounced back over the summer, a curious thing happened: The Class I systems simply tacked returning traffic onto their existing trains, further lengthening consists and leaving locomotives and crews on the sidelines.

At CSX, for example, by the end of July traffic had grown 25% since bottoming out in May. Yet the railroad was only using 13% more locomotives and 14% more road train starts. This played out on the other large systems, too, most of which reported record train lengths and weights in the fall.

Rail executives praised train crews and other essential front line employees who continued to come to work throughout the pandemic, keeping the economy and vital supplies moving.

Union Pacific stood out, backing up its words with cash: In November CEO Lance Fritz announced that the railroad would send \$1,000 bonuses to union employees who worked through the pandemic.

"While many fellow citizens were sheltering in place, our craft professionals rolled up their sleeves and answered the nation's call during one of its greatest times of need," Fritz said. "The pivotal role these essential employees play delivering critical supplies and keeping the economy open cannot be emphasized enough. This recognition reflects how notable their efforts are and how much their great work is appreciated."

CP, CN Continue String of Records for Grain Movement

Canadian Pacific touts new record for calendar year; Canadian National sets 10th consecutive monthly record

January 4, 2021 Trains Newswire



Canadian Pacific and Canadian National have welcomed the new year by announcing the latest in an ongoing string of records for Canadian grain movement.

Canadian Pacific closed out 2020 by setting records in a calendar year, quarter, and the month of December. The railroad moved 31.32 million metric tons of grain in 2020, with 8.84 million metric tons in the fourth quarter, a 5.1% increase over its previous best, the second quarter of 2020. December's 2.84 million metric tons bettered the record set in 2019 by 13.6%.

"Hard-won achievements like these require commitment and focus across the supply chain, but special credit must go to CP's customers and their dedicated employees," Joan Hardy, CP vice-president, sales and marketing, grain and fertilizers, said in [a press release](#). "Their work to create a safe, efficient supply chain is an essential ingredient in our ability to deliver Canada's crops to consumers at home and around the world." The grain records reflect in part the use of a growing fleet of new grain hoppers, which carry 15% more grain by volume and 10% more by weight. Canadian National, meanwhile, moved 2.84 million metric tons of grain in December to set a monthly record for the 10th consecutive month.

For the 2020-21 crop year, the railroad has moved 14.5 million metric tons, an increase of more than 2 metric tons, or more than 15%, over the figure at this point in the railroad's current record for a crop year. Rob Reilly, CN executive vice president and chief operation officer, said in [a press release](#), "2020 was a challenging year for everyone along the supply chain. Our dedicated employees and partners have demonstrated their resilience and courage in uncertain times. These record grain shipments are coming at the same time as CN is shipping very high volumes of many other commodities such as lumber, potash, propane and consumer goods. While we are proud of December's results, we do not take them for granted and we will continue to work hard to safely move our customers' goods."

Wabtec's FLXdrive Battery-Electric Locomotive Begins Revenue Tests on BNSF

By Bill Stephens | January 4, 2021 Trains Newswire



Wabtec's FLXdrive battery-electric locomotive has begun testing on BNSF Railway in California, working as the middle unit in a three-locomotive consist. BNSF Railway

FORT WORTH, Texas — BNSF Railway has begun testing Wabtec's battery electric FLXdrive locomotive in revenue service between Barstow and Stockton, Calif.

The red and gray FLXdrive locomotive, Wabtec 3000, is spliced between a pair of conventional Wabtec Tier 4 locomotives for pilot runs that will extend through March.

The first train out of Barstow consisted of 76 cars, with 55 loads and 21 empties, totalling 8,385 tons, BNSF says. The return trip consisted of 118 cars, with 40 loads and 78 empties, totalling 7,787 tons.

BNSF says the experimental locomotive is one potential solution to reducing its carbon footprint.

"We've got everything in place and we're ready to see how this next-generation locomotive performs in revenue service," said John Lovenburg, BNSF vice president, environmental. "BNSF is focused on continuing to reduce our environmental impact, and we're committed to doing our part to test and assess the commercial viability of emerging technologies that reduce emissions."

The battery-powered locomotive creates a three-unit hybrid consist that is expected to improve fuel efficiency of the diesel electric locomotives by at least 10%. When running on the mainline, both the battery-electric and diesel locomotives power the train. For more details, see Wabtec's [battery-electric locomotive video](#).

"The FLXdrive is the world's first 100% heavy-haul battery-electric locomotive that optimizes the total energy utilization of the entire locomotive consist," said Alan Hamilton, Wabtec vice president, engineering. "This technology works in a manner very similar to how electric vehicles use regenerative braking. It's a significant step forward for the rail industry and will change the course for even cleaner, more energy-efficient transport."

If the initial pilot proves successful, BNSF aims to test the locomotive in other locations and operating conditions on its system. For now the locomotive will be tested in merchandise service between Stockton and Barstow, BNSF spokeswoman Amy Casas says.

The battery-electric locomotive pilot program is part of a \$22.6 million grant awarded to BNSF and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District from the Zero- and Near Zero-Emission Freight Facilities project by the California Air Resource Board.

BNSF says the FLXdrive tests are one part of its investments in sustainable technologies, including idle control, electric wide-span cranes at intermodal terminals, battery-electric hostlers, automated gates at its intermodal facilities, and Tier 4 locomotives.

BNSF partnered with Wabtec on the development of the FLXdrive.

Reading & Northern Brings No. 2102 Nearer to Operation with Steam Test

By Scott A. Hartley | January 13, 2021 Trains Newswire



Reading & Northern's project to return Reading 4-8-4 No. 2102 to service took a huge step forward Tuesday with a successful steam test.

Reading & Northern, via Facebook

PORT CLINTON, Pa. -- Reading & Northern's former Reading Co. 4-8-4 No. 2102 came several steps closer to its long-awaited return to service after steam testing at the railroad's steam shops in Port Clinton on Tuesday. All went well. "The engine is like new," said R&N owner and CEO Andrew M. Muller, Jr. Following the testing, he blew the T-1's Reading "Hooter" whistle at 11:00 a.m., signaling lunch time for the steam crew, volunteers, and invited guests.

The big Northern, built by the Reading at its home-city shops in 1945, is one of four of the T-1 class remaining. Muller hopes that the engine will be running this spring, after being stored 29 years ago.

R&N shop forces lit a fire in the engine on Saturday, and let it warm up over the weekend. By Tuesday, the 2102 was up to its 240 psi working pressure. All components, including the boiler, injectors, feed water heater, and stoker, tested fine, Muller reports. A few leaks were discovered, and they will be repaired after the engine cools down. The 4-8-4 does not look quite ready to run, as the cab still needs to be reinstalled, and the tender is being rebuilt. The multi-year project has cost more than \$1 million so far, and Muller says that he expects to spend another \$100,000 for completion.

The T-1 worked in freight service until fairly late in the steam era, and the surviving four were saved from extinction by Reading's program "Rambles" excursions over the system during the early Sixties. Muller bought the 2102 in 1987 and ran it on passenger trains over his 13-mile Blue Mountain & Reading line north of Reading from 1987 to 1992. The 2102 also made a few off-line trips on Conrail routes during those years.

Bringing No. 2102 back to life has been part of Muller's plans since it was taken out of service, but freight service on the growing Reading & Northern system always has been a priority. The company has a second, smaller steam engine in operation, former Gulf, Mobile & Northern 4-6-2 No. 425, which sees regular service on R&N's frequent passenger excursions.

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Although virtually all work on the R&N is performed by railroad employees, many volunteers helped on the 2102 project over the years. Some put in hundreds of hours, Muller said. Railroad supervisors have kept records of each volunteer's hours and contributions, and those individuals will be granted cab time on future trips.

Muller plans for No. 2102's first assignment to follow T-1 tradition, leading a long high-priority freight. It will to be on the head end of R&N's hottest scheduled train, the North Reading Fast Freight, which makes a daily round trip from North Reading to Pittston, Pa.

Digest: BNSF Train Derails in Arizona, Prompting Lengthy 'Southwest Chief' Delay

Jan 24 2021 Trains Newswire



UhOh

*The train derailed
near Holbrook,
AZ (Source: Ollie
Arviso)*



BNSF intermodal train derails in Arizona, stopping Southwest Chief

No injuries were reported when a BNSF intermodal train derailed Sunday afternoon near Joseph City, Ariz., Photos show several double-stack well cars off the tracks, with containers overturned. The Navajo County Sheriff's Office says the accident was reported about 1 p.m., and no hazardous materials were involved. Joseph City is 23 miles east of Winslow, Ariz. Amtrak [reports on Twitter](#) that as of Monday morning, the westbound Southwest Chief that departed Chicago on Saturday remains stopped in Albuquerque, N.M., because of the derailment and that "extensive delays are expected."

[KPHO-TV reports](#). (JOSEPH CITY, AZ (3TV/CBS5) [AZFAMILY.com](#) - No one was seriously hurt when a train derailed near Holbrook, Arizona. The Navajo County Sheriff's Office says the train went off the rail line that lay south of Interstate 40, east of Winslow near [Joseph City](#), on Sunday.

The train was operated by The Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway Company, one of the largest freight railroad networks in the country.

Officials with BNSF say there were no injuries when multiple cars derailed around 2 p.m. The train was loaded with consumer goods.

One of our Arizona's Family viewers sent us photos of the derailment they took from the roadway. It appeared from the pictures that a dozen or more freight cars had gone off the tracks and had toppled on their sides.

BNSF officials say their crews are cleaning up the site and the incident is under investigation.)



6 Train Cars, 2 Locomotives Derail on CSX RR Bridge at Queensgate Yard

News Wire Digest second section for Jan. 25 2021 Trains Newswire

By [Natalya Daoud](#) | January 24, 2021 at 8:07 AM EST - Updated January 24 at 10:17 PM

CINCINNATI (FOX19) - A portion of Gest Street in Queensgate remains closed after a train derailed on a CSX Railroad bridge early Sunday morning.

District Fire Chief Gregory Potter says crews arrived around 1:30 a.m. to find six train cars and two locomotives had come off the tracks.

In addition, about 1,000 gallons of diesel fuel was leaking from one of the locomotives.

"This spill has been contained and no waterways have been impacted, but Gest Street has been closed as a precaution and to facilitate clean-up," CSX Transportation's Brian Tucker said.

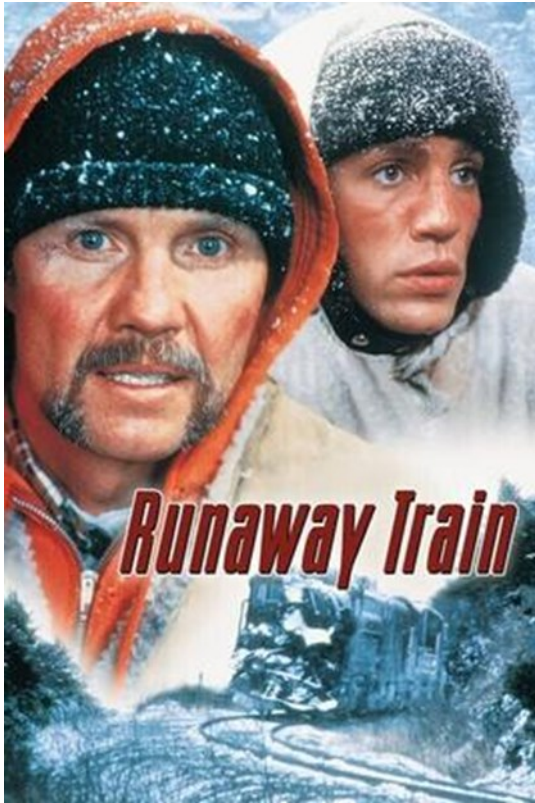
All of the train cars were empty at the time of the derailment, Potter said. Only one car had residue inside but no hazardous materials were released.

Representatives from Duke Energy were also on hand to help with power outages.

Gest Street is closed between Dalton Avenue and Evans Street.

January 17 in Railroad History: Runaway Train

From: [Joseph Lechner](#) Sunday, January 17, 2021, 10:21 AM, provided by Frederick Krenske



Runaway Train (color; 110 minutes; Cannon Films) opened in nationwide U.S. distribution 35 years ago today. The Andrei Konchalovsky production was loosely based on a 1966 screenplay by Akira Kurosawa, who was inspired by a 1963 story in *LIFE* Magazine.

Oscar “Manny” Manheim (portrayed by Jon Voight) and “Buck” McGeehy (Eric Roberts) escape from the fictional Stonehaven Maximum Security Prison during a frigid Alaska winter. The pair happen upon a railroad yard and climb aboard a four-unit diesel lashup. As it begins to move, the engineer suffers a heart attack. His train accelerates out of control (why is it that locomotives in disaster movies never seem to have a dead-man switch?).

After the runaway engine smashes the caboose of an opposing train, Superintendent McDonald (Kenneth McMillan) orders the dispatchers to derail it. Just then, hostler Sara (Rebecca De Mornay) sounds the horn in a trailing unit. This tells railroad officials that the train is not unmanned; it alerts the fugitives that they are not alone; and it tips off prison warden Ranken (John P. Ryan) that his escaped convicts are fleeing by rail. Much mayhem ensues as the speeding train careens through frozen Alaskan wilderness (action sequences were filmed on the Alaska Railroad at Whittier, Portage and Grandview).

Aware that authorities are pursuing him, Manny makes a daring leap to the lead engine. Ranken is lowered to the speeding train from a helicopter; Manny overpowers and shackles him. Ranken orders Manny to stop the train, but the con is determined to die rather than return to prison. In the climactic sequence, Manny uncouples his engine from the trailing units (thus sparing Buck and Sara), and rides defiantly to his demise.

Runaway Train garnered three Oscar nominations for Best Actor (Voight), Best Supporting Actor (Roberts) and Best Film Editing (Henry Richardson). Voight won a Golden Globe for Best Actor. The film failed to break even on its \$9 million production costs (why is it that “train” flicks can’t make money?); but Roger Ebert rated it *four stars*, and Michael Phillips called it the most under-rated film of the 1980s.



Runaway Train is available on DVD for buffs who crave blood, gore and gratuitous violence. If you’re primarily interested in the train scenes, a fan has compiled them here (with Spanish subtitles):

[Runaway train GP40-2 F7A GP7 - YouTube](#)

The real “star” of **Runaway Train** (EMD GP40-2 #3010) is reportedly still in service on the Alaska Railroad photo by Nick Ozorak
Joseph Lechner

Metro News - A Jeopardy Train Related Catagory

Sunday, January 10, 2021, 10:19 AM, Frederick Krenske

On a recent Jeopardy program, in one of Alex Trebek's last appearances, he had a train related catagory. Did you know the proper question answer?

Where’s This Train Headed?

\$200: the northern terminus of the *Ethan Allen Express* is at Rutland in this state - **Where is VERMONT?**

\$400: the *Maple Leaf* starts in this city and passes by the Finger Lakes region on its way to New York - **What is TORONTO?**

\$600: on its way from Chicago to the Pacific Northwest, the *Empire Builder* follows major portions of this pair’s route - **Who re LEWIS AND CLARK?**

\$800: the *Lake Shore Limited* runs from Chicago to Boston and New York along the southern shores of these two Great Lakes - **What are LAKE ERIE AND LAKE MICHIGAN?**

\$1000: the Amtrak line named for this mountain range gives passengers a great view of Mount St. Helens - **What are THE CASCADES?**

Metro News - Another Cancellation

Thursday, January 28, 2021, 10:22 AM, Frederick Krenske



I, Roundhouse Rick, am a member of the Train Collector's Association. The largest yearly train collector's meet is put on twice a year by the Eastern Division of TCA. Now they have cancelled their April Spring Meet in York, Pennsylvania. The cancellations for all things we enjoy have already started for 2021. I hope I can get my Covid-19 shot soon. At least I would like to attend a local Lakes & Pines TCA meet sometime before summer. I'll be keeping a close eye on local train flea markets to see if one of those can happen before summer arrives.

FROM: Dan Danielson, President, Eastern Division-TCA

It is with much reluctance that I announce the cancellation of the April 2021 York Meet.

According to the directives of the Governor of Pennsylvania, and with the compliance of the York Expo (Fairgrounds), our Meet does not fit the requirements set forth for public gatherings during the coronavirus pandemic.

Hold on to your badges which were originally issued for the April **2020** Meet. They will be good for the next York Meet.

The leadership of Eastern Division is looking forward to holding the October 2021 Meet as scheduled. A week-long list of activities is being planned to bring us all back together to play trains.

Railfan Events (Thanks to Rick Krenske, Bill Dredge)

Most Model RR venues are closed for at least four weeks			
Some may open in May of this Year?			

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