

**NRHS**

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

Northstar News

Ides of March is Upon Us



L: CP Heritage Unit leads a rail train for Winnipeg at New Brighton Mar 15 2020 –Bob Ball
 R: UP AC45CCTE 5424 leads sand loads across the Mississippi Mar 2 2020 –Bob Ball

**Table of Contents**

Meeting Notice	Page 1
Chapter Officers, Editor Column, Meeting minutes	Page 1, 2
Field of Dreams	Page 3
SWLRT Potential Delay	Page 3
Midcontinent Railway Museum Report	Page 4, 5, 6, 7
BNSF Service Challenges	Page 7
LSRM News	Page 8
Ore Cars Saved	Page 9
AAPRCO Briefs News, AAPRCO Background	Page 9, 10, 11, 12
More AAPRCO News	Page 12, 13, 14
Siemens Locomotives on Hiawatha Service, MTM News	Page 14, 15
Pipeline Restrictions	Page 15, 16
BNSF Receives Patent	Page 16
Warren Buffet Letter to BNSF	Page 16, 17
CSX Merger	Page 17, 18
CP F9B in Twin Ports	Page 18
Favorite Locomotives by Al Weber	Page 19
All Aboard MN News	Page 19, 20
UP Severe Weather Action, Judge Rules about RR	Page 21
Long Trains Article	Page 22
UP Article, Coaster Locomotives and Cars	Page 23
Des Moines Transload center, CN Derailment, Railfan Events	Page 24

Meeting Notice

Hello Everyone

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

Next newsletter (April 2021) will be out around April 3, 2021.

Hello Everyone

The Northstar Chapter NRHS will be having a ZOOM meeting Saturday night, March 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!

Access to our March 2021 Zoom meeting:

Meeting ID: 879 8064 4142

Passcode: 499290

Or:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87980644142?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87980644142?pwd=NHkwcXZDd1VOY3g1ZUNwZFJsWnNMQT09)[pwd=NHkwcXZDd1VOY3g1ZUNwZFJsWnNMQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87980644142?pwd=NHkwcXZDd1VOY3g1ZUNwZFJsWnNMQT09)**Northstar Chapter Officers**

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**Chapter memberships for 2021 are
OVERDUE!**

**If you have not renewed your membership by
March 1 2021, you will not receive the newsletter.**



Amtrak #7 at
Newport with
F40's in the
1980's
-John Allen
photo

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.

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 Feb 20th 2021 (Zoom)

The meeting was called to order by president John Goodman at 7:01 PM with 23 members and guest present. A quorum was determined. A motion was carried by Frank Wilke and John Cartwright to approve the January meeting minutes as printed in the February newsletter and approved by members. Russ Insbrandt gave the Treasurers report. The Checking account balances for the Chapter and Calendar was given. Richard Tubbesing had not joined the meeting yet, but President John Goodman reported that the next newsletter will be out around the first of March and that program chairman Richard Tubbesing had no program set for the March 20, 2021 meeting and that Dan Meyer reported that Bob Gallegos of Milwaukee will do the April 17, 2021 meeting. John Goodman reported that Dan Meyer would have Hudson Leighton do a future program. It was requested that everyone mute their session so the members could hear clearly what the designated member is reporting. Dawn Holmberg gave the NRHS and Calendar report. Dawn has been updating NRHS chapter news. The NRHS news should be coming out in the near future. Mike Yuhas president of the Wisconsin Chapter stated he has given Dawn the his chapter updates for the NRHS. John stated that we are honored to have Al Weber president of the NRHS present at the meeting. Dawn stated that Calendars are sold out. She has sent out the complementary copy to the Union Pacific and is tracking down where the send a calendar to the BNSF and CP railroads. John Goodman asked if anyone has photos to be considered for the 2022 calendar. . John goodman reported Dawn was asked about resuming our monthly meetings at the Roseville Lutheran church. Dawn reported that she has not heard from the church and that prospects are slim for having a meeting at the church in the near future. John Goodman stated that we will continue our Zoom meetings for March and April. John Goodman gave the trip report. Our annual train ride on the light rail and Northstar will depend on what Metro Transit will allow this coming June. If Northstar does not resume weekend service, we could still ride the light rail to Minneapolis and transfer to the Light rail to St Paul, and maybe have lunch in St Paul. John stated that the picnic at Maiden Rock last year with Social distancing was successful and we could return to Maiden Rock or Prescott WI. John will discuss this with the BOD. Possible trips for August would be a trip to Trego Wisconsin where the Mark Twain zephyr is being restored. Last September we had a successful trip on the North Shore Scenic Railroad in Duluth. John will explore options with the BOD. The NRHS convention info in Milwaukee August 23 thru August 28 2021 has been updated on the NRHS Web site.

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Continued from previous page: The convention committee is still in process of selecting a convention hotel in Milwaukee. The other venues are looking good. John Goodman gave the Cheer Committee report. Joe Frishmon has told John that Steve Kopasz is in the hospital and is expected to be released soon. John emailed Marty Swan to see how he is doing. Gary Rumler attended the meeting and was asked how he is doing. Gary reported that he is getting better. Craig Neros was involved in many flea markets with railroad collectables and has passed away. John asked Dave Herbert about Dave Norman. Dave Herbert reported that Dave Norman has fallen in his home and now is in a home called the Cedars of St Louis Park. Dave Norman would like to get back to his home. John Goodman then reported we have obtained about 2800 feet of 8mm film from the Kurt Mahre collection of his fathers (Marv) Minnesota Railfans Association trips back to the middle fifties. We are reviewing the films at the library and considering having them digitized commercially. Russ Isbrandt was called to give the library report. We are viewing Marv Mahre films and Roger Clark films. The reels are 500 foot reels. Russ Stated that at a cost of 30 cents a foot, we have to be very judicious in what films we will have commercially scanned. Mike Yuhas was asked about the NRHS convention in Wisconsin in the 1950's, and Russ stated that was in 1955 where some of the film we recently viewed was probably at that convention. There was no new business. President Goodman stated that the next meeting will be March 20, 2021 on Zoom. The floor was given to NRHS President Al Weber. Al stated he was once a member of our chapter. He has done some work on rail crossing gate at the St Louis Museum. He stated that the Model RR convention will be in St Louis the summer of 2022. Al also stated that there was a long article in the USA Today newspaper on Rail travel. The next NRHS newsletter will be about 32 pages. Dan Meyer asked if the next BOD meeting will be on Zoom. Al said he is not sure. Other ongoing activities of the NRHS are work of Grant Request Committee and planning Rail Camps this year. John Goodman asked Russ Isbrandt about member dues. We need previous long-time members who have not renewed to renew their memberships. \$30 for subscribers, \$25 for NRHS members. Mark Quam was asked about the St Paul to Eau Claire commuter train. Mark stated they have started a rail commission to get the Wisconsin counties involved in planning. Proposed are four round trips a day. Union Pacific has been amenable in the planning process. Mark noted what the proposed Stations are in Wisconsin. President Goodman called for the meeting to adjourn at 7:36 pm. Motion was carried by Frank Wilke and Seconded by Dan Meyer. Russ Isbrandt gave a great program on his trip in 1965 to Seattle for the World's Fair. Then a train trip to San Francisco on the SP and back to Chicago via the California Zephyr and the North shore line back to Milwaukee. Respectfully submitted by Richard Tubbesing Secretary (thanks to Dan Meyer for recording the zoom meeting!)



Here is a sample photo, (CP's G72 train at La crescent, August 27, 2020; photo by Mike Yuhas).

The March 20 2021 meeting program will be presented by Mike Yuhas. He will present an overview of aerial (drone-based) railroad photography. The first half of the program focuses on flight basics, equipment basics, regulatory issues, safety, and photographic aesthetics. A slide show of some of Mike's finest aerial work will round out the evening.

Field of Dreams *January 2021 Provided by Roger Libra*

Field Of Dreams

1 Well... not exactly. More like Field of Hoppers.

Came across this amazing scene at Mill Creek OK this afternoon 01/03/2021

2. Looks like storage. Very cheap long term storage

3. That is right next to the US Silica plant

4. Pretty simple: These cars are not near old enough to retire, there fore they still have a lot of value. The drilling business is in the toilet, therefore there is not near the need for all the sand cars. No point in scrapping them and highly doubtful they are setting there loaded. Since they are far apart, yes most likely they were mechanically placed (no tracks and no need of tracks). Reporting marks are those of cars used to haul sand, some companies had 5000 or 6000 of these each. Halliburton had over 6000 and some leased too.

5. Same deal at Preferred Sand in Sanders, AZ. 2-Bay sand hoppers sitting in storage, on track, due to the downturn in Fracking. The discovery of a reservoir of oil in the Permian Basin that doesn't need to be fracked is one factor.

6. Looks like the cars are sitting on the wooden mats used by utility construction companies when crossing marshy areas.

David Hawkins Train Orders



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SOUTHWEST LRT ANNOUNCES POTENTIAL DELAY

Date: Thursday, January 14, 2021 Provided by John Goodman



The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are announcing a potential construction delay for the Southwest LRT Project (METRO Green Line extension). Over the course of the 2020 construction season, the project staff and our contractor, Lunda-McCrossan Joint Venture, encountered unforeseen conditions in the Minneapolis segment of the alignment that will take longer to overcome. These include:

Due to the poor soils we encountered in the Kenilworth corridor during the initial construction of the tunnel, an alternative construction method is needed to complete the tunnel. The construction method we are introducing (secant wall) will stabilize the soils while constructing the LRT tunnel. We are taking this approach out of an abundance of caution to protect the foundations of adjacent buildings.

We are constructing an approximately 1-mile corridor protection wall for an additional layer of protection between the BNSF freight trains and LRT trains. The corridor protection wall will be located in the BNSF's Wayzata Subdivision in Minneapolis from the Bryn Mawr Station to just east of I-94. This protection wall was added as a requirement of BNSF after final design and civil construction contracting. While this element is not a surprise, we have now completed analysis and design for the wall and have a fuller understanding of the challenges of constructing this project element in an active freight rail corridor. [Watch this short video about the corridor protection wall.](#)

These are not small changes and require thoughtful and deliberate engineering, design plans, and construction methods. What this means is Southwest LRT will most likely not be meeting its opening day projection of 2023. While these types of setbacks are not uncommon on projects of this scale, we are disappointed by this development. We strongly believe the long-term benefits of this project to the region and state outweigh the short-term challenges we face.

During the next several months, project staff and Lunda-McCrossan Joint Venture will be analyzing the schedule; we will share more information later this year.

[Southwest LRT](#) — an extension of the METRO Green Line — is the largest public infrastructure project in the state of Minnesota's history and is incredibly complex as we construct light rail transit, freight rail, and regional trails. Challenges will always arise in a project of this size and scope.

Construction on Southwest LRT continues in Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Minneapolis. This includes key project elements such as stations, tunnels, and bridges that will continue to be constructed. We will continue to work directly with stakeholders to minimize these construction impacts whenever possible.

The Met Council remains committed to ensuring the many small businesses and subcontractors working on the project are treated fairly due to the anticipated schedule change.



February 2021 provided by Chuck Lavallee

WELCOME! – Mid-Continent Railway Museum welcomes you to discover railroading history. Mid-Continent is currently closed for the winter season. The museum will reopen on May 8, 2021 with train rides resuming at the same time (subject to change and pandemic conditions warrant). Differing from the past practice, Mid-Continent will only be open Saturdays and Sundays in 2021. [See schedule details.](#)

Although we are not currently open, there is still a wealth of information about railroads available on our website that you can explore from the comfort of home. Here are a few sections of our site we think you may find interesting: See the latest [progress](#) on the C&NW #1385 steam locomotive restoration project View pictures and read the history of each of [our collection](#) pieces – over 100 cars and locomotives in all!

Explore the numerous videos available on our [YouTube](#) page

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2021 SCHEDULE RELEASED



Take a deep dive into the history of the builders of wooden railway cars. Check out the restoration of the DULUTH, one of America's oldest and most in tact sleeping cars, or the restoration of East Jordan & Southern #2, the oldest car in Mid-Continent's collection.

Explore the sounds of a steam locomotive in our audio archive.

Learn more about Mid-Continent's humble beginnings 62 years ago.

Learn the local history of North Freedom, Wisconsin and how our rail line came to exist.

Thanks for visiting MidContinent.org. We look forward to welcoming you in person soon!

GIFT CARDS NOW AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE ONLINE –

Giving the gift of Mid-Continent just got easier. Gift cards can now be purchased online in any dollar amount and are valid toward any train or tour Mid-Continent operates. [Find out more...](#)

MID-CONTINENT AWARDED GRANT FROM TOM E. DAILEY FOUNDATION – Mid-Continent Railway Museum is happy to announce the museum has been awarded a \$1,500 grant from the Tom E. Dailey Foundation. This grant will assist Mid-Continent with creating reproductions of the original coach seat design to appear in the historic East Jordan & Southern #2 passenger car, the oldest railcar in Mid-Continent Railway Museum's collection. [Read more...](#)

COACH SHED #2 – Mid-Continent's new 10,500 square foot display building is complete. Be sure to stop in this new exhibit area during your next visit. [Read more...](#)

STEAM & STEEL: SONGS OF RAILROAD'S GOLDEN AGE – Fundraising at Mid-Continent Railway Museum has taken on a more harmonious tone with the release of an original music CD entitled Steam & Steel: Songs of Railroad's Golden Age. A collection of ten railroad themed songs, including nine original compositions by Mid-Continent Railway Museum member Ken Hojnacki, performed by Grammy Award-winning bluegrass artist Laurie Lewis and her band, they range in style from bluegrass to country to folk.

Read [The Story Behind the Songs of Railroad's Golden Age](#), which includes not only the back story but song lyrics, pictures and song samples.

Order yours by calling our office at 608-522-4261 or 800-930-1385

Mid-Continent is an outdoor living history museum and operating railroad recreating, preserving, and interpreting the small town/shortline way of life from the "Golden Age of Railroad." Help us preserve this experience for others to enjoy by making a donation, and consider [joining us](#) as a member!

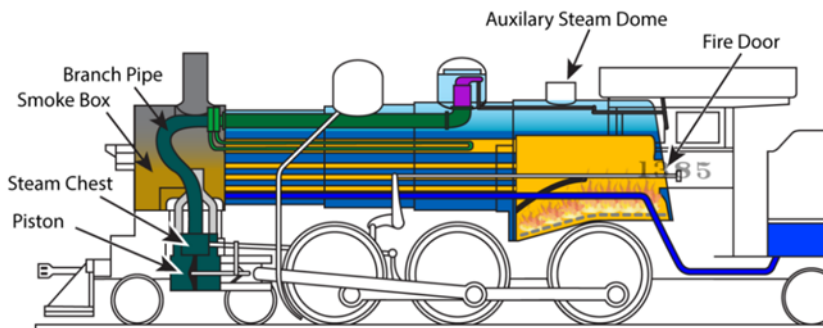
Special Events

Join Mid-Continent for a trip through the fall foliage, the glistening winter landscape, and more! Special events mean more departures, more experiences, and a wider variety of ticket options. Click the events listed below for more information.

Event	Dates
Stars & Stripes Special	July 3-4, 2021
Vintage Rail Car Tours	Oct. 2-3, 2021
Harvest Limited	Oct. 2-3, 2021
Autumn Color Weekend™	Oct. 9-10, 2021
Pumpkin Special™	Oct. 16-17, 2021
Santa Express™	Nov. 27-28 & Dec. 4-5, 2021

C&NW #1385 Update – January 2021

Posted on February 1, 2021



With January coming to a close it is time to check in again with Chicago & North Western #1385's progress. Steve Pahl, MCRM General Foreman of Steam, provided the following list of work being performed or recently completed as of January 20, 2021.

The auxiliary steam dome is currently being repaired. The auxiliary steam dome is where the safety valves, boiler vent valve, and whistle are mounted. The boiler vent valve is used for filling the boiler with water and serves as a vent when draining said boiler. The whistle, of course, is the epitome of steam railroading!

The cast iron blanks for the new piston bull rings have been water jet cut to rough dimensions and are ready to be machined to the final dimension with grooves cut for the piston rings. The center "donut hole" left over after the piston bull rings were cut out are being used as the blanks for the two smaller bull rings that are needed for each valve. That way there is not nearly as much waste in material lost. There are two sets of ports that have been machined into each cage. The large rectangular ports lead to the exhaust nozzle up to the smokebox so the exhaust can be pointed up and out of the smokestack. The smaller parallelogram-shaped ports lead to the passage to the cylinder. *Continued on next Page:*

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Two cast iron blanks which will become C&NW #1385's piston and valve bull rings. M.L. Deets photo



This photo from February 2017 shows 1385's disassembled piston. One of the bull rings is circled. M.L. Deets photo

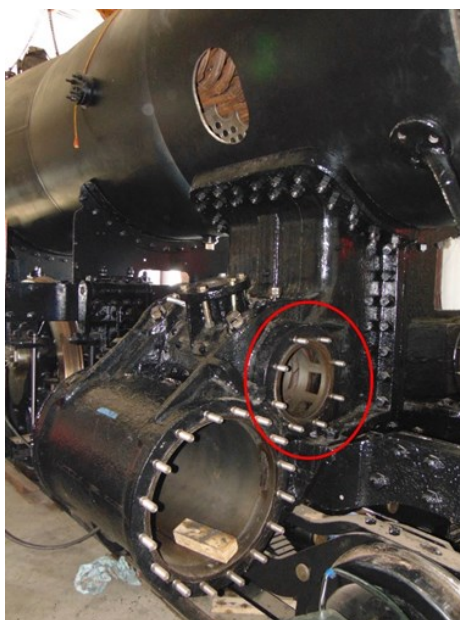


One of the cast iron "blanks" for the new piston bull rings, shown after being water jet cut to rough dimensions. Further machining is required. Steve Pahl photo.

Depending on the position of the piston valve inside the cage either the live superheated steam is routed into the cylinder to push the piston forward or back or the cylinder is connected to the exhaust passage to release the steam once it has done the work of pushing the piston. Since steam pushes the piston in both directions there are ports needed for each end of the piston travel and the need for a cage at each end of the steam chest. The valve cage on the locomotive's engineer side has been previously cleaned up by boring and was found to be thick enough to still have a long service life ahead and was therefore left in place. The fireman's side valve cage was found to be in need of replacement. The new fireman's side valve cages are now ready to be installed into the steam chest. This will be an interesting process to install. The valve cages will be shrunk using dry ice. In the meantime, a couple of rosebud oxy/acetylene torches will be used to expand the steam chest and if everything goes correctly, the valve cage should slide right in. One cage will be inserted from the front side of the steam chest while the other will be inserted from the rear.



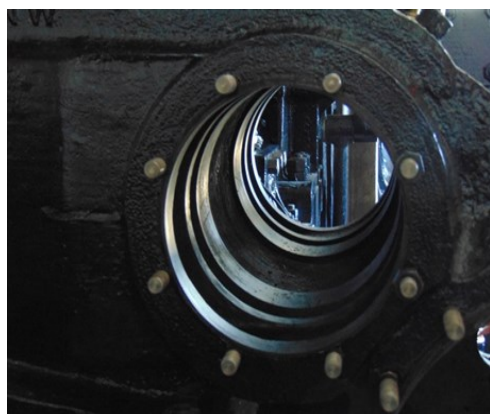
The valve cage is a hollow cylindrical wear element that is used as both a guide for the valve as well as the outer sealing surface for the valve so it can route both the live steam and exhaust steam to the proper places. The valve packing rings form the inner sealing surface and slide back-and-forth in the valve cage as the valve is moved. C&NW 1385's new valve cages stand ready to be installed into the steam chests. Steve Pahl photo.



This broader view shows the engineer's side of C&NW 1385. Unlike the fireman side, the valve cage (circled) on the engineer side was left in place after boring. M.L. Deets photo.4

Fire doors have been painted and await installation. A "spacing" ring needs to be fabricated that will fit between the boiler and the firedoor itself. This is necessary for operational clearance. Due to the change from threaded and peened staybolts to the now welded staybolts, which was by design of the new boiler.

5. As menti oned in the December update, the air compressors are awaiting installation. With the new boiler design, there needs to be adjustments made to the mounting brackets and boiler studs to ensure the proper placement as it appeared when MCRM purchased the locomotive. This will also be necessary for the power reverse due to the same circumstance. SPEC Machines made a tool for resurfacing and lapping the seats and flanges on the steam delivery pipes, the superheater header, and the steam chests. This ensures a tight seal for delivering the superheated steam from the superheater header to the steam chests. Work on these existing sealing surfaces is now complete. Yet-to-be-made matching "donuts" will be inserted between the branch pipe and steam chest flanges and the branch pipe and superheater header to adjust for minor manufacturing size differences and space variations between the new and old components.



Looking into the fireman's side steam chest where the new valve cages will be inserted. M.L. Deets photo



L: Newly machined sealing surface at the bottom end of the branch pipes. These carry the steam from the superheater header to the steam chests. Tyler Roudebush photo.

R ; Top end of the 1385 branch pipes with newly machined sealing surface. Tyler Roudebush photo.

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The smoke box has been seal welded to the boiler. This procedure finally secures the smoke box to the boiler itself. As reported last month, SPEC Machine was busy drilling and reaming the holes that connect the smoke box to the cylinder saddle. I am happy to report that the smoke box is in fact bolted down to the cylinder saddle with 50 tapered fitting bolts custom made by SPEC Machines with 50 H2 heavy nuts. The boiler is now officially attached to the frame! There is still some work to be completed with the smoke box; i.e., complete the grouting at the bottom of the smoke box with refractory, install smoke stack and assorted draft appliances.



50 custom-made tapered bolts now help secure the smoke box to the cylinder saddle. Steve Pahl photo.



Outside view of bolts securing the smoke box to the cylinder saddle. M.L. Deets photo.



Detail view of the seal weld and bolts along the bottom of C&NW 1385's smoke box. M.L. Deets photo.



Jeff Haertlein photo

You Can Help Get C&NW 1385 Back in Service

Posted on [January 31, 2021](#)

Ever since the C&NW No. 1385 restoration was resumed in 2011 work has progressed steadily thanks in large part to the financial support of the 1385 project's enthusiastic followers. That financial backing has allowed hired professional machinists to work on the project 5-days-a-week and allowed progress to occur much faster than could be accomplished by volunteers alone.

As we head in the home stretch we're asking for your continued support so that the 1385 restoration can continue moving forward without delay. Please consider joining the growing list of nearly 1,000 project contributors by donating today. You can do so by visiting our [Donation Page](#) and specifying in the donation form that you want your contribution to support C&NW #1385.



BNSF Service Challenges

From: Gene Poon allaboardraildiscussion@groups.io Monday, February 15, 2021 Provided by John Goodman

BNSF is confronting a broad range of major service challenges across our network due to ongoing extreme winter operating conditions. An unprecedented winter storm brought record cold temperatures and significant snow deep into Texas and parts of the Gulf Coast this morning. Numerous power outages have been reported as well as road closures, which have affected our ability to move train crews and other personnel. As a result, many trains are currently holding until affected infrastructure has been assessed and operations can safely resume. Customers with shipments designated to move through the region should expect extended delays.

In the North Region, temperatures have remained well below zero for more than a week and have significantly impacted our ability to maintain normal traffic flows. Train lengths have been restricted and additional locomotives have been required to generate proper air flow for trains' braking systems. Other actions have been taken to maintain service as much as possible. We also continue to experience reduced productivity at terminals in the region due to multiple switch and air flow issues across rail yards.

As this winter storm moves off to the northeast today, another winter storm is currently moving through the Pacific Northwest and then into the southern Plains. An additional round of significant snow and ice is likely across Oklahoma and north Texas during the middle of the week, while temperatures slowly recover to near normal levels across much of the network by the upcoming weekend.

BNSF has activated 24-hour command centers in multiple operating divisions to manage recovery efforts. From Mechanical teams that are working tirelessly to service our locomotive fleet to Engineering teams that are responding to track issues around the clock, we have called up all available resources to help restore normal operations as quickly as possible.



Most of the trains at the North Shore Scenic Railroad are in a deep winter hibernation, aside from the winter projects in the shop going on with the [NP Coach #517](#) and Steam Locomotive #332.

[Train excursions are on sale now](#), but no steam excursions are scheduled just yet until we complete a few more projects with the 115 year old locomotive. It will run this year, and we will let you know as soon as possible when tickets are on sale.

But everyone's favorite tank engine IS coming back to Duluth this year, and details about Thomas the Tank Engine's return are below.

Josh Miller Station Master [North Shore Scenic Railroad](#)



Day Out With Thomas, Coming Back to Duluth This Summer, 2021!

Tickets On Sale Now!

August 6, 7, 8 and 13, 14, 15 in 2021 is the largest event at the Duluth Depot all year, Day Out With Thomas is fun for the whole family! This is an opportunity for kids to take a ride with their favorite tank engine, meet the railway controller Sir Topham Hatt, have fun in Imagination Station, explore the Railroad Museum, take a ride with Thomas' friend Percy, and much more! It is also the biggest fundraiser for the Lake Superior Railroad Museum. Get ready for the *Celebration Tour* when Thomas brings his best buddy Percy with him to Duluth, Minnesota this summer. Some information is subject to change with the ever-evolving pandemic guidelines and restrictions.

TRAIN EXCURSIONS BEGIN OPERATING MAY 21, THE MUSEUM WILL REOPEN APRIL 1ST. WE CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION TO ASSURE IT IS SAFE AND HEALTHY FOR OUR GUEST-PASSENGERS AND CREWS AND BASE OUR POLICIES ON ST. LOUIS COUNTY AND THE STATE OF MINNESOTA GUIDELINES.

INFO ABOUT COVID19 PROCEDURE CHANGES (As planned for 2021 operations, subject to change):

Masks are required in the Duluth Depot building, and for boarding the train (onboard they can be removed while seated).

Boarding procedures are modified to eliminate the line to board the train

Trains have a reduced capacity, in most cases by half

Onboard the train, additional space is made between seats restricting how close passengers can sit

Friendly signage is posted around the building to simplify social distancing.

The museum itself has been converted to a one-way tour.

Buttons inside the museum have been replaced with motion-activated switches.

Dinner trains reduced capacity by half, spacing tables every-other occupied, or by group

Pizza Trains: All 8" personal pizzas are enclosed in an individual box until they reach the passenger



[See more here](#) SALES POLICY CHANGES:

A relaxed sales policy continues to 2021: reservation/sales made during this time for an excursion made anytime in the 2021 calendar year, will have a "no risk reservation" allowing full refunds for cancellations with at least 2

days notice. [See details here.](#) **You Tube** WHILE THE MUSEUM IS CLOSED, WE MADE A DAILY SERIES OF VIDEO TOURS IN THE MUSEUM, WHICH CAN BE FOUND ON THE MUSEUM'S [FACEBOOK PAGE](#) OR ON THE [YOUTUBE CHANNEL HERE.](#)

David Schauer / 2021



Ore Cars Saved

From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Fri, 29 Jan 2021 15:10:37 PST

A neat little move today as the LSRM went to Missabe Junction to pick up three high-side ore cars that were part of a mini-quad set where one car suffered a structural failure, rendering the quad expendable. The remaining three cars were donated to the museum and at present the plan is to keep one as an example of a 70-ton pellet car (the museum has a 50-ton car already) and the other two cars shipped to the Bruce Mine Park headframe adjacent to the Missabe Trail near Chisholm. The plan calls for laying track under the headframe and putting two ore cars under it to simulate load out. Thanks to Scott Carney and Kent Rengo for volunteering their time for this move today. 1/29/2021 Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

AAPRCO NEWS BRIEFS VOL. 9 ISSUE 2 February 2021

Provided by John Goodman



Washington Update By Ross Capon

It is great to get in on the ground floor explaining your issues to newly elected legislators, as well as to incumbents who are joining the transportation committee for the first time. Our priority with the authorizing committees (House T&I; Senate Commerce) is to see HR2 Section 9219 from the last Congress included in this year's surface transportation bills. (Last year, work was not completed and a one-year stop-gap bill was enacted.)

Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee-New Full-Committee Members.

Democratic incumbent: Seth Moulton (MA-6; Salem)

Democratic First Termers: Jake Auchincloss (MA-4; Attleboro/Newton); Carolyn Bourdeaux (GA-7; Lawrenceville); Kaiiali'i Kahele (HI-2; whole state except Honolulu area); Marilyn Strickland (WA-10; Lacey); Nikema Williams (GA-5); Marie Newman (IL-3; Chicago/Oak Lawn/Oakland Park/Lockport - was Lipinski's district).

Republican incumbents: Tim Burchett (TN-2; Knoxville/Maryville); Michael Guest (MS-3; Starkville); Dusty Johnson (SD; At Large); Jeff Van Drew (NJ-2; Mays Landing);

Republican First Termers: Carlos Gimenez (FL-26-Miami/Key West); Nancy Mace (SC-1; Mt. Pleasant); Nicole Malliotakis (NY-11; Staten Island); Troy Nehls (TX-22; Sugar Land/Pearland); Beth Van Duyne (TX-24; Irving); Michelle Steel (CA-48; Orange County).

House T&I Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials: The subcommittee's new chair is Rep. Donald M. Payne, Jr. (D-NJ-10; Newark/Jersey City). Returning as ranking member: Rick Crawford (R-AR-1; Walnut Ridge/Jonesboro/Cabot/Mountain Home/Dumas). **Subcommittee members will be announced soon.**

Peter Buttigieg's nomination to serve as U.S. DOT Secretary was confirmed January 27 by the Senate Commerce Committee. At his January 21 hearing before the Committee, the very first question--from Chairman Roger Wicker (R-MS)--was about passenger rail and the effort to restore New Orleans-Mobile Amtrak service.

Buttigieg: "As you know, I'm probably only the second biggest passenger-rail enthusiast in this particular administration."

Wicker: "I think you discussed that with me and elaborated on it during our conversation over the phone. You enjoy actually traveling on Amtrak."

Buttigieg: "I do. I enjoy long train trips as well as short ones. I think Americans ought to be able to enjoy the highest standard of rail passenger service."

Cautious optimism is the word regarding funding for restoring Amtrak's long-distance trains to the frequencies in effect prior to October 2020, that is, daily service on most routes, and Amtrak's willingness to restore the service. Amtrak CEO William Flynn, in a [letter to Congress](#), said "Amtrak requires additional COVID-19 relief funding to sustain and restore operations and recall employees through the remainder of FY21 and into FY22 and beyond. In the coming weeks, we are requesting \$1.541 billion in FY21 and will outline our FY22 needs in our annual Legislative and Grant Request." That \$1.541B is in addition to the \$3B Amtrak has already received for FY 21. While, as *Trains'* Bob Johnston reported, "the letter did not mention whether that amount would be sufficient to restore all long-distance trains to daily operation," Flynn has said Amtrak would comply with any Congressional directive--so that directive is essential.

The other four points in Flynn's letter:

"Congress must create a predictable source of federal funding, like a trust fund, for both the Northeast Corridor and National Network..."

"...Prompt access to the nation's rail network is essential for Amtrak to fulfill its mission and meet the needs of the traveling public...We are seeking support and updates to statute to ensure the Amtrak network can grow and serve more of your constituents..."

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"...Amtrak seeks the right to bring an action in U.S. District Court when our [dispatching] preference right is violated..." *Trains* notes that "the letter does not mention the Federal Railroad Administration decision requiring Amtrak and its hosts to agree to schedules that deliver 80% of a train's passengers at stations within 15 minutes of the published time." Those schedules must be agreed before the new service standard metrics take effect.

Amtrak wants to expand short-distance corridors "by allowing us to cover most of the initial capital and operating costs of new or expanded routes prior to requiring state partner cost-sharing under Section 209 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act." Will Congress let Amtrak decide which short distance routes get that new service? What if significant capital investments do not result in state support after that "initial" period?

Further regarding the last point, there is considerable overlap between existing long-distance routes (now tri-weekly) and short corridors that Amtrak is talking up. This brings to mind the June 26, 2019, Senate testimony of then Amtrak President & CEO Richard Anderson: "...on the margin we should be looking at breaking up some of those Long-Distance trains and figuring out how we serve the American consumer to provide high-quality service in short-haul markets where they're using that service today." Short corridors can be problematic if they lack both less time-sensitive, "overhead," longer-distance travelers **and** the speeds needed to attract short-distance travelers. The pandemic reinforces this longstanding concern, especially in corridors with travel dominated by those able to work from home. In the pandemic, existing such corridors have seen much weaker ridership recovery than long-distance routes.

This also brings to mind New York Central's 1966 experimental installation of jet engines on a Budd RDC car which achieved 183.68 mph between Butler, IN, and Stryker, OH, and distracted the public from the railroad's efforts to discontinue long-distance trains. Read the story [here](#).

Correction and clarification: President Trump signed the FY 2021 omnibus/COVID package late Sunday, December 27 (not 26 as I wrote January 4). President Lincoln's overnight trip from Pennsylvania to Washington DC began with a secret, fast ride in a one-car train from [Harrisburg](#) (which I didn't mention January 15) to Philadelphia.

As this is written, the California High Speed Rail Authority made the news twice. On January 28, the Authority "and design-build contractor California Rail Builders announced the completion of the Garces Highway Viaduct, north of the city of Wasco in Kern County." And a deleted 2018 Facebook post from Freshman Rep. Marjorie Taylor Green (R-GA) came to light. As [Newsweek](#) reported, Greene "simultaneously implied that the [2018 California wild] fires could have been started deliberately or accidentally by a solar power generating satellite, but either way the fires were conveniently along the route of the planned California High-Speed Rail project."

More AAPRCO NEWS BRIEFS

Bose to Head FRA, Other USDOT Leaders Announced



Amit Bose Photo: CoalitionForTheNEC

President Joe Biden's administration on January 21st announced 39 key members of U.S. Department of Transportation leadership posts, including Amit Bose as deputy administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

Bose previously served as FRA deputy administrator, FRA chief counsel, USDOT associate general counsel and USDOT deputy assistant secretary for government affairs. He has also served as vice president for HNTB Corporation and chair of the Coalition for the Northeast Corridor, and has been involved in the California High Speed Rail Project, Northeast Corridor Future, Southeast Passenger Rail and Build America Bureau.

Bose's extensive experience in transportation policy, law and management will be an asset to the Biden administration, said Amtrak Chairman Tony Coscia.

"Mr. Bose understands the importance of investing in infrastructure to support economic recovery and keeping America's railroad system reliable and safe," said Coscia in a press release. "We look forward to working with Secretary-designee Pete Buttigieg, Deputy Secretary-designee Polly Trottenburg and Mr. Bose to improve and expand passenger-rail service across the country."

Also announced yesterday: Lana Hurdle, deputy assistant secretary for budget and programs, will serve as acting secretary of transportation until Buttigieg is confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Buttigieg's Senate confirmation hearing was held yesterday.

While additional people will be named later, the initial USDOT team also includes: Casey Clemmons, special assistant, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration; Steve Cliff, deputy administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; Nuria Fernandez, deputy administrator of the Federal Transit Administration; Carlos Monje Jr., senior adviser and acting chief of staff; Alex Pena, special assistant to the general counsel; and Stephanie Pollack, deputy administrator of the Federal Highway Administration.



Payne to Chair House Railroad Subcommittee

U.S. Rep. Donald Payne Jr. (D-N.J.) has been elected chair of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials.

To assume the new role, Payne will give up his chairmanship of the House Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery.

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Our transportation industry has suffered significantly during the COVID-19 global pandemic," said Payne in a press release. "I want to make sure our nation's rail system has the resources necessary to protect commuters and staff, as well as maintain facilities during and after this public health crisis."

The issues and agencies under the subcommittee's jurisdiction include the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Federal Railroad Administration, Surface Transportation Board, Amtrak Inspector General, and Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Operations Advisory Commission.

Most recently, the rail subcommittee was chaired by U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-Ill.), who lost a primary race for reelection last year.

More AAPRCO NEWS BRIEFS

Amtrak CEO Flynn Outlines Legislative Priorities



Bill Flynn

Amtrak Chief Executive Officer Bill Flynn is urging Congress to support five legislative priorities that would help the national intercity passenger railroad recover from the pandemic's economic fallout and expand service.

In a [Jan. 22 letter](#), Flynn is asking Congress to consider:

* **additional COVID-19 relief funding** for Amtrak to sustain and restore operations and recall employees through the remainder of fiscal-year 2021 and beyond. Amtrak is requesting \$1.54 billion in FY2021 and will outline its FY2022 needs in its annual legislative and grant request.

* **an Intercity Passenger Rail Trust Fund.** Amtrak and intercity passenger rail are the only mode of surface transportation without a federal trust fund to provide reliable, multiyear program funding. "Reliance solely on the annual appropriations projects for funding inhibits our ability to pursue large, multiyear capital projects or procurements and service expansion across the nation," the letter states.

* **access to railroads for new service and additional trains.** Most rail routes that Amtrak trains use are owned and controlled by freight railroads. "Amtrak always attempts to work cooperatively with our host railroads to add new routes, modify existing routes and add additional trains," Flynn writes. "More often than not, these efforts fail to provide reasonable access for Amtrak trains, leaving your constituents without the services they deserve."

* **preference enforcement.** "Our host railroads are required by law to provide Amtrak trains dispatching preference over their own freight trains," writes Flynn. "Unfortunately, this requirement is not consistently honored and 'freight train interference' is the largest source of delay to Amtrak trains on host railroads."

* **new routes.** Corridor routes, typically less than 500 miles, represent the fastest growing segment of Amtrak service. "We ask Congress to authorize and fund Amtrak's expansion in such corridors by allowing us to cover most of the initial capital and operating costs of new or expanded routes prior to requiring state partner cost-sharing under Section 209 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act," the letter states

~ BACKGROUNDER ~ Amtrak: History and Current Operations -AAPRCO



Amtrak, the nation's intercity passenger-rail service provider, was created under the Rail Passenger Service Act. Signed by President Richard Nixon in 1970, the legislation enabled most freight railroads that operated intercity passenger-rail lines to join the national system and, in effect, abandon their unprofitable passenger service. The new, federally funded railroad launched service on May 1, 1971, under the name Amtrak, which is a combination of the words "America" and "track." Amtrak operated trains using the rolling stock and other equipment it inherited from the freight railroads' passenger operations.

In 1976, Congress passed the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act. The legislation's primary intent was to create Conrail, but it also gave Amtrak ownership of the Northeast Corridor between Washington, D.C., New York City and Boston. The railroad also received some capital dollars to rehabilitate the electrified corridor.

Amtrak spent several years upgrading the route between New York City and Washington, D.C., allowing the railroad in 1991 to begin operating Metroliner trains between New York and Washington, D.C., at speeds up to 125 mph. In the early 1990s, Amtrak launched the Northeast Corridor High Speed Rail Program in an effort to bring the New York-Boston segment of the corridor up to the same performance level. In 2000, Amtrak launched Acela Express high-speed rail service between Washington, D.C., New York City and Boston, with trains traveling at top speeds of 150 mph.

Through the years, Amtrak has faced much criticism in Congress. Members have called on Amtrak to become self sufficient and some have threatened to significantly cut or eliminate federal funding for the service.



Amtrak begins operations in May 1971.

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Amtrak Today

Amtrak currently serves more than 500 destinations in 46 states and three Canadian provinces, operating 300 trains along 21,200 route miles. Seventy-two percent of Amtrak's route miles are on tracks owned by host railroads. Amtrak pays the railroads for the use of their track and other resources required to operate passenger trains.

Amtrak operates 1,543 passenger cars, 484 locomotives, 80 Auto Train® vehicles and 80 baggage cars, and has placed orders for 130 new long-distance single-level cars and 70 electric locomotives. Amtrak also operates state-owned equipment totaling 136 passenger cars and 26 locomotives.



Acela prototype at the TTCI test track in Pueblo, Colorado.

In addition, Amtrak operates commuter-rail services under contract for Maryland Rail Commuter, Connecticut's Shore Line East, and southern California's Metrolink. Amtrak provides maintenance-of-way and dispatching services for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, equipment maintenance services for Seattle's Sound Transit, and dispatching services for the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority's Tri-Rail.

In FY2016, Amtrak posted a record \$2.14 billion in ticket revenue. Annual ridership totaled 31.3 million passengers, up nearly 400,000 passengers over the previous fiscal year. Total revenue reached a record \$3.2 billion and the railroad posted an operating loss of \$227 million, down \$78 million from FY2015, and the lowest operating loss since 1973.

More AAPRCO NEWS BRIEFS

Congress Could Direct Passenger Railroad to Restore Daily Long-Distance Service as Part of \$1.5 Billion in Relief By Bob Johnston | January 29, 2021

WASHINGTON - Amtrak has clarified details of a letter sent by CEO William Flynn to all U.S. House and Senate last week, confirming to Trains News Wire that legislators have the ability to override the metrics the passenger railroad plans to use to determine decisions on long-distance train frequencies.

In an emailed statement, Amtrak said, "If Congress provides the direction and the needed funding, we would restore long-distance services to daily." Metrics measuring public health, future demand, and current ridership for each individual train "are in lieu of such direction." The request for more than \$1.5 billion in additional funding is one of five "wish list" items Flynn outlined [see "Analysis: Amtrak CEO Flynn sets company priorities for legislation," Trains News Wire, Jan. 27, 2021].

Elaborating on how that money would be spent, the statement adds, "The \$1.541 billion would allow Amtrak to recall employees furloughed since October 1 as a result of Amtrak's response to COVID-19, as well as prevent furloughs that could occur if funds are not provided for the remainder of FY21 (through September 30). This applies to all of our services across the company in both the Northeast Corridor and National Network (state-sponsored and long-distance)."

Amtrak also clarified what would happen to employees normally assigned to state-supported services if those operating authorities decline to restore frequencies.

"The funding would also allow us to keep employees where trains are still not operating at pre-COVID levels. If states determine the funding from Congress or their legislatures is not sufficient or for any other reason, their services would continue to be suspended...(but) Amtrak would still recall those employees furloughed," the statement reads. The employees "could go wherever their seniority allows them; it might not be on an extra board, but they would be recalled and employed."

As for Acela and Northeast Regional trains operating between Boston and Washington, D.C. that have shown the most dramatic ridership and revenue drops since last March, Amtrak says, "We are closely monitoring booking and will continue to make prudent business decisions. Again, if an employee is not needed to support the operations of a train, but we are directed to recall furloughed employees, we would do so."

AAPRCO
Mid-Month Highlights



February 2021 #2

Washington Update by Ross Capon

Provided by John Goodman

Another Virtual AAPRCO Day(s) on the Hill. The series of meetings that we had a year ago were good and of course enabled people to participate without traveling to Washington. Again this year I am happy to set up calls with some or all of your three U.S. legislators. Contact me at rcapon3@gmail.com or 301-385-6438 (text or voice) and indicate times that you prefer and/or are unavailable. Last year I participated in most calls, but just tell me if you prefer to "go it alone." I also will be working to set up conference calls between AAPRCO leadership and key committee staff. Again, the focus will be on good appropriations report language and on keeping last year's House Section 9219 in reauthorization (which apparently in the House again will be called HR2).

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The Senate confirmed the nomination of Pete Buttigieg as DOT Secretary on February 2 on an 86-13 vote. Toomey (R-PA) did not vote; the 13 Republican "no" votes were from Blackburn (R-TN), Cassidy (R-LA), Cotton (R-AR), Cruz (R-TX), Hagerty (R-TN), Hawley (R-MO), Lankford (R-OK), Marshall (R-KS), Rubio (R-FL), Scott (R-FL), Scott (R-SC), Shelby (R-AL) and Tuberville (R-AL).

I expressed concern to a top FRA official that the Biden Administration not fall into the "we'll-put-HSR-everywhere" trap as the Obama Administration did. I noted the terrible press that resulted when reporters like Anderson Cooper ridiculed perfectly good ARRA projects (as in Vermont) because they were not high speed rail. I got a reassuring response, including the fact that Senators Wicker (R-MS) and Moran (R-KS) had already talked to the Secretary about Gulf Coast service and the *Southwest Chief*. We need to make sure the new Administration also hears from key Democrats that support improved conventional rail.

House T&I COVID Relief Mark-up: The Feb. 10 [mark-up](#) in Chairman Peter DeFazio's (D-OR) committee took almost nine hours. Many Republican amendments were defeated mostly on time-consuming recorded votes. Another \$1.5 billion was approved for Amtrak which should be enough to restart daily long-distance service within 90 days of enactment. Enactment is expected by mid-March before extended unemployment benefits otherwise would run out. At the mark-up, there was much Republican complaining about providing more Amtrak and transit funding since the December appropriation was not yet spent. An amendment by Rep. Garrett Graves (R-LA-6-Baton Rouge/Schriever) would have limited Amtrak service restoration to areas which had major disasters; this brought a good rebuttal (5:32:00 on the video) from Rep. Rick Larsen (D-WA-Everett/Bellingham). Rep. Garrett Graves at 6:44:30 noted the number of Uber riders he said the proposed transit funding could pay for.

The 117th Congress: The *Southwest Chief* will continue to be well-represented on key committees! One of my favorite Amtrak quotes was at the October 3, 2018, Senate Commerce hearing, "Implementation of Positive Train Control," after three senators-Udall (D-NM), Moran (R-KS), and Gardner (R-CO)-had harsh words about Amtrak's approach to the *Southwest Chief* and especially the company's temporary (as it turned out) withdrawal of its promised match for a federal grant. After Gardner finished, then-Chairman John Thune (R-SD) told the Amtrak witness, Executive VP and COO Scot Naparstek, "If Senator Klobuchar asks about the *Southwest Chief*, I'll know you're having a bad day."

Senator Udall has retired and Senator Gardner was defeated, but both New Mexico senators and Gardner's successor now are on key committees: Martin Heinrich (D-NM), now the state's senior senator, is on appropriations, while freshmen Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) and John Hickenlooper (D-CO) joined Commerce. Thus, combined with Jerry Moran (R-KS), Commerce's bipartisan *SW Chief* caucus from the key states of Kansas/Colorado/New Mexico remains at three.

Below is a list of legislators newly assigned to the authorizing and appropriations committees. A complete list of committee members is at [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) - click on "Committees" at the upper right; under "standing committees," the committees that authorize and generally set policy for Amtrak are **House Transportation & Infrastructure** and **Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation**. The Appropriations Committees set specific funding levels and do some policy work, especially when the authorizations (normally multi-year) are not up or just subject to one-year extensions.

Please remember that your first and primary job is to tell your own three legislators what you want. They are the ones that are interested in your concerns. If they are not on the "right" committee, they likely have friends who are. If they *are* on the right committee, it's good for them to know that you know that!!

Members Newly Assigned to Committees of Interest in the 117th Congress (*Freshmen)

Brian Schatz (D-HI) is the new chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies. Jack Reed (D-RI), previously the subcommittee's top Democrat, is now its #2 Democrat and chairman of the full Armed Services Committee.

Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) is new to the subcommittee.

New members of the full **Senate Appropriations Committee** (¹ also new to the subcommittee):

Martin Heinrich (D-NM)

¹Mike Braun (R-IN) [signed the bipartisan 6/24/20 letter to Amtrak about tri-weekly service]

*Bill Hagerty (R-TN)

Senate Committee of Commerce, Science and Transportation (subcommittee assignments are pending)

*Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM)

*John Hickenlooper (D-CO)

*Raphael Warnock (D-GA)

*Cynthia Lummis (R-WY)

House T&I Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials

Henry C. Johnson Jr. (D-GA-4-Decatur)

Dina Titus (D-NV-1-Las Vegas)

Jared Huffman (D-CA-2-San Rafael/Eureka/Ft Bragg/Petaluma/Ukiah)

Seth Moulton (D-MA-6-Salem)

*Jake Auchincloss (D-MA-4-Newton/Attleboro)

*Marilyn Strickland (D-WA-10-Lacey)

*Marie Newman (D-IL-3-Orland Park/Oak Lawn/Lockport/Chicago)

Bruce Westerman (R-AR-4-Pine Bluff/Malvern/Arkadelphia/Hope/Texarkana/Ozark/El Dorado)

Tim Burchett (R-TN-2-Knoxville/Maryville)

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Dusty Johnson (R-SD-AL)
 *Troy E. Nehls, (R-TX-22-Sugar Land/Pearland)
 *Michelle Steel (R-CA-48-Orange County)

Full Transportation & Infrastructure Committee

Conor Lamb (D-PA-17-Pittsburgh)
 *Carolyn Bourdeaux (D-GA-7)
 *Kaiali'i Kahele (D-HI-2-everything but Honolulu)
 *Nikema Williams (D-GA-5-Atlanta)
 Jefferson Van Drew (R-NJ-2-Mays Landing)
 Michael Guest (R-MS-3-Starkville)
 *Nancy Mace (R-SC-1-Mt. Pleasant)
 *Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY-11-Staten Island)
 *Beth Van Duyne (R-TX-24-Irving)
 *Carlos A. Gimenez (R-FL-26-Key West/Miami)

Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing & Urban Development

Jennifer Wexton (D-VA-10-Sterling)
 *Mike Garcia (R-CA-25-Simi Valley/Palmdale)
 *Ashley Hinson (R-IA-1-Dubuque/Cedar Rapids/Waterloo)
 *Tony Gonzalez (R-TX-23-Del Rio/San Antonio)

Full Appropriations Committee

Josh Harder (D-CA-10-Modesto)
 David J. Trone (D-MD-6-Gaithersburg)
 Lauren Underwood (D-IL-14-St. Charles)
 Susie Lee (D-NV-3-southern tip of the state)

Clarification: Media reports in Ohio listing five routes that Amtrak supposedly wanted to restart actually referred to proposals by the advocacy group All Aboard Ohio. As *Trains* reported February 2, "although some Ohio news outlets picked up social media posts implying that Amtrak is behind the proposals, the passenger railroad declined to acknowledge specifics regarding the All Aboard Ohio plans in an email to *Trains* News Wire."



Biden Talks Transportation Infrastructure with Senators

President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg met last week with Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee Chair Tom Carper (D-Del.) and other senators to discuss transportation infrastructure legislation.

The bipartisan group of senators included Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) and James Inhofe (R-Okla.).

Biden has proposed a \$2 trillion infrastructure plan that would grow the economy and reduce the transportation sector's greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). The size of the package is still under discussion, The Washington Post reported.

After the White House meeting, Carper said in a prepared statement that Biden made it clear that investing in transportation is a top priority for his administration.

"The American people desperately want us to bring our roads, trains and bridges out of the last century and into the future," Carper said.

Carper added that he's preparing a bipartisan bill that would reauthorize surface transportation programs in ways that reduce GHGs and creates jobs.

"Our current authorization extension expires in September; there is no time to waste," Carper said. "Now I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues in the House and in the Senate to get this done."

Siemens Chargers on Hiawatha Service

On 2021-02-16, 10:04, "Gene Poon" <AllAboardRailDiscussion@groups.io>

Amtrak 331(16) departed Chicago with two P42s. Both the Chargers assigned to that set broke down and Chicago had no more, so P42s were substituted.

Amtrak 332(16) made it seven miles out of Milwaukee before its Chargers broke down. Amtrak 331 tied onto it near Milwaukee Airport and took it back to Milwaukee.

Tuesday, February 16, 2021, 6:24:20 PM EST, Carleton MacDonald <carletonm@comcast.net> wrote:

Siemens Chargers are good locomotives. What is going on? Maintenance deficiencies? The ACS-64 electric locomotives in the Northeast, also made by Siemens, seem to be reliable. Carleton Maple Valley WA

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Speculation on the Continuing Siemens Charger Problems

From: Gene Poon <allaboardraildiscussion@groups.io> Sent: Sunday, February 21, 2021

Speculation has been offered on the many problems being encountered by the new Siemens Charger locomotives purchased by the States and maintained by Amtrak for Midwest Corridor service. Fire alarms. Engine room smoke. Electrical overvoltages. I've heard of fine snow shutting down chargers. No aux generator to power traction motor blowers and radiator fans. No 480/HEP, the engine goes dead. Dynamic brake system takes on snow which can fry out. Moisture causes shorts. I've heard there are HEP cooling issues as well as moisture leading to the HEP dropping out. I have also heard of "trainline emergencies" and MU/COMM issues where snow is getting into the receptacles from hitting snow banks.



Dear MTM Members,

This is a quick note to thank each of you who joined us last Saturday to spruce up the museum prior to our reopening in early March. Our exhibits are looking refreshed and we are excited to give our visitors an even more memorable experience.

I particularly want to welcome those of you who volunteered for the first time. It was great to meet you, and I hope you'll come back often. Nearly every Wednesday and Saturday we could use your help in a variety of ways.

. When you do come in, please remember to sign in at the gift shop so that we can give you credit for your volunteer hours. If you missed doing that on Saturday, please let me know at scott@trainride.org.

We still have some tasks left to accomplish prior to March 3rd. If you are open to pitching in on the inside, or running the snow blower on the outside, please come by again this next Saturday. The weather promises to be warmer!

Also, if you haven't updated your profile on Member Planet, or paid your annual membership dues, please do so. Your help in keeping our books up to date are very much appreciated.

Have a terrific week!

With warm regards, **Scott Hippert**



Canadian Pacific and Canadian National could see increased crude-by-rail traffic as a result of the Biden Administration's decision to kill the Keystone XL pipeline. *TRAINS: David Lassen*

"We do think that the administration's actions ... bodes for more strength and more potential demand for crude," Canadian Pacific CEO Keith Creel told investors and analysts on the railway's earnings call last week. But both Ruest and Creel say that conventional crude by rail shipments will eventually shift to pipelines once capacity matches demand. CN's shipments of heavy crude, which cannot flow through pipelines, will not be affected by the U.S. efforts to limit pipeline construction, Ruest says. CP is awaiting the completion of a diluent recovery unit in Hardisty, Alberta, which is set to open later this year and will allow the railway to ship non-flammable bitumen to a Gulf Coast refinery on Kansas City Southern. The first-of-its-kind facility in Hardisty will remove diluent, which is added to raw bitumen that is extracted from the Canadian oil sands. The process creates a viscous, heavy bitumen designed to move in tank cars. CP and KCS have a 10-year contract to haul the bitumen to a new plant in Port Arthur, Texas.

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Biden Administration Pipeline Restrictions May Benefit Crude by Rail

CEOs at CN, CP both believe traffic will eventually shift to pipelines, but offers near-term opportunities

From the TRAINS Newswire By [Bill Stephens](#) | February 2, 2021

Provided by Rick Krenske

The Biden administration's efforts to kill key oil pipeline projects may boost crude by rail volumes, railroad officials say.

President Joe Biden last month revoked a permit for the Keystone XL pipeline that was under construction to carry oil sands crude from Canada to refineries in the U.S. "The pipeline was not going to be ready before a couple of years, so I think the positive impact on us might be a few years down the line," Canadian National CEO JJ Ruest told Bloomberg Business News.

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Restrictions on Canada-U.S. pipelines should create more support for scaling up the diluent recovery facility, Creel says. Initially it will generate two unit trains per day, but that could double if the plant is expanded after it opens.

The Biden administration also is scrutinizing other projects, including the Dakota Access pipeline that's already handling crude from North Dakota's Bakken oil patch, as part of wider efforts to shift away from fossil fuels that contribute to climate change.

"We do ship Bakken crude out of North Dakota and, obviously, if something happened with that pipeline, we think that would generate an opportunity," says John Brooks, CP's chief marketing officer. "Of course, there's been a lot of noise around that pipeline for a number of years. We've been able to generate some ... stable crude-by-rail business out of North Dakota. But I think certainly there is an opportunity for upside if they would move towards shutting it down or putting it on the sideline for a certain amount of time."

Crude-by-rail volumes declined significantly in the U.S. and Canada last year amid a collapse in energy prices during the pandemic. Canadian crude-by-rail exports to the U.S. fell 70% from April through November of last year, according to the latest data from the Canada Energy Regulator.



BNSF Receives Patent for Moving Block System

Virtual block system would increase capacity, eliminate need for lineside signals

By [Bill Stephens](#) | February 9, 2021



BNSF stack train passes under a signal bridge at Western Springs, Ill., on Jan. 2, 2021. BNSF has received a patent for a moving block system that would eliminate the need for wayside signals. TRAINS: David Lassen

WASHINGTON — BNSF Railway has received a patent for a virtual track block system that has the potential to significantly boost existing mainline capacity, raise average train speeds, and improve the detection of broken rails.

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office approved the patent application last month, and credits the invention to BNSF employees Mitchell Beard, Kent Shue, Jerry Specht, and Ralph Young.

The system would divide existing fixed-length physical track blocks into multiple virtual blocks. Train spacing would be reduced and would be based on train braking capabilities rather than the typical 2-mile length of a fixed signal block.

A moving block system essentially puts a safety envelope around trains, with distance between trains determined using real-time data on the speed, location, and braking performance of trains moving over the main line. By allowing trains to follow one another more closely, the capacity of a main line would be increased.

Moving blocks could boost the capacity of about 8,000 route-miles in the U.S., enabling railroads to avoid adding track and signals on main lines that are at capacity, according to a 2004 report on the benefits of positive train control that Zeta-Tech Associates prepared for the Federal Railroad Administration.

The report said moving block systems would be particularly beneficial on main lines where traffic moves at different speeds.

A moving block system would improve BNSF's ability to pace its premium trains around slower moving freights. A high-priority Z-train, for example, could come up closely behind a merchandise train and then leapfrog ahead at quadruple-track crew change points such as Needles, Calif., and Amarillo, Texas.

The system also would eliminate the need for wayside signals.

"Among other things, the present principles alleviate the need for wayside signals, since train braking distance is maintained onboard the locomotives instead of through wayside signal aspects," the patent summary says. "In addition, by partitioning the physical track blocks into multiple virtual track blocks, broken rail can be detected within an occupied physical track block."

Fixed block signal systems have been in use for more than a century in North America. Various moving block systems have been used for years in Europe and Asia.

It was unclear when BNSF might begin testing and implementation of a moving block system or seek the required regulatory approval from the Federal Railroad Administration. The railroad did not respond to a request for comment.

"BNSF will have to file a safety analysis of its operating plan for moving blocks with FRA showing that there is no degradation of safety when it is implemented," says signal expert Steve Ditmeyer. "FRA, in its recent revision of its regulations, has acknowledged that railroads may be considering removing their intermediate wayside signals, which is necessary for moving block operations, and that a safety analysis would be necessary."

Studies have shown that moving blocks would result in about a 25% increase in capacity on single-track lines, but less than that on double-track routes, Ditmeyer says.

Warren Buffett Praises BNSF Leadership, Touts Railroading in Annual Letter

Annual letter from Berkshire Hathaway chairman notes corporation's 'substantial dividends' from rail ownership

By [Bill Stephens](#) | February 27, 2021

OMAHA, Neb. — Berkshire Hathaway Chairman Warren Buffett praised BNSF Railway management for steering the company through the pandemic and touted the railroad's role in the U.S. economy in his widely read annual letter to shareholders, which was released on Saturday.

"Last year, Carl Ice, its CEO, and his number two, Katie Farmer, did an extraordinary job in controlling expenses while navigating a significant downturn in business," Buffett wrote. "Despite a 7% decline in the volume of goods carried, the two actually increased BNSF's profit margin by 2.9 percentage points. Carl, as long planned, retired at year end and Katie took over as CEO. Your railroad is in good hands."

BNSF's operating ratio for the year set a record at 61.6%, down from 64.5% last year. The Fort Worth-based railroad has halved the operating-ratio gap with its rival, Union Pacific. In 2018 and 2019, BNSF's operating ratio was 4 points higher than UP's. The difference was 1.7 points in 2020.

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BNSF will deliver appropriate returns on its major capital expenditures, Buffett wrote. “Your railroad carries about 15% of all non-local ton-miles (a ton of freight moved one mile) of goods that move in the United States, whether by rail, truck, pipeline, barge or aircraft. By a significant margin, BNSF’s loads top those of any other carrier,” the 90-year-old Berkshire chairman wrote.

Buffett’s letter also touched on railroad history and the industry’s renaissance in recent years. “The history of American railroads is fascinating,” he wrote. “After 150 years or so of frenzied construction, skullduggery, overbuilding, bankruptcies, reorganizations and mergers, the railroad industry finally emerged a few decades ago as mature and rationalized.”

BNSF, he noted, traces its roots to 1850. “Today, it has 390 antecedents whose railroads have been purchased or merged,” he wrote.

He also acknowledged the challenge railroaders face in all sorts of weather. “Railroading is an outdoor sport, featuring mile-long trains obliged to reliably operate in both extreme cold and heat, as they all the while encounter every form of terrain from deserts to mountains,” Buffett wrote.

“Massive flooding periodically occurs. BNSF owns 23,000 miles of track, spread throughout 28 states, and must spend whatever it takes to maximize safety and service throughout its vast system.”

“Nevertheless, BNSF has paid substantial dividends to Berkshire – \$41.8 billion in total,” since Berkshire acquired the railroad in 2010, Buffett wrote. “The railroad pays us, however, only what remains after it both fulfills the needs of its business and maintains a cash balance of about \$2 billion. This conservative policy allows BNSF to borrow at low rates, independent of any guarantee of its debt by Berkshire.”



former CSX B40-8 leads a Pan Am Railways train at Plainville, Conn., on Feb. 6, 2021. CSX has filed its application to acquire Pan Am with the Surface Transportation Board. Scott A. Hartley

CSX Files Pan Am Merger Application with Federal Regulators (updated)

Genesee & Wyoming to operate Pan Am Southern; Norfolk Southern to gain new trackage rights

By Bill Stephens | February 26, 2021

CSX Transportation has told federal regulators that its proposed acquisition of regional Pan Am Railways will improve service, capture business from trucks, and boost railroad competition in New England.

CSX’s merger application, posted today on the Surface Transportation Board website, also resolves a thorny issue: Who will operate Pan Am Southern, the joint venture that provides Norfolk Southern access to New England.

Genesee & Wyoming will operate and maintain Pan Am Southern under its Pittsburg & Shawmut subsidiary, which will do business as Berkshire & Eastern. The move is a victory for NS, which had sought a neutral operator for Pan Am Southern. CSX and NS will jointly own Pan Am Southern, with NS retaining its 50% share and CSX acquiring Pan Am Railways’ stake.

“The selection of a G&W affiliate is based upon our desire to maintain competition and enhance rail service in the New England market,” CSX said in a statement. “G&W’s existing presence, relationships, and experience will greatly assist the transition.”

Norfolk Southern also gains trackage rights over CSX, Providence & Worcester, and Pan Am between the Albany, N.Y., area and Ayer, Mass., for intermodal and automotive traffic.

The trackage rights will give NS a faster and fully cleared route for intermodal trains 22K and 23K, which currently run as single-stack trains east of the NS intermodal terminal at Mechanicville, N.Y., due to clearance restrictions in Pan Am Southern’s 4.75-mile Hoosac Tunnel in western Massachusetts.

NS will be limited to one trackage rights train per day in each direction between Voorheesville, N.Y., and Ayer, with train length capped at 9,000 feet due to siding lengths.

The routing, via CSX’s former Water Level Route and Boston & Albany via Worcester, Mass., will cut the NS intermodal trains’ running time by 3 hours and eliminate the time-consuming single-stacking operation now required at Mechanicville.

NS will fund required clearance work between Worcester and Ayer. NS also will rehabilitate its former Delaware & Hudson route from Delanson, N.Y., to Voorheesville, where it will restore a connection to the CSX main line. Short line SMS Rail Lines will lose its lease the Voorheesville Running Track.

A pair of daily NS merchandise trains will continue to run via Pan Am Southern between the Albany, N.Y., area and the Pan Am classification yard at East Deerfield, Mass.

“Norfolk Southern’s goal is to ensure that shipping customers have access to safe, reliable, and competitive rail transportation in the New England and New York markets and beyond,” the railroad said in a statement. “Norfolk Southern has reached an agreement with CSX that benefits shippers, and we support the transaction. We believe the current structure of the transaction will preserve and enhance rail service and competition in the New England and New York markets.”

The Pan Am Southern consists of about 425 miles of rail lines and trackage rights routes, including the B&M main line between Mechanicville and Ayer that provides NS access to the Boston area via its so-called Patriot Corridor.

Pan Am’s Springfield Terminal subsidiary currently operates the Pan Am Southern, which also includes the north-south route Pan Am uses between White River Junction, Vt., and its branches in Connecticut via Springfield, Mass.

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Berkshire & Eastern plans to hire 159 Springfield Terminal employees. That's lower than the current number of employees Springfield Terminal uses to operate the Pan Am Southern, but G&W's filing did not state by how much.

G&W will expand its footprint in New England, where it already operates three railroads that connect with Pan Am Southern: the New England Central, Providence & Worcester, and Connecticut Southern.

"B&E believes that it could expand existing relationships with short line railroads in the PAS service area to enhance regional business for the customers it will serve," G&W said in its regulatory filing, noting that the railroad will benefit from G&W's safety and training programs, as well as its marketing and commercial resources in New England.

CSX on Nov. 30 announced that it had reached a deal to acquire privately held Pan Am Railways, which stretches from the Albany area to Maine and totals 1,700 miles when trackage and haulage rights are included.

"We look forward to integrating Pan Am into CSX, with substantial benefits to the rail-served industries of the Northeast, and to working in partnership with connecting railroads to provide exceptional supply chain solutions to New England and beyond. We are likewise confident that G&W's subsidiary will bring similar benefits to PAS customers as the successful operator of PAS," CSX said in a statement.

In its filing, CSX said having G&W as a neutral operator will "strengthen PAS as an independent rail route for access to rail shippers in New England and enhance rail competition in New England."

CSX's merger filing did not project cost savings or revenue gains that would flow from the acquisition of Pan Am Railways. The railroad also did not envision significant traffic growth in the short term. "While CSXT expects rail traffic on the PAR System to grow over time, CSXT does not expect to make any significant changes in traffic routes or traffic volumes in the next few years," the filing says.

CSX, already the dominant freight railroad in the region, will extend its reach into Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, as well as to Saint John, New Brunswick, via Pan Am's haulage rights agreement with Irving-owned short lines.

"CSXT will bring to New England rail users its best-in-class rail service and its dynamic operating model that has set new standards for safety and service performance with higher velocity, faster equipment turns, and greater consistency," the railroad told the STB. "CSXT will be able to offer rail customers in New England unprecedented visibility into their supply chain through the easy to use ShipCSX platform that enables them to track and manage their shipments with much greater precision and confidence. Improved service, increased reliability, and highly consistent rail operations will enhance competition, remove truck traffic from congested highways, and provide substantial public benefits to New England."

CSX said it doesn't have plans to "change the existing Pan Am Railways routes, patterns, or types of service," but that it would bring new switching and yard management practices to "achieve ambitious schedules, reduce the variability in rail operations, and increase reliability."

CSX did say it would upgrade Pan Am's physical plant and boost track speeds, particularly in Maine, which could lead to the use of fewer but longer trains.

CSX noted that as an end-to-end merger, the transaction will have no adverse effects on competition. Four shippers, who currently have access to both CSX and Pan Am Railways, will have continued access to two railroads through a switching agreement with Pan Am Southern. No short lines will lose competitive access, CSX said in its filing, and Berkshire & Eastern will independently set rates on Pan Am Southern.

"In addition, CSXT is committing to keeping open existing gateways on the PAR System on commercially reasonable terms and to ensuring access to rate regulation remedies if shippers located on the existing PAR System are dissatisfied with rates for connections to other railroads," CSX said in its filing.

CSX considers the Pan Am acquisition a minor transaction under STB rules and has proposed a review schedule that would have the transaction close in late September. Terms of the deal were not disclosed, although CSX said it would pay for the acquisition through the use of cash and CSX stock. The purchase price was nearly \$700 million, according to people familiar with the matter.

CSX's application included 58 letters of support from shippers, ports, public officials, and a few short lines.



CP F9B 1900

From: [Dave Schauer](#)

Date: Tue, 23 Feb 2021 07:57:50 PST

A surprise visit to the Twin Ports this past weekend saw CP F9B 1900 (ex-CN/VIA/ Nebkota) on train 493 Friday (2/19/2021) and then returning on 492 Saturday. The executive F had work done in St. Paul and was sent to Superior on a shakedown run. I believe this is the first visit of one of CP's Fs in the Twin Ports.

<https://www.railpictures.net/photo/764151/>

CN Heritage units continue to flow through the area as well.

Dave Schauer Duluth, MN

Museum of Transportation – Favorite Locomotives

The Newsletter of the National Railway Historical Society February 2021 By AL WEBER, President, NRHS

Museum of Transportation – Favorite Locomotives By AL WEBER, President, National Railway Historical Society Well, the theme of this month's NRHS News is your favorite engine. Most of you know that I volunteer at the Museum of Transportation in St Louis County, Missouri. Several of us have been taking photos of many of the items in the collection for the last few years. It started with the a rebuild of a streetcar (still a work in progress) Kansas City 1533 (<http://kc1533.org/>) but has evolved into much larger documentation project. Our motive power is at <http://kc1533.org/webpages/catalog/Motivepower.html>. The catalog provides simple documentation of railroad history, similar to Wikipedia just for our museum. The catalog always gets in new data and documentation. This may be something that can interest you, your chapter or organization. The museum gets requests. We do the photos and make them available for all to use. We also have links and photos of other museums. We are adding items all the time. So, what is my favorite??? Southern 6100. I have the first photo of my wife in front of it when it first came to the museum. Model FTA Demonstrator - Repainted in the original demonstrator colors for a celebration at EMD (McCook, Illinois, often described by mailing address LaGrange) for the 50th anniversary of the FT. EMD103 is "the diesel that did it" and that moniker has stuck. American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) International Historic Engineering Landmark. Source: Museum of Transportation, St. Louis County, Missouri. <http://kc1533.org/webpages/MotivePower/Diesel/EMD103.html> As for Steam I have worked on doing a 15 year inspection of Union Electric No. 1. I drove this engine at MOT. It is a small engine, easy to run, that almost anyone could operate. Now the engine is complete, we have all the parts but as you can see it is need of a small amount of work. Source: Museum of Transportation, St. Louis County, Missouri. <http://kc1533.org/webpages/MotivePower/Steam/1UE.html> The first engine that I started to work on at MOT in 1974 is Katy #311. It is a runable engine and several volunteers are working on getting it painted and fixed up now. Several of the volunteers want to make it steam again. Source: Museum of Transportation, St. Louis County, Missouri.



Katy #311



In This Newsletter

Status Update - advocacy activities so far this year - and how you can help!
 Status of funding for the TCMC & MnDOT Passenger Rail Plans
 Grants Received and Matching Funds required
 Governor's Bonding Request - Your Help Needed Now!
 Legislature Bonding and Operating requests
 Our present and future advocacy
 Events on the National Level
 Covid relief act may restore daily schedule on Amtrak long distance trains!
 What Have We Accomplished

Our primary focus this legislative session is to fund the TCMC- the 2nd train from the Twin Cities to Milwaukee and Chicago - aka Twin Cities Hiawatha since it will be an extension of the existing Chicago - Milwaukee Hiawatha service. The project is "shovel-ready" for work to start and be on the rails by 2024...if Minnesota appropriates the required funds to match Federal grants. Here is the current status and our efforts: The TCMC 2nd train project has received grant awards for \$43 Million of the \$53 Million of infrastructure improvements needed to start operations...PENDING MINNESOTA APPROVAL OF \$10 MILLION IN MATCHING FUNDS required for the balance!

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This appropriation will leverage over \$40 Million of needed track, switch, signaling, station, bridge and grade crossing improvements - and construction jobs - IN MINNESOTA!
We have contacted the Governor's office and the 12 leaders of the four Transportation and Capital Investment Committees in the House and Senate to request their support of passenger rail bills.
We have received pledges of support from the leaders we have met with. However, they stress the importance of the Governor including the \$10 Million match in his Bonding request, which has not yet been issued.
HERE IS WHERE WE NEED YOUR HELP! Please telephone and send a webmail message to the Governor's Office asking the Governor to include funds in his bonding request for MnDOT Passenger Rail projects - and specifically the \$10 Million matching funds to enable \$40M funding for the TCMC!

GOVERNOR WALZ' OFFICE

Telephone Number: 651-201-3400

Webmail Link: <https://mn.gov/governor/contact/>

Several bills will be introduced in the House and Senate:

\$10 Million matching fund bonding for TCMC

\$10 Million matching fund general funding for TCMC

\$160 Million for other Passenger Rail Projects: [See Map](#)

Twin Cities - Duluth (NLX)

St Paul - Minneapolis connection

Twin Cities - Moorhead

Twin Cities - Albert Lea

Twin Cities - Mankato

Twin Cities - Eau Claire

A bill to create a railroad reserve fund using the approximately \$20 Million paid annually by railroads in property taxes to the state. Currently this flows into the general fund.

When bill numbers are available we may ask for your help to support them in the legislature.

Additional Plans for legislative action:

Contacting Mayors, Administrators, and Chamber of Commerce executives of the 24 cities which would receive service under the MnDOT Passenger Rail plan, to solicit letters of support.

Working closely with the Great River Rail Commission on coordinated messaging to support the TCMC

Producing a promotional video

Contacting businesses, city and county officials for support.

Producing video "commercials" for AAMN and the MnDOT Rail Plan

On the National Scene

News Flash! - Feb 9 - The House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure released a [transportation funding proposal](#) for the next round of COVID-19 funding that includes \$1.5 billion for Amtrak and \$30 billion for transit, along with mandates to restore daily service on the long-distance trains and bring back workers furloughed due to the pandemic. Congressman Pete Stauber is the lone Minnesotan on the committee. If he is your congressman, give his office a call and ask for his support for this funding!

With the advent of the Biden - Buttigieg Department of Transportation, the possibility of substantial investments in Passenger Rail are emerging around the Nation. Mayor Pete wants to make the US the leader in highspeed rail...a lofty goal. More likely, his efforts could help expand the standard and high-er speed (79-110 mph) passenger rail network.

There suddenly seems to be interest among "Red" states to compete for infrastructure dollars. Both Indiana and Ohio have recently announced large corridor passenger rail plans. Minnesota needs to get on board with more passenger rail development to compete with peer states.

A possible game-changer for state supported corridor development was announced by Amtrak. They are requesting authorization to fund the infrastructure costs and initial operating costs for new corridors, which could have a major favorable impact on ability of states to justify passenger rail projects.

Transportation infrastructure priorities on both the National and State levels are focused on projects which impact climate change, racial and economic equity, access to employment and create jobs. It will be interesting to see what will be included in Biden's pending infrastructure plan for passenger rail... Stay Tuned!

Digest: Canadian Crude-by-rail Fell by Almost 40% in 2020, Regulator Says

News Wire Digest third section for February 26, 2021

Canadian crude-by-rail sees major drop in 2020, regulator says

Canadian crude-by-rail exports fell by nearly 40% in 2020, according to the Canada Energy Regulator, which regulates the export of crude and petroleum products. The average of 172,013 barrels per day — after an average of 280,272 barrels in 2019 — after an erratic year that included a record high of 411,991 barrels per day in February 2020 and an eight-year low of 38,867 barrels per day in July. Figures recovered as the years progressed. The OPEC+ price war and lower demand resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic led to excess pipeline capacity, the agency says, which in turn led to a decrease in crude-by-rail. "2020 was far from a normal year for everyone, and it was a particular roller-coaster for crude-by-rail," Darren Christie, CER chief economist, said in [a press release](#). "COVID-19's effect on Canadian energy use, production and exports was significant and widespread, so it's no surprise that this is reflected in annual crude-by-rail export numbers."



Drastic Action by UP Account Severe Winter Weather

From: Gene Poornlboardraildiscussion@groups.io Monday, February 15, 2021

URGENT: Systemwide Gate Closures on Union Pacific Network Announcement Number: IM2021-30 2-15-2021
To Our Premium Intermodal Customers,

Extreme winter weather continues to impact operations through much of the Union Pacific network, including the Pacific Northwest, the Midwest and the Southern Plains.

To keep our terminals fluid, all ingates at Union Pacific terminals will close effective tomorrow, February 16, 2021 at 08:00 AM in the terminal's respective time zone. We anticipate the closures to last approximately 72 hours. Exceptions to the ingate closures include:

All International shipments that currently originate or terminate at LA/Long Beach on-dock terminals only will continue to be accepted, and will operate on extra schedules as resources allow (ingates to ICTF will also be closed)

Westbound domestic interline shipments sponsored by NS, CSX, CPRS or CN will be accepted at all interchange points

All shipments to and from Seattle and Tacoma will be closed for approximately 48 hours; however, international shipments to and from Tacoma on-dock will continue to be accepted

Please note that all terminals will continue to be open for outgates, and we highly urge you to assist the network recovery process by continuing to pull notified units.

We have activated our winter weather action plans and remain focused on restoring service safely and timely. We will notify you as soon as we plan to reopen gates to all traffic.

Judge: Rail talks can be included in lawsuits

Major companies sue
for alleged price-fixing.

By JOSH FUNK
Associated Press

OMAHA - A federal judge has ruled that the details of conversations between the nation's four largest railroads should be included in lawsuits challenging billions of dollars of charges the railroads imposed in the past.

The ruling on Friday undercuts one of the defenses Union Pacific, BNSF, CSX and Norfolk Southern had offered in dozens of lawsuits major companies filed last year questioning the way railroads set rates. The lawsuits said the railroads conspired to boost prices starting in 2003 by imposing coordinated fuel surcharges and pocketing billions of dollars in profits.

The price-fixing allegations have been winding their way through U.S. courts for more than a decade since several companies first filed similar lawsuits in 2007. The cases are moving forward individually after an appellate judge ruled



NATI HARNIK • Associated Press

A federal judge ruled that the nation's four largest railroads can't exclude details of conversations from lawsuits challenging billions of dollars of charges the railroads imposed.

last year that the case didn't qualify for class-action status for as many as 16,000 shippers affected by the rates.

The companies that filed the lawsuits — which include carmakers such as Hyundai, manufacturers such as Camp-

bell Soup and power companies like Dominion Energy — said the four railroads had meetings, phone calls and e-mail communications through which they embarked on the conspiracy to apply the fuel surcharges to all traffic to

generate profits.

One of the plaintiffs' attorneys, Stephen Neuwirth, said he's glad the details of those conversations can be presented at trial.

"That evidence establishes that for at least five years, the railroads violated U.S. law by coordinating fuel surcharges as a way to raise rail freight prices," Neuwirth said.

In the lawsuits, the railroads have argued that their fuel surcharges were legal and were simply designed to recover the skyrocketing cost of fuel at the time. The railroads had also argued that an obscure law that allows railroads to discuss rates on shipments that cross multiple railroads should have protected their conversations about rates, but the judge rejected that argument on Friday.

Union Pacific, which is based in Omaha, plans to continue "vigorously defending itself against the allegations in these lawsuits," spokeswoman Elizabeth Graham said. Officials at BNSF, which is headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, declined to comment.

Article Submitted by Leigh Neprude



A long westbound CSX Transportation merchandise train grinds its way up Washington Hill in Becket, Mass., on July 13, 2019



Three distributed power units, placed midtrain, help lift the tonnage up the eastern slope of the Berkshires. Bill Stephens photos



What Does it Mean for Service When Long Trains Get Even Longer?

Posted by [Bill Stephens](#) on Tuesday, February 23, 2021

When railroads first figured out that operating longer trains was an easy way to make more money, firemen were still tossing wood into the bellies of their 4-4-0 steam locomotives. Since then the development of larger, more powerful locomotives was done with one goal in mind: Pulling more tonnage with a single crew. So today's Class I railroad trend toward ever longer trains is nothing new.

What is new is the zeal with which the Class I railroads are embracing longer, heavier trains that allow them to move tonnage with far fewer people and locomotives.

To see why the 14,000-footer is all the rage, just glance at the cost savings from running longer trains. Union Pacific saved \$268 million in operating expenses last year by boosting train length. Tack on the savings from increased locomotive productivity, which is a byproduct of bigger trains, and the combined tally comes to \$487 million. That's not chump change.

In all, average train length on UP has grown by 30%, to a shade over 9,000 feet, since it adopted Precision Scheduled Railroading in October 2018. The other U.S. Class I systems running the PSR playbook – CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern, and Kansas City Southern – have increased train length, too, following in the footsteps of Canadian National and Canadian Pacific. And even BNSF Railway, the only big road that has not jumped on the PSR bandwagon, is not immune to the trend.

The longer train movement shows no signs of abating. During their earnings calls last month each of the publicly traded Class I systems said they plan on running even longer trains this year to further boost productivity.

What you don't hear is how moving tonnage on fewer but longer trains affects service. Railroading is, after all, a service business. So it's fair to ask: Are we headed back to the drag freight era and the hold for tonnage approach to operations, with the resulting toll on service reliability?

The disadvantages of operating 14,000-foot trains are well understood. They take longer to build and to put in a yard at destination. They take longer to get up to track speed, if they make it at all, and take longer to stop. They might fit in only some passing sidings, which can complicate operations.

If there's a problem en route, like getting flagged by a wayside defect detector, the conductor may have to walk a mile or two to find the problem, then hoof it back to the head end. This ties up a main line, with delays rippling outward from the troubled train. And it means more grade crossings may be blocked, which is of increasing concern to communities, politicians, and regulators.

Yet the long-train trend – when combined with other significant operational changes – does appear to offer some service and operational benefits.

First, if you're moving your traffic in fewer trains, that reduces the number of meets in single-track territory and helps ease congestion on busy double-track routes. Some railroads have seen average transit times drop by as much as 25% between crew change points simply by having fewer meets.

Second, blending unit train traffic into the merchandise network helps ensure there's enough tonnage to support a daily merchandise train. Before the shift to long trains, Norfolk Southern on some corridors might have scheduled a daily merchandise train, an auto train that ran five days per week, and steel and grain shuttles that each ran three days per week. But with volume as variable as it is, the merchandise train might get annulled 10% of the time. By folding the automotive, steel, and grain traffic into the merchandise network there's enough volume to support a 12,000-foot train that runs every day. This also can reduce dwell time at the originating terminal.

Third, railroads are doing more pre-blocking of traffic at origin, which avoids a stop at a local yard that can consume 24 hours. They're also relying more on block-swapping traffic en route, which can save 10 hours or more compared to switching or shoving a car over a hump. A long train might carry five or six blocks and pick up or set out blocks three times en route to its final destination. This creates an incentive to run trains every day because if a railroad annuls a scheduled train, it has consequences down the line: Those mainline work events don't occur, and blocks up to 3,000 feet long get stranded.

So in theory the long-train phenomenon is not a hold for tonnage approach, under which the railroad won't run a train until enough cars accumulate to hit whatever the set tonnage threshold may be.

The numbers bear this out. At UP, for example, cars travel 15% further per day, terminal dwell is down 24%, and average train speed is up 9% since it adopted PSR. And an analysis by Rick Paterson, a railroader-turned-analyst at Loop Capital, shows that compared to long-term averages dating to 2015, traffic over the past three months through January is moving faster on CP, CSX, and UP and is moving at around the long-term average at BNSF, KCS, and NS.

But in practice, of course, your long-train mileage may vary. Some chief operating officers have cracked down on local operating people who originate trains under 5,000 feet. After getting dressed down by headquarters, you can be sure the folks in the field are holding tonnage in the yard until they can send out a train long enough to keep the boss happy.

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

UNION PACIFIC TRAINS PER DAY

	1998	2004	2019
Chicago-Clinton, Iowa	52	58	41
Nebraska triple track	115	137	77
North Platte-PRB (coal)	52	65	27
Rawlins-Granger, Wyo.	59	68	42
Elko-Winnemucca, Nev. (SP+WP)	28	31	20
Roseville-Dunsmuir, Calif.	19	15	12
California Central Valley	14	13	14
LA-El Paso Sunset Route	33	44	39
Moffat (Denver-Bond, Colo.)	19	18	7
Kansas Pacific (Oakley, Kan.-Denver)	6	6	1
T&P Line (El Paso-Odessa, Tex.)	2	20	19
Golden State (El Paso-Dalhart, Tex.)	16	15	14
Sunset (El Paso-Alpine, Tex.)	14	14	12
Pine Bluff-Texarkana, Ark.	24	20	20
Poplar Bluff-Texarkana, Ark.	30	35	29
KC-Wagoner, Okla. (MP+MKT)	33	34	22



Whatever Happened to UP?

Posted by [Fred Frailey](#) on Sunday, October 20, 2019

Union Pacific is a profoundly different railroad on many parts of its far-flung system than it was just two decades ago. To show you what I mean, let's look at the numbers--the numbers of trains it operates, to be specific. What you'll see is that the part of Union Pacific that is linked loosely to Texas is doing fine. These would include the three spokes of the LA-El Paso Sunset Route that divide in West Texas and the former Cotton Belt and Missouri Pacific corridors coming from Chicago and places east to Texarkana. Nineteen trains a day visit the Mexican border at Eagle Pass (on average, seven of them BNSF trains on trackage rights), versus six in 1998 and seven in 2004. Houston is in a sort of permanent state of meltdown, due to the volume of business UP puts through there. That is actually good news.

Now let's look at the rest of the railroad. Start in Chicago and follow the Overland Route to Sacramento. The former Chicago & North Western sees 17 fewer trains a day than it did 15 years ago. The 100 miles of triple track east of North Platte, Neb, carries **SIXTY** fewer than in 2004. That is an astounding number, and you can't pin it all on the devastating loss of Powder River Basin coal. Frequencies across the middle core of the Overland Route (Rawlins to Granger, Wyo.) are off by one third. Not shown in the table is Granger-Pocatello on the line to Portland, where the daily count fell from 24 to 17 trains the past 15 years. The combined train count west of Ogden-Salt Lake City is off by a third, too, and the former Western Pacific is now visited by a mere five trains a day.

You **can** blame coal for what happened to the former Denver & Rio Grande Western between Denver and Salt Lake City and the Kansas Pacific corridor between Denver and Topeka, Kan. A single train a day (coal) on the KP! What keeps Salina, Kan., to Denver in the UP fold is beyond my understanding. West of Denver, as best I can tell, a mere two coal mines remain in business. Take away the *California Zephyr* and a daily pair of BNSF trackage-rights trains and you have just three UP trains going through Moffat Tunnel. I'm told that UP won't sell or abandon part or all of the Moffat because it would then have to move the BNSF trains to its Overland Route across Wyoming. But so what? There's plenty of unused capacity. So that is our quick, train-centric tour of Union Pacific. It's telling us several things. First, the company would be in a world of trouble were it not for the energy economy of the Gulf Coast. The collapse of PRB and Colorado coal (from 52 trains a day to 28 on the PRB side) contributed to falling train counts on the eastern half of the railroad, as did longer trains brought about by UP's adoption of Precision Scheduled Railroading principles.

But what shocks me is that Union Pacific appears to have done little (or nothing) to fill the capacity void left by coal and longer trains. Let me give you an example: I define merchandise traffic as everything but intermodal, grain, and coal business. From 2000 through 2018, UP's merchandise traffic (measured in cars handled) rose a bit less than 3 percent. Put that up against competitor BNSF (up 35%, and subject to the same competitive pressures), Canadian National (up 50%) and Canadian Pacific (up 40%). UP has company in the basement, by the way. CSX merchandise business dropped 24% from 2000 through 2018, and that of Norfolk Southern 5%. And I think the reason for the business losses by UP, CSX and NS is that they are all married to achieving ultra-low operating ratios, which is the percentage of operating revenues consumed by operating expenses. They choose to do this by gutting the payroll (possibly including marketing departments) and raising rates to the point that customers desert them.

In the case of Union Pacific, what it is left with is this enormous overcapacity, including an entire transcontinental route (Topeka to Denver to Salt Lake City to Sacramento. all of it under one or another form of Centralized Traffic Control) that is essentially not being used at all! The efficiencies that arise when you use assets fully are not being realized. This fact has been hidden by the raising of rates, but you can't do this forever. I'm not smart enough to divine where all this is going to lead Union Pacific (and CSX and Norfolk Southern, for that matter). But a little voice is telling me that a path like the one UP is following does not end up at a desirable destination.--Fred W. Frailey

Digest: New Coaster Locomotives, Refurbished Cars Debut



The North County Transit District debuted a new paint scheme on refurbished coaches placed in service Monday, along with five new Siemens Charger locomotives. North County Transit District

North County Transit District debuts new Coaster locomotives, refurbished cars

San Diego's North County Transit District placed the first five of its new Siemens Charger locomotives into service Monday, along with several newly renovated passenger cars. The locomotives, which began testing in October [see ["News Photo: New Coaster locomotives begin testing,"](#) *Trains News Wire*, Oct. 8, 2020] and refurbished Bombardier coaches wear a new paint scheme; car interiors feature new upholstery and carpeting, upgraded lighting, and charging stations at some seats. "Today's launch of the new Coaster locomotives and overhauled passenger cars underscores NCTD's commitment to its mission to deliver safe, convenient, reliable, and user-friendly public transportation services," Tony Kranz, district board chairman, said in [a press release](#). "This roll out is a huge step in improving Coaster services. The new Coaster locomotives will increase service reliability, improve the rider experience, and are more environmentally friendly." The new locomotives, substantially quieter than the F40s they are replacing, have led to increased efforts to address trespassing along the Coaster route [see ["Digest: San Diego transit agency to increase trespassing enforcement,"](#) *News Wire*, Jan. 28, 2021].

Work to Begin on Des Moines Transload Project

Construction is set to begin Monday on the Des Moines (Iowa) Transloading Facility Project, a 31-acre site with direct access to Iowa Interstate, Norfolk Southern, and BNSF. The Business Record reports the project, being developed by Des Moines Industrial in partnership with Des Moines agencies, the Iowa Department of Transportation, and the Federal Railroad Administration. It will include 15,000 feet of track, 115,000 square feet of warehouse space and 8 acres of exterior storage, with future cold storage and close-proximity off-site warehouse possibilities nearby. It is expected to be in operation later this year.



UhOh

CN Derailment in Chicago provided by Roger Libra Feb 15 2021

This picture is a CN derailment by Chicago, interesting that two cars came off by the power line at neither one took down a pole.

Railfan Events (Thanks to Rick Krenske, Bill Dredge)

Twin City Model Railroad Museum Hobby Show and Sale	Saturday, May 15, 2021 from 9 am to 3 pm.	MN State Fairgrounds – Education Building 1265 Snelling Ave N Falcon Heights, MN 55108	Admission for the show is \$6.00 for ages 8 and up! Ages 7 and under are FREE!
2021 Modelers' Retreat	Via Zoom March 12 and 13 2021	Contact Ken Zieska at mhry19@gmail.com photos of models or layout projects to share, send them to TCDNMRA@Gmail.com	You will be emailed the access codes prior to the meet.

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