

**NRHS**

Northstar News

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

Enjoy the Fall Colors, Jack Frost isn't far behind!



*L: Illinois Railway Museum Nebraska Zephyr
Sept 16th 2023 Showcase
Weekend –R Tubbesing
Photo*

*R: Illinois Railway Museum Shay #5 with Ca-boose train departing for the museum depot. Sept 16th 2023 Showcase Weekend –Roger Libra
Photo*



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Meeting Notice:

Saturday October 14 2023 6:15 pm At Roseville Lutheran Church, our October Meeting also will be a ZOOM meeting. Note: in 2023 meetings will held on the 2nd Saturday of the month. (October Program: to Be Determined)

Informal Dinner at Keys Restaurant -Lexington and Larpenteur Avenues at 4:15 pm October 14th, 2023.

Please join us in-person at Roseville Lutheran Church, Saturday October 14th at 6 pm. Our business meeting will begin at 6:15 followed by the program.

Zoom Meeting ID: 848 6467 2408 Passcode:732394

Web link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84864672408?pwd=Y09VWHNGVDJyNVFVMlVOQWFTQjdvdjQ0OT09>
or <https://tinyurl.com/4jb3x54a> -/- Dial-in audio-only 507-473-4847 –President Dan Meyer

If you are having trouble with your Zoom application that you are unable to resolve, you may dial into the meeting, audio-only, from any telephone. Dial 507-473-4847 and follow the prompts.

Northstar Chapter Officers & Staff

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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. (1215 Roselawn Ave W Roseville MN 55113)



From the Editor: The BOD has decided to change the Chapter By-Laws. The BOD proposes for 2024 that chapter officers be reduced from 5 to 4 positions. The positions will be President, Treasurer, Secretary and National Representative. Members will be able to vote on this change at the October 14th 2023 meeting. These changes were reviewed at our May 2023 meeting. Detailed write up can be viewed on our Chapter website. Also, for 2024, The BOD passed a resolution of Dues increase. Chapter regular membership will be \$30, Subscribers will be \$35 and if subscriber receives the paper copy (mailing) of the newsletter, an additional charge of \$5 will be assessed. Proposed by-laws can be read by using the link here: <http://northstar-nrhs.org/bylaws/Proposed-Changes-By-Laws-Oct-2024.pdf>

Programs for the October Meeting is are open. Jack Barbier will present a 'Steam Trifecta' DVD program in November. Contact either Jphn Goodman or Richard Tubbesing at the above E-mails to schedule and show your program.

*****Important Notice*****

Dear Northstar Member: We have recently learned that the building containing our library will be sold. We will have to vacate the premises. As a result, we must make the decision as to whether to find suitable office space or store the contents. Currently about 8 people visit per week and a few borrow materials. Our current rent is \$556 per month. In the past our calendar sales and flea market sales have failed to cover the rent. We run a deficit of roughly \$2000 per year. We have been extremely fortunate to have had several individuals step up with donations ranging from \$1000 to \$12,000. The library would have had to close long ago without these donations. If the library is to continue, we must change the way we operate. We need to actively sell surplus books and artifacts on line and at flea markets. We need to actively seek donations from members, the public, the government, corporate donors and railroads. We need to increase sales and profit from the calendar. We have failed to do any of these things. Our total cash position in both the calendar and chapter checking accounts at the time of this writing is around \$15,000. In Early 2010 we had around \$30,000 in assets, so it has taken 13 years to reduce our cash position by half. With inflation being a real thing, the remaining cash could be used in a surprisingly short amount of time if we have no other income. Right now we must decide to find another suitable office or storage space at a rent which would require the continued publishing of the calendar and require attempting to sell sufficient material at more fleas markets and on eBay to avoid quickly depleting the treasury or store and liquidate the contents to permit the chapter to continue operation. We need your opinions. Please send your comments to dan@mever-family.net and risbrandt@comcast.net.

Meeting Minutes September 9th 2023 at Roseville Lutheran Church

The meeting was called to order at about 6:15 pm by President Dan Meyer. The meeting had a quorum. Sixteen people were present. A motion to approve the May 2023 meeting minutes reported in the September Newsletter was brought before the membership. . The motion was carried. The Treasurer's report was given by Russ Isbrandt. The chapter checking account balances for the Chapter is a little less than last month. The calendar account was reported. The library report was given by John Goodman. We are processing many books from Dave Herbert's Collection. A book dealer has reached an agreement with Dave Herbert and his sister. Dave Herbert has moved to Newport News VA close to where his sister resides.

John Goodman along with President Dan Meyer would like to put in the next newsletter of where the future of the library is headed. We need to have members come forward to discuss the fate of the library. Dan Meyer stated he contacted the library building owner and that the building is in the process of being sold. The lease payments are month to month and will not be extended. Dan stated that there is a self-storage place nearby and that might be a viable option for the library contents. When the building is sold, the probability is that we might get evicted by the new owner. John Goodman stated that the next meeting that at least 15 minutes should be devoted to member opinions about the library. John Goodman stated that we have two flea markets we plan to attend. The Canterbury show is the last weekend in October. We will be at the State Fair Grounds flea market in September and would like to see the membership visit our table. The Calendar report was given by Russ Isbrandt. The new 2024 calendar is expected to be delivered soon. The calendar price will be increased by about one dollar due to postage rate increased. Dan Meyer stated that our website and Facebook presence will be updated with the sale of the new calendar.

John Goodman gave the Trip report. Our trip to Duluth to ride the Two Harbors run was successful. We rode the 'Silver Club' dome car which was a former California Dome lounge car. The configuration of the dome seating with tables was difficult for riders to get in and out of especially for older persons. It was a great trip in perfect weather. Members carpooled it up to Duluth. John stated that next year we will probably go to Trego WI again provided that the Mark Twain Zephyr is running. Richard Tubbesing gave the Newsletter Report. Richard stated there is nothing of note and the newsletter will be produced monthly on about the first of the month till next May. The cheer committee was given by John Goodman. John stated that Dave Herbert visited Dave Norman at his nursing home and will not be allowed back to his home. Glen Holmberg stated that Twin City Model Railroad club (Dave is a charter member) will be moving Dave's model railroad and that his house will be sold. Glen Holmberg gave a report on Bob Clarkson. Bob Clarkson is recovering from a stay at a hospital and has returned home and hopes to attend the next meeting. Frank Wilke stated he will be having eye surgery. Dan gave Web report. Dan stated he has updated the web site with a few items.

Dawn Holmberg gave the National Representative report. Dawn has just flown in from the NRHS convention in Florida. Dawn stated that the NRHS advisory committee has been looking to clean up the accounting books about past money being allocated properly. The NRHS is looking to set up a Site Exploration Committee to explore convention sites, and a committee set up to decide where the conferences will be. The BOD is looking at Harrisburg PA and either Canada or Rock Island IL for the next two convention sites. The next conference may be in the Champaign-Urbana area in Illinois next spring. Another committee will be the Chapter Engagement Committee to send out a survey of chapter opinions. The NRHS is looking to digitize their film library but do not have the staff to do this, so are considering sending out films to a vendor to digitize the films. Patty Webb and Mike Yuhas have set up a report for chapters showing chapter membership. Dawn stated she signed up for this report for our chapter. Membership awards have been given out. The NRHS wants to publish an extra issue of the Bulletin. The Train's Magazine photo contest will be published in the November newsletter. Dan Meyer stated that we have changes coming to our chapter by-laws. In essence, the Board of Directors will have the Vice President removed, so there will be President, Treasurer, Secretary and National Representative. Also, lengthening the election cycle to three years. For Details, Dan mentioned these changes are posted on the chapter website which is easy to find. This change has been duly publicized. The attendees then voted on this By-law change and approval was unanimous. John Goodman brought up the need for a Nominating Committee this year for BOD Offices starting in January 2024. Dan stated he is a member.

Dan Meyer stated we need three people on the nominating committee. The Nominating Committee is Dan Meyer, John Goodman and Ed Johnson. John Goodman stated nominations are due by the October meeting for BOD members starting Jan 1 2024. Election of BOD members will be at the November meeting. Old Business. Dawn Holmberg stated that meetings this year will be on the 2nd Saturday of the month for October and November. Dan Meyer stated we will keep it at the 2nd Saturday of the month into next year (2024). The Program report was given by Richard Tubbesing. Bob Ball will present photos from his collection this evening. October 2023 is open. (Hopefully Greg Smith) and November will be a video by Jack Barbier. New Business: No New business President Dan Meyer then motioned for adjournment of the meeting at 6:42 pm. Motion was carried. **Announcements:** Bob Ball noted that Scott Heidrick has passed away. Sale of his model railroad models will be at the Fair Grounds flea market. Ed Johnson gave a report about the 2nd train to Chicago. There is no set date for Amtrak 2nd train to Chicago. It has been pushed back at least a year. The problem is equipment availability according to Amtrak. Bill Dredge stated he has moved and has a new address. John Goodman stated that the next year NRHS convention will be in Harrisburg PA with steam featured on the East Broad Top RR, and RDC's on the Reading and Blue Mountain RR. Bob Ball gave a link to members of his photo library which you can view at your Leisure. After unsuccessfully trying to get Bob's Steam DVD to play properly, we had a great show of Bob's great photography! Respectfully submitted by Richard Tubbesing, Secretary.

Metro Transit to Add Northstar Service on Weekdays and for Vikings Games

Additional trips will begin Oct. 2 on the line that runs from Big Lake to downtown Minneapolis.



Commuters boarded the Northstar commuter train at Target Field station in Minneapolis. J LEILA NAVIDI • lei-la.navidi@startribune.com BACKGROUND INFORMATION

By [Tim Harlow](#) Star Tribune On Tuesday, September 12, 2023,

The Northstar commuter rail will run more often starting next month, when Metro Transit plans to add two additional weekday trips in each direction and bring back special trains for Vikings games.

When expanded service begins Oct. 2, Northstar trains will make three trips each weekday morning from Big Lake to downtown Minneapolis. In the afternoon, three trips will depart Target Field Station and run to Big Lake. Currently there are just two trains in each direction on weekdays.

In an additional offering, one reverse commute trip will be added to the schedule each weekday. A northbound train will depart downtown Minneapolis at 6:40 a.m. A southbound train will depart Big Lake at 4:45 p.m.

Metro Transit will bring back trains for Vikings games as well, starting with the Oct. 8 home game against the Kansas City Chiefs.

"Ridership is increasing on all modes, including Northstar, and we are eager to continue this trend by expanding service as resources allow," General Manager Lesley Kandaras said

"We are particularly excited to expand our Northstar service and to showcase the convenience and comfort commuter rail provides." Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Metro Transit ran four weekday trains in each direction on weekdays and two on weekends, and operated special trains for Vikings and Twins games.

With the onset of the pandemic, ridership dropped dramatically. Metro Transit cut weekday trips to two each way and eliminated weekend trips and trains for Vikings and Twins games.

From 2011 through 2019, Northstar carried between 2,200 and 3,300 weekday riders during the morning and evening peak commute hours of service. Ridership fell to just over 60 weekday riders in April 2020, according to the Metropolitan Council, which provides the service.

More than 50,000 Northstar rides have been taken through the end of July, up 20% compared to the same period in 2022, according to Metro Transit spokesman Drew Kerr. In July, average weekday ridership on Northstar was 330.

Between 2011 and 2019, average weekday ridership was between 2,200 and 3,300, transit agency figures show.

Current and prospective riders have told Metro Transit they'd be more likely to ride or would ride more often if additional trips were provided, Kerr said.

The agency attempted to restore service as the pandemic eased, but could not reach an agreement with Anoka County for its share of operating expenses for the line, which includes four stops in the north metro county.

Anoka County officials contended that with fewer trains running they should not have to pay as much as Metro Transit was billing. For the past two years, Anoka County and Metro Transit remained at odds over funding. Metro Transit even sent a letter to the county stating that without full payment, the agency would not be able to increase service to four weekday trips in each direction each day or bring back special event trains.

That all changes Oct. 1, when a new .75% metro-wide transportation sales tax the state Legislature approved this spring kicks in, according to Kerr. Some of that money will be used to fund the additional Northstar trips.

The metro area sales tax allows Metro Transit to budget with greater certainty than in the past, Kerr said.

Minnesota Steam Locomotive Might Run This Fall

By [Steve Glischinski](#) | September 20, 2023 DM&IR 2-8-0 332 will be test fired this month



Minnesota steam locomotive: DM&IR No. 332 on a photo freight at Palmers, Minn., in September 2019. Steve Glischinski

DULUTH, Minn. — The continuing saga of the on-again off-again operation of [Lake Superior Railroad Museum's Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range 2-8-0 No. 332](#) appears to be "on" again. Throughout this summer the locomotive has been under repair, with stay-bolts being replaced and another hydrostatic test made under Federal Railroad Administration supervision. Problems with the 2-8-0s leaf springs and tender truck bolsters have also been corrected. No. 332, on display at the museum since 1974, was returned to service in 2017 and operated several times until 2019. Plans to run it in 2020 were abandoned due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspections to return the locomotive to service in 2021 led to the discovery of problem welds that were repaired, but the engine did not run that year. In 2022 the engine was fired up and set to run again in September, when problems with the leaf springs and tender truck bolsters were discovered, preventing its return to service. While correcting those problems, the museum took the opportunity to do some additional boiler work using Fraser Shipyards of Superior, Wis.

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Founded 130 years ago, Fraser has worked on Great Lakes ship boilers for decades and has occasionally done work on steam locomotives and other high-pressure boilers.

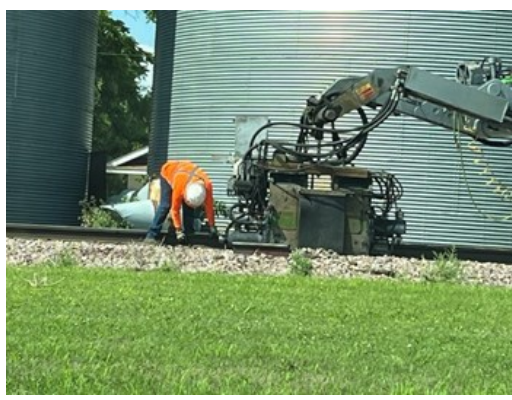
Museum Executive Director Ken Buehler told *Trains* News Wire that a test fire-up under FRA supervision will occur before the end of September. If the locomotive passes the test, several test runs will be made. Buehler said the museum hopes to have No. 332 pull a few trips to Two Harbors on the museum's North Shore Scenic Railroad before the season ends in October. There won't be any special announcement or extra ticket charges when the engine runs, Buehler said: "People will just get a surprise that a steam engine will pull their train."

American Locomotive Co.'s Pittsburgh Works built the engine in 1906 for the Duluth, Missabe & Northern as No. 332. It was operated by DM&N successor Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Railway as No. 332 until 1955, when it was sold to short line Duluth & Northeastern of Cloquet, Minn., and renumbered 28. The locomotive remained in service on D&NE until 1964. It was donated to the museum in 1974. In 2019 it was restored to its DM&IR appearance and renumbered back to DM&IR No. 332.



Twin City & Western Upgrades Track with Welded Rail in Glencoe MN

-Photos by Roger Libra August 2023 -Welded rail now installed from Minnetonka to Buffalo Lake.



Metro News - Stone Arch Bridge To Be Repaired

Tuesday, September 12, 2023, 11:35 AM, Frederick Krenske :

MINNEAPOLIS — While Minneapolis' 3rd Avenue bridge — a major artery into downtown — is set to reopen next month, the nearby Stone Arch Bridge is set to close for repairs starting next spring.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation said the bridge's mortar needs to be repointed and its stone needs to be repaired or replaced, along with other fixes. Construction is set to start in spring 2024 and is expected to last two years. Half the bridge will be under construction next summer, and the other half the summer after that.

"It's a landmark," said Dalton Doering, a Minneapolis photographer. "It's what people from out of town come to see a lot of times."

MnDOT says the mortar and rocks beneath the roadway are getting repaired and replaced. Half the bridge will be under construction next summer. The other half will be done the summer after that. It will still be possible to walk or ride out to the midway point of the bridge.

There's also some good news related to Minneapolis bridges — the 3rd Avenue Bridge is opening again next month after about a year of delays. "It's wider," said Amber Blanchard, MnDOT's major projects manager. "It accommodates more room for bikes and pedestrians on the entire structure, plus it got a makeover, if you will, for the construction that was taking place."

Doering's glad to have it back. "You won't have to go around either side of the city the way you kind of had to do," he said.

The 3rd Avenue Bridge will be the detour route for Stone Arch, which is still going to be open during the winter months. MnDOT says the Stone Arch repairs will cost \$26 million.

There will be a celebration on Oct. 28 for the re-opening of the 3rd Avenue Bridge.

The last time the Stone Arch Bridge went under repair was back in the middle of the 1990s.

Wisconsin Great Northern Places 'Mark Twain Zephyr' Back on its Trucks

By Steve Smedley | September 12, 2023 Provided by Rick Krenske -Metro News

Supply chain issues delayed restoration of running gear.



Wisconsin Great Northern Railroad's Mark Twain Zephyr power unit Injun Joe is placed on its new power truck as crane operators take direction from operations manager Nick Turinetti, at the railroad's facilities Trego, Wis., on Monday, Sept. 11, 2023. Monday was a monumental day in the restoration of the train built for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy in 1935. Steve Smedley



Wisconsin Great Northern Railroad's Mark Twain Zephyr power unit No. 9903, Injun Joe, sits on its new power truck (beneath the operating compartment) as a full rainbow fills the sky at Trego, Wis., on Monday, Sept. 11, 2023. When the Injun Joe arrived by truck three years ago, a double rainbow appeared over the classic shovel-nose streamliner. Steve Smedley

TREGO, Wis. — A rainbow formed in the sky as work neared completion on putting the five-car set of the shovel-nose streamliner *Mark Twain Zephyr* back on its rebuilt truck sets at the [Wisconsin Great Northern Railroad](#) yards Monday.

When the power car *Injun Joe*, No. 9903, was trucked here 3 years ago, after the WGN saved the train from certain scrapping, a double rainbow appeared over the train after a 2-day drive from Gateway Rail Services in Madison, Illinois.

The *Mark Twain Zephyr*, built in 1935, is one of nine stainless steel passenger trains for the Chicago Burlington & Quincy. The train ran between Burlington, Iowa, and St. Louis until 1958. Since 1959 the train has passed through several owners with dreams to restore it to operation, until Wisconsin Great Northern completed its purchase on June 29, 2020 [see, "[Mark Twain Zephyr to run again,](#)" [News Wire, July 27, 2020](#)].

"This is an exciting day for rail preservation as the long-awaited restoration of the *Mark Twain Zephyr* comes one mega step closer to operation," says Greg Vreeland, WGN general manager.

Supply chain issues in the last 18 months, explained Vreeland, slowed the truck rebuilding process for the five-car train. The delay is specially related to the custom-fabricated leaf springs that were being manufactured in Minnesota.

While the truck work was slowed, the train's entire interior is 90% complete, with each car having its own new head-end power connections, air conditioning and heating units, and new carpeting and seating installed. "We've even cooked pizza for the staff in the rebuilt kitchen area of the *Huckleberry Finn*," says Vreeland.

Early Monday morning, the former Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Railroad 250-ton wreck crane No. X-7, built by Industrial Brownhoist in 1941 and dubbed "Missabe Little Monster," was on one end of the observation car *Tom Sawyer*, as the WGN's former Canadian Pacific 100-ton Kershaw crane was placed on the opposite end the car during the first of five lifts done to place the historic train back on its trucks.

"I was volunteering with Greg at the Lake Superior Railroad Museum in Duluth, when he had dreams of owning his own short line railroad," says noted Missabe Road photographer and book author Dave Schauer. "He should be very proud to see his dreams come to fruition 42 years later. And, his son Alexander, 13, is following in his footsteps."

The *Mark Twain Zephyr* has been off its trucks and in storage for at least three decades.

Wisconsin Great Northern stripped, cleaned, repaired, and repainted each truck set in an off-site shop near Earl, Wis. The trucks share a unique articulated feature with car ends sharing a single truck set.

Greg Turinetti, the father of WGN operations manager Nick Turinetti, was visibly proud as he watched his son direct the re trucking process on Monday. "This makes me feel proud that a historic piece of equipment is being restored to active use."

The new power truck for the shovel-nose streamliner came from one of four Wisconsin Great Northern Railroad EMD SW-600 locomotives. Some structural work was done on the frame of the *Injun Joe* to accommodate the larger truck.

The final stage of the restoration is moving an EMD 6-cylinder 567 prime mover into the engine room along with a generator and air compressor. The cab will also receive a control stand from former American Can SW-600 No. 1280, which was painted in a Chicago & North Western Railway scheme for the Chicago & North Western Historical Society mini meet held in Trego during 2019.

Government Shutdown Prospects, Impacts on USDOT, Modes Commentary

Railway Age Written by [John Cline](#), CRC Director of Government Affairs, Cline Strategic Consulting September 26, 2023
[Regulatory](#)

It does look like I may eat my words from the 2023 [Commuter Rail Coalition](#) (CRC) Summit—held Sept. 18-20 in Chicago—where I predicted we would not see a government shutdown. At least a partial government shutdown this weekend (Sept. 30-Oct. 1) now appears likely, but I still hold out hope.

The odds are not in my favor though.

The challenge facing Republican leadership in the House is that various blocks of conservative members have opposed all their efforts to gather an acceptable bill with all the provisions that make everyone happy.

Currently, the House needs 217 votes to pass a bill. There are currently 221 Republicans and 212 Democrats—with two vacant seats previously held by one Democrat and one Republican. The problem for Republicans last week (week of Sept. 17) was they were down three votes. The Democrats have been down two votes. These members are absent for various reasons—many having to do with health and family matters. Of these absent members, two Republicans and one Democrat have indicated they will be back this week (week of Sept. 24).

Early last week, Republican leadership in the House tried to move the Defense appropriations bill, which typically is fairly easy to pass. They figured if they could get that ball rolling, it might allow for passage of the proposed continuing resolution (CR). However, the vote on the rule allowing the defense bill to proceed to the floor failed by two votes when five Republicans voted against the rule. Later in the week, they tried again with the same result, except this time some of the five Republican no votes were different people.

While the CR never officially moved to a vote, the draft version that was being readied for passage would have cut all program accounts except defense, disaster relief, and veterans by 8%. While the draft CR did not include money for Ukraine or recent disasters, it did include HR 2, the border security and immigration reform bill that passed the House along strict party lines. Of course, this CR was a complete non-starter with Democrats and it proved insufficient for a handful of Republicans.

The House will return today, Sept. 26, following a brief break for Yom Kippur. A pathway for Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) has yet to emerge. It appears that Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) will try to lend his hand to the effort, despite the constitutional restriction that revenue measures originate in the House. (There are revenue raising provisions in the Federal Aviation Administration [FAA] Authorization which he would presumably save in order to qualify as a revenue-raising bill. Surely, there would be legal challenges if he pursues this path.)

On Sept. 21, Schumer moved that the Senate take up the House-passed FAA Reauthorization bill (HR 3935) with the intent of stripping out most of the House provisions of the bill and inserting a CR of three months. He would add an extension for the expiring FAA authorization (Sept. 30) and depending on the climate with Republicans in the Senate, perhaps some other provisions (i.e., extension of the Farm Bill, Ukraine assistance).

Even if Schumer were successful in passing his CR, Speaker McCarthy would surely not bring it to the House floor as he would suffer the wrath of his membership and almost certainly be removed from the Speakership. Stay tuned as this saga plays out. If there is a shutdown, the [Federal Transit Administration](#) (FTA) will still be operable.

FTA now draws its administrative funding for compensation of its 700 employees from the Trust Fund, so it is immune for now to a cutoff in annual funding. The [Federal Railroad Administration](#)'s (FRA) 1,000-plus employees are not funded in whole from the trust fund so the [U.S. Department of Transportation](#) (DOT) shutdown implementation plan shows 350 employees being furloughed.

FRA identified 472 employees who are critical employees and another 169 who have their compensation from another source not affected by the shutdown. So, if you do have any issues that need to be addressed that are not safety related, you may see some delays. If you have interactions with other DOT modes, you may also see some delays, again depending on the source of their compensation funding.

All will be revealed as this week progresses.

Editor's Note: The [Surface Transportation Board](#) also faces a shutdown. However, Senate-confirmed agency administrators and Senate-confirmed STB members cannot be furloughed during a government shutdown, as their jobs and compensation are provided by statute. And while furloughed employees technically are furloughed without pay, it is customary, upon the end of the shutdown, that Congress votes to provide all furloughed federal employees with back pay. The STB and FRA will retain a skeleton staff to deal with emergencies such as car supply issues, emergency service orders and challenged embargoes.



LET'S CELEBRATE!!

All Aboard Minnesota celebrates its 10th anniversary as a 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization this year! This is only due to your support, participation, and generosity!

Join us for a fun and festive program and social time on Saturday, November 18, which will include speakers and updates you won't want to miss!

Event Details:

Location: Edina Public Library - Meeting Room - right off main entrance. Address: 5280 Grandview Sq. Edina, MN 55436 (Library is located in the western corner of Hwy 100 and 50th street - take the 50th street exit which turns into Vernon, then left on Eden Ave to Grandview Sq.) Edina Library Phone: 612-543-6325. The Edina Library is served by the #46 bus connecting with the Blue Line. Click on this link for more transit information: [Bus and Transit Information](#)

Time: Doors open at 1:00 pm - A light lunch and beverages will be served. Adjourn 2:45 pm

Program: (begins around 1:30pm - approximately 45 minutes)

Have you ever wondered how and why All Aboard Minnesota started? Hear it directly from our two founding members, Jack Barbier and Jerry Ratliff. All Aboard Minnesota's main accomplishments during the past 10 years, what the future holds, and most importantly, how you made a difference! Rep. Erin Koegel - Chair of the Transportation Conference Committee - will talk about the historic legislation during the 2023 session which enables new passenger trains to roll in Minnesota, and what the future could bring Frank Loetterle from the Federal Railroad Administration will give an update on their long distance rail Amtrak study, and what it could mean for Minnesota Greg Mathis from MnDOT will update us on Minnesota's progress for passenger rail including updates on the 2nd Train between the Twin Cities and Chicago

Brief cake cutting ceremony!

There will be time after the program for questions and discussion

Please RSVP - by Monday, Nov 13th

Our Website: [All Aboard 10th Anniversary Celebration RSVP](#)

Or email: www.allaboardminnesota@gmail.com

Cost is free to our members and friends.

We look forward to seeing you there! It is with our heartfelt thanks that we have reached this milestone, and its all because of you! www.allaboardminnesota.com

Warbonnet Fundraiser *On Wednesday, September 27, 2023, 9:15 AM, RRHMA/Friends of the 261*

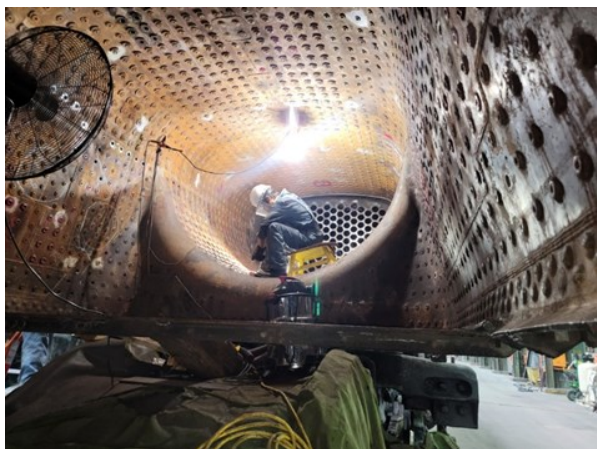


A recent addition to the RRHMA – Silvis fleet is BNSF Railway #537. Originally built as Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway #537 in 1990, painted in Santa Fe's famous Warbonnet passenger diesel paint scheme, #537 is the first of the type to be preserved. RRHMA – Silvis is looking to bring #537 back into its former warbonnet silver and red colors.

Donate to repaint #537!

RRHMA Restores Diesels to Service

By Steve Glischinski and Justin Young | September 7, 2023 Metro News - RRHMA Restores Diesels To Service Southern Pacific business car also repainted



Staybolts are inspected on UP No. 3985. Alex Beams/RRHMA.



Business Car Stanford is rolled out of the Silvis Shop. RRHMA

SILVIS, Ill. – Railroading Heritage of Midwest America (RRHMA) has restored two diesels to service and is continuing work on its two Union Pacific steam locomotives, 4-6-6-4 “Challenger” No. 3985 and 2-10-2 No. 5511 at its former Rock Island shop complex in Silvis.

On Aug. 26 crews fired up Union Pacific “Centennial” No. 6936 for the first time in several years. It now becomes the only operating example of the world’s largest diesel locomotive.



UP Centennial No. 6936 at Silvis. RRHMA

It is one of a class of 47 Centennials built for UP between 1969 and 1971, the largest diesel locomotives ever built in terms of size. They were named Centennials since their debut coincided with the Golden Spike Centennial in 1969. A total of 13 Centennials were preserved by UP. While there are still repairs to be done on No. 6936, it was able to move around Silvis under its own power. The UP “wings” on the nose of the unit have been removed, since they were not part of the Centennial’s paint scheme during their years of regular service.

Also returning to service is B40-8W No. 537, recently donated to RRHMA by BNSF Railway. The only preserved example of a B40-8W, volunteers made repairs to return the unit to operation. RRHMA’s next goal is to repaint No. 537 back into its Santa Fe red and silver “Warbonnet” colors, which is estimated to cost \$65,000.

No. 537 was constructed by General Electric for Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe in October 1990 as part of its “Super Fleet” of new EMD and GE diesels painted in Santa Fe’s famous Warbonnet passenger diesel paint scheme revived by Mike Haverty, the railroad’s then-president. AT&SF was the only railroad to order the B40-8W. No. 537 is the first of the type to be preserved, although the model is still operated by four short lines in addition to BNSF.

RRHMA has completed repainting former Southern Pacific business car *Stanford* into two-tone Southern Pacific gray. The car, built in 1928, spent the majority of this year in the Silvis paint booth as crews applied the SP colors. Still to come are lettering and other details. The car was built by Pullman in January 1928 for SP as No. 140, *Sunset*. The car has four bedrooms finished in walnut and mahogany, a kitchen, crew quarters and observation room. It was renamed *Stanford* in November 1955 as SP acquired another business car with the *Sunset* name. Delivered in Pullman green, *Stanford* also wore SP two-tone gray, simulated stainless steel, and after UP acquired Southern Pacific in 1996, Union Pacific Armour Yellow.

Work continues on Union Pacific No. 5511, the sole surviving UP 2-10-2. The pistons and rings have been removed for cleaning and inspection. Needle scaling work is being done on the bottom of the front tube sheet and bottom of the smokebox to remove deposits left over when tires were burned in the locomotive during the filming of Union Pacific’s movie “Last of the Giants” in the late 1950s. Earlier this summer the firebox fire brick was removed, and the safety valves and dynamo (used to generate electricity for headlights and lighting on the locomotive) were removed for rebuild work. No. 5511 was built by Baldwin in 1923. Alex Beams of RRHMA reports that volunteer crews have been diligently removing parts from No. 3985.

The front tube sheet has been removed, as have flawed areas of the firebox. Boiler plate has been ordered for making firebox patches. Bad stay bolts continue to be identified and removed. The front air tank, air coolers, and other air piping on the front end have been taken off, and the front engine exhaust pipe to the smoke box has been removed. American Locomotive Co. built No. 3985 in 1943. It was part of UP’s steam program until 2010.

RRHMA is still seeking funds to restore the steam and diesel locomotives and repaint No. 537. Donations may be made at rrhma.com



— AMTRAK NEWS —

Amtrak Tentatively Sets Sept. 11 Date to Resume 'Adirondack' Service to Montreal

Trains Newswire [By](#) | September 2, 2023

-Cross-border service halted in June over track conditions in Canada



The northbound Adirondack arrives at Port Kent, N.Y. on Sept. 22, 2016. The train is tentatively scheduled to resume operation on its full route as of Sept. 11. Bob Johnston

PLATTSBURGH, N.Y. — Amtrak has resumed selling tickets for the much-interrupted *Adirondack* to Montreal and plans to resume service on Sept. 11, [WAER radio reports](#), but the station quotes an Amtrak spokesman as saying the company still needs to “work out several operational details to make that date happen.” Operations north of Albany were halted June 24, only about seven weeks after the train began operating to Montreal after a three-year hiatus, because of heat-related speed restrictions imposed by Canadian National on the Canadian portion of the route [see [“Amtrak abruptly suspends ‘Adirondack’”](#) Trains News Wire, June 26, 2023]. In subsequent statements, the host railroad and Amtrak were at odds on the state of Amtrak payments to maintain the track north of the Canadian border and the imposition of the heat restrictions [see [“CN, Amtrak disagree”](#) News Wire, June 29, 2023]. The train was subsequently extended to Saratoga Springs, N.Y., in July.

Communities along the train’s route have decried the impact on residents and tourism from the train’s absence, so it was no surprise that Garry Douglas, president of the North Country Chamber of Commerce, said his organization welcomes “indications that Amtrak will resume the Adirondack service.” But given the on-again, off-again nature of that service, he also called on Amtrak and Canadian National “to define the track improvements needed and how and when they will be undertaken so we can hopefully avoid future summer stoppages.”

Similarly, state Assemblyman D. Billy Jones [told the Plattsburgh Press-Republican](#), “CN and Amtrak need to release their long-term plans to make the necessary fixes to the track so that this doesn’t happen again next year.”

Service on the New York-Montreal route was suspended in April 2020 during COVID-19-related cutbacks, but remained suspended long after other routes had returned. Amtrak cited “challenges with operations, border facilities, security and staffing” for the inability to restore cross-border operations, and “servicing, staffing, and train operations challenges” for not running the U.S. portion of the route as far as Plattsburgh [see [“Amtrak to resume Adirondack service”](#) News Wire, March 11, 2023]. Members of New York’s congressional delegation eventually became involved in the effort to restore service.

Amtrak Projects Receive Almost \$200 Million in CRISI Grants

Trains Newswire [By](#) | September 26, 2023 -NEC fencing, apprenticeship program join Gulf Coast service in receiving funding



A southbound Amtrak train races through Elizabethtown, N.J. Fencing along the Northeast Corridor was one of the Amtrak projects to receive CRISI grant funding on Monday. David Lassen

WASHINGTON — Amtrak received almost \$200 million in the Federal Railroad Administration’s Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grants announced Monday, a list of awards highlighted by the more than \$178 million for the restoration of Gulf Coast passenger service [see [“Federal Railroad Administration awards more than \\$1.4 billion,”](#) Trains News Wire, Sept. 24, 2023].

Other major awards received by Amtrak include up to \$8.8 million for fencing along the Northeast Corridor; up to \$8.8 million for a workforce development apprenticeship training program; and up to \$1.826 million for a grade crossing improvement program in Mississippi and Louisiana, in partnership with Canadian National Railway and the two states to address crossings along the *City of New Orleans* route. Amtrak will provide a 20% non-federal match to all three projects.

“The CRISI grants announced today will help launch new and expanded service, advance critical safety and reliability improvements, and provide opportunities for the workforce, marking another big milestone as we continue to advance a new era of passenger rail,” Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner said in [a press release](#).

Amtrak said it had also supported grants by other entities which had received funding, including the Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s Springfield-Worcester line improvement project; the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority’s Franconia-Springfield bypass project; MARC’s Penn-Camden line connector; Birmingham Department of Transportation’s REDESIGN Alabama project; and the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority’s Sacramento-Roseville third-track project

Transit Briefs: Amtrak Railway Age Written by [Marybeth Luczak](#), Executive Editor September 22, 2023 [Passenger](#)

Amtrak on Sept. 21 celebrated the \$1.4 million renovation of its Missouri River Runner-served station in Jefferson City. (Amtrak Photograph)

Amtrak completes \$1.4 million station-accessibility upgrade project in Jefferson City, Mo. Also, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) schedules fall service shutdowns for maintenance work; New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) reports post-pandemic subway ridership records and releases a Request for Information for subway platform cooling technologies; and Petaluma, Calif., receives \$30.2 million for affordable housing at the future Petaluma North SMART (Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit) Station.

[Amtrak](#)

Amtrak on Sept. 21 celebrated the \$1.4 million renovation of its *Missouri River Runner*-served station in Jefferson City. The service, operated under contract with the [Missouri Department of Transportation](#) (MoDOT), links St. Louis and Kansas City, with stops in Jefferson City twice daily, east-bound and westbound.

Amtrak, working with the city, advanced a series of accessibility improvements in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

Replacement of the former asphalt platform with a new 325-foot-long concrete platform, which is eight inches above top-of-rail. According to “America’s Railroad,” it provides a level surface for wheeled mobility-device users and includes a tactile detectable warning system along the full length for passengers with vision disabilities.

Construction of a new concrete ramp and landing near Jefferson Street, which provides an accessible path of travel to the new platform, with a second ramp located at the west end of the platform.

Installation—in consultation with the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office—of LED pole-mounted light fixtures on the platform and pathways. According to Amtrak, the fixtures not only add light and boost safety, but also are designed to complement the historic fabric of the site and style of the surrounding streetlights.

New signage and guardrails were also part of the project.

A group of volunteers staffs the station, using a temporary facility until the state-owned historic building normally used can be reopened, Amtrak reported.

“Making our stations accessible to all customers is a priority and we’re actively performing construction, renovation, repair and upgrade projects at stations across our national network,” Amtrak Vice President David Handera said. “We want Jefferson City and all of our stations to be a welcoming and comfortable environment to all of our customers.”

“We are well aware that as the Capital City, it is important that citizens be able to access state government and other facilities in our beautiful city; Amtrak is a critical piece of our transportation infrastructure,” said Jefferson City Mayor Ron Fitzwater, who spoke at the ribbon-cutting event. “We are excited for the enhancement to facilities here in Jefferson City.”

“At MoDOT, we are proud to have a partnership with Amtrak and communities across the state,” MoDOT Director Patrick McKenna said. “This route supports thousands of jobs and generates hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity for this state.”

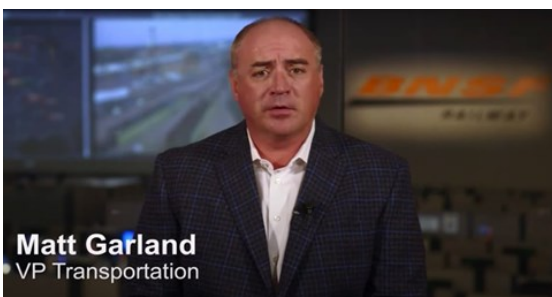
Amtrak reported that it has invested \$793 million since 2011 in accessibility upgrades and improvement projects at 118 stations across the national network. The improvements include repairs and upgrades to platforms, ramps and sidewalks, and renovations to entranceways and restrooms, with 20 stations brought into ADA compliance last year. Another 20 stations are targeted for completion this fiscal year at a forecasted investment of \$125 million.

Amtrak said its program is advancing 143 station designs and 39 station construction projects for accessibility and working toward 100% completion by 2029.

In August, [the railroad held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the completion of a station-accessibility upgrade project in Connersville, Ind.](#)

**—— BNSF News ——****Q&A with BNSF VP Transportation Matthew Garland**

Railway Age Written by [Rick Paterson](#), Managing Director, Loop Capital Markets September 18, 2023 [Class I](#)



Matt Garland
VP Transportation

One by one, the U.S. railroads are getting their operating houses in order following the difficulties of 2022, and as that evolves we’re engaging with senior operations leaders to understand how they’ve engineered the turnaround, lessons learned, and how the future is going to be different from the past. We interviewed CSX on June 16, and now as [BNSF](#) has started putting up some good operating numbers, we’re pleased to share some Q&A with BNSF Vice President Transportation Matthew Garland, who has responsibility for all train operations.

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**BNSF photo**

Question 1: The BNSF Recovery Story

As an outside observer I've done my best to put words against the weekly BNSF operating data that we see from the STB, but we'd of course prefer to hear from you exactly how the BNSF operating team engineered the network's recovery from the U.S. industry-wide service crisis last year. Your network fluidity seemed to bottom in April of 2022 while crew shortages peaked in July. Using that as a starting point, walk us through the last 12-months. What worked, didn't work, successes and setbacks, how the network coped with winter, and what shape is the network in today?

Matt Garland: To answer this question, you really must go back to the beginning of 2022 for context. We had an extremely cold winter in the north and ongoing congestion at ports and inland terminals due to chassis shortages coupled with a shortage of warehouse workers. As our velocity deteriorated, rail cars on our network began to climb. We certainly understand why customers wanted to add more equipment, but it exacerbated the congestion. We were moving less volume with more resources. The growing congestion further constrained the resources we had available.

We knew we had to move quickly to regain service momentum, so we implemented a plan with aggressive measures to restore network velocity and bring our service product back up to our customers' expectations. The plan had three primary drivers of network fluidity: locomotive availability, crew availability, and car inventory. The first two are really ensuring you have the right resources in place at the right time to move the freight that needs to move. We increased the active locomotive fleet starting with pulling more than 250 locomotives out of storage over the winter and added additional units throughout the spring. We increased the output from our locomotive shops by using overtime to repair locomotives faster. Both actions increased locomotive availability by turning the assets faster and resulting in improved fluidity as we moved toward late spring and early summer.

Crew availability was harder to tackle. As has been well-documented across all railroads, the recall success rate for furloughed workers did not match historic percentages when we called people back following the pandemic-driven volume drop in 2020. We mounted a hiring campaign that was considerably larger than our traditional hiring plan, which is matched to the volume we expect to move each year. But we achieved it and hired around 3,000 new employees in 2022, including about 1,800 additional TYE employees. Due to the competitive labor market all companies faced in 2022, we had to modify our hiring program in several ways to bring people on faster. In addition to incentives in hard to hire locations, we streamlined and reworked the application process to access a broader applicant pool. We also started training classes as soon as we could, rather than waiting for a larger class size to begin training. Of course, taking on a hiring plan of this magnitude during collective bargaining added an additional challenge. Fast forward to today, and I'm happy to report we have reached paid sick leave agreements with 11 of our 12 unions along with other scheduling changes that help improve the work/life balance of our employees' schedules. We are more than sufficiently staffed to handle the forecasted volumes for the balance of the year.

The final piece of the service restoration plan to reduce cars online required frequent communication and collaboration with our customers. Managing active car inventory on the network is the single most impactful lever we possess to improve network fluidity and restore service consistency at critical terminals that our customers rely on. We know this is challenging for our customers, but it really was the quickest path to network recovery. A year later, and the railroad is in great shape with service at, or in some cases exceeding 2019 levels. Velocity continues to trend in the right direction, and we have solid momentum going into fall harvest and peak domestic and parcel seasons. BNSF's hump yards have set all-time bests for productivity almost every month of 2023. Our people are aligned and pulling in the same direction. Through August, we have the lowest number of injuries in our company's history and lead the industry in both injury frequency ratio and reportable equipment incidents. We credit our progress partially to our Transportation Safety Agreement that has been in place just over a year. This first-of-its-kind in the industry agreement with a portion of our transportation workforce has driven step-level improvement in our safety outcomes.

Our safety and service performance are also impacted by our capital program. As you know, our capital investment is \$3.96 billion in 2023 for both maintenance and expansion. The largest component is for maintenance, and we'll spend \$2.85 billion this year alone keeping our railroad in the best condition it's ever been. We also continue to increase capacity, and our capabilities, along the Southern Transcon with our multi-year double-tracking projects in Eastern Kansas and Southern California. Along our northern route, we recently completed the Sandpoint Bridge project, so we now have bi-directional traffic across Lake Pend Oreille which has been a chokepoint on our route to the PNW. The bridge, coupled with the double track work in Eastern Washington opens up significant capacity across the north. Additionally, we are excited to bring Montana Rail Link back into the BNSF network on January 1, 2024. This will provide even more capacity and drive additional efficiencies across our northern corridor.

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Question 2: Crew Management



BNSF photo

Railroads seem to get into trouble with crew capacity deficits—triggering meltdowns—at two points in the business cycle. The first and one we'll focus on today is early in economic recoveries when the companies are coming out of a recession and recalling crews that were furloughed going into the recession. If the volume rebound is stronger/earlier than expected or the crew recall rate lower than expected, it's game over. This, very broadly, explains the 2022 service crisis. In December last year, NS introduced a more conservative crew management strategy where furloughs in future will be substantially less, and surplus crews sent to training rooms to learn to be engineers until being redeployed back into the field. We thought this was an elegant solution that we hoped would promulgate through the industry. CN and CSX have also stated they've adopted a more restrained posture on furloughs that's similar to the NS strategy. What, exactly, is BNSF's strategy as it relates to conductor multi-skilling and furloughs?

Matt Garland: As I mentioned, we brought on about 1,800 new transportation employees in 2022 and by year's end, we'll have added 1,200 more as we continue to hire in certain locations. With current volume levels, we are over resourced in some locations. However, we have chosen not to furlough this year to ensure that we are well-positioned to respond if markets begin to change quickly for our customers. For those locations that are over resourced we are pulling forward our Engineer Training Programs and working with our labor organizations to deploy temporary transfers across portions of our Ag network where we anticipate a robust harvest. We will again accelerate our engineer training for conductors through the first half of 2024. This 20-week program is designed to ensure our new engineers will possess the safety and operating practices skills necessary to perform the duties of a locomotive engineer and allows us to absorb any softness in the freight market and can quickly pivot if demand is higher than our current forecast.

Question 3: Enhancing Resiliency

Given the spate of meltdowns within the industry in recent years we've all been painfully reminded that strong Class I rail service is a rare and valuable commodity. It's easy to lose and when it's gone it's a long, hard, road to get it back. It's also proven to be very difficult for any Class I to run consistently well for extended periods of time (multiple consecutive years for example) and external shocks from climate change is only going to make that more difficult. Given your network is now running well, what, specifically, is the operating team doing that is new or different from the past in order to entrench and institutionalize service resiliency so that the 2022 meltdown proves to be BNSF's last meltdown? Put another way, what changes are being made that should give customers confidence that good BNSF service is here to stay?



**A BNSF train passes through a wayside detector array.
BNSF photo**

Matt Garland: 2022 was hopefully a rare event that we don't see again where every stakeholder in the supply chain faced challenges with staffing, wild swings in volume and two severe winters. I don't like to be defensive about winter as we know it comes every year, but severe winters have a severe impact. Trains get shorter. It's difficult to get crews to trains when a state's entire highway network is shut down. You must be nimble and resourceful. For a brief period in North Dakota, we were the only mode of transportation continuously operating. I would say the largest impact that we're facing is the increasing number of severe weather events in the past few years. At a macro level, extreme weather events have been on the rise, especially in the Western U.S. And not just winter weather either. Excessive heat, thunderstorm-caused high wind events and wildfires have all increased. We must be ready for that, adapt and not let it impact the operation. A good example of this recently was during Tropical Storm Hilary in Southern California, where the entire BNSF operations team resourced appropriately and enacted a solid plan to respond that significantly mitigated the impact and allowed for continuity of operations. We did extensive preparation for that event and mobilized equipment and put contractors on retainer ahead of the storm. It wasn't an accident that we came out of it in good shape. We lost our southern Transcon multiple times and had a swift response to prevent major service disruptions. We are constantly evaluating weather threats, implementing plans, and then measuring our time to recover to continuously improve our response. We're spending a lot of time on probabilistic weather forecasting and executing operational plans in advance. Completely different model than reacting to postevent. The downside is if the forecast is wrong it costs a little money, but looking at the probability of when an event will occur gives us more insight into making those decisions accurately to get ahead of events to enhance service recoverability.

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To that end, we have been hardening the railroad in multiple locations to mitigate against disruption. We continue to improve our Winter Action Plan every year, and have deployed hundreds of additional switch heaters, increased the amount of locomotive winterization packages, and improved our pre-winter mechanical inspection processes of our car fleet. We are continuing to deploy fixed anemometers to more accurately measure wind increasing our ability to operate safely during wind events along with partnering with weather vendors to improve our understanding of when a severe weather event will occur. Hardening our network to ensure resiliency isn't new for BNSF. Over the past few years, we have raised over 3,100 miles of track over 12' in areas prone to flooding. For example, we recently raised our line segment in Northern California to prevent our tracks from being overtaken by water as Tulare Lake began to re-fill for the first time in 40 years. We have also raised the track across many portions of North Dakota that are prone to spring flooding. In addition to track lifting, we also invested significantly in slope armoring and stabilization to protect against future flooding events. We have also installed over 600 fuel cells to maintain signal operation during the power outages that often accompany significant weather.

Technology also plays a big role keeping our network fluid, specifically in the inspection arena. Technologies that you're familiar with, like our Automated Track Inspection, or ATI program, using autonomous geometry cars. The geo cars improve the accuracy and reliability of track inspections and expand the footprint of what we're able to inspect. Simply put, we can inspect more miles of track than before with fewer maintenance windows and deploy our maintenance crews more strategically and efficiently to target areas of need identified by the geometry cars. We now have the capacity to inspect more than 450,000 miles every year. In 2021 and 2022, we



BNSF photo

Question 4: Positioning the Intermodal Network for the Rebound

Customers are seeing good service from BNSF but they also see that the railroad's volumes are soft. Year-to-date through Sept. 9, intermodal loads in particular are down 15% year-over-year in 2023. The sum of all other business is down 3%. Customers know that railroads run faster and better when volume pressure is off, and slower and worse when volume pressure comes back on. At some point that 15% intermodal deficit will correct—possibly rapidly—and it's obviously critical that BNSF maintains an acceptable service floor as the pressure comes back on. What is BN's strategy to prepare for and then maintain good intermodal service in the face of a double-digit rebound in volumes?

Matt Garland: It really comes down to executing well on three things:

- Investing in our best-in-class facilities and infrastructure to support improved service reliability and meet the needs of our customers today and tomorrow.
- Creating and deploying industry-leading, transformational technology.
- Building with a future-facing mindset for the capacity our customers will need tomorrow.

These three items are really interdependent as certain actions like investing in our facilities or deploying technology also has a big impact on our service reliability. A good example is our Hobart intermodal facility in Los Angeles. Hobart is already the largest intermodal facility in North America with capacity for over 1 million lifts per year. While it's not feasible to expand the footprint of the facility in the Southern California real estate market, we have to get creative to add additional capacity. In other words, we have to find ways to go up more efficiently with the limitation on expanding out. To that end, we have been exploring container stacking technologies across the network, including one called Pathfinder at Hobart that we developed in cooperation with Mi-Jack, one of our largest crane operators. The Pathfinder essentially prepositions the work autonomously, be it a pick-up for a driver or a delivery to the crane operator to put it in the stack. So, this is about driver productivity as much as it is creating capacity in the stack. By eliminating the dependency on a crane operator for a driver to retrieve a container, it improves the productivity of each driver. We get more capacity out of our existing real estate while improving driver experience and productivity. Finally, there's the third leg of building with a future-facing mindset. I previously mentioned the multi-year double and triple track projects in Kansas and California, specifically, our Emporia and Needles subdivisions. Both projects support growth and recoverability, but also supports service consistency now by helping us to better handle the day-of-week and seasonal swings in volumes. Since 2019, we've added miles and miles of both main line tracks and intermodal crane production track capacity. In addition, we've added more than 6,000 parking spots of capacity at our intermodal facilities. We're continuing this theme across our main tracks and endpoints to further improve transit performance, service consistency and overall capacity to say "yes" to bringing on our customers' freight. We've also expanded our domestic intermodal footprint in the PNW with opening of the Tacoma South earlier this year. The new facility along with working with the Northwest Seaport Alliance to open the Terminal 5 on dock facility has significantly increased capacity and has sizable impact on network fluidity overall. Last but certainly not least, we announced the Barstow International Gateway, or BIG, last fall, which is one of the most exciting intermodal infrastructure projects to be launched by BNSF in a generation. This \$1.5 billion, state-of-the-art, master-planned rail facility in Southern California will be the first of its kind in the U.S. Once built, it will be the largest intermodal facility in North America, sitting on more than 4,500 acres, and will consist of a rail yard, intermodal facility, and warehouses for transloading freight from international to domestic containers. The facility will have multiple customer benefits, such as lowering supply chain costs and reducing carbon emissions.

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It also benefits our intermodal partners by reducing dwell at the Southern California ports and providing a lower cost rail move to an inland transload facility vs. the truck move today to existing facilities. Once containers reach Barstow, they will be processed at the facility using clean, energypowered handling equipment, and then loaded onto trains moving east. This combination of yard, intermodal facility and customer warehousing will allow us to offer new service lanes, more consistent and faster transit off the west coast ports and access to additional, scarce warehouse capacity in Southern California. So, I go back to the beginning. If we execute those three areas well, (and I have every reason to believe we will because we already are), then our intermodal network is not only poised for the rebound but poised to succeed well into the future.



Wikimedia Commons/RoyLuck

Question 5: Manifest Network On-Time Performance

I've enjoyed watching your service metrics improve over the past 12 months, but the one I'm still frustrated with and need to understand better is manifest on-time performance. I realize manifest is a smaller portion of your business, representing about 45% of average daily train starts versus 57% at UP, 53% at CSX, and 60% at NS, but 45% is still highly significant and the most recent on-time performance scores averaged 68% over the past four reported weeks (through 9/8). Technically, this means that three out of every 10 cars are a day or more late, which looks poor. Help us interpret this 68% number. Are there mitigating or contextual factors that make 68% acceptable, or is it genuinely unsatisfactory, and if that's the case what's being done to meaningfully improve it?

Matt Garland: We continuously strive to improve the experience for our customers. As mentioned earlier, we have had an intense focus on improving our merchandise service and our merchandise terminals are operating at peak levels of efficiency. Our first mile/last mile service is performing very well and is consistently now in the 90% range daily. I do think it's important to note that a railroad's merchandise network is very complex and each Class I reports schedule adherence very differently.

In Q2 of this year we launched a three-pronged strategic initiative to improve our Merchandise on-time performance. Merchandise operations are resource intensive, and now that our network has been reset, we have the crew and locomotive resources to provide consistent performance which starts with departing our manifest trains on time. Departing a train on time is a team sport and requires all departments (transportation, mechanical car and locomotive) to work together to achieve the desired result. Building the train and setting it on time provides the mechanical team time to complete a thorough and safe inspection, while making sure the locomotive consist is built ahead of departure and placed on the train and the crew is called—briefed and ready. All of these parts must be expertly choreographed to achieve the desired result of terminal On Time Performance.

The second tier of this strategy is to ensure we are making our scheduled connections to minimize car dwell and improve our inventory turnover rate. We measure this as percent of cars over dwell plan, and in the past 30 days we have seen a meaningful decrease which is not only improving our capacity, but also our customer transit consistency as more cars depart on time on the right train. The final piece is to focus on quality train builds and not allowing for cars to depart out of route. It does no good to depart on time or decrease terminal dwell if a car is not moving on the right train to destination. The teams that are focused on merchandise performance are working within a framework of continuous improvement and if one terminal is underperforming, we have resourced a small team of experts that go on site to that terminal to assist and quickly get service turned around. This strategy is working. We have made incremental progress each day since this initiative was launched, and the entire BNSF team is committed to improving this aspect of our business and providing our customers the level of service they expect. PL



BNSF photo

Question 6: To What Degree is BNSF a Scheduled Railroad?

In terms of operational philosophy, there seems to be a spectrum of views on whether to, at one extreme, schedule as much of the traffic as possible to maximize network predictability, and at the other end of the spectrum hold trains—particularly bulk—to maximize for train length and tonnage and minimize train starts. Where exactly is BNSF on this issue? Has there been any shift in operational philosophy or strategy here in recent years?

Matt Garland: BNSF is where we've always been since we became a company in 1995. We have a bias for growth. Our business model has always been to grow, provide industry-leading service, receive appropriate value for what we do, and invest those returns back into the railroad to be positioned for further growth. We call it the virtuous cycle. Part of being focused on capturing growth is having a strong cost structure—getting everything you can out of your assets and driving efficiency. When you have a strong cost structure and drive value for the service you deliver, you usually have returns that justify reinvestment and the capacity to grow with your current customers while pursuing new growth opportunities. We have always relied on growth to be successful and will continue to do so into the future.

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We focus on serving customers in a way that is economic and meets their needs. We don't try to fit customers to our network by holding to a rigid schedule or holding trains to achieve some operational goal. We are customer-focused and match their needs with a service offering that works for both of us. That is essential to our long-term growth, particularly for customers who have a choice in their mode of transportation.

BNSF, BMWED Reach Tentative Paid Sick Leave Deal

Railway Age Written by [Marybeth Luczak](#), Executive Editor September 19, 2023 [Class I](#)



BNSF on Sept. 18 reported reaching a tentative agreement with the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division-International Brotherhood of Teamsters (BMWED) that includes paid sick days.

The agreement, which builds on existing [BNSF](#) paid time off and sickness benefits, is subject to ratification and part of "larger discussions about modernizing the work environment," according to the Class I railroad. BNSF would provide four paid sick days annually to every qualifying maintenance-of-way employee, plus three paid personal days could be used as paid sick time off, [BMWED](#) reported. If a BMWED member does not use the entirety of their entitled paid sick leave, the union noted, they can either contribute it to their 401(k) contributions through BNSF's retirement program or cash it out for straight time wage. "With a successful conclusion of the BMWED agreement, BNSF will have negotiated paid sick day and work modernization agreements with all 12 labor unions that represent BNSF employees," BNSF said.

"This agreement took a lot of hard work and diligence from the membership and notably from the four General Chairmen on the property and I want to thank them for their steadfast commitment to seeing this across the finish line," said BMWED Northwest Vice President Staci Moody-Gilbert, a [2022 Railway Age Women in Rail honoree](#) who will be speaking at the [2023 Railway Age / RT&S Women in Rail conference, to be held Nov. 2 in Chicago](#).

"This is obviously a great success for our union, and I am glad that BNSF recognized the importance of this issue. Our members can now take time to properly address health issues as they arise without worry of financial repercussions. This agreement brings BNSF in line with the other Class I carriers who have entered into similar agreements and is a welcomed development. I congratulate the General Chairmen and the membership for obtaining this victory."

BMWED-represented BNSF railroaders will vote on ratifying the deal in the coming weeks, according to the union.

In a related development, [BNSF and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen on Aug. 1 reported agreeing to a tentative deal on paid sick leave and other work/rest options for approximately 7,500 railroaders.](#)

North Dakota Supreme Court Denies Missouri River Bridge Appeal

Trains Newswire [By](#) | September 18, 2023 -BNSF begins preliminary work for construction of new bridge

Missouri River bridge

BISMARCK, N.D. — On Sept. 14 the North Dakota Supreme Court denied a request by [Friends of the Rail Bridge](#) that the court take "original jurisdiction" in a case that sought to revoke permits for construction and demolition of the [BNSF Railway bridge](#) over the Missouri River between Bismarck and Mandan, N.D., the [Bismarck Tribune](#) reported.

The Friends of the Rail Bridge has been trying without success to save the 140-year-old former Northern Pacific bridge and convert it into a walking bridge tourist attraction [see ["Preservation group makes argument to North Dakota Supreme Court on BNSF bridge."](#) News Wire, Aug. 22, 2023]. The group has used a novel approach: FORB maintains that the state owns not just the Missouri River riverbed between the two cities but also any permanent fixtures that were attached at the time of North Dakota statehood. Therefore, this would include the bridge. "BNSF has a clear right of way and a clear ability to construct, but they were not granted the bridge. The bridge belongs to the state of North Dakota," FORB attorney Bill Delmore said at a Supreme court hearing in August. BNSF argues it has full ownership of the bridge. BNSF in June began preliminary work for construction of the new \$100 million bridge that will take three years to complete. This spring BNSF obtained two sovereign lands permits from the state Department of Water Resources, the final two permits needed to begin construction. Sovereign lands of North Dakota are defined as areas lying within the ordinary high-water marks of navigable lakes and streams. The two permits approve construction of a new bridge and removal of the old. FORB appealed the issuance of the two permits in May with the state district court. The appeal was dismissed in June by South Central District Judge Jackson Lofgren on technical grounds without ruling on any of the appeal's claims.

The group in mid-July appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court and in a separate action days later asked the high court to take "original jurisdiction" in the matter, the Tribune reported. The decision on last week denied FORB's request for "original jurisdiction."

his isn't the final decision on the matter however. The Supreme Court still has to on the dismissal of the FORB appeal of the two permits by the state district court.

Latest Investigation Faults BNSF Railway for Washington's Tunnel 5 Fire

Trains Newswire [By](#) | September 18, 2023 Preliminary report points to debris and carbon emission particles from the Class I railroad's locomotives as the main cause



Origin area of Washington's Tunnel 5 Fire under investigation on July 9, 2023. Washington DNR photo



Two possible carbon particles recovered from the origin area of the Tunnel 5 Fire. Wash. DNR photo

SKAMANIA COUNTY, Wash. — In a preliminary report initially obtained by the [Columbia Insight](#), later acquired for *Trains News Wire*, the Wildland Fire Investigation of the Washington State Department of Natural Resources has determined a [BNSF Railway](#) freight train as the main cause of the Tunnel 5 Fire. As the name implies, the fire ignited on July 2, east of the tunnel near milepost 70 which is part of the BNSF Fallbridge Subdivision. Over 500 acres, and ten [mostly private resident] structures within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area were reported to have been destroyed by the blaze which was contained on July 14, 2023.

DNR investigator Bruce Long reports recovering metal debris and diesel engine carbon emission particles within the specific origin area on July 3. "I later learned from the BNSF that these shiny metallic looking pieces were a solid polymer lubricating pad which rubs against the moving train wheels and is manufactured by MPLTECHNOLOGY.com."

The investigation's witnesses included a father and son who were train-watching the subdivision during the morning of the fire and photographed a 12-to-15-car freight train, led by GP38-2 No. 2322 and GP39-3 No 2600, reportedly westbound from White Salmon to Vancouver, Wash. The report's conclusion/findings indicated the train traversed the area at approximately 10:53 to 11:00 a.m., the fire was then reported to 911 at 11:17 a.m. In a testimony by the father whose an engineer for the [Union Pacific Railroad](#), "the green and white engine (No. 2322) was possibly more than 40 years old, was likely non-turbocharged," as read in the report. "In his [the father] experience with Union Pacific (UP) this green and white engine is not commonly used on open tracks in the Columbia River Gorge area. "Being a non-turbocharged engine, it has a high likelihood of emitting diesel carbon emissions from the exhaust which could start a fire."

he hypothesis developed based on the evidence gathered and witness testimonies indicated, "WB BNSF engines #2322 and #2600, pulling 12 to 15 loaded cars, emitted something which started 3 fires within the origin area along the North side of the BNSF tracks near RR MP 70. Receptive fuels growing in soil along the tracks consisting of seasonally dry grass and small brush growing in the origin area just North of the North rail was ignited in 3 areas by the emitted object(s)." Additional witness statements along with camera footage from Amtrak's westbound *Empire Builder* on June 27 led to the investigation of two minor ignitions in the area, which both took place within a week prior to the Tunnel 5 Fire.

Additional witness statements along with camera footage from Amtrak's westbound *Empire Builder* on June 27 led to the investigation of two minor ignitions in the area, which both took place within a week prior to the Tunnel 5 Fire. "Additionally, BNSF track maintenance activities had ignited two other fires in the same vicinity just 5 and 8 days earlier," as described in the report's conclusion/findings. "These two track maintenance fires occurred during hours of darkness when temperatures would have been cooler and humidity higher.

"A localized fire danger along the tracks in this general area should have been known to BNSF."

While the report was approved by the DNR on Aug. 25, supplemental reports may follow. The Tunnel 5 Fire is still under investigation, according to the *Columbia Insight*.

NTSB Calls for New Gasket Standards for Tank Cars as a Result of 2022 BNSF Derailment and Fire

Trains Newswire [By](#) | September 29, 2023 Report also finds issues with welds, thermal protection in assessment of DOT-

WASHINGTON — The National Transportation Safety Board has called for development of new standards for gaskets used by tank cars in flammable-liquid service as a result of investigation into a January 2022 derailment and fire involving a BNSF Railway Train in Oklaunion, Texas.

The NTSB released [a synopsis of its final report on Thursday](#) and said the final report itself would be released as soon as possible to those asked to address its recommendations. Because the board was only investigating the performance of the DOT-117J tank cars involved, it did not determine a probable cause of the derailment itself. That incident, on Jan. 8, 2022, involved 37 derailed cars from a three-locomotive train with 96 cars of denatured ethanol and two buffer cars. BNSF estimated that more than 600,000 gallons of ethanol was released from 28 of the derailed cars, leading to a fire that burned uncontrolled for about four hours. No injuries were reported [see "[Alcohol tank cars burn ...](#)," *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 10, 2022].

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The NTSB has called for new standards for tank-car gaskets as a result of its investigation into this 2022 derailment and fire involving a BNSF train in Oklahoma, Texas. Wichita West Volunteer Fire Department, via Twitter

The NTSB investigation found that the majority of the ethanol was released from equipment such as manway covers and valves that remained intact after the derailment, but was damaged by the subsequent fire, and said more thermally resistant gaskets likely would have reduced the severity of the hazardous-material release. It also found that weld issues may have led to a physical breach in one of the tank cars involved, and that some DOT-117 tank cars may have insufficient thermal protection because of the way specifications for the cars are written.

As a result, the board's report calls for the Federal Railroad Administration to work with the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration to develop benchmark service and survival temperatures for gaskets in flammable-service tank cars that reflect currently available materials, and for thermal performance standards for gaskets that reflect both normal and accident conditions. It also calls on the PHMSA to revise its DOT-117 specifications to ensure service equipment is thermally protected on non-pressure tank cars, and for the Association of American Railroads to revise its certification procedures for tank-car construction to reflect that revision. Finally, it also calls on the AAR to revise inspections on tank cars to include a standard for rejecting oversized welds such as those involved in the failure of one car in the derailment.



Union Pacific News



Jennifer L. Hamann, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, UP

UP Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Jennifer L. Hamann has been appointed to the [Steel Dynamics, Inc.](#), Board for the balance of a one-year term ending May 2024. Hamann, age 56, will serve as an independent director and participate as a member of the Audit Committee, the North American steel producer and metal recycler reported Sept. 15.

A 30-plus-year UP veteran, Hamann has been in her current role since 2020. She has also served as Senior Vice President of Finance (April 2019-December 2019) and Vice President of Planning and Analysis (October 2017-March 2019), where she gained cross-functional leadership experiences in such areas as capital planning and analysis, debt and equity capital markets, marketing and sales, investor relations, audit, human resources, and corporate strategy. Additionally, Hamann has extensive knowledge of business and regulations within Mexico based on her participation on multiple UP Mexican joint venture Boards, Steel Dynamics, Inc., noted. She earned an M.B.A. in business administration and a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of Nebraska.

Earlier this year, [The Manufacturing Institute—the workforce development and education partner of the National Association of Manufacturers—named Hamann a recipient of its 2023 Women MAKE Awards.](#)

UP Upgrades Eagle, Falcon Premium Intermodal Services

Railway Age Written by [Marybeth Luczak](#), Executive Editor September 12, 2023 [Intermodal](#)



(UP Photograph)

Recent operational changes have allowed Union Pacific (UP) to remove a full day of transit time for customers shipping on its Mexico intermodal products, Eagle and Falcon Premium, which connect the United States, Mexico and Canada.

[Eagle Premium](#) serves Mexico, Chicago, the West Coast, and eastern U.S. points, including Detroit, Mich., and Louisville, Ky. [Falcon Premium](#), which was [developed jointly earlier this year with CN and GMXT](#) (Grupo Mexico Transportes, comprising Ferromex, Ferrosur and IMEX), directly connects all CN origin points within Canada and Detroit, Mich., to GMXT terminals in Mexico at Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, and Silao, Guanajuato (see map below). This interline service “leverages GMXT’s best-in-class transit times between Silao, Guanajuato, and Eagle Pass, Texas; Union Pacific’s superior route from Texas to Chicago; and CN’s best-in-class service connecting Chicago to all points in Canada through the unique EJ&E

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“Union Pacific has a great network, and we will continue leveraging it to offer our customers competitive, world-class service,” Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena said during the Sept. 12 announcement. “I’m optimistic about the strong performance and the growth potential as a result of our operational excellence and opportunities created by the nearshoring trend in Mexico.”

“CN is pleased to offer customers an entire day off the already fast Falcon Intermodal Premium Service,” CN President and CEO Tracy Robinson said in a Sept. 12 statement. “I am confident the early results of the Falcon service, combined with our speed and reliability, will enable the continued growth of this service.”

In a related development, [CN and Norfolk Southern \(NS\) on Sept. 11 announced a new domestic intermodal service linking CN-served Canadian markets with NS-served Kansas City and Atlanta, “the heart of the fast-growing manufacturing and consumer base in the Southeastern U.S.”](#)

Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena asks FRA for Rolling Stock Inspection Data

Trains Newswire [By Bill Stephens](#) | September 11, 2023

The railroad hasn’t received a detailed report after the FRA’s intensive inspections found a high level of safety defects in freight cars and locomotives over the summer, in what the FRA administrator called a risk to public



Locomotives sit outside Union Pacific’s shop at North Platte, Neb., in June 2018. Bill Stephens

OMAHA, Neb. – Union Pacific says the results of the Federal Railroad Administration’s focused inspections of its freight cars and locomotives raised more questions than answers.

“Typically, inspections by the FRA include a focused audit close out with clear findings and action steps, as well as a meeting to discuss any findings and mitigation approaches,” CEO Jim Vena wrote in a letter to FRA Administrator Amit Bose today. “Our team has not received an audit close out, which will help us more quickly address the issues raised. While a more detailed response will be forthcoming, given the significance of your concerns, I wanted to provide a prompt response addressing the immediate actions we are taking and items we are evaluating.”

The FRA inspections of UP, conducted in July and August, found mechanical defects at rates that were twice as high as the national average. Bose outlined the results of the inspections in a letter to UP executives on Friday, which said the railroad’s inspection practices posed a safety threat. Bose also asked whether recent mechanical department furloughs played a role in what he called the poor condition

“More than 1,000 items can be considered a defect on a locomotive, ranging from something minor that has less impact on the mechanical safety of a locomotive, such as an amnesty lock on a bathroom door, to higher impact ones like a high flange wheel,” Vena wrote. “We are eager to understand the types and categories of the defects cited, as well as the ratio of the percentage of defects.” The number of locomotives inspected by the FRA represents 10% of those in North Platte and about 1% of Union Pacific’s overall fleet, UP said.

Vena insisted that UP’s fleet remained safe to operate and that the railroad would never compromise on safety. He also said that there was no correlation between recent furloughs of mechanical shop employees and UP’s ability to maintain cars and locomotives.

“The furloughs across our system are the result of lower business volumes, which result in equipment storage, and represent a fraction of a percent of all craft employees,” Vena wrote. “Union Pacific’s Mechanical employee-to-car and locomotive ratios are in line with our own long-term trend, as well as those across the industry.”

Vena also explained why UP officials at Bailey Yard in North Platte, Neb., asked FRA inspectors to leave the East Departure Yard, which had been paralyzed by the intensive inspection.

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“When unscheduled audits occur in railyards, it is standard procedure to work with FRA inspectors to ensure the location of the inspections doesn’t cause safety risks for inspectors or employees, or create service interruptions for our customers,” Vena wrote. “We are proud of the professional relationships our managers have with local federal inspectors, and it is very common at a location like North Platte to ask the inspection team to go to a different part of the yard if inspections are becoming impactful to service or placing the inspectors at risk.”

Vena noted that North Platte has four yards where inspections can take place, and it was typical for railroad officials to coordinate inspection locations with the FRA inspectors.

“As we await the standard audit close-out documentation, our teams are already working to identify any potential gaps in our daily repair process,” Vena wrote. “We plan to review those findings, as well as actions we’re taking to close any identified gaps, during our October meeting. We take the FRA’s concerns very seriously and look forward to meeting in person to discuss them.”

Vena, who served as UP’s chief operating officer in 2019 and 2020, became the railroad’s chief executive on Aug. 14.

Bose’s letter to UP executives came three days after the U.S. House of Representatives Oversight Committee sent a letter to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg regarding its response to train derailments and near-misses involving airlines. The committee asked DOT to provide documents related to “efforts to investigate and remediate these issues to protect the safety of all Americans.”

The FRA’s letter to UP also came just a day after the safety agency issued an advisory urging railroads to take action when wheel impact detectors flag wheels that pose a safety risk. The advisory was prompted by the derailment of a UP coal train that included several cars that had previously set off wheel impact detectors. The derailment was likely caused when the impact of one of the defective wheels broke a track bolt, the FRA said.

Note: Updated at 11:03 a.m. on Sept. 12 with new information from Union Pacific, which corrects an error in its letter to the FRA regarding the percentage of locomotives inspected at North Platte and out of its overall fleet.

Progress Rail Files Antitrust Suit Against Wabtec, Seeks Divestiture of GE Transportation Trains Newswire [By Bill Stephens](#) | September 11, 2023

-Wabtec has abused its dominant market position in locomotives and key locomotive components and systems, Progress Rail claims

[Progress Rail](#) has filed an antitrust suit against [Wabtec](#), arguing that the rival locomotive maker has engaged in anticompetitive behavior and should have to divest its acquisition of GE Transportation.

The 2019 GE acquisition, Progress Rail says in its [lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court in Delaware last week](#), tipped the competitive balance in favor of Wabtec. Wabtec was already the sole supplier of key locomotive components, Progress Rail says, while GE Transportation was the dominant locomotive manufacturer.

While the GE Transportation acquisition was under regulatory review, Progress Rail and Wabtec reached an agreement covering joint development, compatibility, and interchangeability matters. The companies later reached an agreement covering interoperable electronic train management systems, which would allow the Wabtec PTC system to be compatible and integrated with Progress Rail’s electronic train management system.

“Wabtec’s professed commitment to ‘open competition,’ ‘integration,’ and compatibility, however, was hollow and instead it has used its dominant market position to engage in anticompetitive exclusionary conduct that has harmed and continues to harm competition and consumers,” Progress says in its suit.

Progress has asked the court to order Wabtec to divest the former GE Transportation, to stop foreclosing Progress rail from access to information necessary to compete with Wabtec, and to force Wabtec to live up to its interchangeability agreement.

Progress claims that Wabtec has engaged in anticompetitive conduct in markets for long-haul freight diesel locomotives, Tier-4 compliant freight locomotives, and electronic train management systems.

Wabtec has used its dominant position to reduce required cross-product compatibility by restricting the flow of critical data and information, imposing unnecessary costs and delays on competitors, and making false statements to consumers about the viability of Progress Rail, Progress says in its suit.

“Unless stopped, Wabtec will continue to misuse its monopoly power to artificially exclude competition, stifle innovation, fortify existing and create new barriers to entry, and deprive consumers of free choice and price competition,” Progress says. “Such unchecked conduct will make the freight locomotives that drive this country’s economy more expensive, less safe, and worse for the environment.”

Progress cites a long list of Wabtec’s dominant positions in key locomotive markets.

Wabtec has manufactured about 75% of the active long-haul freight locomotives in North America and about 90% of new long-haul locomotives that comply with Tier-4 emissions regulations. It also is the dominant supplier of locomotive energy management systems, with Trip Optimizer holding a 79% share of the market, and its Locotrol distributed power system holding nearly 100% of the market. Wabtec’s Interoperable Electronic Train Management System, commonly called I-ETMS, is installed on virtually all freight locomotives.

In a statement released today, Wabtec said it would vigorously defend itself.

“We believe that Progress Rail’s recent complaint against Wabtec at its core is an unsupported attack on the merger of Wabtec and GE Transportation, which was completed over four years ago,” Wabtec said. “The merger has provided benefits to the entire industry, as well as Progress Rail itself. Progress Rail actively participated in the U.S. Government’s review of that transaction and benefitted by entering into agreements with Wabtec that transferred Wabtec technology to it as part of the United States Department of Justice and global merger clearance process. We also firmly believe that Progress Rail’s assertions that Wabtec breached agreements or engaged in other illegal conduct are wrong. We intend to aggressively defend the case in court.”



WASHINGTON – Federal regulators have put a hold on their final environmental assessment of Union Pacific's proposed 6-mile branch to a new industrial park being built outside Phoenix.

Regulators Pause Environmental Review of Proposed Union Pacific Line Near Phoenix

Trains Newswire [By Bill Stephens](#) | September 1, 2023 -Nearby construction caused damage to archaeological sites along the proposed six-mile right of way

The Surface Transportation Board's Office of Environmental Analysis, [in a decision released on Thursday](#), said it was delaying a decision indefinitely due to the discovery of "significant ground disturbance and damage to archaeological resources in the area of the proposed right-of-way."

The Tohono O'odham Nation on Aug. 24 requested the environmental assessment process be put on hold until a damage assessment report is completed, potential mitigation is considered, and other legal issues are resolved. Other tribes had raised similar concerns.

[UP told the STB](#) that property owners abutting the proposed right of way in Mesa, Ariz., entered the railroad's property without permission and construction projects unrelated to the proposed rail line were responsible for the damage. UP was unaware of the damage along the proposed right-of-way. The railroad asked adjacent landowners to cease work on UP property and to remove equipment from the right-of-way. UP also hired a security service, put up no-trespassing signs, has staked the property boundaries, and is installing fencing.

The proposed rail line is part of the [Pecos Industrial Rail Access and Train Extension corridor](#), or PI-RATE, that will be built to serve industrial properties near the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport.

Report: Ferromex Temporarily Suspending Service (Updated)

Railway Age Written by [Marybeth Luczak](#), Executive Editor September 22, 2023

[Short Lines & Regionals](#) (Related to UP story following)



(Ferromex Photograph)



(Ferromex Photograph, via NBC News)

Mexican railway operator Ferromex on Sept. 19 said it was temporarily suspending 60 trains on south-north routes because of an increasing number of migrants climbing aboard railcars and suffering injuries, according to news reports. On Sept. 20, some trains restarted service. Union Pacific and BNSF issued embargoes at Eagle Pass in Texas.

"In recent days nearly a half dozen regrettable cases of injury or death were registered among the groups of people who on an individual basis or in families, including girls and boys, boarded freight trains on their way north, despite the grave danger that implies," [Grupo Mexico](#), the railroad's owner, said in a statement released in Spanish (below), according to a report in *The Hill*.

Migrant groups congregating in rail yards and on trains include "more than 1,500 people in Torreón, Coahuila, 200 miles south of the international border; 800 people in Irapuato, Guanajuato in central Mexico, around 1,000 people in the central northern state of Aguascalientes, and more than 1,000 people on the route between Chihuahua and Ciudad Juárez, the city that borders El Paso," the company reported, according to *The Hill*. The railroad company said stopping the trains, which are hauling cargo that would fill 1,800 tractor trailers, was "to protect the physical safety of the migrants," while it awaited action by authorities to solve the problem," according to the Associated Press (AP).

Ferromex has routes running to five U.S.-Mexico border crossings, and according to *The Hill*, Grupo Mexico "said it had informed its clients about interruptions to supply lines and international commerce." Grupo Mexico estimated that stopping the trains represents a daily loss of \$2.34 million, according to Reuters. The impact of Ferromex, Mexico's largest concessionary rail operator, halting trains will be "very important," Ana Bertha Gutiérrez, International Trade Coordinator at the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness, told the AP.

"She noted the measure could hit industrial states like Nuevo Leon, Baja California and Chihuahua hard, given their links to the U.S. market." According to the AP, "[m]igrants have long used the trains, known collectively as 'The Beast,' to hitch rides from as far south as Oaxaca state to the U.S. border. About a decade ago, the Mexican government briefly staged raids on the trains to discourage the practice, but later largely abandoned the effort."

The news outlet noted that "Mexico [is on track to receive more asylum applications this year than ever before](#) as the flow of migrants threatens to overwhelm governments of several Latin American countries along the migratory route.

"Andrés Ramírez Silva, the director of Mexico's refugee agency, said last week that the number of asylum applications his agency receives this year could reach 150,000, well above the 129,000 record set in 2021."

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According to a Sept. 20 Reuters report, Grupo Mexico said that some trains have restarted service “on routes where no ‘heightened risk’ had been identified. The company did not say how many trains were still not operational.” It noted that it would “continue evaluating the situation and was in touch with authorities over how it proceeded.”

The President of Mexico, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, on Sept. 20 called the Grupo Mexico train stoppage announcement “strange” and “unusual,” Reuters reported.

“Mexico’s National Migration Institute has proposed adding agents to the affected routes, noting in a statement it also requested the company increase its private security aboard trains,” according to Reuters. “Ferromex executives will meet with members of the Mexican government and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection on Friday [Sept. 22] to discuss further measures, the Mexican institute added.”

[Canadian Pacific Kansas City](#) Executive Vice President and Chief Transformation Officer John Orr told *Railway Age* on Sept. 20 that his railroad is so far not experiencing issues with migrants. [Union Pacific](#) (UP) on Sept. 20 released an online customer notification, saying, “The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Agency closed train traffic at Eagle Pass Wednesday, pausing rail cars. The closure is due to the migrant crisis on the Southern Border. Union Pacific’s other gateways cannot handle the extra traffic and we are notifying our customers of an embargo at Eagle Pass, effective immediately. This will help us better manage your shipments during this dynamic and rapidly developing situation. We remain in communication with CBP and will continue normal operations at our other gateways.” [BNSF](#) on Sept. 21 issued the following online service advisory, effective Sept. 20: “Following the Department of Homeland Security border closure in Eagle Pass, TX, due to safety and security concerns in the area, BNSF has issued an embargo (BNSF001723) on traffic destined for interchange with Ferromex (FXE) at both the Eagle Pass and El Paso junctions. All traffic interchanging at Eagle Pass has been stopped at this time to assist in clearing out congestion in the area. Through the embargo, BNSF is not currently accepting new shipments through El Paso. However, as conditions allow, we will be moving some shipments already in route. No permits are being issued at the present time. We will continue to keep you updated as this situation progresses.” In another development, [Mexico President Andrés Manuel López Obrador earlier this year deployed Naval forces to the country’s southern provinces of Veracruz and Oaxaca to occupy a 75-mile section of railroad between Medias Aguas and the port city of Coatzacoalcas operated by Grupo Mexico. *Railway Age* reported that it “turned out to be ‘much ado about nothing’ or a political stunt, as some industry observers opined.”](#)

Officials Agree to Reopen Eagle Pass Rail Gateway After Meeting with Union Pacific Executives

Trains Newswire [By Bill Stephens](#) | September 22, 2023



Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena, center, and President Beth Whited, left, lead a railroad delegation in Eagle Pass, Texas on Friday.

OMAHA, Neb. – U.S. Customs and Border Protection will allow the Eagle Pass, Texas, railroad gateway to reopen at midnight tonight after a visit by a delegation of Union Pacific executives led by CEO Jim Vena.

The bridge linking Eagle Pass with Ferromex at Piedras Negras, Mexico, has been closed since Wednesday due to the influx of thousands of migrants crossing the border. U.S. officials shut the bridge down two days after Ferromex suspended northbound traffic for safety reasons following the deaths and serious injuries to several migrants who attempted to hop freight trains to the U.S. border. The shutdown brought rail traffic to a standstill at the second-busiest gateway to Mexico. Eagle Pass handled a total of 16 UP and BNSF Railway trains per day in August, according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Vena, UP President Beth Whited, Chief Financial Officer Jennifer Hamann, and leaders from the corporate relations, marketing and sales, and operations teams visited Eagle Pass to see the migrant crisis firsthand, understand its impact, and identify ways to resume operations, UP said.

Report: Explosion at UP’s Bailey Yard in Nebraska (Updated Sept. 20)



The North Platte Nebraska Volunteer Fire Department on Sept. 14 at 4:25 p.m. reported via social media platform X that “NP Fire & Hazmat are on scene with UPRR. The incident is contained at this time. They are monitoring the situation and the weather, adjusting their tactics and evacuations to keep responders and citizens safe. Stay alert to any changes that may come.” (Photograph Courtesy of NPVFD, via X) The Sept. 14 explosion from inside an intermodal container loaded on a railcar at Union Pacific’s (UP) Bailey Yard was contained within hours, allowing yard operations to resume. An investigation is under way. UPDATE: According to a Sept. 19 Associated Press (AP) report, Adam Matzner, the chief investigator for the Nebraska State Fire Marshal’s office, “said Tuesday that investigators haven’t found any sign of a criminal act connected with the explosion, so the incident appears accidental. But the investigation is ongoing.”

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UP spokeswoman Kristen South told the news outlet that the railroad “is cooperating with the state and federal agencies while conducting its own review of what happened and how rail employees responded to find ways to improve how it responds to future incidents.” Also, a [Federal Railroad Administration](#) (FRA) spokesman told the AP “that he couldn’t provide any additional details about the agency’s investigation.”

Background

The explosion, which occurred around noon on Sept. 14 at the 2,850-acre North Platte, Nebr., yard, led to an evacuation within a one-mile radius due to what the local fire department called, at the time, “toxic smoke,” which was generated when one of the chemicals being hauled caught fire, according to a Sept. 14 AP report. The evacuation lasted several hours in North Platte, which has a population of approximately 23,000 people and is about 250 miles west of Omaha.

UP spokeswoman Robynn Tysver told the media outlet that no one was injured and no railcars derailed. She said it was not yet clear what caused the explosion and that the fire was extinguished by 5:30 p.m., the AP reported.

According to the AP, the container was carrying “perchloric acid, which is used in explosives as well as a variety of food and drug products, Tysver said.” The fire spread to the container above the one that exploded, but not to the rest of the parked train, the AP reported on Sept. 15.

A volunteer at the Golden Spike Tower, built a few years ago “to allow people to watch thousands of railcars be sorted ... on Union Pacific’s key east-west corridor,” told the *North Platte Telegraph* that “two plumes of smoke rose from the blast site,” according to the AP; “the east plume was like black smoke. The west plume was orange smoke, something like I’ve not seen from a fire,” he said.”

Joanna Le Moine, Deputy Director of the Lincoln County Emergency Management Agency, told the AP on Sept. 14 that officials were “monitoring the situation and the weather to determine which direction the smoke will go ‘to help keep responders and citizens safe out of an overabundance of caution

ince the explosion occurred “near the western end of the railyard and the prevailing winds were carrying the toxic smoke outside the railroad,” AP reported, “Union Pacific was able to continue operating part of the facility and keep trains moving,” according to railroad officials. UP resumed full use of the yard after the fire was put out, UP spokeswoman Kristen South told the AP.

According to the AP’s Sept. 14 report, the [National Transportation Safety Board](#) (NTSB) was monitoring the event, agency spokeswoman Sarah Taylor Sulick said; Scripps News reported Sept. 16 that the agency is not investigating. FRA officials were at the yard monitoring UP’s “response to the explosion,” agency spokesman Warren Flatau told the AP on Sept. 14. The AP on Sept. 15 reported that the perchloric acid “dissipated in the air as it burned off,” according to North Platte Fire Chief Dennis Thompson, and that “air and soil monitoring in the area never showed any dangerous levels.” Thompson also told the media outlet that the other container “that burned in the fire likely contained memory foam—not another hazardous chemical.”

There is no ongoing risk to residents or rail yard workers, Thompson told Scripps News, but air and water quality are being monitored to ensure nothing changes. The media outlet reported that “any leftover residue [from the perchloric acid] was safely contained” and that “[h]azmat crews were careful to capture any of the water used to put out this fire to make sure that it did not seep into the ground water with any of that perchloric acid,” according to Thompson.

Now, state Fire Marshal and railroad investigators are working to determine the explosion’s cause, AP reported.

[Earlier this month, FRA Administrator Amit Bose sent a letter to UP “to express serious concern about specific and significant risk to rail safety.”](#) Following inspections at the North Platte rail yard, Bose said “compliance of the rolling stock (freight cars and locomotives) on the UP network is poor, and UP was unwilling or unable to take steps to improve the condition of [its] equipment.” The letter was addressed to CEO Jim Vena, President Beth Whited and Executive Vice President-Operations Eric J. Gehringer—and copied to Surface Transportation Board Chair Marty Oberman and six union officials. Vena has responded with a polite but firm letter to Bose some observers are calling “Railroading 101.”

Tags: [Breaking News](#), [Federal Railroad Administration](#), [National Transportation Safety Board](#), [Union Pacific](#)



—— CPKC News ——

Supply Side: Blume Global

Railway Age Written by [Marybeth Luczak](#), Executive Editor September 14, 2023 [News](#)

“Blume’s asset management solution is well established as the marketplace where IMCs obtain railroad-owned intermodal equipment,” Blume Global CEO Pervinder Johar said Sept. 11. “We look forward to helping CPKC expand their business in the U.S.”

Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) will use Blume Global’s asset management system to foster intermodal traffic growth. Also, Rio Tinto’s Iron Ore Company of Canada (Rio Tinto IOC) is donating C\$4 million to a Quebec college for a new training, research and innovation pavilion for the rail, industrial maintenance and energy intelligence industries; and Penn State names Wabtec Corporation as its 2023 Corporate Partner of the Year.

[Blume Global](#)

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Pleasanton, Calif.-based Blume Global on Sept. 11 reported that it will provide its asset management system to [CPKC](#) to help the Class I railroad increase visibility of its 53-foot domestic containers to Intermodal Marketing Companies (IMCs) in the United States.

“Blume is pleased to begin this new chapter in our long and successful relationship with the legacy Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern operating entities—[now \[merged as\] CPKC,](#)” [the first single-line, transnational railway connecting Canada, the U.S. and Mexico,](#) said Pervinder Johar, CEO of Blume Global, [a WiseTech Global subsidiary.](#) “Blume’s asset management solution is well established as the marketplace where IMCs obtain railroad-owned intermodal equipment. We look forward to helping CPKC expand their business in the U.S.”

“CPKC is excited about our agreement with Blume Global, which is a natural fit for customers seeking access to our expanded intermodal network,” said Ricky Stover, Assistant Vice President, Domestic Intermodal at CPKC. “This agreement will help position and prepare CPKC to efficiently meet our customers’ needs.”

In a related development, [CPKC on May 11 kicked off daily intermodal service between the Midwest and Mexico with trains MMX-180 and MMX-181, which now link Chicago, Kansas City, Texas markets, Monterrey and San Luis Potosi.](#)

CPKC Touts its Premium Cross-border Intermodal Service Linking Chicago and Mexico

Trains Newswire [By Bill Stephens](#) | September 13, 2023 In response to CN-UP-FXE transit time improvements, CEO Keith Creel says CPKC’s single-line service can’t be beat



Canadian Pacific Kansas City’s Mexico Midwest Express trains link Chicago with Monterrey and San Luis Potosi, Mexico. CPKC

LAGUNA BEACH, Calif. – Canadian Pacific Kansas City Chief Executive Officer Keith Creel today touted the benefits of the railway’s flagship single-line Mexico Midwest Express service linking Chicago and Mexico.

[Yesterday Union Pacific announced](#) that it had shaved a day off of its rival cross-border Falcon Premium intermodal trains run in conjunction with Canadian National and Ferromex, as well as the joint UP-Ferromex Eagle Premium service.

“If you’ve got a three railroad move, you can take a day out of it,” Creel told an investor conference today. “But you can’t take the complexities out of three railroads run by three different operating groups being guided by three different sets of priorities versus one.” Interline intermodal service can’t realize the same potential as single-line service unless the joint service has a significant mileage advantage, Creel says. UP has a great network with the shortest route between Chicago and the Mexican border, he says, but that mileage advantage in the U.S. is erased by CPKC’s shorter route from the Laredo border crossing to Monterrey and San Luis Potosi, outside of Mexico City. Falcon Premium service uses the Eagle Pass, Texas, gateway. “So at the end of the day — their best day versus our best day — I think there’s a place for both,” Creel says. “But I do think, if we do our jobs, that the premium freight is going to be on our railroad because it’s going to be the most reliable, the most consistent, and the transit time is going to be the best.”

MMX trains Nos. 180 and 181 make the 2,150-mile run between Bensenville, Ill., and San Luis Potosi in four days.

“We’re doing it at a trucklike speed. We’re beating what we advertised, and that train is 95%, 96% on time,” Creel says. “I look at it every day, every morning. If it gets late I know about it. It is really symbolizing the power of this extended haul network — and it’s attracting business.”

An unnamed auto manufacturer began using MMX service today to ship finished vehicles from Mexico to the U.S. and Canada, Creel says.

Next week four new customers will begin shipping perishables between Chicago and Laredo, Texas, using CPKC’s expanded reefer container fleet, Creel says. Initial volume is expected to be 250 loads per week.

A key advantage of the CPKC service is the cold storage supply chain the railway and partner Americold are building, starting with a warehouse at the CPKC intermodal terminal in Kansas City, Creel says.

“It is going to be the premium supply chain connecting Chicago to Mexico or Mexico to Chicago,” Creel says.

Creel also noted that CPKC is targeting the Mexico-Chicago market, not the Mexico-Toronto market that rival Canadian National is aiming at with Falcon Premium. Both services were launched in May. “I wish them well. I think they’ll grow. I think they’ll do OK,” Creel says.

Canadian National Chief Financial Officer Ghislain Houle, who spoke after Creel at the Morgan Stanley investor conference, says he was pleased that new Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena, who spent four decades at CN, was able to take a day out of the Falcon Premium schedules.

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“Here’s what we need to do, and Jim knows this very well and we know this. There’s three railroads: FXE, UP, and us. We need to work as a single line railroad. That’s the key,” Houle says. “We cannot let that train sit in Chicago, for example, for a week or two. We cannot, we cannot, we cannot. We need to work and we need to make these interchanges as fluid as if it had been our own network, our own railroad going from Mexico to Canada.”

The three railroads will hold each other accountable for meeting service standards, Houle says, adding that’s no different than what can happen within the operating department of a railroad that’s offering single-line service.

For Chicago interchange with UP, the Falcon Premium relies on CN’s congestion-free former Elgin, Joliet & Eastern route around the city, Houle notes.

CN sought to merge with Kansas City Southern but lost the battle to Canadian Pacific after an unfavorable regulatory review. Falcon Premium is CN’s competitive response to the \$31 billion merger of CP and KCS. “I’m extremely excited by this because it allows CN to access Mexico without having to make a huge bet and without having any integration issues,” Houle says.

Morgan Stanley analyst Ravi Shanker noted that his firm’s customer surveys showed surprisingly strong demand for Falcon Premium service.

“The key service from Monterrey to Toronto is five days, which is trucklike. So I think, like anything else, it starts small but ... the opportunity that presents is unbelievable,” Houle says.

CN officials have said they believe the service ultimately can divert 350,000 truckloads annually, which would amount to two train daily train pairs. CN expects customers to move test loads before fully jumping on board.

CPKC Trains Collide in Ontario, Derailing 13 Cars

Trains newswire [By](#) | September 28, 2023

No injuries reported in Wednesday morning incident

MacTIER, Ontario — Thirteen cars of a Canadian Pacific Kansas City freight train derailed about 4:30 a.m. Wednesday after a reported collision with another train, [CTV News reports](#).

CPKC said in a statement to the network that no injuries were reported and no hazardous materials were involved. Two of the cars were carrying plastic pellets and the others were empty.

The railroad said the exact cause remains to be determined, but preliminary investigation indicated a train “operating in a restricted speed area made contact with the rear of another train,” according to CTV.

The incident occurred about 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) south of Parry Sound, Ont., and about 165 kilometers (103 miles) north of Toronto. MacTier is the end point of CP’s MacTier Subdivision, which extends to Toronto, and the start of the Parry Sound Subdivision to the north.

— Museum and Steam Engine News —



On Labor Day weekend, the Mt. Rainer Scenic Railroad began offering steam-powered excursions from Elbe to Mineral, Wash. This is the first time since 2019 that the railroad has operated passenger trips. Polson Logging Co. No. 70, a 1922 Baldwin 2-8-2, brings the train into the Elbe depot. Robert Harbison

Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad Returns to Operation

[By Bob Lettenberger, Trains Associate Editor](#) | September 7, 2023 -Tourist line offers limited excursion schedule for September, October

ELBE, Wash. — Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad has begun offering a limited excursion schedule for September and October as stated on its website. The train trips come at least a year or two ahead of the railroad’s timeline for returning to operation [see “[Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad scheduled to reopen by 2025](#),” *Trains*, December 2022].

“We are thrilled to announce our soft reopening with train excursions running between Elbe and Mineral for a limited time in September and October,” reads the [website statement](#). “We’re bringing back the tradition of unforgettable steam train excursions, through the heart of Washington State ...” Trains began running over the Labor Day weekend and were the first to do so since 2019. More than 1,200 people rode the train during the first weekend of operations. The return to operation did have a few challenges, which the railroad’s staff and volunteers were able to surmount, says Bethan Maher, executive director. In a [Facebook post](#), Maher notes that unusually heavy rain in the area on Thursday before the weekend downed numerous trees, which blocked the railroad’s track. Staff and volunteers worked into the early morning hours to remove the trees and inspect the track.

Additionally, vandals struck the railroad, stealing the restroom piping from under its concession car, disabling the only toilet facilities on the trains. Again, staff and volunteers were able to correct the situation in time to maintain the advertised schedule.

The Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad dates to 1980, when Weyerhaeuser Corp. allowed Tacoma lumberman Tom Murray Jr. to launch a tourist railroad on a portion of its line formerly owned by the Milwaukee Road.

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In 2016, the operation was acquired by American Heritage Railways, owner of the Durango & Silverton Scenic Railroad, and re-branded as the Mt. Rainier Railroad and Logging Museum. AHR closed the railroad in May 2020 stating the operation was not profitable and that it was being hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Western Forest Industries Museum acquired the railroad, announcing plans to reopen and expand the operation by 2025.

To find out more about the Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad schedule, please visit its [website](#).

For additional information on the WFIM plans, please visit their [website](#).

Robert Harbison contributed to this story.

Santa Fe No. 2926 to Headline Albuquerque's New Mexico Railroad Days

[Trains Newswire](#) | September 8, 2023 Restored 4-8-4 will return to the main line to reach downtown's Rail Yards



Santa Fe 4-8-4 No. 2926 makes its first public outing to the Tractor Brewing Wells Park on May 6, 2023. Alex Gillman

Albuquerque's downtown Rail Yards – a former ATSF facility with sections redeveloped for venue purposes, and [future home for the re-stored 4-8-4](#). Organized by the locomotive's owner, the New Mexico Steam Locomotive & Railroad Historical Society (DBA New Mexico Heritage Rail), the free event is scheduled on Sept. 30 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Oct. 1 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"These events help draw people to areas they may not have been to before and to gain new experiences," said John Roberts, president of the non-profit organization. "We plan events like this to bring public awareness to our project and our goals, educate the visitors about the history of locomotives, stimulate interest in railroad history, and encourage becoming a volunteer member to help support the current and future needs of the organization."

According to the press release, the 4-8-4 will depart on Sept. 30 at 8 a.m. from its restoration site on 8th Street for the ferry move to 1st St., along New Mexico Rail Runner Express' Albuquerque Subdivision – Sawmill Spur. The locomotive will then traverse the ex-ATSF Transcontinental main line for the first time since 1956 to reach the [BNSF Railway](#) freight yard near the Rail Yards Market at 777 1st St.

No. 2926 will depart on Oct. 1 shortly after the event for the return trip. "We are really happy that NMDOT's leadership [[New Mexico Department of Transportation](#)] has provided us the opportunity to make these trips," Robert explained.

New Mexico Railroad Days will headline No. 2926 with accessible cab tours for the public. Equipment from Rail Runner, BNSF, and Amtrak have also been invited to participate in the festivities. A private night photo session titled *Steam at the Albuquerque Rail Yards* is scheduled for that Saturday evening from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., and will be led by award-winning photographer Steve Crise.

For more information, visit the [New Mexico Heritage Rail website](#).

In Cab Experiences' with N&W No. 611 Offered on the Buckingham Branch Railroad

[Trains Newswire](#) [By](#) | September 28, 2023 Tickets for Sept. 30, 2023, sessions now on sale



Norfolk & Western No. 611 ties down on a newly constructed siding at Victoria Station in Goshen, Va., on Sept. 14, 2023. Zac McGinnis photo

OSHEN, Va. — Ever since its 2015 restoration and return to service, "In Cab Experiences" have been part of the norm for Norfolk & Western steam locomotive No. 611. Participants are given the chance to learn and either operate or fire on the J-class 4-8-4 under supervision by the engine crew. The program — which has taken place during the locomotive's previous visits to the [North Carolina Transportation Museum](#) in Spencer, N.C., and the Strasburg Rail Road in Ronks, Pa. — will now expand to Virginia's Buckingham Branch Railroad. Tickets are now on sale for both the engineer and fireman seat experiences on Sept. 30.

As announced on the Norfolk & Western Class J No. 611 [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages, the 30-minute sessions will operate out of Goshen where the locomotive is currently stationed. Participants must be 18 years of age or older and have a valid driver's license. Visit the [FareHarbor website](#) for more information and to purchase tickets — \$850 for the Engineers' Seat, and \$375 for the Firemans' Seat. No. 611 is scheduled to [operate weekend fall excursions as part of the Virginia Scenic Railway](#), a passenger excursion operator for the Buckingham Branch. The half-day *Shenandoah Valley Limited* will depart Goshen at 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., each day on Oct. 6-8, 13-15, 20-22, and 27-29, in addition to Nov. 3-5. Visit the [Virginia Scenic Railway website](#) for more information and tickets.

Mid-Continent Railway Museum Celebrates Milestone, Continued Progress

By David Lassen | September 1, 2023 Metro News - Mid-Continent Railway Museum

Organization marks 60 years in North Freedom, Wis.



Visitors to Mid-Continent Railway Museum's 60th anniversary event climb aboard at the North Freedom, Wis., depot. Jeffrey Lentz



The museum's Copper Range Special train consisting of two 1903 American Car & Foundry wooden coaches built for the Copper Range Railroad, powered by an ex-US Navy GE 45-tonner. Jeffrey Lentz



Guests of Mid-Continent Railway Museum board the museum's two restored Copper Range Railroad coaches for the first ride of the day. Lindsay Lentz



Passengers soak in the history during a 35-minute special 60th anniversary ride aboard Copper Range No. 60. The car is normally kept for display only, but rides were given aboard it and sister car No. 25 during Mid-Continent Railway Museum's 60th anniversary event. Jeffrey Lentz

NORTH FREEDOM, Wis. — Mid-Continent Railway Museum celebrated its 60th anniversary earlier this year, marking the milestone with special events as well as reminiscences of the Wisconsin museum's growth from a fledgling museum to one with some 500 volunteer members who share their interest in and knowledge of the "Golden Age of Railroading" with almost 20,000 visitors annually.

The museum's collection includes more than 100 items, including nine steam locomotives, eight internal-combustion units, and a wealth of rolling stock. Among its diesels is Milwaukee Road Alco RSC2 No. 998, recipient of [a donation of almost \\$95,000](#) earlier this year from the James T. Baker Jr. Living Trust to aid in its restoration to operation.

The museum established its site in North Freedom — about an hour from Madison and a 2-hour drive from Milwaukee — by purchasing 4.2 miles of track from the Chicago & North Western in 1963. That was the milestone it celebrated with events on May 27, including the operation of two sets of excursion trains. One, the Lackawanna Express, featured the museum's regular 55-minute excursion trip with its group of former Delaware, Lackawanna & Western steel coaches. The other, the Copper Range Special, offered a rare chance to ride the museum's two wooden Copper Range Railroad cars, a coach and combine, built by American Car & Foundry in 1903. Those cars are generally displayed inside the museum's Coach Shed No. 2, but ran some seven trips that day in their first excursion service in almost a decade.

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Museum office manager Jeff Lentz reported some 450 people were on hand for the anniversary celebration, with a total of 847 rides taking place on the two trains.

Speeches by Museum President Andy Spinelli and others opened the day, with longtime member B.G. Miller — who joined the museum in 1967 — recalling that weekend volunteering became a form of competition. “If you showed up here on a Friday afternoon,” Miller said, “you’d sign up in the depot to be trainman, fireman, engineer, whatever. If you weren’t here at 1 or 2 o’clock in the afternoon on Friday, all the spots were filled, so it was a mad scramble to see who could get here first.”

The operation of the Copper Range cars was an appropriate showcase of the wooden-car restoration that has become one of the hallmarks of Mid-Continent. The museum’s car shop — which held an open house in conjunction with the anniversary events and reported signing up several new members — has a number of impressive projects under way. Among them is the restoration of 1902 Duluth South Shore & Atlantic sleeper *Duluth*, recipient of a \$10,000 grant from the John H. Emery Rail Heritage Trust earlier this year. Updates on that and several other restoration projects [are available here](#); information on the ongoing work to restore the museum’s celebrated steam locomotive, Chicago & North Western 4-6-0 No. 1385, to operation to steam, [is available here](#).

The museum is open daily through Labor Day. As of Sept. 9, the museum is open Saturdays and Sundays through Oct. 22; it then reopens Saturdays and Sundays Nov. 25 through Dec. 3 for its Santa Express event. More information is available [at the museum website](#).

— Misc News —

AAR: North American Rail Volume Down Through 37 Weeks

Railway Age Written by [Carolina Worrell](#), Senior Editor September 20, 2023 [Class I](#)

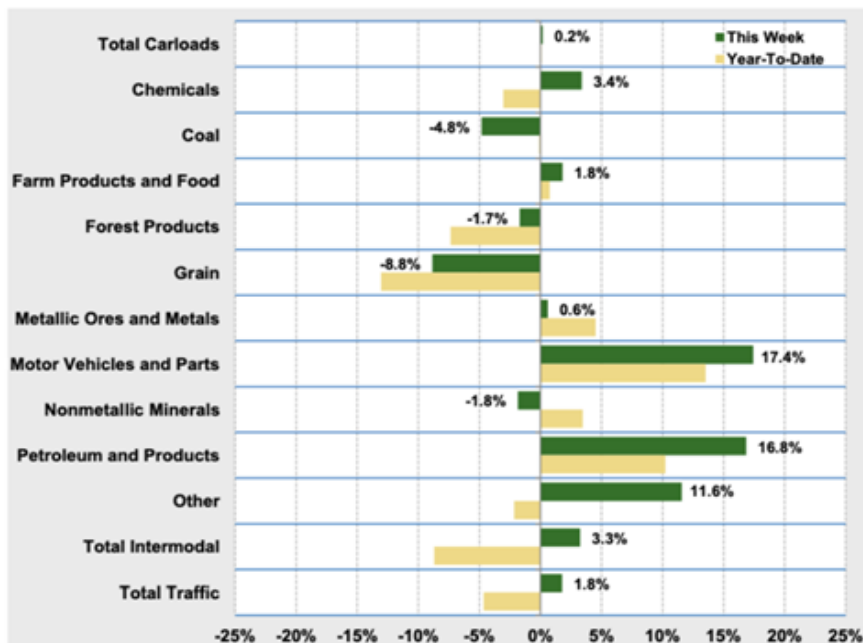
U.S. Rail Traffic¹
Week 37, 2023 – Ended September 16, 2023

	This Week		Year-To-Date		
	Cars	vs 2022	Cumulative	Avg/wk ²	vs 2022
Total Carloads	232,723	0.2%	8,303,938	224,431	0.1%
Chemicals	32,758	3.4%	1,152,729	31,155	-3.0%
Coal	69,268	-4.8%	2,434,096	65,786	-0.1%
Farm Products excl. Grain, and Food	16,412	1.8%	595,399	16,092	0.8%
Forest Products	8,126	-1.7%	300,483	8,121	-7.4%
Grain	16,294	-8.8%	664,812	17,968	-13.0%
Metallic Ores and Metals	20,373	0.6%	765,930	20,701	4.5%
Motor Vehicles and Parts	16,233	17.4%	549,081	14,840	13.5%
Nonmetallic Minerals	33,914	-1.8%	1,177,127	31,814	3.5%
Petroleum and Petroleum Products	10,393	16.8%	348,176	9,410	10.2%
Other	8,952	11.6%	316,105	8,543	-2.2%
Total Intermodal Units	257,067	3.3%	8,806,749	238,020	-8.7%
Total Traffic	489,790	1.8%	17,110,687	462,451	-4.6%

¹ Excludes U.S. operations of CPKC, CN and GMXT.

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

Trends, 2023 vs 2022
United States



For the first 37 weeks of 2023 (ending Sept. 16), total U.S. weekly rail traffic dipped 4.1% from the same point last year, according to the Association of American Railroads' (AAR) Sept. 20 report. Both Canada and the U.S. saw declines, while Mexico saw an increase.

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North American rail volume for the first 37 weeks of the year (ending Sept. 16) on 12 reporting U.S., Canadian and Mexican railroads came in at 23,974,092 carloads and intermodal units. Cumulative volume in Canada was 5,837,742 carloads, containers and trailers, down 3.5%; in Mexico, 1,025,663 carloads and intermodal containers and trailers, up 3.2%; and in the U.S., 17,110,687 carloads and intermodal units, down 4.6%.

According to AAR, for the week ending Sept. 16, 2023, U.S. Class I railroads hauled a total of 489,790 carloads and intermodal units, up 1.8% compared with the same week last year. This comprises 232,723 carloads—up 0.2% from the prior-year period—and 257,067 containers and trailers—up 3.3% compared with 2022.

Six of the 10 carload commodity groups posted an increase compared with the same week in 2022. They included motor vehicles and parts, up 2,410 carloads, to 16,233; petroleum and petroleum products, up 1,498 carloads, to 10,393; and chemicals, up 1,072 carloads, to 32,758. Commodity groups that posted decreases compared with the same week in 2022 included coal, down 3,518 carloads, to 69,268; grain, down 1,581 carloads, to 16,294; and nonmetallic minerals, down 637 carloads, to 33,914.

For the first 37 weeks of 2023, U.S. railroads reported cumulative volume of 8,303,938 carloads, up 0.1% from the same point last year; and 8,806,749 intermodal units, down 8.7% from last year.

North American rail volume for the week ending Sept. 16, 2023, on 12 reporting U.S., Canadian and Mexican railroads totaled 341,118 carloads, down 0.6% compared with the same week last year, and 339,525 intermodal units, down 1.0% compared with last year. Total combined weekly rail traffic in North America was 680,643 carloads and intermodal units, down 0.8%. North American rail volume for the first 37 weeks of 2023 was 23,974,092 carloads and intermodal units, down 4.1% compared with 2022.

Vermont Rail System Repairs Continue

[By](#) | July 27, 2023 **Green Mountain, Washington County railroads should be reopened next week**



A slope failure on the Green Mountain Railroad at East Wallingford, Vt., is one of the areas where repairs continue as Vermont Rail System recovers from flooding earlier this month. Vermont Rail System

RUTLAND, Vt. — Vermont Rail System continues to make progress in repairs to flood damage sustained by its lines earlier this month, company president Selden Houghton told a local news site on Wednesday.

“Hopefully, by next week, we’ll be 100% put back together,” Houghton said in [a phone interview with the VTDigger](#).

Houghton detailed the widespread damage for *Trains News Wire* on July 12, but felt VRS had been fortunate because the flooding had not caused any bridge failures [see [“Vermont Rail System recovers ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, July 12, 2023].

The hardest-hit portion of the system, the Green Mountain Railroad, still has 27 state-owned miles closed because of flood damage, Joe Flynn, secretary of the Vermont Agency of Transportation, told the news site. One damaged portion of that line, in Ludlow, Vt., where tracks were left hanging 50 feet in the air after a washout, was widely shown in national news broadcasts. Another, in East Wallingford, saw tracks left unsupported by a massive slope failure.

In Ludlow, the washed-out area has been filled in and work to relay the tracks was slated to begin Wednesday. In East Wallingford, work was continuing to shore up the hillside before tracks could be rebuilt.

The Washington County Railroad, which saw two locomotives and 11 railcars stranded by flooding, should also be fully repaired next week, Houghton told the Digger.

Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority to Host Annual Conference Aug. 9

[By](#) | August 4, 2023 Event in Butte, Mont., will feature FRA, STB officials BUTTE, Mont. — Federal railroad

Administration Administrator Amit Bose and Surface Transportation Board Vice Chair Karen Hedlund are among scheduled speakers at the third annual conference of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority, set for Wednesday, Aug. 9, at the Hotel Finlen in Butte.

The conference will bring together passenger advocates, government officials, railroad representatives, and others interested in the authority’s efforts to restore passenger service on the former route of the North Coast Hiawatha, as well as other passenger routes. The authority’s monthly board meeting will be part of the day’s schedule.

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“It is only through regional collaboration and coordination with the host railroads and policymakers that we will achieve our goal of expanding and improving passenger rail service both here in Montana and throughout the region,” said Authority Chairman Dave Strohmaier said in [a press release](#). “And the presence at our conference of senior officials from the Federal Railroad Administration, Amtrak, Surface Transportation Board, other agencies, and host railroads shows that our efforts and voices are being taken very seriously.”

For more information on the conference schedule, or to register, [visit the authority’s website](#). Registration for a live stream of the event is also available.

— Updated at 8:45 a.m. to correct date in headline

Class I Briefs: BNSF -Railway Age Written by [Marybeth Luczak](#), Executive Editor September 18, 2023 Class I BNSF



The first BNSF grain shuttle leaving Minnesota for the Pacific Northwest, September 2023. (Caption and Photograph Courtesy of BNSF)

Car Velocity (MPD)	Terminal Dwell (hours)	Local Service	Volume (units)
197.4	24.2	91.8%	168,667
+0.3% +2.9%	-2.0% -4.7%	-1.9% +0.8%	-6.6%
Week ending September 12			Week ending September 9
Percent change versus prior week (left); versus prior month average (right)			Percent change versus prior week
Definitions for Metrics			
Car Velocity: average number of miles a railcar travelled per day			
Terminal Dwell: average time a car resides at a specified terminal location			
Local Service: percentage measuring adherence to customers' first/last mile service plans			
Volume: total number of carloads and intermodal units moved by the railroad during the week			

(Table, Courtesy of BNSF)

NSF's first bean harvest train of the season arrived in Vancouver, Wash., on Sept. 12, 10 hours and 53 minutes ahead of schedule, [the railroad reported via LinkedIn](#). The train hauled soybeans to United Grain in Vancouver from Crookston, Minn. (BNSF Photographs)

BNSF on Sept. 15 issued an operating performance update for customers on its website. The Class I's operating teams responded to a Sept. 14 derailment on the Panhandle Subdivision, near Wellington, Kans., which is approximately 34 miles southwest of Wichita. While both main lines [reopened Sept. 15](#), BNSF said customers “may expect lingering delays as the affected signal infrastructure undergoes repair and traffic continues to normalize.”

According to the railroad, crews remain focused on “maintaining improved service performance” as trains begin moving the [fall harvest](#) and BNSF prepares for peak intermodal shipping season. Its teams have positioned operational resources in critical locations, are prepositioning snow removal equipment at facilities, and completing all main line maintenance on crucial routes, the railroad said

BNSF provides an operating performance update for September. Also, Union Pacific (UP) Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Jennifer L. Hamann joins the Board of Directors at Fort Wayne, Ind.-based Steel Dynamics, Inc.

For the first full week of September, BNSF reported experiencing its best railcar velocity in the past 12 months with a weekly average of 197.4 miles per day (see table above). In the most recent two weeks, the railroad had four days where average railcar velocity was above the 200-mile-per-day mark. Additionally, terminal dwell was down, BNSF reported, and is performing better than August 2023. The local service metric, which reflects the railroad's effectiveness in handling carloads, was down slightly from the prior week but up slightly from the prior month, according to the railroad.

BNSF noted that [on Sept. 2, trains were delayed as its crews responded to a track washout on the Needles Subdivision; service was restored to both main lines the following day.](#)

It's Official: Time to Ride Between SoFlo and Orlando -Provided by John Goodman

Brightline Orlando Station

Orlando Grand Opening.



On Friday, September 22, 2023 history was made as the first passenger train from South Florida arrived in Orlando. More than 600 elected officials, community leaders, and members of the media joined for the celebration.

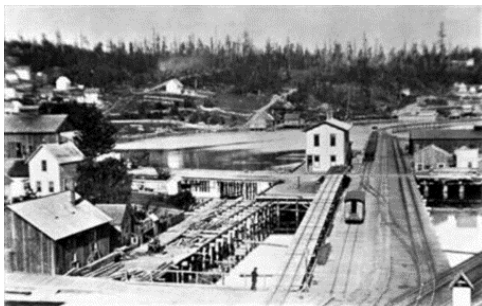
Brightline is connecting Florida's top destinations like never before, forever changing the way people travel throughout The Sunshine State. We've also got some special surprises in store for Guests who ride during the first month of service between South Florida and Orlando. Now's the best time to become one of our inaugural Guests... and be a part of history. We look forward to welcoming you aboard



July 14 in Railroad History: Northern Pacific Railway

From: [Joseph Lechner](#) Date: Fri, 14 Jul 2023

150 years ago today, Arthur Denny read a telegram from the Northern Pacific Railway to a crowd that had gathered at Henry Yesler's sawmill in Seattle. The telegram announced NP's decision to locate its western terminus on Commencement Bay, some twenty-five miles to the south. Citizens of Seattle were outraged. In the summer of 1872, Seattle had offered the NP 7,500 town lots, 3,000 acres of land, \$50,000 in cash and \$200,000 in bonds if it would build its terminal in their city. However, J. C. Ainsworth and R. D. Rice had chosen Tacoma because it was closer to the Columbia River and would require fewer miles of track. The NP and Seattle had a love-hate relationship during the 1880s. Henry Villard announced in 1881 that he would extend his main line from Tacoma to Seattle. But Villard was ruined by the panic of 1883 and forced to relinquish control of the NP in 1884. His successors had little interest in King County. They did lay track all the way to Seattle, mainly because they could receive and then sell off 40 square miles of land for every mile of track under the Land Grant Act of 1864. Train service from Tacoma to Seattle began operating in June 1884; however, service was very poor. The line had only one passenger coach. On the return trip, locomotives had to operate in reverse all the way to Tacoma because there was no turntable in Seattle. Tracks were irregular and unballasted. The 25-mile trip took three hours. Transcontinental passengers to/ from Seattle had to change trains in Tacoma, and usually had to lay over for the night. The Northern Pacific finally saw the light. Freight car loadings to Seattle outnumbered loads to Tacoma ten to one. Most ominously, both the Great Northern and the Canadian Pacific were building lines to Seattle. Faced with certain disaster if it did not improve service, the NP made Seattle its official terminus in 1887. Joseph Lechner



Seattle rail terminal circa 1880
[HistoryLink.org](#)

Urban Rail Begins Reinventing Itself Trains Newswire [By Bob Johnston](#) | September 22, 2023 Commuter Rail Coalition members seek to build patronage amid changing employee work requirements



On Tuesday, Commuter Rail Coalition participants were given a tour of Metra's heavy maintenance facility, where freshly outshopped F40 No. 111 is ready to roll. Bob Johnston



Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District President and General Manager Mike Noland, right, and Greg Yovich, NICTD's Director of Capital Projects-Mechanical share a moment hosting a special South Shore excursion for Commuter Rail Summit participants to Hammond, Ind., on Monday Sept. 18. Passengers then switched to buses to tour construction on the Westlake Extension and double track project as far east as Michigan City, Ind. Bob Johnston

CHICAGO — Representatives from a wide range of U.S. rail operations gathered in the Windy City this week to compare ways in which systems are attempting to capture customers who may have shunned their trains prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Highlights of the three-day confab included a tour of South Shore Line projects hosted by Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District General Manager Mike Noland and an extensive “behind the scenes” visit to Metra’s 47th Street car shop and 49th Street locomotive rebuild facility arranged by Metra CEO Jim Derwinski.

But the meeting’s main focus was to cross-pollinate ideas on how to grow ridership. “We’ve reached a new baseline. Let’s understand who our new riders are going to be,” urged Caltrain Executive Director Michelle Bouchard. She led a panel of presenters on a session appropriately titled, “Becoming the transportation provider of choice in a changing landscape.” The stakes couldn’t be higher for the San Francisco-Silicon Valley system. It has been undergoing a massive conversion since 2017 to electric propulsion based on five-day per week ridership.

The consensus of Bouchard and panelists from Philadelphia’s SEPTA, San Diego’s North County Transit District, Washington D.C.’s Virginia Railway Express, and Los Angeles’ Metrolink is to embark on a customer acquisition strategy that involves consumer outreach and offering frequent off-peak service. The easy money — monthly pass riders — went away,” explained Metrolink CEO Darren Kettle, “but now we’re seeing that suburb-to-suburb trips comprise 51% of our ridership. The commuter peak still exists, though cross-line travel has increased.” Metrolink recently restored the number of trains it operated pre-pandemic to the far-flung Antelope Valley Line to Lancaster, Calif. “But we’re changing where we are putting those trains, including late-night,” Kettle added. His agency continues to plan for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, which the city wants to be car-less. “We will have to figure out how to handle the equivalent of 9 Super Bowls for 16 days,” he says. Both NCTD’s Katie Persons and SEPTA’s Jody Holton stressed the need to develop what Persons characterizes as “trip planning inspiration,” a reason to travel, and experimentation with different fare plans coupled with promotion to entice new riders. With Covid-19 supplemental grants ending within the next few years, Bouchard pointed out frequencies spread more evenly throughout the day are much more efficient to operate because crews are kept busy. “The ‘fiscal cliff’ and providing more frequent service aren’t at odds,” she said. There were also discussions of solving the “first-mile/last-mile” seamless travel challenge and negative perceptions of safety and cleanliness that may keep customers in their cars. As NICTD’s Mike Noland said, “We need to give people better options through increased frequency rather than having them drive and pay for parking.”

Austrian Federal Railways Uses 3D-printed Components on Rail Equipment

Trains Newswire [By](#) | September 7, 2023 Metro News - Minneapolis Company Making 3D Parts For Rail Equipment -**Chromatic 3D Materials produces parts out of U.S. and Germany facilities**



MINNEAPOLIS — [Chromatic 3D Materials](#) has begun providing 3D-printed components to be used on rail equipment in Europe. A partnership with the [Austrian Federal Railways](#) (ÖBB) resulted in the production of bellows, grommets, cable glands, and valve covers, according to a [recent statement from Chromatic](#).

A Cityjet Desiro ML in short-distance, commuter service for Austria’s ÖBB. Austrian Federal Railways

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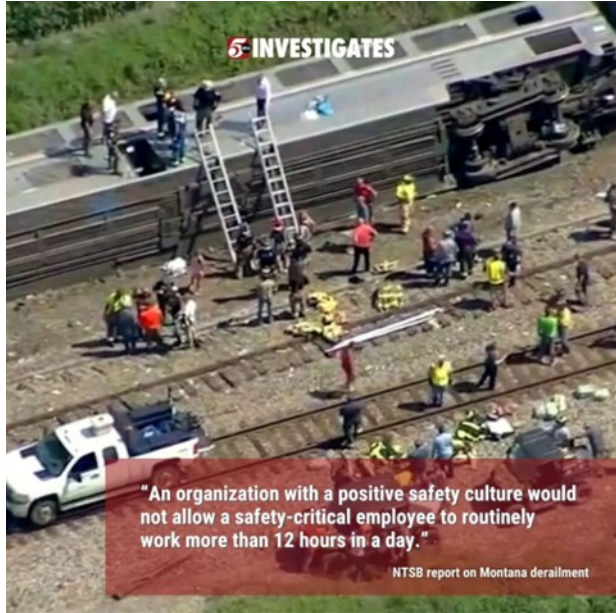
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“At Chromatic, we take pride in the durability of our 3D-printed materials, which have undergone rigorous testing,” said Dr. Bart Engeldahl, managing director for the company that operates multiple facilities in the U.S. and Germany. With the rapid growth in 3D printing and due to the challenge of sourcing obsoleted parts, ÖBB approached Chromatic in June 2023 with the request for custom prototypes. The final design of the components includes enhancement in performance, longevity and comfort for the railway’s fleet of locomotives, rolling stock, and train sets. The versatile thermoset polyurethane was the selected material based on durability and flexibility. “Now that ÖBB is demonstrating the use of our 3D materials in rail applications, we expect customers with demanding transportation, aerospace, industrial and defense applications will have confidence in Chromatic’s products and printing technologies,” Engeldahl stated.

NTSB Calls Out ‘shortcoming in safety culture’ at Minnesota’s Largest Railroad

Ryan Raiche KSTP provided by Metro News - Safety Culture At BNSF

Updated: September 7, 2023 - 10:42 PM Published: September 7, 2023 - 6:42 PM Provided by Rick Krenske



BNSF claims it monitors the hours worked by its team members very closely.

NTSB calls out ‘shortcoming in safety culture’ at Minnesota’s largest railroad. Federal investigators are concerned about the safety culture at Minnesota’s largest railroad, according to a recent report on a deadly derailment. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) concluded this summer that poor track conditions caused an Amtrak train to derail in Montana two years ago. The track is owned by Burlington Northern Santa Fe. The NTSB is also currently investigating another BNSF derailment last March that forced a small town in southwest Minnesota to evacuate. After that derailment, 5 INVESTIGATES [revealed a troubling pattern](#) at the railroad that included a history of [track defects](#), destruction of evidence, and retaliation against employees. The new report out of Montana also found BNSF has a “shortcoming in its safety culture.”

Deadly Derailment

Three people died and dozens were injured when eight cars jumped the rails in September 2021. The accident is now being blamed on misaligned and poorly maintained tracks. The 72-page report by the NTSB also found that the track inspector worked “excessive hours” and “most likely... did not have time” for a thorough, so-called walking inspection that may have prevented the tragedy. But the NTSB said that an organization with a positive safety culture would not allow a safety-critical employee to routinely work more than 12 hours in a day.

Secret Recordings from Minnesota

Track inspectors in Minnesota have voiced similar concerns about the safety culture at BNSF. One former inspector called it a “a very toxic work environment.”

Channel 5 INVESTIGATES: we [obtained conversations](#) secretly recorded by another former inspector who claims he was fired for reporting “too many defects.”

“I have missed so much stuff being the only person here working seven days a week,” Don Sanders said in one of the phone conversations with his former supervisor.

The recordings, first reported by 5 INVESTIGATES, are part of a 2017 lawsuit filed in federal court by Sanders. He claimed the calls showed how he was pressured to keep trains moving at full speed no matter what.

“All I can say is I need your help right now to keep my ass from getting fired,” Sanders’ boss is heard saying on one of the calls.

“I understand,” Sanders replies. “So, in order to keep you from getting fired, I need to just look the other way?”

“No,” his boss said. “We just need to have a conversation.”

Jury Verdicts And Growing Scrutiny

A jury awarded Sanders more than two million dollars. BNSF is currently appealing the decision. The company did not respond to requests for comment. A spokesperson previously said it does not retaliate against employees.

However, a federal jury in Colorado found the company did retaliate against another former track inspector who said his boss instructed him to “falsify reports” and threatened to withhold his paycheck. The jury awarded that employee more than \$1 million in 2021.

Railroads have been under growing scrutiny after a series of derailments across the country, including the wreck that released hazardous chemicals in Ohio earlier this year.

State and federal lawmakers are demanding answers about the safety culture at the largest railroads—including BNSF.

The safety concerns are now shared by federal investigators.

A Lengthy UAW Strike Would Curb Railroads' US Auto Volumes

Trains newswire [By Bill Stephens](#) | September 14, 2023 It would take a week to 10 days for a strike to affect Norfolk Southern volumes, CEO Alan Shaw says



A Norfolk Southern distributed power unit shoves eastbound auto racks at Cassandra, Pa., in April

A potential [United Auto Workers](#) strike against the Big Three automakers would put a dent in railroads' motor vehicle and parts volume – the traffic segment that's shown the most growth this year as overall rail volume has declined.

The UAW has set a midnight deadline tonight for a strike at Ford, GM, and Stellantis, with the union and automakers far apart on wages, pensions, cost of living adjustments, and profit sharing. Yesterday UAW President Shawn Fain said the union would strike at selected plants first, followed by others if talks with the automakers don't make progress.

So far this year motor vehicles and parts have accounted for 3.2% of U.S. rail traffic, according to Association of American Railroads data.

The segment is up 13.4% so far this year, while overall U.S. traffic has slumped 4.8%, according to the AAR.

Norfolk Southern directly serves just over half of all light vehicle production in the U.S., with the Big Three accounting for 30% to 40% of the railroad's automotive volume, CEO Alan Shaw said at the FTR Transportation Intelligence conference yesterday.

"There are finished vehicles waiting to be moved. So we could see normal volumes on us for a week to 10 days before it has any impact," Shaw says of a potential strike.

Auto sales have rebounded this year from the computer chip shortage that began during the pandemic and crimped production. Last month S&P Global Mobility projected that auto sales this year would be 15.4 million units – its highest level since 2019 and an 11.6% increase from 2022.

Last year the Big Three accounted for 43% of U.S. auto sales.

Ukraine Update: Railways See Espionage, Sabotage, and Station Attacks as War Grinds On

Trains Newswire [By Keith Fender](#) | September 27, 2023 -Activity in Poland shows conflict's reach into neighboring countries



A regional train in Szczec, Poland. Services around the city were stopped by misuse of a radio system in August. This train's special gold livery commemorates the fact it was used to transport the Pope during a visit to Poland. Keith Fender.



Polish railfan, joined by some from other countries, photograph an excursion in 2011. New laws could make the hobby difficult in Poland. Keith Fender

The war in Ukraine shows no sign of ending any time soon, and railways remain heavily involved in Ukraine; in Russia, where the ongoing invasion depends on it; and in neighboring European countries.

Trackside espionage in Poland

In March, Polish police arrested six people allegedly working for Russian Military intelligence who had placed trackside cameras near rail lines, airports, and major roads in southeastern Poland, through which most western military and humanitarian aid passes. The imagery from the cameras was transmitted via the internet.

During the summer it was disclosed that Polish security services have arrested 16 people suspected of being Russian spies or saboteurs. According to Polish police, those arrested included Polish and Russian citizens.

They had been under observation for some time, but were arrested as they planned to actually sabotage railway lines or trains. The group was allegedly recruited earlier in 2023 by Russian agents and was being paid in cryptocurrency to undertake the surveillance.

Radio stops trains

In late August a bizarre event stopped all rail traffic in the area of the western Polish port city of Szczecin near the German border. A systemwide stop instruction, designed for emergency use, was broadcast on the Polish rail internal radio system used to communicate with engineers in their cabs. The stop system automatically activates train brakes, so more than 20 trains were halted.

According to some media reports, the Russian national anthem was heard playing in the background as the emergency stop signal was transmitted. The radio-based system that was disrupted is clearly not very high tech – which may explain the ease with which it was interfered with. However, it also meant the people responsible were easy to trace. Two people — one a 29-year-old police officer from eastern Poland — have been arrested as the main suspects; whether they were acting on behalf of a foreign government is unclear.

Railfans could be caught in photo ban

The fact that foreign intelligence services have been filming and monitoring Polish rail, road, and air traffic in recent months has led to new laws that will allow photography to be banned at Polish rail stations or depots (and airports) — although the ban will come into force only after signs are posted making the prohibition clear. So far, none are reported. Poland used to have draconian blanket bans on rail photography. These were only lifted in 1989-90 when the Communist government was removed. In the 1980s, signs banning photography were widespread on railway property until removed around 1990.

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Exactly how these new rules will be introduced is unclear. Potentially only those facilities directly involved in marshalling freight trains may be covered, but the worst case is that ordinary railfans, of which there are thousands in Poland — almost all of whom are younger than is average in countries where rail photography wasn't banned until the 1990s — will be caught up in a ban designed to catch covert filming, not people openly doing so as a hobby.

Rail lines a target in Ukrainian counteroffensive

The Ukrainian army began a counteroffensive this summer to recover territory occupied by Russia. The key objective appears to be the recovery of land bordering the Sea of Azov, which would cut the land-based links between Russia and the illegally occupied Crimean Peninsula. The fighting is ongoing, and progress has been slow thanks to the Russians having many months to prepare defences. As of mid-September, Ukrainian government sources were openly stating their aim was to sever the electrified rail line linking the occupied cities of Melitopol and Donetsk; from Donetsk multiple routes head east into Russia and currently supply Russian forces. By mid-September, Ukrainian forces were 15 miles from the town of Tokmak, which sits on that rail line, according to media reports. If Ukrainian forces continue to advance, the use of that railway line is likely to be much more dangerous, as artillery will be in range. The line is the only one available between Russia and Crimea, apart from the route over the Crimean Bridge which continues to be the target for Ukrainian drone attacks. A 2022 attack shut the bridge down briefly [see [“Rail bridge linking Crimea and Russia damaged ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Oct. 9, 2022]; two people were reported to have been killed during [another attack in July](#), while Russia said it thwarted an additional attack [earlier this month](#).

Trackside sabotage in occupied Ukraine and Russia

Multiple incidents involving sabotage of railway tracks have occurred in the last 18 months — many in parts of Ukraine occupied by Russian forces, but also in Russia itself, and in neighboring Belarus, which is an ally of Russia. Russian security services have arrested multiple people in occupied Ukraine suspected of railway sabotage on behalf of the Ukrainian government. In May 2023, two freight trains in two days were derailed in the Bryansk region of southern Russia. These were not the first such incidents in the area that borders Ukraine. In July, a Russian court convicted a dual Russian-Ukrainian citizen of terrorism offenses for blowing up tracks and derailling another train in the same area in July 2022. According to Russian news agency Tass, prosecutors said the man was working for Ukrainian intelligence services; he was sent to prison for 22 years. Attacks on lineside rail signalling systems have been reported deep inside Russia this year and more than 60 people, mostly young Russian citizens, have been arrested for this in 2023, according to local media. In most cases, the defendants describe being offered money via online contacts to undertake arson attacks on signal equipment cases or power supply systems.

On Aug. 20, Russian media and the BBC reported five people were injured in a Ukrainian attack on the station in the Russian city of Kursk, about 90 miles from the Ukrainian border. Whether this was a deliberate attack, or a drone targeted elsewhere shot down by Russian anti-aircraft systems, is unclear.

In Ukraine, the railway and station in the city of Kherson is still being regularly targeted by Russian artillery. The city was liberated by Ukraine in November 2022 [See [“Ukraine rail update ...”](#) *News Wire*, Nov. 21, 2022] but is still in range of Russian guns across the Dnipro River.

Ore Rail - Digest #523 NSM to go Union From: [Dave Schauer](#) Date: Wed, 19 Jul 2023 13:45:21 PDT

I'm not surprised given how Cliffs uses the plant as a swing operation with a lot of uncertainty. This will mark the first time since the operation rose from the ashes of Reserve Mining in 1990 that it will have a union workforce.

Northshore Mining Co. Workers to Join USW

By Lee Bloomquist Jul 19, 2023 Labor contract negotiations to begin in August Miners at Cleveland-Cliffs Inc.'s Northshore Mining Co. in Babbitt and Silver Bay have elected to join the United Steelworkers (USW) union. A card check process conducted by the USW resulted in a majority of the taconite facility's approximately 400 hourly-paid workers approving of a desire for a union, according to the USW. A card certification process which verified the results, was finalized Tuesday by an arbitrator, said the USW. “Mining in Minnesota provides essential support for our local communities, our domestic steel industry and our nation's critical infrastructure,” Emil Ramirez, USW District 11 director, said in a news release. “We're honored that workers at Northshore chose our union.” By joining the union, workers believe, they will have more say in the workplace. “We chose to unionize so that we can have a voice on the job, especially when it comes to workplace health and safety, retirement security and other critical issues that affect us every day,” said Jason Curtis, a Northshore Mining Co. maintenance technician in the USW news release. “We're proud of our work and of our part in the long legacy of responsible mining in Minnesota. Now, we're looking forward to making these jobs even better.” A USW local president and staff at Northshore Mining Co. will be elected soon, said John Arbogast, USW District 11 staff representative. A negotiation process between the USW and Cleveland-Cliffs aimed at reaching a labor agreement will begin within two weeks, he said. The goal is to reach a labor contract in August. “We always say there's strength in numbers and now they're part of everything,” said Arbogast. “I think what finally pushed them over the top is that they want a seat at the table.” Northshore's mine in Babbitt and processing plant in Silver Bay were idled for about a year before restarting this spring. Cleveland-Cliffs has said Northshore will operate as a “swing” operation, producing iron ore pellets when needed and idling when pellets are not needed. Hourly-paid workers at five other northeastern Minnesota taconite plants have been represented by the USW for decades. Those plants are: Cleveland-Cliffs' Hibbing Taconite Co., Minorca Mine, United Taconite, and United States Steel Corporation's Minntac Mine and Keetac. Cleveland-Cliffs employs about 2,000 hourly workers in total at Hibbing Taconite Co., Minorca Mine, United Taconite, and its Tilden Mine in Upper Michigan. In recent labor contract negotiations, Cleveland-Cliffs has been a leader in reaching new labor contract agreements with the USW. http://www.businessnorth.com/daily_briefing/northshore-mining-co-workers-to-join-usw/article_09987fa6-2640-11ee-a313-c71c7859bc7b.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share Dave Schauer Duluth, MN



Hennepin Overland Proposed Schedule 2023-2024 Provided by Bill Dredge
Times: 1:00pm – 4:00pm Trains after Dark(6:00pm-9:00pm) Adult Fare \$10

September 2, 3 ,9, 10, 16, 17, 23 ,24 October 1, 7, 8, 15, 21, 22, 28, 29 November 4, 5, 11, 12, 18, 19, 25, 26(black Friday) December 2, 3, 9, 10, 16, 17, 23(trains after dark), 24, 30, 31	February 3, 4, 10(Trains after dark), 11, 17, 18, 24, 25 March 2, 3, 9(Trains after dark), 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30 (Closed March 31-Easter Sunday) April 6, 7, 13(Trains after dark), 14, 20, 21, 27, 28(Pot luck)
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Railfan Events (Thanks to Rick Krenske, Bill Dredge)

Northstar Chapter NRHS Monthly Meeting	Saturday October 14th 2023 6:15—8:45 pm	Roseville Lutheran Church 1215 Roselawn Ave W Roseville MN 55113	FREE -Guests are Welcome
Newport Railroad Club Flea Market	Saturday October 14 2023 9:00am—2:00pm	Woodbury High School 2665 Woodlane Drive Woodbury, MN	\$7
Great Train Show (Tentative)	Saturday –Sunday October 28th and October 29th 2023 10:00am—4:00pm	Canterbury Park 1100 Canterbury Rd, Shakopee, MN	\$10 for both days
West Wisconsin Railroad Club's 21st Annual Train show	October 14th & October 15th 2023 10:00 AM—3:00 PM	YMCA Indoor Sports Center 3456 Craig Road Eau Claire, Wisconsin. 54701-6977	\$8
Windy City Excursion #261 Private Cars	Friday October 6 –Sunday Oc- tober 8 2023	St Paul to Chicago on Amtrak Empire Builder	See 261.com For fares

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