

**NRHS**

# Northstar News

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

**Happy Thanksgiving! MEETING Saturday Nov 19th!**

*L: Friends of #261  
Gourmet Express  
Bongards MN Oct 2  
2022 –R Tubbesing*

*R: New Bridges by  
BNSF Just completed  
over Coon Rapids Blvd  
Extension near Coon  
Creek Sept 2022 –R  
Tubbesing*

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**Meeting Notice:**

**Saturday November 19th 2022 6:15 pm At Roseville Lutheran Church, our November Meeting also will be a ZOOM meeting.**

Informal Dinner at Keys Restaurant -Lexington and Larpenteur Avenues at 4:15 pm.

Then, you simply click on the link below to join using your internet browser. Meeting Notice: Saturday November 19th 2022 6:15 pm in person at Roseville Lutheran Church *and* also online via the ZOOM meeting platform. If you join us via Zoom, please make sure your Zoom client is the latest version. Click on the icon In the upper right corner of the Zoom app and the click check for updates

The Zoom meeting will open at about 5:45 pm Saturday evening for chit-chat and Zoom troubleshooting. If you would like to test your Zoom client during the week before the meeting, please contact Dan Meyer at [dan@meyer-family.net](mailto:dan@meyer-family.net) and arrangements will be made.

**Use this URL to join the meeting:**

Topic: Northstar Chapter, NRHS November Zoom Meeting

Time: Nov 19, 2022 17:30 Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85830668821?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85830668821?pwd=bFJVdGZuODdEL1hyWFdvTFRxcDkvUT09)

[pwd=bFJVdGZuODdEL1hyWFdvTFRxcDkvUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85830668821?pwd=bFJVdGZuODdEL1hyWFdvTFRxcDkvUT09) or [https://](https://tinyurl.com/4avv525k)

[tinyurl.com/4avv525k](https://tinyurl.com/4avv525k)

Meeting ID: 858 3066 8821

Passcode: 135791

One tap mobile

+19292056099,,85830668821#,,,,\*135791# US (New York)

+13017158592,,85830668821#,,,,\*135791# US (Washington DC)

Audio-only dial in 312-626-6799

If all else fails you may dial in using your telephone for audio-only: 312-626-6799

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

*From the Editor: Holiday Banquet Sign-up form is included in this issue. The BOD has secured a room at Mancini's Restaurant in St Paul for Sunday December 4 2022 at 3pm. Cost is \$46.50. We have a commitment for 30 people. Note: Prices are considerably higher than previous banquets. From President John Goodman Chairman.*



**The 2023 Calendar is now available. Get yours now at the next chapter meeting or on Wednesday's at our library. Buy yours soon as the last two year editions have been sold out!**

## Meeting Minutes October 15<sup>th</sup> 2022 At Roseville Lutheran Church

The meeting was called to order by President John Goodman at 6:20 pm. There were 18 people attending. President Goodman announced we have a quorum. President Goodman made a motion to approve the minutes of September 2022 meeting in the October Newsletter. The motion was carried by Gary Rumler and seconded by Roger Libra. The motion was approved. The Cheer Committee report was given by John Goodman. President Goodman noted that long time member and former officer Marty Swan has passed about July 5<sup>th</sup> of 2021. President Goodman stated he found out about this event from the NRHS Membership Chairman this summer. President Goodman stated that Marty was a longtime NRHS member and chaired the Emblem sales committee for many years. Marty was a long-time friend of President Goodman and Russ Isbrandt and he will be missed. Marty was contacted by the NRHS in February of 2021. We do not know what happened in the intervening time to his death. President Goodman on behalf of the chapter sent a sympathy card to Marty's widow. Dawn Holmberg reported that the card was returned. Another bit of bad news was the death of one of our friends Kurt Mahre's mother. Kurt was a business manager for Amtrak. Kurt's Father was an officer of the Minnesota Railfans Association and passed away in 2021. Kurt's Mother memorial service will be held in two weeks in Maplewood MN. Member Cy Svobodny is still with us but could not make this meeting. Russ Isbrandt gave the Treasurers report. Both the Chapter and the Calendar Accounts are in good position. Russ stated that there are 38 regular members, and 2 family members and one renewal for 2023. There are 30 Subscribers. Russ is working on 2023 renewal notices and will be sent out soon. Dawn Holmberg gave the National Representative report. The NRHS has a new board and President. The NRHS has implemented new by-laws which reduce the number of board members, and the new President is Tony White. The NRHS News was mailed out last week and will have a photo of the advisory council.

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The next BOD meeting is planned for next May 2023 in Nevada jointly with the RLHS. Dawn then showed a photo from the 1994 Holiday banquet which pictures the late Marty Swan. The NHRS is in good financial standing. The NRHS has a new Vice President Frank Cornelius who is working on getting an NRHS online store up and running. Dawn Holmberg gave the calendar report. Money from initial sales will be deposited to our calendar account by Calendar Chairman John Goodman soon. The number of Calendar postcards reminders are being determined. The sending of calendar notification postcards are close by being done. Calendars are available for sale this evening. Our web site will soon be updated so Calendars can be ordered on our web site as the order form is being finalized. The price of the calendar has gone due to the higher cost of postage and envelopes. Dan Meyer gave the Web Report. Dan is working on maintaining the web site and our presence on Facebook. The Calendar information has been posted on our website. All chapter newsletters back to 2001 are available on our web site. President Goodman reported on the Trip report. The Light Rail ride in June had an extremely low turnout. We hope to have a better turnout next year. The Picnic in July at Maiden Rock Wisconsin on the third Saturday in July had a good turnout of 14 to 18 people. Only about five BNSF Trains were seen. In August we had a very good turnout riding the Wisconsin Great Northern Pizza train out of Trego Wisconsin. President Greg Vreeland provided us seating in the ex-CN Diner #1341 diner where the Pizzas were made. We also got a tour of the Mark Twain Zephyr under restoration. We will look at possibilities for next year after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the new year. Dawn Holmberg gave the meeting location report. We will be meeting the third Saturday in November, the Holiday banquet will be Sunday December 4<sup>th</sup>. We have booked Roseville Lutheran Church from January to May of 2023. Our meetings in 2023 will be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month. President Goodman reported that we have an agreement for our Holiday Banquet at Mancini's Restaurant in St Paul Sunday December 4<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Dinner options are Walleye, Steak or Chicken. The Price will be \$46.50. We need 30 participants. President Goodman stated that the price increase is mainly due to inflation and difficulty finding a venue for the Holiday Banquet. An order form will be coming out in the next newsletter. The speaker will be announced soon. President Goodman gave the Program report. This Evening we have a Russ Isbrandt DVD of railroad film shot in the late 2000's. Greg Smith will give a slide presentation of slides (mostly black and white) he has recently acquired of Railroads in the Twin Cities in the 50's and 60's for November. Programs for 2023 are open. Solicitation of programs was made and to Contact Richard Tubbesing to schedule a program. Richard Tubbesing will provide details in the next Newsletters this year when we have more details. President Goodman asked if there was any old business. President Goodman said that is in normal for our chapter this month to announce a slate of nominees for our officer positions. Dan Meyer will run for President, Bill Dredge will run for vice President, Richard Tubbesing for Secretary, Russ Isbrandt for Treasurer and Dawn Holmberg for National Representative. Solicitation was made by President Goodman to contact him to put on the ballot. John Goodman asked for any New Business. President Goodman stated the NRHS Convention for 2023 will be held in Fort Lauderdale Florida around Labor Day weekend. All venues are still planned in spite of the last hurricane. Transportation to near the convention hotel is available via Amtrak. The NRHS has decided that future NRHS Conventions will be held around Labor Day as they have been in the past. The meeting was then called for adjournment by President Goodman at 6:45pm. Motion was carried. Russ Isbrandt then presented digitally converted 8mm film of railfan trips from 1979 to 1986, a look at the IRM last year. It was very enthusiastically received. Mark Quam was asked about start-up of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amtrak train to Chicago. Amtrak has stated that startup might be three-times a week starting in January. Canadian Pacific has given the green light. Mark stated that three-days a week might be a problem. Mark stated according to WISDOT and MINDOT startup might be in the June-July timeframe in 2023. But, Mark stated that he is confident the WISDOT and MINDOT will agree to a startup in January or February 2023. Also, All-Aboard group has sent a letter to Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar about Amtrak not fulfilling it's obligation's which are not beneficial to the traveling public. President Goodman asked Mark about the future of the Eau Claire Service. Mark Stated that the Chippawa-St Croix commission has been formed to further study the project. The commission has representatives from the Wisconsin Counties involved, Cities of Eau Claire, Menomonee and Union Pacific. Plans are to get Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority to join the commission. Also, planned is obtaining the AIPRO company (a world-wide organization company on rail service) to do a marketing study on proposed Eau Claire service. Once the market survey is done by AIPRO that members of the commission will proceed further. If funding is obtained, hopefully service can start in two to three years. Frank Wilkie asked about the pending US railroad Strike. John Goodman stated that no strike date has been set yet. Respectfully submitted by Secretary Richard Tubbesing

### Obituary: CAROL MAHRE

Wife of longtime chapter friend Marv Mahre (died April 22, 2012) and mother of Chapter Friend Kurt Mahre. She was preceded in death by her husband, Marvin; parents Leo and Mildred Dehen; brother Jack; brothers-in-law Bill and Arlin; sisters-in-law Betty and Marilyn; son-in-law Kay Kizer; and granddaughter Alicia Clark. A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, October 29th at Bruentrup Heritage Farm, 2170 County Road D East, Maplewood from 12:00-4:00PM.







Top: H Martin Swan Dec 11, 1994 at Holiday Banquet- Dawn Holmberg photo  
Bottom: H Martin Swan NRHS Convention August 2007 -R Tubbesing

## Obituary: H Martin Swan July 5 2021

It is with sadness that we have to report that long-time Northstar Chapter and NRHS member H. Martin Swan has passed away. He held several Chapter offices including President and National Representative. He was also a long-time NRHS Emblem Sales Manager. He worked for many years at the Great Northern Railway and then the Burlington Northern Railroad as a rate analyst. He passed away on July 5, 2021. He is survived by his wife Debra.

## CP Holiday Train 'Back on the Rails'

Railway Age Written by [Marybeth Luczak, Executive Editor](#) October 13, 2022 -Class 1



(Photograph Courtesy of CP)

Canadian Pacific (CP) will kick off its Holiday Train tour next month, after a two-year hiatus, to raise money, food and awareness for local food banks in communities along its network.

[Due to the pandemic, CP did not run the train in 2020 and 2021, but broadcast virtual concerts and encouraged Canadians and Americans to donate to its annual giving program.](#)

This year, the [CP Holiday Train program](#) has two trains, one that travels exclusively in Canada and another with stops in both Canada and the U.S. The tour will feature 168 live shows. While free to attend, [CP](#) is asking attendees to bring a cash or non-perishable food donation if they're able. Collection stations will be set up at each event, with all donations made staying with the local food bank.

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The U.S. Holiday Train is scheduled to depart Montreal on Nov. 22 and will feature Brittany Kennell and Don Amero performing in Jackman, Brownville Junction and Hermon, Maine, and in eastern townships of Quebec. Lindsey Ell and Texas will perform for communities in New York, southern Ontario, and down through Chicago to Kansas City. Alan Doyle and Kelly Prescott will pick up the tour in Iowa and finish the train's journey back to Canada with the final show in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, on Dec. 18. CP said the Canadian Holiday Train will depart Montreal on Nov. 27 and travel west to Vancouver. Performing from Montreal to Calgary are Tenille Townes and Aysanabee, while artists McKenzie Porter and Virginia to Vegas will finish the tour departing out of Calgary and wrapping up in the greater Vancouver area on Dec. 18.

Since the Holiday Train program launched in 1999, it has raised more than \$21 million and collected five million pounds of food for community food banks across North America, according to CP.

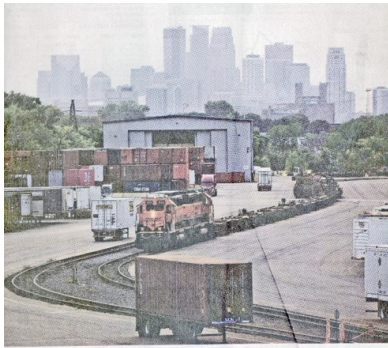
"I'm grateful to the CP team members who adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic to deliver two exceptional virtual Holiday Train shows and to all those who continued to donate while we kept community members safe," CP President and CEO Keith Creel said. "The Holiday Train is all about families and communities coming together to celebrate the season and help those in need. We are excited to be back out on the rails and in our communities, taking these two beautiful trains across our network and sharing the joy that comes with gathering in the spirit of giving."

Twin City area Schedule:"

<u>SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11</u>	<u>MONDAY, DECEMBER 12</u>	<u>TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13</u>
Winona: 3:30 p.m.	Cottage Grove: 5 p.m.	Golden Valley: 4:45 p.m.
Wabasha: 5:30 p.m.	St. Paul (Union Depot): 6:45 p.m.	St. Louis Park: 6 p.m.
Hastings: 8 p.m.		Minneapolis: 8 p.m.

## Tentative Deal has Rail Back on Track

Star & Tribune Story by Kristen Leigh Painter and Burl Gilyard September 16 2022 Provided by Leigh Neprude



*A Nationwide rail strike -averted Thursday – could have wreaked havoc in Minnesotan particularly on the states farm and ethanol industries.* Minnesota's rail-dependent farmers and businesses sighed with relief Thursday after union and railroad leaders reached a labor agreement, averting a strike that would have dealt another blow to the nation's already precarious economy. President Joe Biden announced the tentative deal after a marathon 20-hour negotiating session at the Labor Department, one day before the threatened walkout.

- ◆ 45,000 U.S Railroad Jobs Cot over the past six years
- ◆ 4,300 railroad workers in Minnesota
- ◆ 80% of those workers unionized

Few states shuttle more rail freight than Minnesota -from iron ore and taconite to farm and food products. About 80% of the states roughly 4300 rail workers are unionized, said John Apitz, Legislative counsel for Minnesota Regional Railroads Association.

The looming strike raised concerns across Minnesota's farm country as combine tractors were preparing to head into grain fields for harvest. Jason Krohn farms 5000 acres of corn and soybeans in Slayton Minn., On Wednesday evening before the agreement was reached, he said farmers would have felt an immediate impact if the strike had proceeded.

"'Devastating' would be the word you'd have to use," Krohn said. "Rail touches every aspect of agriculture directly. We could probably sustain days without a catastrophe, but not weeks."

Farmers use rail to get feed for their animals and fertilizer for their fields. They use it to ship crops to market. The Trickle-down would almost certainly have caused prices to go up at a time consumers are already grappling with high inflation.

It also would have hit the ethanol industry hard. Minnesota is one of the nation's largest ethanol producers, and 80% of their output moves by train, said Brian Kletscher, CEO of Highwater Ethanol in Lamberton and Chairman of Minnesota Bio-fuels Association, a trade group.

"It's a very big deal that the strike was averted" he said.

In the days leading up to the strike deadline, Eden Prairie based C.H. Robinson the nation's largest logistics company hustled to create backup plans for the 7,500 retail customers, many of whom depend on rail transportation, Tim Humbert, vice president of North American Intermodal said in a statement.

"those center-of-the-store items like toothpaste and boxes of pasta, for example are the types of things that tend to move by rail because they're less perishable." Humbert said. "Our fresh produce customers also use rail to move hardier things like potatoes, onions and oranges. And the company's food beverage and health care customers wanted to shore up alternative plans for moving raw materials necessary. To maintain production, he said. "for our customers and the good of the entire logistics industry" he said, "we're glad that all the parties involved in the negotiations were able to reach an agreement."

Averting a strike means the U.S. economy dodged the most serious economic damage that could have resulted from the labor dispute. However, there could still be a short-term ripple effecting supply chains as some companies had preemptively began shifting to trucks ahead of the looming strike, said Emily LeVasseur, managing director at Eden Prairie based supply-chain consultancy Waypost Advisors.

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A rail car hold the equivalent of about four truckloads – and truckers are also in short supply. “Some shippers were scrambling to secure four times as many trucks as they had railcars,” LeVasseur said.

The rail industry still must solve the long-term issues of attracting and retaining workers –a major cause of back-logged shipments, overflowing warehouses and congested ports, she said.

Shippers have loudly complained this year about delays and poor service as railroads struggled to quickly hire enough workers to handle a surge in demand as the economy emerged from the pandemic. The shipping problems gave rail workers extra leverage.

“Certainly, a rail strike would have been an absolute disaster,” LeVasseur said. “Hopefully, this means railroads won’t have such a hard time hiring people.”

Biden appeared alongside union leaders in the White House Rose Garden and hailed the deal in remarks Thursday morning.

“These rail workers will get better pay, improved working conditions, and peace of mind around their health care costs: all hard earned,” he said. The agreement is also a victory for the railway companies who will be able to retain and recruit more workers for an industry that will continue to be part of the backbone of American economy for decades to come.”

Four major railroads operate in Minnesota. Texas-based BNSF Railway is the largest with about 1,500 miles of track. Calgary, Alberta-based Canadian Pacific Railway is second with more than 1,100 miles of track. Minneapolis has been Canadian Pacific’s U.S Headquarters, though it will relocate to Missouri with the company’s acquisition of Kansas City Southern

Other large operators include Canadian National which was not part of the union negotiations, and Union Pacific.

The five-year deal retroactive to 2020, includes \$5000 in bonuses. And the railroads agreed to ease their strict attendance policies to address union concerns about working conditions.

Workers will now be able to take unpaid days off for doctor’s appointments without being penalized. Previously, they would lose points under the attendance systems at BNSF and Union Pacific railways and could be disciplined if they lost all their points.

The unions that represent conductors and engineers who drive the trains had pressed hard for changes in the attendance rules and they said the deal sets a precedent that ensures they will be able to negotiate such rule in the future.

Victor Chen, a sociologist at Virginia Commonwealth University who studies labor, said concerns about working conditions have increasingly become a priority for unions and workers they represent.

“at a certain point, good wages just aren’t enough to make up for the toll these sorts of working conditions impose on workers,” Chen said. “The companies need to treat workers like human beings, rather than just inputs in a business process.”

The rail unions pointed to workload and attendance rules after the major railroads cut nearly one-third of their work-force – some 45,000 jobs over the past six years.

The industry has aggressively cut costs everywhere and shifted operations to rely more on fewer, longer trains, which use fewer locomotives and fewer employees. The unions said the remaining workers, particularly engineers and conductors, were on call 24/7 because of jobs cuts and could hardly take any time off under strict attendance rules.

Unions had an advantage at the bargaining table because of the tight labor market and ongoing service problems on the railroads, Chen said.

A Strike would also have disrupted passenger traffic well a freight because Amtrak and many commuter railroads, including Metro Transit’s Northstar Line operate on tracks owned by the Freight Railroads. Before the strike deadline, Amtrak had canceled all of its long-distance trains, including through Minnesota and was working Thursday to restore full service.

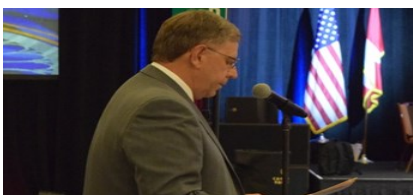
The threat of a shutdown carried political risks for Biden, a Democrat who says he believes unions built the middle class. But he also knew a rail strike could damage the economy ahead of the midterms, when majorities in both chambers of Congress, key governorships and scores of important state offices will be up for grabs.

A stoppage could halt shipments of food and fuel at a cost of \$2 billion a day – worsening the dynamics that have contributed to soaring inflation. “Especially now, with rising inflation and the nation’s supply chains struggling toward recovery, a rail strike would have been acutely painful for manufacturers, shippers, retailers and consumers, both regionally and nationwide, so today’s announcement of a tentative strike-averting deal is certainly welcome news,” said Deb DeLuca, executive director of the Duluth Seaway Port Authority. DeLuca is also chair of The Minnesota Freight Advisory committee.

*Staff writers Brooks Johnson, Mike Hughlett and the Associated Press contributed to this report. Kristen Leigh Painter 612-673-4767 Burl Gilyard 612-673-4856*

## SMART-MD, NCFO Accept Deal, BMWED Rejects It. Strike Not Imminent (UPDATED, 12 p.m. ET)

Railway Age Written by [Frank N. Wilner](#), Capitol Hill Contributing Editor October 13, 2022 -M/W



*BMWED President Tony D. Cardwell said his union would maintain the status quo until at least Nov. 19—five days after the anticipated Nov. 14 return of Congress following mid-term elections. The NCCC said that “in the event of a failed ratification, the parties have agreed to maintain the status quo for a period of time pending any further discussions and assessment of next steps.”*

Members of the Mechanical Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART-MD) and of the National Conference of Firemen & Oilers (NCFO) have voted to ratify tentative agreements amending wages, benefits and work rules negotiated with the National Carriers’ Conference Committee (NCCC), which represents most Class I railroads and many smaller ones. Hardly unexpectedly, but still troubling to railroads and their shippers, members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division of the Teamsters Union (BMWED) voted to reject a tentative contract. Barely 43% of the almost 12,000 BMWED members casting ballots voted in favor of the agreement, said the union Oct. 10 in announcing the results. A work stoppage is not imminent.

SMART-MD and NCFO are the fifth and sixth of 12 rail labor unions to ratify tentative agreements with the NCCC. Only BMWED so far has rejected it.

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All provisions of existing wage, benefits and work rules agreements will remain in force as contracts negotiated under the Railway Labor Act have no expiration date and are changed only by ratified amendments. A work stoppage by BMWED—or any of the other six unions that have yet to ratify—is not anticipated before late November, if at all. A work stoppage by any of the rail unions, however, can be expected to cause a nationwide rail shutdown. Carriers also could trigger such a shutdown by locking out the work force—as it did in 1992—if a work stoppage is initiated against just one railroad. There has not a nationwide rail shutdown since.

BMWED President Tony D. Cardwell said his union would maintain the status quo until at least Nov. 19—five days after the anticipated Nov. 14 return of Congress following mid-term elections. The NCCC said that “in the event of a failed ratification, the parties have agreed to maintain the status quo for a period of time pending any further discussions and assessment of next steps.” That Nov. 19 date mentioned by BMWED may be extended, as voting by the two largest of the rail unions—the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART-TD) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET, also a Teamsters affiliate)—will not be completed before Nov. 17, and votes by members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) may not be counted before Nov. 20.

Moreover, Nov. 19 is the Saturday before Thanksgiving Day—Thursday, Nov. 24—meaning many House and Senate members may not be in Washington that week to vote on legislation ending a work stoppage. The following weeks are equally problematic, as religious holidays occur in December. Congress then doesn’t return until early January, and it will not be known until after Election Day, Nov. 8, which political party will control the House and/or Senate.

Compounding uncertainty—even chaos should even one senator filibuster and prolong a proposed legislated end to a work stoppage—is that congressional action, if necessary, will occur during a lame-duck session of Congress. Many members who were defeated or are retiring will be negotiating new employment with lobbying and law firms—a Washington “revolving door” tradition. There will be incentive for many to double-down on pro- or anti-labor images, or avoid choosing sides and not vote. In short, lame-duck sessions are the worst of times for such a rail work stoppage to occur.

Equally uncertain is whether railroads will again blink and sweeten their offers to avoid a work stoppage, as they have twice done to gain the tentative agreements such as rejected by BMWED. Rejections by other unions will only increase the precariousness of the status quo.

**Following an all-night mid-September bargaining session in the offices of Biden Administration Labor Secretary Marty Walsh involving BLET, SMART-TD and the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, the carriers backed off an insistence they would not budge from non-binding recommendations made a month earlier by a Biden-appointed Presidential Emergency Board.**

**Then, in response to Division 19 of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) rejecting a tentative deal, the carriers again blinked and offered up additional deal sweeteners to gain a second tentative deal with the IAM on Sept. 27 that is pending ratification.**

Each tentative agreement contains a “me too” clause, each sweetener offered by carriers to one union is applied, as applicable, to all the others.

BMWED’s Cardwell said his members’ rejection of the tentative contract is over quality-of-life issues rather than wage and benefits boosts—the carriers’ “stubborn reluctance to provide a higher quantity of paid time off, especially for sickness.” There is concern that BLET and SMART-TD members may similarly turn thumbs-down on their tentative deals, expressing displeasure over mandatory attendance policies as well as other quality-of-life issues. It is member quality-of-life issues that made the BMWED rejection unsurprising, and which likely have influenced **BLET President Dennis Pierce and SMART-TD President Jeremy Ferguson not to endorse the tentative deals, even though they negotiated them.**

The NCCC, in expressing “disappointment” over the BMWED rejection, said the tentative agreement included “significant increases to the national rules relating to reimbursements for travel and away from home expenses for the roughly 50% of BMWED members employed in traveling roles.”

Each of the current tentative agreements—including the one rejected by BMWED members—provides for a 24% wage increase through 2024 and retroactive to January 2020, \$5,000 in lump-sum bonus payments, and a 14.1% retroactive portion of the 24% wage increase payable immediately.

The five unions that have ratified tentative agreements are the American Train Dispatchers Association, Brotherhood of Railroad Carmen, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Transportation Communications Union, and Mechanical Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers.

Ratification votes of the other five unions are to be counted on or before the following dates:

Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, Oct. 26

IAM, Division 19, Nov. 5

International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Nov. 11

BLET, Nov. 17

SMART-TD, Nov. 17

*Railway Age Capitol Hill Contributing Editor Frank N. Wilner is author of “Understanding the Railway Labor Act” published by Railway Age sister company Simmons-Boardman Books of Omaha, Neb. He has almost 50 years’ experience on both sides of the bargaining table as assistant vice president for policy at the Association of American Railroads and director of public relations for SMART-TD and its predecessor United Transportation Union.*





## News from the North Shore Scenic Railroad & Lake Superior Railroad Museum Issue #116 - October 2022

Autumn is a special time in Duluth, as the whole hillside is "set ablaze" with color. The splendor of the fall leaves and cooler temps is not lost at the railroad.

The fall-season has become the busiest time of year for the trains. The upcoming Pumpkin Trains are always very popular, with limited capacities to assure we have a perfect pumpkin for everyone!

I hope you will enjoy this month's edition of *Trackside*, and hope to see you soon,

Josh Miller

Station Master [North Shore Scenic Railroad](#)



*This train sells out every year... On one special weekend, October 20-23 (MEA Weekend) the Pumpkin Trains take riders to the pumpkin patch up the line, and then returns to the Lake Superior Railroad Museum for tons more fun.*

### ***ITS THE GREAT PUMPKIN TRAIN***

New this year, we're adding a puppet show/ventriloquist to the live entertainment in the museum. Every ticket for the train includes museum admission and all the extra shows on this special weekend.

See you soon for the Pumpkin Patch Express, departing 5 times a day over the four-day weekend of MEA break. *All Aboard!*

**[Learn more and get tickets here](#)**



### ***IRON ORE'S 130TH ANNIVERSARY***

Everyone knew it was there. They just didn't know where was. The discovery of iron ore on the Vermillion Range in the 1860s came with great cost and danger. It was underground, hard rock mining, which meant drilling, blasting and tunneling. What they had been looking for was what the Ojibwa called "red earth." Soft, close to the surface and easy to dig hematite, assayed at 65% iron ore. It was the Seven Iron Men, the Merritt brothers of Duluth, who found it and developed the Missabe Iron Range.

This month is the 130th Anniversary (Oct. 12, 1892) of the first shipment of ore from the Merritt's mine at Mountain Iron to their hometown of Duluth. So proud was the family that they brought the ore car to the Union Depot and displayed it with armed guards.

Actual shipments of Missabe ore to blast furnaces through the Duluth Missabe & Northern's new dock in West Duluth wouldn't occur until the following summer. Before the completion of the dock, Missabe ore was shipped out of Superior. Building the railroad through Proctor and the dock in Duluth was expensive. Through a myriad of financing deals the Merritts fell victim to the treachery of John D. Rockefeller. The Panic of 1893 finished them off. -By Ken Buehler

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For a second year, but new last year, Domecar seats are available! For just \$10 more per ticket, you can ride upstairs in our “new to us” domecar and enjoy comfy booth seating under the 85-foot glass dome.



### #4211 FRESH IN THE SHOP

To pull their trains, the Erie Mining Company of Northern Minnesota, purchased five F9a and six F9B units in 1956. Number 4211 was built in May 1956 as number 101. It was delivered on June 13, 1956 and cost \$189,262. It originally wore a blue paint scheme with a silver band, but beginning in October 1963 Erie began repainting them yellow with a maroon band, and renumbered the engines.

In May 1986 LTV Steel Corporation acquired Erie Mining, the name was changed to LTV Steel Mining Company. Following LTV Corporation's bankruptcy in December 2000, the Hoyt Lakes plant, where #4211 operated, was closed.

The last train carrying pellets produced before the closure ran on June 22, 2001, and was led by #4211. After its last run, #4211 was donated to the museum in 2002 by Cliffs Erie. The B unit, #4222, was given to the museum in 2006.

Always a bit of a “back burner” project, locomotive #4211 has been patiently awaiting fresh paint for many years... and it was worth the wait! Over this past spring and summer, the shop has been hard at work cleaning it up. A mostly-volunteer lead project, many painstaking hours were put into cleaning up and freshening up almost every aspect of the locomotive. It probably didn't look this good when it was brand new!

An upcoming members-only “rededication” of the locomotive will be held at the Lake Superior Railroad Museum in October. Members will have a mailed invitation arriving soon. [Learn more about becoming a member of the museum here.](#)

Thank you for your ongoing support and interest. This newsletter is brought to you by:



**Mid-Continent Railway Museum BBS** -  
Provided by Chuck Lavallee

### VRCT and Work Session Update Wed Oct 05, 2022 9:54 am

A large group of volunteers were on hand during the recent work session (Sept. 30, Oct 1-3) to support the Vintage Rail Car Tours (VRCT) as well as working in the Car Shop. The volunteers helping with the VRCT's preparations and tours included: Don P., Randy M., Matt, Jeff Ha., Owen, Tom, Bob R., Ross, David M., Bobbie, Richard D., Harry, Andy, Jami S., David S., Judy G., Darryl G., Nancy K., Tom P., and myself. In the office Jeff Lentz and Theresa assisted with planning, advertising, ticketing and reservations for the VRCTs. Thanks too to Mack O. for his assistance with the Facebook postings!! □

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The VRCT Group Photo



TRAINSLive filming inside the DULUTH with the HO model

On Friday Bob Lettenberger, of TRAINS Magazine, joined us to do some filming inside the DULUTH and the Montana Western. The filming was for Trains LIVE, an online streaming video series produced by Kalmbach in which they try to do "behind the scenes" access and interviews. Inside the DULUTH, I was interviewed about the history and restoration of the car. In addition, Randy M. was interviewed as he spoke about his recently completed HO model of the DULUTH that was on display inside the DULUTH. Inside the MW#31, Bob interviewed Andy S. for over an hour talking about the history and significance of the gas-electric car. All in all it was a very positive session and one that should help get the word out about the great work that is being done at Mid-Continent.

This year's VRCTs included tours through the Badger #2 Fish Car, Copper Range #60, Copper Range #25 and the Montana Western #31. Many of the visitors with a tour ticket also went on to see the active restoration projects in the Car Shop. The tours went well and we received a lot of positive feedback on the restored cars and the work that we have been doing. The tours were well attended with a total of (178) people taking the tours (94 tickets sold on Saturday and 84 on Sunday). Thank you to everyone that helped with the preparations, tours and the clean-up. It was a great team effort.

In the Car Shop volunteers were also active during the four day period. In the Car Shop volunteers included: David P., Gary, Jack, Randy, Owen, Jeff H., Fred and myself. A brief summary of the activity and progress follows: DULUTH: Larry continued to paint the truss rods and iron work under the car. Randy, Larry and I worked on a few of the new headliner panels. Two panels were put in place and one other panel had the canvas glued down on it. I also delivered the recently restored berth ladder for the car. On Saturday Bob Berghorst delivered another shipment of wood parts and trim pieces for the car.



Jeff, Randy, Owen and Matt during the tours



Randy giving a tour inside the CRRR #60



Jeff and Owen giving a tour inside the CRRR #25

Soo Line #203: David P. continued to paint inside the caboose as well as parts such as the coal bin cover and the end door hinges. Other recent tasks completed include the cleaned and painted trucks (thanks Larry!!). LS&I #64 : Jack continued working on the north end platform of the LS&I #64.

Miscellaneous:-We took delivery of a historically accurate bell for the Shay. Bob Berghorst delivered the bell for Michigan. Thanks Bob!! Randy, Owen and I assembled and mounted the new display sign and ASME plaque for the Montana Western #31.



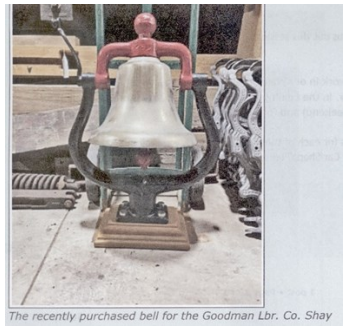
The restored berth ladder for the DULUTH



The most recent delivery of woodwork and parts for the DULUTH



Work progressing on the north end of the LS&I #64



The recently purchased bell for the Goodman Lbr. Co. Shay

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The new display sign for the MW #31

-Randy and Jeff H. made a couple repairs to the Soo Line #99085 including repairing a broken stair tread. Thanks much to everyone that helped us out this session. I really appreciate everyone's help in making the VRCTs and the work session a success. **Looking ahead we still have a lot of work in our plans to be completed between now and our last session scheduled for early December. In the coming weeks we have work sessions scheduled for October 14-16th (Pumpkin Special Weekend) and for October 28th-30th.** We are in need of volunteers to join us for each of these sessions. Mark your calendar and firm up your plans to join us for a day or two in the Car Shop. Please let me know if you can join us for either or both of these sessions.

Bill Buhrmaster Restoration Dept. 708-340-4098



Volume 6 Issue 10 October 2022 -provided by John Goodman

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS 2023 Annual Conference January 12-15, 2023 N.C. Transportation Museum- Spencer, NC

Registration for the 2023 Conference at the North Carolina Transportation Museum is just about ready. Watch for a special edition of the IE. Once Conference registration is open, the Early Bird registration deadline is October 30.

Nominations for directors are open. Nominations will close in early December. This year four seats are open:

Roger Fuehring  
Brad Black  
Joe Rosenthal  
Kevin Moore

Being a board member is a great opportunity to help direct the future of our Alliance. Please consider running! Contact Burt Hermey

[cbhermey@pacbell.net](mailto:cbhermey@pacbell.net)

## AMTRAK

### RPCA-AMTRAK CONFERENCE CALL SEPTEMBER 23, 2022

For RPCA: Burt Hermey Mike Stickel Roger Fuehring

For Amtrak Michael DeAngelo Steve Robusto

1. Private Car Business Update
  - a. Thru August:  
143 moves vs 94 moves FY 22 vs 21  
778 segments vs 444 July.
2. Amtrak Inspector Notice- 2 year/same car inspections
  - a. Michael DeAngelo to send notice to all inspectors advising.
3. Other Topics / Q&A

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## A Word on PV-involved Train Delays

In our most recent teleconference with Amtrak, Roger Fuehring asked if there were any PV-caused delays in the recent past that RPCA should be aware of, and the answer that came back we took to be “no”.

We all know that delays involving private cars are bound to happen from time to time. They can involve entraining/detraining our passengers and their baggage, en route mechanical problems with the PV, or terminal issues. If the delay is more than a few minutes you can expect to hear from CNOC about it, and here’s where it pays to be proactive.

Let’s say your cars are being switched on the train at Denver, and it’s taking an inordinately long time to do so. Pay attention, and ask questions! Then, when you have scoped out the situation to your satisfaction, write a note to Special Movements. Be brief and concise, with just the facts and no conjecture. Do so promptly! Special Movements likely won’t hear about the delay through the company channels until the following morning’s meeting, so briefing them early will arm them with your observations of what happened. That was something I did, and on the occasions when I did so the subject was dropped.

Many PV owners still use air pressure to raise water, but have a small compressor that only works on the water tanks. Meanwhile, the main reservoirs are slowly bleeding down. Charging the air reservoirs from the brake pipe can take many minutes—passenger cars have large reservoirs and the charging port is quite small. I know of cars that can take 20-30 minutes to charge up.

Consider getting a bigger compressor that charges the entire brake system. The ones we got were three hp compressors, belt driven, and ran on 480 v 3 phase. Available from Grainger. Tap directly into a reservoir or the reservoir charging pipe with a check valve and a shutoff valve (so it can be isolated) and set your pressure to around 105 psi. Let the water-raising valves do their thing, and you’ll have the added advantage of your air brakes being set while you’re parked. At that pressure, there’s almost no charging needed so the train air tests can be conducted almost immediately after the air is established, and you’re on your way quickly.

There’s no need to turn the compressor off when being switched at 90 psi. The brakes will work just fine, but you will hear the compressor running to maintain 105 psi (or whatever you set) in the tanks.

Sooner or later your PV will be involved in a delay. It behooves all of us to make that as infrequent an occurrence as possible.

Suggestions are welcome! Burt Hermey [cbhermey@pacbell.net](mailto:cbhermey@pacbell.net)

## RAILROAD NEWS

This is a synopsis of Railroad related news culled from various sources including Trains Magazine, Progressive Rail



*Famed Norfolk & Western J-class 4-8-4 No. 611 will return to steam this fall in a series of limited-time-only events announced by the Virginia Museum of Transportation, owners of the locomotive, and the Strasburg Rail Road, which together are completing the most recent federally required inspection of the 72-year-old locomotive. Among the scheduled events are at-the-throttle opportunities, a static display of the 4-8-4 while under steam, and 45-minute excursion rides over the Strasburg’s main line through Amish farmland. A portion of proceeds from these events benefit the Virginia Museum of Transportation, based in Roanoke, and support the preservation and maintenance of N&W 611.*

Jim Hager has been named general manager of the 190-year-old Strasburg Rail Road, America’s oldest short line and now one of the country’s busiest and longest-running steam tourist railroads. He has worked on several short lines, doing everything from train-and-engine service to designated supervisor of locomotive engineers, to trainmaster, to training and testing officer, to mechanical work. He comes to Strasburg from a job as general manager with the Krapf Group, overseeing a \$10 million school-bus operation with a fleet of 156 buses. He’s also written articles and books on railroad topics.

The Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum has received a \$200,000 grant from a National Park Service program toward the restoration of the museum’s 1925 Pullman sleeping car, the Maitland. The Southern Railway donated the 12-section, one-drawing-room car to the museum in 1965. It was used in both World War II and peacetime service. The grant is part of the Save America’s Treasures program, offered by the Park Service in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Tourist operator, St. Louis Iron Mountain & Southern Railway has repainted its former Pennsylvania Railroad E8, No. 5898, in the classic Pennsy pinstripe livery. The locomotive, built by EMD in La Grange, Ill, in 1951, was purchased from the Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad in 1998. The engine has been sanded, stripped, and repainted, and a template for a new Pennsy nose emblem has been made. The Electro-Motive Division of General Motors built just two RS1325 locomotives. Both have now been saved.

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Genesee & Wyoming Inc. is donating former Chicago & Illinois Midland RS1325 No. 30 to the Illinois Railway Museum. The transportation costs to bring the locomotive back to the Midwest are being covered by several donors. Now both RS1325s will be preserved in Illinois.

The Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad and Museum, shut down by owner American Heritage Railways in 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, will resume operation in 2024 or 2025, according to the executive director of the Western Forest Industries Museum. According to Forest Industries Museum Executive Director Bethan Miller, railroad operations will expand to include the town of Eatonville, about 9 miles from Elbe. This would more than double the length of the railroad, which previously operated a 7-mile route between Elbe and Mineral, Wash. The museum plans to restore several steam locomotives to service and construct a new museum.

After being sidelined for two years by the COVID-19 pandemic, Kansas City Southern's six-car Holiday Express train will run again this year, making stops in 20 communities in eight states in a tour beginning Nov. 23. At each stop, families have the chance to board the train, tour the interior of three cars of the six-car train, and meet Santa and his elves. The Holiday Express project will also continue its tradition of fundraising for the Salvation Army, which continued virtually in 2020 and 2021.

The United Railroad Historical Society of New Jersey has begun the restoration of the last surviving U34CH locomotive, a project it is undertaking in partnership with contractor and consulting firm FMW Solutions. The organization started the project with a \$10,000 matching donation from the Tri-State Railway Historical Society. Erie Lackawanna No. 3372 is one of 32 locomotives built by General Electric between 1970 and 1973 as part of a commuter modernization effort. A complete mechanical evaluation by FMW Solutions this summer determined nothing precluded the locomotive from being returned to operating condition.

The CSX Santa Train will run this year after all. In a reversal of an earlier decision, the train will mark its 80th anniversary year by running on Saturday, Nov. 19. There were reports that the train would not run in 2022, because of staffing and supply-chain problems, after being sidelined for two years because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Amtrak/Freight/Federal Agencies



*CSX Transportation has named former Ford Motor Co. executive Joseph R. Hinrichs as its next chief executive officer. Hinrichs, 55, will succeed CEO Jim Foote, who retired on Sept. 26. Hinrichs has more than 30 years of experience in the global automotive, manufacturing, and energy sectors, previously serving as president of Ford's automotive business. Hinrichs said he will continue CSX's focus on growth, technology, and improving the company's culture.*

The two biggest rail unions don't expect to tally members' votes on their tentative contract agreements with the Class I railroads until mid-November. On Sept. 22, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen began a 15-day question and answer period during which general chairmen will reply to the national president's office with any questions or clarifications regarding the tentative agreement.

Once the Q&A session is complete, ballots will be distributed on or around October 14, with the BLET tentatively set to tally the votes on November 17.

The Surface Transportation Board's Office of Proceedings has granted a request by all parties involved to extend board-sponsored mediation regarding Amtrak's effort to launch Gulf Coast passenger service to Oct. 11. Amtrak, CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern, and the Alabama State Port Authority had filed the request saying all parties agreed to an additional 15-day period of mediation. It is the second such extension to the mediation process.

## AARPCO Mid-Month Highlights October 2022 -Provided by John Goodman



### President's Report By Tony Marchiando

#### *Attention Car Owners*

The new tariff for fiscal year 2022-23 took effect on October 15th. It is available on Amtrak's website, as well as on AARPCO's website through the link on the Members Only page. This year's increase is under four percent. Amtrak has re-instated its traditional rule limiting car inspectors to no more than two consecutive years inspecting any one car. The rule had been extended to three years during the pandemic.

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Amtrak has clarified its policy on providing ice to private cars to say that ice will be provided where available.

## 2022- 2023 Board of Directors

### *Directors Representing Amtrak Certified Car Owners (and term)*

Sherrie Conover (2022-23)—filling out the term of Mike Margrave, who resigned his seat after selling his interest in Promontory Point

David Hoffman (2022-24) John Pearson (2022-24) Adam Auxier (2022-24) Tony Marchiando (2021-23)

Robert Menzies (2021-23) Keith White (2021-23)

### *Directors Representing Non-Amtrak Certified Car Owners (and term)*

Rick Stone (2022-24) Mike Kelly (2021-23)

### *Director Representing Associate Members (annual term)*

Thomas Lanahan

### *Directors Emeritus*

Dewitt Chapple, Jr. Clark Johnson

**The American Autumn Explorer III completed its journey through New England's scenic fall countryside on October 5th. Following are some highlights of this perennial AAPRCO favorite.**



*Photo: Steel Wheels Photography*



*Along the Connecticut River | Photo: Roger Schmorr*



*North Bennington, Vermont | Photo: Roger Schmorr*



*Bellows Falls, Vermont | Photo: Roger Schmorr*



*The Chapel Hill at Albany-Rensselaer Station*

*| Photo: Roger Schmorr*



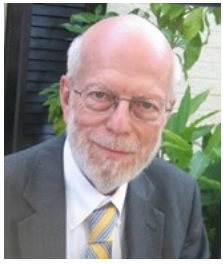
©Jacob Galvin 2022

*Photo: Jacob Galvin*

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## Washington Report By Ross Capon

The Senate on September 12 received from the White House the first Republican nominee to the Amtrak Board – Joel Matthew Szabat of Maryland. He was Undersecretary of Transportation for Policy in the Trump Administration. Since four of the five Democratic nominees were from the south end of the Northeast Corridor, it was up to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) to “save the White House’s bacon” in terms of complying with the IIJA which requires that “four individuals shall reside in or near regions of the United States that are geographically distributed outside of the Northeast Corridor.”

So far, Normal IL Mayor Chris Koos is the only nominee from west of the Potomac River! Thus, all three remaining R nominations would need to be from outside the Northeast Corridor.

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation on September 7 held a nominations hearing to consider the five Democrats that President Biden submitted on May 3.

Click here <https://www.commerce.senate.gov/2022/9/nomination-hearing> to watch the archived video of the hearing (the hearing starts at 34:07 so it actually runs about 87 minutes; the brief summary below includes time marks to help you find specific passages of interest).

The only hint at a possible vote against nominees came from Chair Maria Cantwell (D-WA) who is tired of hearing reasons why Seattle-Vancouver service has not been restarted. “Before voting for these nominees, I want to see a workforce strategy and plan.” First, she was told that Amtrak did not have enough conductors; now the problem is not enough baggage handlers on the Canadian side.

1:38:00 Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) expressed frustration about the lack of nominees from Western states, noted that the law has been changed to reflect the network’s diversity, and by a show of hands determined that not one nominee has been to Montana. “I don’t plan to stop you, but you guys have a lot of work to understand what is going on.” He also referenced ongoing work to restore the southern route across his state, “which would be incredibly important.”

1:43:00 Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS) endorsed Tester’s comments regarding the board’s composition. 1:45:10 Moran, who consistently has sought pro-long-distance-train commitments from nominees, contrasted the strong letter submitted a year ago by Mayor Koos (after he was nominated by Trump) with a letter signed this year by all nominees saying “we share your commitment.” Moran: “I see a significant difference between what the joint letter says and what Mayor Koos’s letter said, which was said much more emphatically and much more specifically.”

This prompted Chairman Anthony Coscia to say he was not aware of the distinction between those two letters and he “would gladly sign on verbatim to the exact same statement” [that Koos gave last year]. Coscia, who joined the Amtrak board in 2010 and has served as chair since 2013, then delivered an impassioned defense of the national network. He called it a “treasure in the nation’s transportation system” and said “the anchor of that treasure are those long-distance lines.” He even said “our experience working with you on the *Southwest Chief* has been incredibly important to the company to sort of reaffirm its need to work with all its stakeholders to maintain the national network in its present form and to expand upon it.”

Koos urged his colleagues to consider what the Amtrak map looks like without the long-distance trains “and see what kind of a system you have. It’s quite a bit of an eye-opener. Being in a rural central United States community, I totally understand the need for that long-distance system.”

1:49:43 Moran responded, “I was awakened to the realization that not everyone shares that view when at one point in time Amtrak’s position was that we should replace train passenger service with bus service from a point in Kansas to a point in New Mexico and considered that as part of the national rail passenger service.”

Coscia referred to Amtrak’s ever-improving customer satisfaction scores, but the hearing was bereft of comments about what is actually happening on the railroad:

- trains or cars cancelled,
- passengers booted out of sleepers and into coach with little to no warning -- sometimes with minimal or no refunds and no empathetic explanation,
- trains going out with violations, including FDA-enforceable violations, and
- trains running without baggage cars notwithstanding Amtrak’s fleet of fairly new baggage cars.

More recently, Train 351 on Friday, October 7, took about 19 hours from Pontiac MI to Chicago. From passenger reports, it appears crew and management completely failed in their service recovery responsibilities. Passengers were so poorly informed that they called the police to be “rescued.” Click [here](#) for one report on that situation.

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## Passenger Rail News

### Amtrak returns service to Florida following Hurricane Ian

Amtrak this past weekend was set to restore its passenger trains between Miami and New York two weeks after Hurricane Ian. Amtrak was fully restoring service on the Silver Meteor and Silver Star routes, which offer daily departures between New York and Miami with intermediate points in Florida, including Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale. In total, the two routes provide service to 17 destinations across the state.

The hurricane caused problematic track conditions, prompting Amtrak to suspend Silver Star service to most of the state. Since then, Amtrak's host railroad has repaired the damage and reopened the line.

Service restoration on the Silver Meteor represents the first operation since January, when the route was suspended after the COVID-19 omicron variant disrupted a number of Amtrak services due to limited available resources. The service was supposed to resume on Oct. 3, but was postponed because of the hurricane.

"The return of the Silver Meteor and Silver Star marks a major milestone for Amtrak in Florida," said Amtrak Vice President of Long Distance Services Larry Chestler in a press release. "We are pleased to resume this vital service, connect communities across the state and do our part to help Floridians recover from Hurricane Ian."



### STB Creates Office to Analyze Amtrak's OTP

The [Surface Transportation Board](#) has established the Office of Passenger Rail to investigate and analyze issues related to [Amtrak's](#) on-time performance (OTP).

The office's creation is the next step in the board's strategy to investigate and enforce Amtrak's OTP, STB Chairman Martin Oberman said in a press release.

A section of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 authorizes — and on eligible complaint requires — the STB to investigate the causes of "substandard" OTP of passenger-rail service, to identify mitigating measures and, under certain conditions, prescribe relief, STB officials said.

In late 2020, the [Federal Railroad Administration](#), in conjunction with Amtrak, called for a "customer OTP" metric to measure passenger-rail OTP, with a minimum standard of 80% of passenger arrivals at stations to occur within 15 minutes of the scheduled time for any two consecutive calendar quarters.

Complaints may be brought by Amtrak, by an entity for which Amtrak operates intercity passenger-rail service, by an intercity passenger-rail operator or by a host freight railroad over which Amtrak operates, STB officials said.

To prepare for the OTP enforcement obligations, the STB created a passenger-rail working group of STB staff in April 2021. The group was changed with developing plans to enhance the agency's capacity to fulfill its passenger-rail oversight and to ensure it meets its obligations to enforce the OTP requirement.

In August 2021, the board appointed a senior staff member from the Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs and Compliance, Neil Moyer, and an attorney from the Board's Office of Proceedings, Ryan Lee, to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for OTP investigation processing and resource allocation.

Moyer and Lee have worked with the U.S. Department of Transportation's Volpe National Transportation Systems Center to develop data tools to quickly analyze FRA's OTP quarterly data.

The STB "stands ready" to handle any OTP cases that are filed, Oberman said.

"We are fully analyzing the quarterly data provided by the FRA, and we are developing a basis for determining whether any board-initiated investigations may be necessary," he added. "The other board members and I look forward to working closely with Amtrak and the freight railroads in the nation's effort to improve its passenger-rail system."

Amtrak officials said they welcome the STB's action.

We look forward to working closely with the STB's new Office of Passenger Rail to enforce the FRA's performance standards for intercity passenger rail," they said in a press release. "We will also participate on the STB's new passenger-rail advisory committee. This will provide an opportunity for issues to be elevated and resolved before they require an investigation."

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## Amtrak's Virginia Routes Log Ridership Growth

Ridership on [Amtrak's](#) state-supported trains in Virginia reached record levels in August, topping a previous record set in July, the [Virginia Passenger Rail Authority](#) and Amtrak announced in early October.

During August, 119,280 riders traveled on all four state-supported routes, an 8.2% increase from July's ridership level of 110,256. The highest ridership level occurred on trains to Newport News — a 12.9% increase from July's level. The increase included the resumption of a roundtrip that had been suspended during the pandemic.

Ridership on trains traveling through the Newport News corridor logged a 28.5% increase when compared to August 2021.

Service to Roanoke and Norfolk also posted increases in August, following the July 7 launch of two new roundtrips — one to each city.

"The continued growth of our state-supported Amtrak service shows that rail is not only a viable part of Virginia's transportation network, it's a necessary part," said DJ Stadtler, the authority's executive director, in a press release. "Every day we are working towards our mission of providing more rail options across the commonwealth."

The route between Richmond and Washington, D.C., continues to rebound from a pandemic suspension of service. In August, 11,828 passengers rode the route, a 22% increase over the August 2019 ridership level.

## Amtrak Switch to Miami Airport Station Again Moving Forward

Trains Newswire [By Bob Johnston](#) | September 29, 2022 -Provided by John Goodman

**Facility has been used since 2015 opening by commuter operator Tri-Rail**

Florida DOT funding helped construct the \$2 billion airport station, built with a ticketing, baggage, and waiting-room concourse for Amtrak that is separate from Tri-Rail's. The commuter carrier moved in upon the facility's completion, but Amtrak demurred, initially because its long-distance trains blocked busy 25th Street on the north end of the station. Who was responsible for this construction oversight is a matter of debate, though FDOT soon paid \$5.6 million for street resurfacing and a highway bypass that automatically directs traffic to 28th Street if 25th Street is blocked with a long-distance train for an extended period.

However, Amtrak continued to balk at moving operations to the new station after that situation was rectified in 2017. While the company didn't pay to construct the modern facility, it is expected to pay an allocated portion of common-area maintenance, track, canopy, and platform costs.

That has been a sticking point ever since. A Florida DOT spokeswoman told *Trains Magazine* during negotiations in late 2017 that "lease terms are pending, specifically terms of cancellation, [but] Amtrak can cancel without penalty from FDOT." This week's *Miami Today* report notes, "both parties are currently negotiating the lease and an acceptable termination clause," and that Amtrak must also consummate separate agreements with Miami International Airport and Tri-Rail.

Bringing Amtrak's trains closer to downtown Miami will require a 4-mile deadhead back-up move prior to the departure of the northbound *Star* or *Meteor*, and a similar move back to the servicing yard after southbound trains arrive.

This is necessary because the only place to turn them is a loop at Hialeah, and thus, on-duty time costs for both onboard service and operating crews will rise, and the servicing window would also be shortened. The tradeoff is better visibility in Miami's transportation mix, greater convenience and comfort for passengers, and potentially more revenue.



*A Tri-Rail train arrives at the Miami Intermodal Center in February 2018. In the foreground is the unused track for Amtrak trains. Bob Johnston*



*An Amtrak sign awaits the arrival of service by the passenger carrier. Bob Johnston*

In a letter to the Citizens Independent Transportation Trust, a community group that has pressed Amtrak management to move service to the airport facility, Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner wrote that the company was evaluating technical and operational aspects of the move and was working to reach "mutually acceptable commercial terms for a long-term facility lease" at the new station.

That was last April. Amtrak spokeswoman Kimberly Woods recently told *Miami Today*, "We are excited about the prospects of serving the Miami Intermodal Center in the future," adding, "Discussions continue with the Florida Department of Transportation and other agencies to allow Amtrak to become part of the MIC."

## Locomotive Builders Seek Path to the Future

By David Lassen | October 18, 2022

No one solution likely as battery, hydrogen, hybrid options develop to supplant diesel



A diagram shows features of the Wabtec FLXdrive battery-electric locomotive. Wabtec



A rendering of a 14.5 megawatt-hour EMD Joule locomotive. Progress Rail

FORT WORTH, Texas — Railroading's path is clearly heading away from the diesel-electric locomotive, the builders of those locomotives agree.

Where that path leads is far less clear, representatives of Alstom, Progress Rail, Siemens, and Wabtec said in a discussion at last week's Railway Supply Institute Conference. Battery power, hydrogen, and hybrids of all sorts all have a chance to play a role, but what those roles will be, it's too soon to know.

Michael Cleary of Alstom sales and business development compares the way forward to the "spaghetti diagram" of a hurricane forecast: "There's all these divergent paths of where everything is going to end up, but with more time and data, it starts to converge."

"I think we're going to get to the common theme of what it's going to look like in this industry, but it's just going to take us a while." Venu Madala, Wabtec group vice president, product management, discussed the FLXdrive battery-electric tests conducted in 2021 with BNSF and said they should that a unit with greater energy storage capability than the demonstrator's 2.4 Megawatt-hours could have achieved 25% to 30% fuel savings. . [See ["Wabtec says next generation of battery-electric ..."](#), *Trains News Wire*, May 17, 2021]. Wabtec is now working on an 8 MWh road unit.

"So the operations demonstrate that the fuel savings are there, which make economic sense along with getting the sustainable solutions," Madala said. "Because without economics, it's going to be a hard option for railroads, and that's what we're focused on, to make it palatable for the customers."

In keeping with Cleary's concept of different paths, Madala believes there will be no one sustainable motive-power solution for everyone.

"Everybody is going to have a very unique fleet, and they're going to have very unique requirements from their fleet strategy perspective. And our goal is that we're going to be able to help each customer uniquely by having solutions available in different areas."

Hydrogen is also likely to be among that mix of solutions. Progress Rail, which also has battery locomotives on the way, is working with BNSF and fuel company Chevron on one of several hydrogen fuel-cell locomotive projects [see ["BNSF to join Caterpillar, Chevron in hydrogen fuel-cell project,"](#) *News Wire*, Dec. 14, 2021]. Michael Cleveland, Progress' director of advanced energy, touched on how much there is to learn

"The promise of only water coming out your tail pipe is really impressive," Cleveland says. "But being able to understand, how do you get fuel to it? What are the fueling times look like? What are the differences in the piping, and the behavior, and the response curves of fuel cells? That's all new stuff for us ..."

"For some of us, this would be very daunting ... On the other side of it, it's a very exciting technical challenge. And looking at the faces I see around the room, I think more of us are excited about the technical challenge."

Peter Tuschinski, vice president of rolling stock portfolio and product strategy for Siemens Mobility's Rolling Stock Division, notes his company is already working on partial-zero-emission passenger solutions for the U.S. Amtrak equipment ordered in 2021 will use the company's Charger diesel-electric in tandem with a pantograph-equipped coach that would allow the train to operate in electrified and non-electrified territory [see ["Siemens optimistic about US passenger market,"](#) *News Wire*, Sept. 24, 2022]. It is working on a similar solution with a battery-equipped coach that would allow short-range operations in areas such as tunnels leading into stations or urban city centers.

*Continued on next page:*



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Battery technology is such, Tuschinski says, that zero-emission commuter operations are already possible; zero-emission intercity service will likely require hydrogen power. Even then, for a range more than about 150 miles, locomotives will likely require hydrogen tenders.

Sean Cronin, Metra's senior director of mechanical capital projects, provided a customer's perspective on the emerging technologies. Metra is involved in a project with Progress Rail to convert at least three of its diesels to battery power [see ["Metra board approves deal ..."](#), News Wire, Aug. 18, 2022] and is looking to purchase an electric switch engine.

"We need to get real-world data about what these new technologies do in our environments," Cronin says. Safety, reliability, and costs — both to operate and maintain — will determine Metra's ability to embrace the new choices.

"It's the initial cost of the rolling stock. It's the cost of the infrastructure, fueling and in the shops we maintain and in the depots. ... We have to have a vision of the future, what the costs are going to be of this new fuel or power source we're going to use. And then last, it's the cost of the maintenance. We've all maintained diesel locomotives for a long time; we know how much it costs. But with some of these new technologies, how much does it cost, on both a 92-day and 184-day maintenance cycle, and on an overhaul cycle, for where I need to move capital to maintain these new pieces of rolling stock. ...

"This is a new journey. I think we're pretty open to the new technologies, but it's got to work in the services that we provide, and the first thing we have to think of is that it has to work for our passengers."



*Cars roll down the eastbound hump at Union Pacific's Bailey Yard in North Platte, Neb., in June 2018. UP will build hybrid-electric locomotives for yard service at its shops in North Little Rock, Ark. Bill Stephens*



## Union Pacific to Partner on Construction of Hybrid-Electric Locomotives

*By* | October 6, 2022 Railroad and technology firm ZTR will build six units at UP's North Little Rock shops

OMAHA — Union Pacific, which has already made the biggest commitment to battery-electric locomotives of any North American Class I railroad, is taking another big step into alternative forms of motive power.

The company [announced today](#) (Thursday, Oct. 6) that it will partner with green technology firm ZTR to build hybrid-electric locomotives at its North Little Rock, Ark., shops. The prototype unit is expected to be delivered in late 2023 with five more locomotives constructed in 2024.

The hybrids, like a plug-in hybrid automobile, will offer multiple modes of operation and be able to charge onboard batteries in several ways, including wayside and onboard charging. They are planned to operate in mother-slug sets, with a diesel locomotive connected to a slug unit equipped with batteries, electronics, and controls supplied by

"Adding hybrid-electric locomotives to our fleet is another important step for Union Pacific as we work to explore 'drop-in' technologies that modify current systems and reduce our carbon footprint," Shane Keller, Union Pacific senior vice president of engineering and mechanical, said in a press release. "This pilot will help make our fleet more fuel efficient and further advance our commitment to reaching our sustainability goals, while testing the technology's capability for expanded use across our locomotive fleet."

The new locomotives — to be converted from older, higher-emission units — will be used chiefly in yard operations, with the mother-slug configuration increasing the traction motors available for the pulling and braking power needed for such work. UP already uses more than 65 mother-slug sets with ZTR technology in yards across its system.

"ZTR is proud of our long-standing relationship with Union Pacific and excited to partner with them on this hybrid-electric locomotive development," said ZTR Control Systems President Derek Shipley. "This investment aligns well with our ongoing goal to leverage ZTR's technical expertise to support railways in their decarbonization and efficiency improvement efforts. This initial hybrid-electric mother-slug application will be the basis of our design for future hybrid-electric, long-haul and fully electric solutions."

UP has previously ordered 20 battery-electric locomotives for yard service — 10 from Wabtec and 10 from Progress Rail [see ["Union Pacific orders ..."](#), *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 28, 2022]. Those locomotives will be tested in North Platte, Neb., and in the Los Angeles basin. UP did not immediately indicate where the newly announced units might be used.



## Don Lind Loco from Chaska Now in Janesville, MN, GN Loco in Willmar, MN at Kandiyohi, MN Hist Soc

**Sent:** Wednesday, June 22, 2022 9:08 PM  
Provided by Chuck Lavallee



## News photos: Aerial Views Show Extent of Seminole Gulf Damage

By | October 8, 2022 Florida short line faces months of recovery after Hurricane Ian



*A view of one of six Seminole Gulf Railway bridges destroyed by Hurricane Ian. Sol Tucker*

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Aerial photos from *Trains News Wire* contributor Sol Tucker provide some indication of the extent of the damage sustained by southwest Florida's Seminole Gulf Railway as a result of Hurricane Ian.

The photos were taken Friday (Oct. 7).

Railroad officials said earlier this week that at least a half-dozen bridges on the 100-mile railroad based in Fort Myers had been lost as a result of the Category 4 hurricane which devastated Florida's west coast on Sept. 28. That includes three bridges over the Caloosahatchee River in the Fort Myers area [see ["Seminole Gulf Railway faces lengthy closure ..."](#) *Trains News Wire*, Oct. 5, 2022].

Railroad executives indicated they would seek Federal Railroad Administration assistance to help reopen the line, citing its potential role in transporting construction materials to help with rebuilding in Fort Myers.



*Multiple washouts scar a short section of the Seminole Gulf right-of-way. Sol Tucker*



*Another badly damaged Seminole Gulf bridge. Sol Tucker.*

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*“Section 213 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) authorizes, and on eligible complaints requires, the STB to investigate the causes of substandard passenger rail OTP; to identify mitigating measures; and, under specified conditions, to prescribe relief,” according to the STB. (Photograph Courtesy of Amtrak)*

## STB Launches Office of Passenger Rail

RAILWAY Age Written by **Marybeth Luczak, Executive Editor**  
October 13, 2022 -Regulatory

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) on Oct. 1 established the Office of Passenger Rail, responsible for investigating and analyzing issues regarding Amtrak on-time performance (OTP). “Section 213 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) authorizes, and on eligible complaints requires, the [STB](#) to investigate the causes of substandard passenger rail OTP; to identify mitigating measures; and, under specified conditions, to prescribe relief,” STB reported on Oct. 13. [The Federal Railroad Administration \(FRA\)](#) on Nov. 16, 2020, adopted a [final Rule](#) establishing [metrics and minimum standards for measuring the performance and service quality of Amtrak’s intercity passenger trains—following nearly 10 years of a contentious battle involving Amtrak and its host freight railroads that twice reached the U.S. Supreme Court.](#) (FRA was charged to do so under PRIIA.)

STB said that FRA, in conjunction with [Amtrak](#), “promulgated a ‘Customer OTP’ metric to measure passenger rail OTP, with a minimum standard of 80% of passenger arrivals at stations to occur within 15 minutes of the scheduled time for any two consecutive calendar quarters.” This standard began to apply on July 1, 2021.

Complaints may be brought by Amtrak, by an entity for which Amtrak operates intercity passenger rail service, by an intercity passenger rail operator, or by a host freight railroad.

[In April 2021, STB established an in-house Passenger Rail Working Group to prepare for its new enforcement obligations.](#) The group was charged with “developing plans to enhance the agency’s capacity to fulfill its passenger rail oversight efforts and to ensure it will fully meet its obligations to enforce OTP requirements,” STB said.

[In August 2021, STB appointed Neil Moyer](#), a senior staff member from the Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance, as well as Ryan Lee, an attorney from the STB’s Office of Proceedings, to develop and begin to implement a plan for OTP investigation processing and resource allocation. According to STB, both have worked with the [U.S. Department of Transportation’s Volpe National Transportation Systems Center](#) “to develop data tools to quickly analyze FRA’s on-time performance quarterly data.”

A Director for the Office of Passenger Rail will now be hired, according to STB, which noted it is in the process of creating, under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, a Passenger Rail Advisory Committee to advise STB on passenger rail transportation issues.



*STB Chairman Martin Oberman*

“The creation of the Office of Passenger Rail is the next step in a carefully planned strategy for the Board to meet its responsibility to investigate and enforce Amtrak on-time performance,” STB Chairman Martin Oberman said. “The agency stands ready to handle any on-time performance cases that are filed. We are fully analyzing the quarterly data provided by the FRA, and we are developing a basis for determining whether any Board-initiated investigations may be necessary. The other Board members and I look forward to working closely with Amtrak and the freight railroads in the nation’s effort to improve its passenger rail system. “I want to extend my many thanks to Mr. Moyer and Mr. Lee for their excellent work as the development team for this new office.”

“Amtrak welcomes the Board’s enhanced focus on Amtrak on-time performance, an important issue for our service reliability and something our customers have a right to expect,” Amtrak said in an Oct. 13 statement. “We look forward to working closely with the STB’s new Office of Passenger Rail to enforce the FRA’s performance standards for intercity passenger rail.

“We will also participate on the STB’s new Passenger Rail Advisory Committee. This will provide an opportunity for issues to be elevated and resolved before they require an investigation.”



*BNSF train Z-CHCSSE crosses the ex-NP bridge over Lake Pend Oreille near Sandpoint, Idaho, on Oct. 2, 2022. The adjacent second bridge is now structurally complete and is expected to enter service by late November. Bruce Kelly*



## BNSF's New Sandpoint, Idaho, Bridge Nears Opening

By Bruce Kelly | October 10, 2022 Structurally complete, new bridge should see first trains in November

SANDPOINT, Idaho — BNSF Railway's nearly mile-long second bridge across Lake Pend Oreille near Sandpoint is now structurally complete and tracklaying has begun. BNSF spokeswoman Lena Kent says, "The new bridge will have trains operating over it by the end of November."

Initially, the second main will be laid from a point near the northwest (railroad east) end of the bridge to the beginning of current double track at East Algoma, across the lake from Sandpoint. Two smaller bridges, across Sand Creek and Bridge Street in Sandpoint, will not have their second main track laid until 2023.

Completion of the second main all the way to Sandpoint Junction, where BNSF and Montana Rail Link connect, will require further preparation of the narrow right-of-way past Sandpoint's ex-Northern Pacific depot served by Amtrak's *Empire Builder*. BNSF says the depot platform will be rebuilt to allow the second main to fit between the depot and the existing main.

After the second bridge over Lake Pend Oreille is placed in service, BNSF plans to resume the process — which began in 2008 — of replacing piers and deck segments on the existing ex-NP bridge, which dates to 1904.

*Grain train G-TUSKAL off BNSF's ex-GN Hi Line, rolls through Sandpoint Junction, Idaho, and past the ex-NP Sandpoint depot on Oct. 2, 2022. BNSF says the depot platform will be rebuilt to make space for a second main track. Bruce Kelly*

## STB Establishes Office to Probe Amtrak Delays on Host Railroads (updated)

By | October 13, 2022 Board is ready to handle on-time performance complaints, chairman says

WASHINGTON — The Surface Transportation Board has created a passenger rail office that will be responsible for investigating and analyzing Amtrak on-time performance on host railroads.

The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 authorizes the STB to investigate the causes of substandard passenger rail on-time performance, to identify mitigating measures, and, under specified conditions, to prescribe relief.

In late 2020, the Federal Railroad Administration, in conjunction with Amtrak, promulgated a "Customer OTP" metric to measure passenger rail on-time performance, with a minimum standard of 80% of passenger arrivals at stations to occur within 15 minutes of the scheduled time for any two consecutive calendar quarters. Complaints may be brought by Amtrak, by an entity for which Amtrak operates intercity passenger rail service, by an intercity passenger rail operator, or by a host freight railroad over which Amtrak operates. "The creation of the Office of Passenger Rail is the next step in a carefully planned strategy for the Board to meet its responsibility to investigate and enforce Amtrak on-time performance," STB Chairman Martin J. Oberman [said in a statement on Thursday](#). "The agency stands ready to handle any on-time performance cases that are filed. We are fully analyzing the quarterly data provided by the FRA, and we are developing a basis for determining whether any Board-initiated investigations may be necessary. The other Board members and I look forward to working closely with Amtrak and the freight railroads in the nation's effort to improve its passenger rail system." In a statement Thursday afternoon, Amtrak said it "welcomes the Board's enhanced focus on Amtrak on-time performance, an important issue for our service reliability and something our customers have a right to expect. We look forward to working closely with the STB's new Office of Passenger Rail to enforce the FRA's performance standards for intercity passenger rail. "We will also participate on the STB's new passenger rail advisory committee. This will provide an opportunity for issues to be elevated and resolved before they require an investigation."

— Updated at 7:40 p.m. CDT with Amtrak statement.



## Weekly U.S. Carload, Intermodal Volume Remains Down

U.S. Rail Traffic<sup>1</sup>

Week 40, 2022 – Ended October 8, 2022

	This Week		Year-To-Date		
	Cars	vs 2021	Cumulative	Avg/wk <sup>2</sup>	vs 2021
<b>Total Carloads</b>	<b>232,930</b>	<b>-2.8%</b>	<b>9,252,232</b>	<b>231,306</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
Chemicals	30,187	-8.3%	1,331,218	33,280	2.9%
Coal	65,989	-2.0%	2,641,048	66,026	3.4%
Farm Products excl. Grain, and Food	16,909	5.1%	649,994	16,250	3.8%
Forest Products	8,916	-13.0%	391,316	9,783	-2.7%
Grain	23,429	-2.8%	874,926	21,873	-4.5%
Metallic Ores and Metals	20,995	-6.2%	840,678	21,017	-7.4%
Motor Vehicles and Parts	13,955	7.0%	526,450	13,161	1.8%
Nonmetallic Minerals	33,132	-0.2%	1,258,001	31,450	4.0%
Petroleum and Petroleum Products	9,993	6.3%	380,823	9,521	-10.0%
Other	9,425	-13.7%	357,778	8,944	-9.7%
<b>Total Intermodal Units</b>	<b>261,483</b>	<b>-2.0%</b>	<b>10,521,037</b>	<b>263,026</b>	<b>-5.0%</b>
<b>Total Traffic</b>	<b>494,413</b>	<b>-2.4%</b>	<b>19,773,269</b>	<b>494,332</b>	<b>-2.7%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Excludes U.S. operations of Canadian Pacific, CN and GMXT.<sup>2</sup> Average per week figures may not sum to totals as a result of independent rounding.

Association of American Railroads

WASHINGTON — Carload and intermodal traffic remain below 2021 levels in [the latest weekly statistics](#) from the Association of American Railroads.

For the week ending Oct. 8, overall traffic of 494,413 carloads and intermodal units represented a 2.4% drop from the same week a year earlier. That figure included 232,930 carloads, down 2.8%, and 261,483 containers and trailers, down 2%.

Year-to-date figures, through 40 weeks of 2022, show overall traffic down 2.7%, with carloads even with 2021 figures and intermodal volume down 5%.

North American totals, for 12 reporting U.S., Canadian, and Mexican railroads, show 690,202 carloads and intermodal units, down 0.6% from the corresponding week in 2021. That includes 336,086 carloads, down 0.5%, and 354,116 intermodal units, down 0.8%.

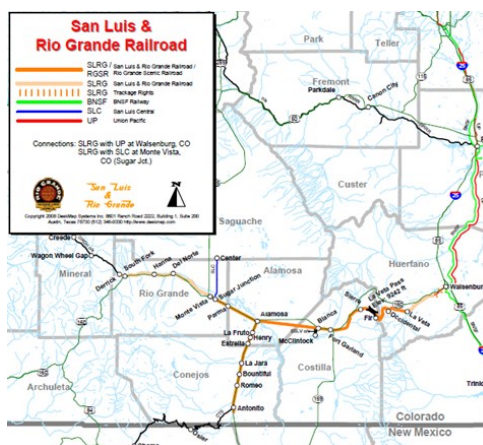
Year-to-date North American totals are down 2.2% from the 40-week totals for 2021.



Passengers board a San Luis & Rio Grande train at Alamosa, Colo., in June 2015. OmniTRAX is purchasing the railroad, which last ran excursions in 2019.  
Brian Schmidt

## OmniTRAX Finalizes Deal for San Luis &amp; Rio Grande

By | October 12, 2022 Colorado short line to become company's 26th railroad



The San Luis & Rio Grande Railroad

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DENVER — OmniTRAX has completed an agreement to purchase the assets of the bankrupt San Luis & Rio Grande Railroad, which will become the company's 26th short line.

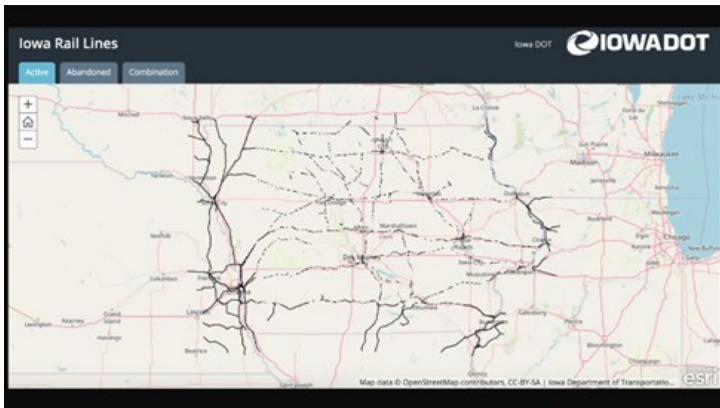
Bankruptcy trustee William Brandt had said last month that the company had signed an agreement in principle to purchase the 155-mile Colorado railroad, a former Denver & Rio Grande Western route most recently operated as an Iowa Pacific Holdings property [see [“OmniTrax has agreement ...,”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Sept. 19, 2022]. It has been in bankruptcy for three years.

“As a Colorado company, we know how important the SLRG has been to the San Luis Valley and Colorado's economy,” OmniTRAX CEO Dean Piacente said in [a press release](#) announcing the deal. “The Broe Group companies have grown with Colorado for 50 years and we are proud to help revitalize this railroad to bring more business and jobs to the region and our state.”

The addition of the San Luis & Rio Grande will become the second OmniTRAX railroad in Colorado, joining the Great Western Railway, and will increase the company's North American rail network to more than 2,000 miles. The deal is expected to close in late 2022.

Terms were not announced. The Valley Courier newspaper previously reported the company offered \$5.75 million, although almost \$4 million of that was to address back taxes.

OmniTRAX says the railroad provides a key statewide freight connection between the San Luis Valley and Colorado's eastern plains, and that acquisition offers expanded reach for the line's active rail customers and provides new opportunities to grow the region's economic base.



**The Iowa Transportation Commission has signed off on distributing \$6.3 million to six rail infrastructure and related rail development projects.**

Targeted Job Creation projects	Loan	Grant
Alta, Iowa, Soybean Crush Plant (Buena Vista County)	\$2,000,000	\$612,000
Floyd Valley Transload (Woodbury County)	\$664,800	\$120,000
IceCap Cold Storage (Pottawattamie County)	\$503,315	\$576,000
Rail Network Improvement projects	Loan	Grant
CP Unit Train Expansion Phase 5 (Clayton County)	\$1,650,000	-----
Rail Port Planning & Development projects	Loan	Grant
Booneville North Transload Facility (Dallas County)	-----	\$100,000
Pacific Junction South Industrial Park Transload Facility	-----	\$82,440
<b>Total Awarded Funding:</b>	<b>\$4,818,115</b>	<b>\$1,490,440</b>

*Between 2006 and 2017, the RRLG Program has assisted 70 rail projects, awarding \$19 million in grants and financing \$24 million in loans. see:*

[MM1022 RRLGPFactSheet-1](#)



*A Kansas City Southern intermodal train heads for the Union Pacific Brownsville Subdivision at Robstown, Texas, in November 2017. Bill Stephens*

## Iowa Approves \$6.3MM for Rail Projects

Railway Age Written by [Marybeth Luczak, Executive Editor](#)  
October 12, 2022 -Freight

The projects will be funded under the [Railroad Revolving Loan and Grant \(RRLG\) Program](#), which is administered by the [Office of Rail Transportation at the Iowa Department of Transportation](#). The program provides financial assistance to rail projects in these three categories:

**Targeted job creation.** Projects must provide immediate, direct job opportunities. Loans and grants are available. Grant funding is contingent on job creation and retention commitments by the applicant, and loans can supplement grants if the project cost exceeds available grant funding. A local match is required for both grants and loans.

**Rail network improvement.** Projects must support existing rail lines and service or improve industrial access when no direct job creation is involved. Only loans are available in this category. Loans will be offered at 0% for a 10-year term. Loan requests require a 20% matching contribution.

**Rail Port Planning and Development.** Grants of up to \$100,000 are available for planning studies that enable a community, county or region to make fact-based decisions concerning the location, design or funding requirements for a rail port facility. Study results are expected to help decision-makers evaluate rail development options that support economic growth. Grant requests require a 20% matching contribution.

To the left is the list of RRLG projects approved by the Commission and slated to support the creation and retention of 109 jobs within three years of their completion:

## CN Challenges STB's Draft Environmental Review of CP-KCS Merger

By [Bill Stephens](#) | October 17, 2022 CN contends that the merged CP-KCS system would increase fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions

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WASHINGTON — Canadian National is challenging some conclusions federal regulators reached in their draft environmental review of the proposed Canadian Pacific-Kansas City Southern merger.

Chief among them: The assumption that the merged Canadian Pacific Kansas City would not increase fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

CN, in an Oct. 14 filing with the Surface Transportation Board, challenged the draft environmental impact statement's conclusion that overall railroad diesel fuel use would not change after the merger. CPKC's traffic growth is expected to come at the expense of competing railroads, so any increase in fuel use at CPKC would be offset by a decline in fuel consumption at the other railroads, the environmental statement concludes.

But CN says the board failed to take into account that CPKC's routes, on average, are 217 miles longer than the average mileage of existing routes on competing railroads.

When combined with CPKC's rail traffic diversion projections, this 11.7% mileage difference means CPKC would add more than 122 million additional unit-miles to the rail network annually compared with existing routes, primarily on BNSF Railway and Union Pacific. In the busy lane linking Chicago with the Mexican border at Laredo, Texas, CPKC's route is 19.9% longer than the shortest route, UP's.

"Adding 122.6 million circuitous unit-miles to the rail network in order to move the same volume of traffic currently being moved by other railroads will have negative environmental impacts that need to be balanced against any asserted environmental benefits of the CP-KCS merger," CN consultant David Hunt wrote.

CN also asks the board's environmental officials to require CP and KCS to verify or resubmit their truck diversion data. CN questioned whether CP and KCS are undercounting the projected daily truck traffic at some of the combined railroads' intermodal terminals. Higher increases, CN contends, might trigger an environmental review.

CN also argues that the STB's environmental analysis should also cover its proposal that as part of an approval of the merger CP be required to divest the KCS line linking Springfield, Ill., with Kansas City and St. Louis. CN would then link the Springfield Line with its former Illinois Central to create a new single-line route linking K.C. with Chicago, Detroit, and Eastern Canada.



**Inching toward a decision on the Canadian Pacific-Kansas City Southern merger, the Surface Transportation Board held seven days of hearings\* on the transaction, with numerous presenters, both pro and con.**

## CP, KCS to STB: 'A Perfect Fit With No Overlap'

Railway Age Written by [William C. Vantuono](#), Editor-in-Chief

October 07, 2022 -News

CP and KCS executives, CEOs Keith Creel and Pat Ottensmeyer ([Railway Age's 2022 Co-Railroaders of the Year](#)) among them, provided testimony addressing operations, competition, service quality, capital investment, environmental impact, and effects on passenger rail on shared rights-of-way (chiefly Metra in the Chicago region). The entire presentation can be downloaded below. Canadian Pacific-Kansas City (CPKC) is "a perfect fit with no overlap," said Creel. The merged railroad will "be accountable to on-the-record commitments, keep affected gateways open on commercially reasonable terms and create no new bottlenecks, honor its Service Promise and its offer to extend Bayer agreement terms to all of KCS's TIH (toxic inhalation hazard) shippers, collaborate with all users of Texas lines shared with CPKC to support coordinated operations and necessary infrastructure additions, and honor its commitments to Metra."

Those commitments to Metra are that CPKC will not "force CPKC freight trains operating between Kansas City and St. Paul, Minn. over the lines we share with Metra (except in emergency detour situations), and object to Metra resuming of its full pre-COVID schedules on Metra's Milwaukee District West and Milwaukee District North lines." The new Class I will "work collaboratively with Metra on improved real-time communications about dispatching decisions that might have an impact on Metra's scheduled trains, support collaborative assessments of proposed Metra operational changes outside peak windows (when Metra needs our consent to add trains), and support an agreed-upon escalation process to avoid or resolve disputes about issues impacting Metra train performance." "Growth will enable all points to be better-served," noted CP Assistant Vice President of Service and Product Design Raymond Elphick and KCS Executive Vice President Operations John Orr. "Deeper blocking and longer distance trains reduces transit times, generates greater reliability and improves resource utilization. The density of traffic along the north-south corridor of the combined network creates economies of scale. 'A car is a car,' as connecting carriers (based on the traffic analysis) would receive the same or better service." **\*Editor's Commentary:** Contributing Editor Frank N. Wilner notes, "During deliberations on the merger of railroads New York Central and Pennsylvania into Penn Central, ICC member William H. Tucker was quoted in the Feb. 13, 1967, *Railway Age* that "there is no conceivable reason why a merger case should resemble a trial for first-degree homicide, with a dozen prosecuting attorneys and scores of defense counsel nitpicking at every statement." See Wilner's ["Is STB Facing Information Overload?"](#) The CPKC presentation cited here is 52 pages, long but quite clear and concise, in my opinion. A CSX presentation on just the Meridian Speedway effects of the merger is about 120 pages. Similarly, BNSF and Union Pacific filed long statements on how they perceive the merger will affect their operations in just the Houston area, and at the Laredo border gateway. Preparing all of this excruciating detail must have required a tremendous amount of time (not to mention attorney fees). It's all available on the STB website. — William C. Vantuono



## NORTH POLE EXPRESS

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**Railfan Events** (Thanks to Rick Krense, Bill Dredge)

	<b>Saturday-Sunday</b> <b>November 12-13, 2022</b> <b>9am—5pm</b>	<b>Wisconsin State Fair Park in</b> <b>Milwaukee, WI Order tickets at <a href="https://www.train-fest.com/tickets">https://www.train-fest.com/tickets</a></b>	<b>\$20 for two-day Ticket</b> <b>\$19.95 for single day ticket</b>
Greater Upper Midwest Train Show & Sale	Saturday, Nov 19, 2022 9:00 am—2:00 pm	Century College West Campus 3300 Century Ave. N. White Bear Lake, MN 55110	\$6
Granite City Train Show	Saturday, Nov 5, 2022 10:00 AM—4:00 pm	St. Cloud River's Edge Convention Center 10 4th Ave S St Cloud MN 56301	\$6
Great Train Show	Saturday—Sunday, Nov 5, 6 2022 10:00 AM—4:00 pm	Canterbury Park 1100 Canterbury Road Shakopee MN 55379	\$10 for both days
Lakes and Pines Division of the Train Collectors Semi-annual Train Show	Sunday, November 13, 2022, at 12:15 PM	John P Murzyn Hall 530 Mill Street NE Columbia Heights MN 55421	\$5

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