



NRHS

# Northstar News

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

**Happy Holidays!**

rev2



*L: CN Holiday Train Proctor MN - David Shauer*

*R: CP Holiday train at SPUD 2018 -Jeff Terry*



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## Meeting Notice:

**Saturday January 6th 2024 6:15 pm At Roseville Lutheran Church, our January Meeting also will be a ZOOM meeting. Note: in 2024 meetings will held on the 2nd Saturday of the month (Except January).**

**(January Program: To be determined)**

Informal Dinner at Keys Restaurant -Lexington and Larpenteur Avenues at 4:15 pm January 6th, 2024.

Please join us in-person at Roseville Lutheran Church, Saturday January 6th 2024 at 6 pm. Our business meeting will begin at 6:15 followed by the program.

If you are unable to join us in person, the Zoom Meeting log-in information will be in the January 2024 newsletter.



TCRT Duluth car at Excelsior Holiday Nov 7 2020 -Bob Ball

## Northstar Chapter Officers and 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: Holiday Banquet is December 3rd 2023 at Manicini's Restaurant in St Paul.***

***Programs for future meetings are open. Jan-thru May 2024 are open. Contact either Jphn Goodman or Richard Tubbesing at the above E-mails to schedule and show your program.***

***Please note: renewal invoices for membership dues for 2024 have been sent.***

***Please Note the increase in yearly dues on your invoices for regular members (NRHS members) and subscribers.***

## Meeting Minutes November 11th<sup>h</sup> 2023

The meeting was called to order by President Dan Meyer at 6:21pm. We have a quorum. There were about 15 members present. MEETING MINUTES: A motion was floored to approve the minutes of the September 2023 meeting as written in the October 2023 Northstar news. Richard Tubbesing stated there were some corrections provided by Russ Isbrandt. *The correct name for Bob Moen's outfit is the American Passenger Train History Museum, not American Passenger Railroad Museum. Moving the library remains to a storage facility saves us \$396 per month in rent but not insurance. I will have to explore getting a reduction in the insurance premium in light of our very much smaller collection. Ray Benson Jr. (Casey) brought the slides of Dick Melcher and Ray Senior to have them scanned which I volunteered to do and am in the process of doing. We DID NOT ask to borrow them but did get his permission to retain copies of the scans.* Motion was carried. LIBRARY REPORT: The library report was given by John Goodman. Bob Moen came up with a truck on Wednesday October 18<sup>th</sup> and we loaded about 85% of the library contents. Bob Moen transferred the contents to a storage location in the Charles City IA area. The restored Charles City Milwaukee Road depot (which was scheduled for demolition by Canadian Pacific) was moved to Bob Moen's Passenger car area and is waiting for heating, electrical, air conditioning to be installed. Our collection will eventually be housed in the basement of the depot as a railroad research facility. Hopefully, in a year we plan to make a visit to Charles City IA to visit Bob Moen's facility. The rest of our collection was moved to a climate-controlled storage about a block away from our Library in Crystal. We decided to move our kept contents ourselves.

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Helping in the move were Dan Meyer, Dawn Holmberg, John Goodman, Russ Isbrandt, Richard Tubbesing, Ed Johnson, Jack Barbier, Joe Fishbein, Glen Holmberg, Bill Dredge and Wayne Torseth. Richard Tubbesing stated that Dan Meyer, Dawn Holmberg, John Goodman and Russ Isbrandt did yeoman work on the move and the attendees were requested to give an ovation to these members for their hard work. Most of the material we kept are historical records of our chapter going back to June 1969 and historical documents that are important to our organization. We retain six of fifteen shelving for our storage unit. We leased a 10x20' room on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor in the Storage facility. It is not large enough to hold our weekly Wednesday gatherings. There is only room for 2 or 3 people. We also have three more boxes for Bob Moen that he will pick up when he comes to town for the All-Aboard meeting coming up. Dawn Holmberg got a check of over \$300 from former building owner Mr Moshee Weinburg of the refund deposit to give to treasurer Russ Isbrandt. We will eventually go thru and sort the material in the storage unit. This includes slides of the Bill Cordes, Bob Macnie, Barney Olsen, Roger Clark and Bill Herzog collections. These will be important photos for our future calendar production. We are also saving over \$4000 a year. John Goodman stated that there are other possible railroad collections to be obtained but will wait and see. TREASURERS REPORT: The Treasurer's report was given by Russ Isbrandt. Our total checking balance is healthy. We netted \$404 from the Canterbury Train show. There are twenty Regular members that have renewed and seventeen that have yet to renew. We have seven subscribers with eleven that have not renewed. CALENDAR REPORT: The Calendar report was given by Dawn Holmberg. The Postcard is being finalized for mailing and should be going out in the next week. We sold 11 calendars at the Canterbury show. Russ Isbrandt stated that our web site does not have current price and ability to order calendars. Dan Meyer stated that the web site will be updated in the next week so calendars can be ordered. TRIP DIRECTORS REPORT: The trip Director report was given by John Goodman. The Wisconsin Great Northern railroad has placed the trucks back on the Mark Twain Zephyr and power plant is near installation. We are open to a trip to Trego WI on the Wisconsin Great Northern. The option of going to the Boone and Scenic RR in Iowa is too far, and would be feasible for a bus trip, but the bus rental is too expensive. We had fun on the Northshore Scenic in Duluth and could be a possibility. Dawn Holmberg reported that the LSRM steam engine has been fired up and running but no trips are planned as it is too late in the year. A trip to Charles city is 2 hours and 15 minutes away. Bob Ball suggested we also include a trip to the Iowa Traction on a Charles City Trip. Bob stated that Dave Fallin of the Iowa Traction is very friendly to visitors. Bob will see him soon and inquire on a possible trip. It was stated that the Iowa traction cannot run an excursion. John Goodman said he will submit a write-up of trip possibilities in the newsletter. NEWSLETTER REPORT: Richard Tubbesing gave the newsletter report. The last newsletter has a sign-up sheet for the Holiday Banquet. The newsletter will be out around the first of every month. CHEER COMMITTEE: The Cheer Committee was given by John Goodman. John mentioned that former member Steve Kopacz has moved to a different care Facility. Greg Smith is the one who has given us information on Steve. We have no information on Dave Norman. Dan Meyer reported that Dawn Holmberg had a medical procedure that turned out fine. Dave Herbert recently moved close to his sister in Virginia. Russ Isbrandt talked to him recently and he declined to renew his membership and Russ communicated that the Old Dominion Chapter in Richmond is a NRHS chapter to join close to his new home. John Goodman stated that most of Dave's model RR collection went to Scale Model supplies owner and Dave's military collection went to a military history group. WEB REPORT: The Web report was given by Dan Meyer. The Web site is up to date and Dan does put information of our chapter activities on Facebook. All the newsletters back to 2002 are available on our chapter web site. NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE REPORT: Dawn Holmberg gave the National Representative report. No news to report as there is no information on a Winter or Spring Conference next year. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS REPORT: John Goodman gave information on the Nominations and Elections of Officers for 2024. Dan Meyer solicited nominations according to our bylaws. Solicitations for each office (President, Secretary, Treasurer, and National Representative) was solicited three times by Dan Meyer. There were no nominations. Therefore, for the Three-Year term starting in January 2024 the Officers are Dan Meyer President, Richard Tubbesing Secretary, Russ Isbrandt Treasurer and Dawn Holmberg for National Representative. John Goodman stated that there has been no nominations outside of the current slate of Officers. The by-laws specify that nominations are due in October, and Elections in November starting the next January 1<sup>st</sup>. John Goodman moved a motion that the unanimous ballot be cast and the officers directed to be the winners. The motion was seconded. The vote by members was unanimous. Bob Ball gave thanks the current officers for their service. Dan Meyer stated that Bob Ball was also a past president and thanked for his contributions. HOLIDAY BANQUET REPORT: The Holiday Banquet report was given by John Goodman. Dan Meyer stated he has Banquet sign-up forms for the members. John stated he has 15 people signed up and hopes to get at least thirty people signed-up. Program for the Banquet will be by Northern Pacific Historian and Airline pilot Bill Kubler and on the North Coast Limited with a brief report on his career as an airline pilot. The venue will be held at Mancini's Restaurant in Saint Paul with a meal choice of Steak or Chicken. John stated reducing our choice to two entrée's reduced our banquet cost to \$35. OLD BUSINESS: Old Business was presented by Dawn Holmberg. Our monthly meeting venue's have not been confirmed by the church for 2024. Solicitation was made of the monthly meeting dates. The January 2024 meeting will be moved up to January 6<sup>th</sup> (RPCA Conference is 2nd Saturday in January) and thereafter be the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month. Dawn stated she will work with Roseville Church (Dan and Dawn are members, and we get a reduced rate on room rental) to schedule our meetings for the first 5 months of 2024. Meeting dates will be noted in the next newsletter. Russ Isbrandt then made a motion to move the January meeting to the 6<sup>th</sup> and motion was carried. Richard Tubbesing stated that it was good to see Warren Krekelburg present as has just gone through a serious illness. NEW BUSINESS: New Business was given by John Goodman about photo authorization. Russ Isbrandt stated he has given permission for the use of two of our Winona and Southwestern railroad photos to a non-profit historical group.

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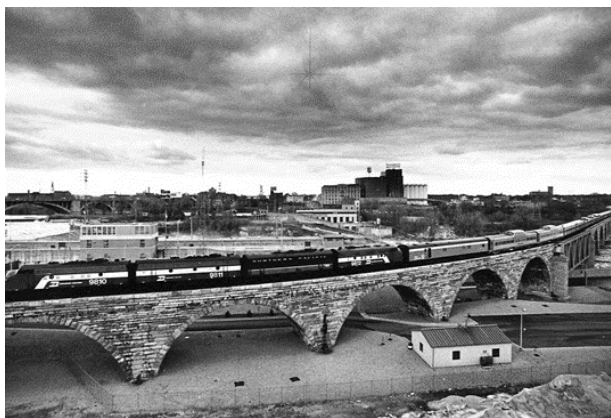
*Continued from previous page:* Russ waived the fee to this historical association. The historical association will send us a copy of their publication for use of our photos. Ed Johnson raised the question if we are going to continue our tradition of meeting weekly on Wednesdays at our library. John Goodman stated that Russ being a resident of Ramsey County that we can schedule a meeting room at a library close to our monthly meeting church location. As we proceed into next year we will do this on a more frequent time frame and try to published the these meetings in the newsletter. Richard Tubbesing stated that his apartment has a great room that could be used but located in Fridley and parking could be a problem. Richard will check with apartment management for availability. AD-JOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 7:08 pm. Motion was carried. PROGRAM: Richard Tubbesing stated that the program will be a DVD by Jack Barbier called an Eastern Steam Trifecta. Bill Dredge had an announcement about the All Aboard Meeting in Edina MN on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November at 3PM. Ed Johnson confirmed this meeting. Jack Barbier program was then presented after a 10 minute break. It was well received! Respectfully submitted by Richard Tubbesing Secretary

## Amtrak Twin Cities Services Through the Years

By Brian Schmidt, Classic Trains Editor | October 22, 2023 -provided bt Rick Krenske



*The Amtrak Type 300A station design shown opened in 1978 in both the Twin Cities and Miami. Amtrak photo*



*The first Amtrak consist heads into Minneapolis' Burlington Northern (former Great Northern Railway) station crossing the famous stone arch bridge over the Mississippi River on May 1, 1971. R. H. Middlestaedt photo*



*The first westbound Empire Builder/North Coast Hiawatha (Nos. 7/17) departs the new Minneapolis-St. Paul station on March 2, 1978. The \$5.7 million facility opened the day. R. H. Middlestaedt photo*

One train has been constant in more than 50 years: the famed 'Empire Builder'. Amtrak Twin Cities services started on May 1, 1971, at the Burlington Northern (former Great Northern) station in Minneapolis. Service levels ebbed and flowed through the years as trains were added or subtracted. Amtrak opened a new Twin Cities station on March 1, 1978, using a standard plan that was also built in Miami. It was located on Transfer Road on St. Paul's west side in the Minnesota Commercial Railroad's yard. The last train to use the BN station was the northbound *Arrowhead* for Duluth, which left at 8:30 a.m.; the first train to use the new station was the westbound *Twin Cities Hiawatha*, which arrived at 8:25 p.m. At the time, Amtrak patronage for the Twin Cities stop averaged 580 persons.

### *Empire Builder*

Amtrak moved to the historic [St. Paul Union Depot](#) on May 7, 2014, which lost all of its passenger trains at Amtrak's creation in 1971. SPUD is located at the east end of the Twin Cities' Green Line light rail. Amtrak Twin Cities services started with just the *Empire Builder* at the beginning on May 1, 1971. It operated as trains 7 and 8 from Chicago to Minneapolis over the Milwaukee Road and west of Minneapolis on the former [Great Northern](#) main line to Seattle. Along the route it served (West) Grand Forks and Minot, N.D.; Havre and Whitefish, Mont.; and Wenatchee, Wash. At various times it operated less than daily as the budget would allow. On Oct. 28, 1979, it became the first long-distance train to be reequipped with new Superliner equipment. In 1981 the train added a new section operating between Spokane and Portland, Ore.; it carried Nos. 27-78. The *Builder* still operates today as Amtrak's sole entrant in the Chicago to Seattle market that for a time supported three named trains.

### *North Coast Hiawatha*

The *North Coast Hiawatha* joined the Chicago to Seattle market as an unnamed triweekly train on June 5, 1971. It operated from Chicago to Minneapolis over the Milwaukee Road and west of Minneapolis on the former Northern Pacific main line to Seattle. Along the route it served Bismarck, N.D.; Billings, Butte, and Livingston, Mont.; and Ellensburg, Wash., among other stops. It obtained the *North Coast Hiawatha* name, a combination of Northern Pacific's *North Coast Limited* and [Milwaukee Road's Hiawatha fleet](#), and Nos. 9-10, with the first Amtrak timetable issued on Nov. 14, 1971. At first, the Amtrak *North Coast Hiawatha* service operated jointly with the *Empire Builder* between Chicago and Minneapolis and Spokane and Seattle. On Nov. 14, 1971, it began operation as a separate train between Chicago and Minneapolis and on June 10, 1973, also between Spokane and Seattle. While the full route was tri-weekly, the train operated daily on the Chicago to Minneapolis segment. The *North Coast Hiawatha* was dropped from the Amtrak map on Oct. 6, 1979.

## Three Injured as Light Rail Train Derails in Minneapolis



By | November 19, 2023 Service restored after Saturday night incident

MINNEAPOLIS — Three people suffered minor injuries Saturday night when a Metro Transit light rail train derailed in downtown Minneapolis, [WCCO-TV reports](#). A concrete object on the tracks caused the derailment between the Nicollet Mall and Warehouse District/Hennepin stations about 8:30 p.m., according to Metro Transit. None of those injured required hospitalization. Replacement buses substituted for Blue and Green line service in downtown until early this morning, with a regular light rail schedule resuming today, Metro Transit reported in [a social media post](#).

## Soo Line No. 1003 Steams Through Central Wisconsin for 110th Year

By [Lucas Iverson](#) | November 13, 2023 Checklist for offseason work on 2-8-2 to be built on



*Soo Line 2-8-2 No. 1003 on display in Downtown Hartford, Wis., for the 2023 Santa Train on Nov. 11. Lucas*

HARTFORD, Wis. — A weekend of operations for [Soo Line steam locomotive No. 1003](#) stretched from its home in Hartford to as far as Fairwater, Wis., approximately 50 miles northwest.

The Mikado-type 2-8-2 is in its 110th year, having been constructed in March 1913 by the American Locomotive Company in Schenectady, N.Y. Making the most of what was the only scheduled operation in 2023, the locomotive's performance of the annual *Santa Train* and photo charter along the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad had something for everyone to enjoy.

On Saturday morning, Nov. 11, No. 1003 in its shining boiler jacketing led the *Santa Train* on a short move from the Wisconsin Automotive Museum to downtown Hartford for display, preceding Mainstreet's Christmas Parade. The locomotive then headed out of town in the afternoon with a Milwaukee Road flatcar and reefer, along with a Soo Line wooden caboose to its overnight stop in Brandon, Wis. The following day witness No. 1003 at the head end of a private photo freight, starting at Fairwater and making its way back to Hartford. In a partnership between *Steel Highway Magazine* and Brodie Photography, the charter offered a variety of runby locations along the route for both photographers and videographers.

"No. 1003 ran flawlessly and steamed beautifully," said Mike Raia, president of the Steam Locomotive Heritage Association that operates the locomotive. Winterization immediately took place upon arrival back at the Automotive Museum on Sunday night. The checklist for both maintenance and repairs will be put together and built on over the next couple of months, according to Raia. In between runs, the displayed locomotive is accessible to the public in the museum during their normal visiting hours.

Visit [Steam Locomotive Heritage Association](#) and the [Wisconsin Automotive Museum](#) websites for more information.

## Minnesota Steam Locomotive Makes Test Runs

By [Steve Glischinski](#) | November 6, 2023 DM&IR 2-8-0 No. 332 runs in Duluth



*The Lake Superior Railroad Museum operated successful test runs with Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range 2-8-0 No. 332 on Saturday, Nov. 4. Douglas Hildebrandt*

DULUTH, Minn. — The Lake Superior Railroad Museum's Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range 2-8-0 No. 332 has returned to operation with weekend test runs. The locomotive ran Nov. 4 on the North Shore Scenic Railroad. The museum's steam crew, headed by Scott Carney, operated the engine between the museum in downtown Duluth and the siding at Lakeside in the city's East End. For the test, No. 332 pulled DM&IR caboose C-205 and SD18 No. 193, which was used to simulate a train. This summer the locomotive was under repair, with staybolts 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 that 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. All the work has been approved by the Federal Railroad Administration. The test runs were deemed a success. The museum hopes to use No. 332 on a limited basis on the North Shore Scenic Railroad between Duluth and Two Harbors in 2024.



## Federal Regulators to Establish Passenger Rail Advisory Committee

[By](#) | November 13, 2023 The panel will advise the Surface Transportation Board on matters relating to passenger and commuter rail service



*Amtrak's westbound Empire Builder meets a Canadian Pacific train led by SD70ACU No. 7028 at Nashotah, Wis., on March 8, 2020. Nolan Wallenkamp*

WASHINGTON — The Surface Transportation Board is creating an advisory panel that will guide the board on passenger and commuter rail issues. The Passenger Rail Advisory Committee will have 18 voting members that will include representatives from Amtrak, commuter rail agencies, intercity operators other than Amtrak, a state that provides funding for Amtrak service, a state that's only served by Amtrak long-distance trains, Class I railroads, short line railroads, passenger rail advocacy groups, a rail shipper, rail labor, and three at-large members.

"I am very pleased that the Board is taking this necessary step in creating the PRAC," Chairman Martin J. Oberman said in a statement today (Monday, Nov. 13). "Once we are able to seek nominations and select members for the inaugural committee, the Board looks forward to working with the members to better understand the issues impacting passenger rail and hear their valuable insights."

Based on the Board's very positive experience with our other advisory committees, I fully expect the creation of this new passenger-oriented committee will prove equally valuable to the Board members."

The board will issue a separate decision seeking nominees to serve on the committee once the panel's charter is filed with the STB's congressional oversight committees.

The committee will provide advice and make recommendations to the board on improving efficiency on passenger rail routes; reducing disputes between passenger rail carriers and freight rail hosts regarding the use of freight rail carrier-owned facilities and infrastructure for passenger service, including passenger on-time performance issues; and improving regulatory processes related to intercity passenger rail to the benefit of the public, the communities served by passenger rail, and the environment.

## Union Pacific Plans Major Big Boy Tour in 2024

[By](#) | November 2, 2023 Steam locomotive will visit 'four corners' of 23-state system



*Union Pacific Big Boy No. 4014 rounds a curve on the Yoder Subdivision between Egbert and Albin, Wyo., on June 7, 2023. UP plans a major tour for the 4-8-8-4 in 2024. Kevin Gilliam*

OMAHA, Neb. — Union Pacific will send Big Boy No. 4014 on a "Four Corners" tour of its system in 2024, the railroad announced today, including stops in Oregon, California, Texas, and Illinois.

"As we move forward at Union Pacific, we remember where we came from; the Big Boy represents the history of Union Pacific and the United States," Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena [said in a message](#) to UP's "Steam Club," which receives first notification of plans for the 4-8-8-4. "When No. 4014 comes to town, we will celebrate with the communities where we operate, our employees and their families. Together, we will marvel at how far technology has brought us."

Anticipated stops include Chicago; Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston; Salt Lake City; Portland, Ore; Nampa, Idaho; and Roseville, Calif. A schedule and route information will be announced next year, and the railroad plans events for employees and their families in addition to public stops.

“[The Trains Interview: Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena ...](#),” Oct. 19, 2023], Vena had indicated he planned to use the Big Boy more I love it,” Vena said then. “It’s a wonderful way to represent who we are, where we came from, and understand what technology does. There was a reason why the diesels came in and we’re able to change. But it is a wonderful symbol of who we are. And I’m going to bring it out next year and we’re going to use it for people to understand and learn more about Union Pacific. It will be part of our employee days, where the employees get to bring their families and are able to go jump on that thing and see how big it is.”

## Second Train Between Twin Cities and Chicago Slated to Begin in 2024

By [Steve Glischinski](#) | November 3, 2023 Minnesota DOT surveying potential riders about possible amenities



The westbound Empire Builder passes through Northbrook, Ill., on Oct. 18, 2023. A second train on the Chicago-Twin Cities portion of the Builder route is slated to begin in 2024. David Lassen

ST. PAUL, Minn. — In a social media post Wednesday, the Minnesota Department of Transportation announced the long-awaited second passenger train between St. Paul and Chicago will begin service in 2024. MnDOT is also asking potential passengers to take a survey about amenities they would like to see aboard the train. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Illinois Department of Transportation, and MnDOT are sponsoring the service. Amtrak will operate the trains on CPKC's route.

While infrastructure improvements are planned in the La Crosse, Wis., and Winona, Minn., areas, CPKC has agreed to start the service before the improvements are completed as part of a deal reached when Amtrak endorsed the Canadian Pacific/Kansas City Southern merger. Service on the route is currently provided by Amtrak's Chicago-Seattle/Portland Empire Builder. While westbound service from Chicago to St. Paul is fairly reliable, eastbound service suffers when the Empire Builder is late making the long trek from the West Coast. Amtrak operated a second train on the route from November 1971 to October 1981, when the overnight North Star was discontinued, leaving the Empire Builder as route's only train.

The MnDOT survey [is available here](#). Editor Note: Also see 'All Aboard MN' news in this issue.

### MNNR Locomotives



*L: Video snap shot from Youtube -new unit #5884 back in August 2023 still in TTI colors at New Brighton -Thanks "SD457500"*

*R: East Penn RR B23-7 #3153 -New Acquisition by MNNR -*



From the November 2023 Railfan Magazine. Friday, November 17, 2023, 1:07 PM, Frederick Krenske  
East Penn Railroad's two remaining GE locomotives will find new homes on Minnesota Commercial Railroad. In mid-September, B23-7 #3153 and B30-7 #7874 were stenciled with Minnesota Commercial reporting marks and new numbers. A minor celebrity, the B23-7 (renumbered Minnesota Commercial 45) was built in 1978 as Conrail 1933. The B30-7, now wearing Minnesota Commercial 51, is an ex-Southern Pacific unit. Minnesota Commercial has been phasing out many of its Alco locomotives in favor of those from GE.





## Holiday Trains on the Northshore Scenic Railroad by the Lake Superior Railroad Museum



### Christmas City Express November 24 - December 17

The Christmas City Express is a storybook experience recommended for families with children under 10 and the young at heart. The performance begins in the Lake Superior Railroad Museum, where you'll be treated to a classic book reading of the *new Christmas City Express* story, enjoy carolers, and a visit from a special guest! Then climb aboard the train for a short 30-minute ride up to Lake Superior. Onboard, enjoy complimentary hot chocolate, cookies and holiday tunes.

*The museum is included with your tickets during/after performance, not beforehand, its only about 20 minutes of time to explore. If you come earlier in the day or the next day (prior to 3pm) you can tour the museum for 50% off.*

#### **Tentative Show times:**

Friday 4:15, 5:15, 6:15, and 7:15 pm

Saturday 3:15, 4:15, 5:15, 6:15, and 7:15 pm (Saturdays \$2 more per ticket)

Sunday 3:15, 4:15, 5:15, and 6:15

Full experience is about 90 minutes: Performance first, then a short 30-minute train ride.

**COACH SEATS: \$30.00 for passengers 3 and up, 2 & under free.**

**DOMECAR SEATS: \$40.00 for all passengers (ages 0+)**

### Bentleyville Shuttle Train -November 30 - December 23



**Operating Thursdays and Saturdays, starting November 30th.** Ride to the Bentleyville Tour of Lights aboard the North Shore Scenic Railroad. Skip the hassle of parking at Bayfront, and enjoy a meal at Fingers before or after your tour (not included with your ticket). All tickets are round-trip included for the short, 10-minute ride to Bentleyville and back.

**Tickets are just \$10 each, sold online only.**





Wednesday, November 1, 2023, 9:28 AM

In this issue:

***St. Paul Union Depot Issues - 2nd Twin Cities to Chicago train  
Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission Annual Meeting  
Northern Lights Express - likely many years before service begins  
Let's Celebrate - AAMN 10th Anniversary!***

### 1. St. Paul Union Depot Issues:

Amtrak operating personnel recently provided All Aboard Minnesota with an internally generated report about safety issues at the Saint Paul Union Depot (SPUD). This report is currently circulating within Amtrak's operating departments and details concerns these personnel have with crime, prostitution, vagrants, drug usage and other issues that threaten both passenger and employee safety. The report also highlights a conflict between using the building as a multi-modal transportation hub or a banquet facility. When the concourse is used for events, passengers are forced to wait in a narrow corridor with minimal seating and exposed to very loud music making train related announcements impossible to hear. This situation also causes congestion when passengers are boarding and detraining.

The AAMN board forwarded the report to Ramsey County Commissioners Ortega, Trista Matascastillo, and Ramsey County Transportation Planner Kevin Roggenbuck, to make them aware of these concerns and offering our help for possible solutions. Commissioner Ortega responded that they will set up meetings with Amtrak to resolve these issues. We understand there have been some very informal discussions within Amtrak that if conditions don't improve at SPUD, Amtrak may move their operations back to their former station at Midway. We will keep you posted but if you experience any issues at SPUD please report these to us.

Late this summer, AAMN received information from Amtrak that the 2nd Twin Cities to Chicago train might begin service as early as Sept. or Nov 2023! But we recently learned that the operating agreements between Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Amtrak, and Canadian Pacific Railway have not yet been signed. Also impacting operations are the issues with St. Paul Union Depot as outlined above. We have been told that service could begin in the **fall of 2024**, or maybe even in the spring of 2024. Greg Mathis from MnDOT will give an update at our 10th Anniversary event (more details below). All Aboard Minnesota will stay on top of this developing situation and once we know when service begins we will publicize the start up with multi-channel communications. Stay tuned!

### 2. Midwest Interstate Rail Passenger Commission Annual Meeting

The Interstate Rail Passenger Commission (MIPRC) held its annual meeting last month in Normal, Ill. This eight-state commission is responsible for helping states build out their state rail plans and building out a broader mid-west passenger rail plan. Most states are waiting for the Federal Railroad Administration to select corridors state DOT's have applied for (the FRA will help with study money and planning resources for corridors selected), which will be announced in November or December. Some of the highlights included Michigan, which seeks to expand service frequencies on all three of their state corridor routes, and increase speeds to 110 mph; Wisconsin, which wants to extend service from Milwaukee to Green Bay, and Madison, along with a third Twin Cities to Chicago train routed through Eau Claire, WI; Oklahoma which seeks to connect the Heartland Flyer with the Southwest Chief in either Kansas City or Newton, and Indiana which wants to increase speed between Indianapolis and Chicago along with making the Cardinal long distance train daily.

The MIPRC itself applied for a \$5M federal grant to build out the mid-west passenger rail plan which was not granted. Minnesota gains new representation on the Council with Senator Rob Kupec from Moorhead replacing Rep. Alice Hausman who retired. Senator Kupec is a strong proponent of adding daytime passenger service from St. Paul to Fargo/Moorhead, which AAMN has worked on for years. We look forward to a strong partnership with Senator Kupec.

### 3. Northern Lights Express - Twin Cities to Duluth - likely many years in the future:

Sources close to this project have informed AAMN that the Northern Lights Express is nowhere near "shovel ready" as is often cited. The final design and construction study, along with the environmental impact study - both necessary to secure federal grants, are at the end of their "shelf lives" and need to be updated. That updating will take approximately two years and then negotiations with BNSF Railway will need to be restarted. After that, federal matching grants will need to be obtained before construction could begin to upgrade the existing freight railway for passenger train speeds. This entire process could take anywhere from seven to ten years we have been told. Greg Mathis will update us on this project also at our 10th Anniversary event.

### 5. Let's Celebrate!

**2023 officially marks 10 years for All Aboard Minnesota as a 501 (C) (3) organization!** A celebration event is planned for **Saturday November 18 at 1:00pm at the Edina Public Library (corner of Hwy 100 and 50th street)** We will provide a light lunch and an exciting program! It will be free for all of our members and friends. Invites, both email and mail, have been sent to you and the event with all of the details are posted here: [All Aboard Minnesota is 10 Years Old! Let's Celebrate!](#) • Please register and attend. We look forward to seeing you!

We could not have achieved this milestone without your generosity, activism and support. We are very grateful to all of our members, friends, colleagues, and partner organizations.

[www.allaboardminnesota.org](http://www.allaboardminnesota.org)



## ----Amtrak News----

### Amtrak Train Derails in Michigan After Grade-crossing Collision; 11 Minor Injuries Reported

[By](#) | November 17, 2023 Chicago-bound Wolverine strikes tow truck trying to move stuck vehicle; Friday trains cancelled



*The engineer and 10 passengers suffered minor injuries when an Amtrak Wolverine derailed after a grade crossing collision on Thursday night. Kyle Steinke.*

NEW BUFFALO, Mich. — Eleven people reportedly suffered minor injuries when Amtrak Wolverine train No. 355 bound for Chicago struck vehicles at a grade crossing and derailed in New Buffalo Township, Mich., about 10 p.m. Thursday night, [WZZM-TV reports](#). At least eight trains scheduled for today have been cancelled while derailment cleanup takes place. The Berrien County Sheriff's Office reports the train's engineer and 10 passengers were injured. A tow truck was reportedly removing a truck stalled at the grade crossing when both vehicles were struck by the train at the Lakeside Road crossing near U.S. 12. [The New York Times reports](#) an estimated 218 passengers and six crew members were on board. Passengers were taken to a temporary shelter at New Buffalo High School. Some were picked up there by family or friends; Amtrak arranged buses to transport the remaining passengers at about 12:40 a.m. According to a post on [the Amtrak Alerts social media feed](#), these trains which use the same route have been cancelled for today (Friday, Nov. 17): Wolverines 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, and 355, and Blue Water trains No. 364 and 365. The post Amtrak was attempting to arrange alternate transportation. — Updated at 9:30 a.m. CST with photos.

### Engineers, Amtrak Reach Tentative Contract Agreement

[By](#) | November 14, 2023 Vote set to begin on 7-year deal with 30% pay increase



INDEPENDENCE, Ohio — Amtrak has reached a tentative contract agreement with its more than 1,400 locomotive engineers, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen has announced.

If ratified, the agreement would run through 2028. Features include retroactive payments retroactive to 2022, a 30% wage increase (34.12% compounded); 10 weeks of paid parental leave; increased away-from-home expenses; addition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a paid holiday; and improved bereavement leave.

Ballots are set to be mailed to union members on Wednesday, Nov. 15; ballots will be counted on Dec. 6, with results announced that day.

### Amtrak, Brightline Fare Sales Aim to Fill Seats at Cheaper Prices: Analysis

[By Bob Johnston](#) | November 14, 2023 Amtrak sale ends Wednesday; Brightline's runs through Nov. 27

WASHINGTON and MIAMI — Rail passengers who are able to lock down travel plans in advance can benefit from two pre-Black Friday sales now underway at Amtrak and Florida's Brightline.

#### Amtrak Winter Sale

Through this Wednesday, Nov. 15, Amtrak is offering "flash sale" advance purchase fares for travel Dec. 4, 2023, through March 15, 2024, with discounts in coach and in Acela business class. [The landing page](#) lists sample "as low as" fares by region. Although there are no blackout dates, the accompanying "Terms and Conditions" advisory notes, "Seating is limited and may not be available on all trains, dates, or departures." Cancellations are permitted prior to departure, but there is a 50% cancellation fee for these fares, as opposed to a 25% fee to cancel a recently re-defined "value" fares and no cancellation charge or change fee for the "flex" version [see ["Amtrak to implement two-tier fare structure: Analysis."](#) News Wire, Oct. 18, 2023]. When attempting to book, the cancellation penalties for each category are clearly indicated during the fare selection process.

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*The eastbound Empire Builder crosses Swan Boulevard in Wauwatosa, Wis., on Nov. 2, 2023. Amtrak running a fare sale on coach and Acela Business Class seats through Wednesday, Nov. 15. David Lassen*



*A Miami-bound Brightline BrightPink trainset passes through Stuart, Fla., on Sept. 23, 2023. Brightline's current fare sale concludes Nov. 27. Bob Johnston*

On the Northeast Corridor and routes with plenty of capacity and frequency, the limited-time fare offering's discount is often not substantially lower than the other levels. Where seats are limited, such as between Chicago and Washington, D.C., the sale fare is only sporadically offered in December. After March 15, 2024, the \$70 winter sale fare rises to \$104 on the *Capitol Limited* and \$83 on the *Cardinal*.

Interesting bargains can be had on the *Empire Builder*, where each of the train's sections are priced as separate trains. For example, between Chicago and St. Paul on the first day of the sale (Dec. 4), the Seattle section (train no. 7) coach fares are \$34 sale, \$40 value, and \$43 flex, while the Portland section (train no. 27) coach costs on the same date are \$64 sale, \$76 value, and \$83 flex. On the Friday before Christmas, both sections are already 70% sold out and only a \$179 flex fare is offered.

No upgrades to business class or sleeping cars are permitted, and the sale is not offered on the *Ethan Allen*, *Vermont*, *Hiawathas*, *San Joaquins*, *Pacific Surfliners*, or 7000-8999 numbered Thruway bus service.

## News Report Says New Acela Delays Have Cost Amtrak \$140 Million

[By](#) November 9, 2023 **Wall Street Journal** says expenses are mounting to keep current Acela equipment running



*A next-generation Acela power car under construction at Alstom's Hornell, N.Y., facility on June 12, 2019. A news report says delays in launching service with the new Acelas has cost Amtrak \$140 million so far. Bob Johnston*

NEW YORK — Delays in launching Amtrak's next-generation Acela fleet have cost the passenger company \$140 million so far, and the figure continues to grow, the *Wall Street Journal* [reported Wednesday in a paywalled article](#).

The figure includes the growing maintenance costs of keeping the current Acela trainsets — the first of which entered service in December 2000 — operational beyond their intended service life, and with parts no longer being manufactured. The *Journal* reports Amtrak has spent \$48 million on parts, brake overhauls, and other work by private contractors to keep the current fleet in operation, and that four of the 20 trainsets built by Bombardier and Alstom between 1998 and 2001 never returned to service after being parked during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, they are being cannibalized for parts.

The Amtrak Office of Inspector General released a highly critical report on the manufacturing process for the new Acelas in October

*Trains News Wire*, Oct. 3, 2023], but all dollar figures were redacted in that report. The *Journal* reports it was able to review an unredacted version of the report, which is the source of its \$140 million figure. That figure also includes losses from having fewer Acelas in operation and having less capacity in those that are running, compared to the larger next-generation trains.

## House Set to Vote on Spending Bill with Big Amtrak Cuts, Prohibition on California High-speed Rail Funding

By | October 31, 2023 Appropriations bill set for Wednesday vote retains 64% reduction in Amtrak funding

### Amtrak appropriation comparison

	(in \$ millions)				
	Total	National network	% of total	Northeast Corridor	% of total
Congress enacted 2023	\$2,453	\$1,193	48.6%	\$1,260	51.4%
Congress authorized 2024	\$3,650	\$2,450	67.1%	\$1,200	32.9%
Biden Administration Budget	\$3,068	\$1,841	60.0%	\$1,227	40.0%
Amtrak Request	\$3,650	\$1,950	53.4%	\$1,700	46.6%
House Republicans proposal 2024	\$875	\$776	88.7%	\$99	11.3%
% reduction from 2023	64.3%	35.0%		92.1%	

Source: Rail Passengers Association

WASHINGTON — The House of Representatives is set to vote Wednesday on an appropriations bill that would cut Amtrak funding by more than 60% and block federal support for the California high speed rail program.

[H.R. 4820](#), which funds the Department of Transportation and Department of Housing and Urban Development, includes in the budget for the Federal Railroad Administration the cuts proposed earlier this year by Republicans on the House Appropriations Committee. Those would reduce total spending from \$2.453 billion in 2023 to \$875 million, including a cut in Northeast Corridor spending from \$1.25 billion to \$99 million [see [“House Republicans propose 64% cut to Amtrak budget ...”](#)]

It also specifies that “None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available under this Act or any other Act may be provided to the State of California for a high-speed rail corridor” the same or similar to the one currently under construction.

It also maintains the proposed cut of more than 50% in Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement, or CRISI, grants from their current levels to \$258.5 million, as well as other cuts in the GOP proposal.

Even if the bill passes the Republican-controlled House, it is unlikely to survive in its current form in the Democratically controlled Senate or be signed by President Joe Biden. The Biden administration [issued a statement Monday](#) in which it said it “strongly opposes House passage” of the bill, saying House Republicans “are wasting time with partisan bills that cut domestic spending to levels well below the FRA agreement” — a spending deal negotiated in May with since-deposed House Speaker Kevin McCarthy — “and endanger critical services for the American people.” Specifically regarding rail spending, the statement says the administration “is concerned by the bill’s lack of investment to improve the safety and efficiency of the nation’s passenger and freight rail network” and opposes the provision blocking California high speed rail spending.

The Transportation Trades Division of the AFL-CIO on Tuesday [released a statement](#) calling for representatives to vote against the bill, saying, “The entirety of rail labor stands in opposition to the proposed draconian funding cuts in the legislation that would devastate U.S. passenger and freight rail networks and the dedicated rail workers that run them.”

### ‘Empire Builder’ Disruptions Triggered by Snow, Mechanical Issues

By Bob Johnston | October 30, 2023 Amtrak improves delay updates for ticketed passengers; alert information on social media site X is less complete



*The eastbound Empire Builder pauses in the snow at Shelby, Mont., on Oct. 21, 2020. The train encountered numerous weather and mechanical-related problems over the last week following another October snowstorm. Bob Johnston*

CHICAGO — The Chicago-Seattle/Portland, Ore., *Empire Builder* is finally on the road to recovery after incurring significant challenges during the past week following a late October High Plains snowstorm and related issues.

A series of delays throughout the week culminated in eastbound train No. 8 departing Seattle more than 5 hours late on Saturday, Oct. 28, after its westbound counterpart, hobbled between Glasgow and Malta, Mont., arrived 3½ hours late earlier in the day. The eastbound that left late on Saturday departed St. Paul, Minn., 5 hours, 20 minutes late today (Monday, Oct. 30) en route to Chicago.

The problems each *Builder* encountered due to bad weather east of Spokane, Wash., were exacerbated by extensive delays to the Portland section near Pasco, Wash. Because the westbound train makes a same-day equipment turn at Portland, tardiness accumulated.

Trouble began to cascade with a 6-hour-late eastbound departure from Spokane on Wednesday morning; the train lost another 5 hours across North Dakota and arrived into Chicago more than 14 hours late at 7:11 a.m. Friday. Delays to eastbound *Empire Builders* leaving Spokane Thursday through Saturday ranged from 3½ to 4½ hours.

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“Each train has experienced a unique delay, including track work near Pasco, mechanical issues, freight train interference, late bridge closing, and late departures from the terminal,” Amtrak spokesman W. Kyle Anderson told *Trains News Wire* in an email over the weekend.

BNSF Railway’s Lena Kent says last week’s winter storm across the Hi Line “caused several challenges impacting on-time performance.” Among those were Amtrak mechanical issues which caused BNSF to “lease Amtrak a locomotive for recovery. BNSF continues to work closely with Amtrak operating leaders to mitigate delays for passengers,” she reports.

The good news: the westbound *Empire Builder* arriving today was 5 minutes early into Seattle and only 11 minutes late into Portland, Ore. Amtrak had short-turned the previous day’s delayed westbound at Spokane, with bus substitutions to and from those West Coast cities Sunday, so the eastbound train operating across Montana Monday was also running on time.

### Getting accurate delay data

Dramatically overdue trains that periodically plague long-distance routes with many nocturnal rural stops, like the *Builder*, *California Zephyr*, and *Sunset Limited*, seriously upend travel plans for anyone without other options who book these once-per-day (or less) trains.

Amtrak no longer routinely posts extensive delays to trains outside the Northeast Corridor on its “Amtrak Alerts” feed on the social media site X (formerly Twitter). It still maintains “AmtrakNECAAlerts” and passengers [can sign up for delay alert notifications here](#). The “Amtrak Alerts” posts now occur only where two or more trains are affected on a particular service line. Thus, there was no mention of the northbound *City of New Orleans*’ 3 hour-plus overnight delay into Carbondale, Ill., on Oct. 30.

However, the company has used modern technology to significantly improve communication with ticketed passengers.

Here’s an example. Heavy rains in Florida last month played havoc with CSX’s aging signal system south of Jacksonville. By the morning of Sept. 27, the northbound *Silver Star* had gobbled up all of its scheduled recovery time and was more than 3 hours late leaving Columbia, S.C.



An equipment display and former Seaboard division headquarters station building greets the northbound *Silver Star* at Hamlet, N.C., on Sept. 27, 2023. Bob Johnston

Anyone ticketed that day to ride No. 92 — including those onboard — received a series of text messages each time the train’s status changed significantly. The text provided a link to a constantly updated schedule displaying revised estimated arrival and departure times for that train’s upcoming stations.

Once the *Star* departed each stop, the display showed what time it was originally scheduled and when it actually departed. The information allowed the author to avoid conflict between a dining-car breakfast and a rare daylight photo opportunity of the rambling Seaboard station at Hamlet, N.C. (see below).

“Amtrak is now able to communicate directly to virtually all of our ticketed customers via text (SMS), email, and with notifications through both our iOS (Apple) and Android apps,” spokesman Marc Magliari tells News Wire.

“With this improvement, we are now able to shield Amtrak and its state partners from unforeseen changes and potential volatility from external platforms such as Twitter/X.”

## -----Mexican Passenger Train News-----

### Mexican Government Seeks Passenger Service on Seven Lines

By | November 21, 2023 Decree includes three long-distance routes; freight operators have until Jan. 15 to offer proposals



L: Four Kansas City Southern units lead a northbound container train across the Rio Grande and into the United States at Laredo, Texas, in November 2017. CPKC de Mexico has until Jan. 15 to develop proposals for handling passenger trains requested by the Mexican government, including a Mexico City-Nuevo Laredo route. Bill Stephens

MEXICO CITY — The Mexican government has identified seven routes where it seeks the establishment of passenger rail service under a decree issued Monday, an edict that will require the companies holding the nation’s freight concessions to operate those services or accommodate government-operated trains. Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador announced his plan to issue the decree earlier this month *Trains News Wire*, Nov. 9, 2023].

A draft version of the decree was released Friday, and CPKC, one of the concession holders though its CPKC de Mexico affiliate, said then that it was talking with the government about the passenger plans and had agreed to fund a capacity study for its Mexico City-Nuevo Laredo route [see [“CPKC in discussions ...,”](#) 2023]. News Wire, Nov. 17, 2023].

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That 700-mile route is one of the three long-distance routes included in the edict released Monday, [the Associated Press reports](#). The others are a 900-mile route from Aguascalientes to Ciudad Juárez, and a 1,350-mile route from Mexico City to Nogales. [BN Americas reports](#) the other routes are Felipe Ángeles International Airport (Zumpango)-Pachuca, approximately 16 miles; Mexico City-Veracruz-Coatzacoalcos; Manzanillo-Colima-Guadalupe-Atlixco-Irapuato; and Mexico state-Querétaro-León-Aguascalientes.



## ---BNSF News---

### TSB to Investigate Collision Involving Two BNSF Trains in British Columbia

[By](#) | November 19, 2023 **No injuries reported as two locomotives, five cars derail**

DELTA, British Columbia — The Transportation Safety Board of Canada is investigating a collision and derailment involving two BNSF Railway trains that occurred early today (Sunday, Nov. 19) in Delta, [the CBC reports](#).

Railroad spokeswoman Lena Kent told the CBC two locomotives and five cars derailed in the incident at about 2:30 a.m. A small amount of fuel spilled from one of the locomotives; no other hazardous materials were involved and no crew members were injured. Adjacent Provincial Route 91 was closed to accommodate cleanup. The TSB said it was sending an investigator to examine the incident.

Delta is between Vancouver, B.C., and the U.S. border on BNSF's New Westminster Subdivision.

### Preservation Group, BNSF Return to North Dakota Supreme Court Over Bismarck Bridge

[By](#) | November 17, 2023 **Court hears arguments over effort to overturn state permits that allowed work on Missouri River bridge to begin**



*The battle over the Northern Pacific bridge over the Missouri River at Bismarck, N.D., was back in front of the North Dakota Supreme Court on Thursday, Nov. 16. Northern Pacific*

BISMARCK, N.D. — The fight over the future of BNSF Railway's Bismarck-Mandan Rail Bridge over the Missouri River was back in front of the North Dakota Supreme Court on Thursday, as the court heard arguments on a preservation group's effort to overturn state permits allowing construction of a new bridge to proceed. The group Friends of the Rail Bridge is seeking to prevent demolition of the current bridge, which has piers dating to 1882, in an effort to preserve the bridge as a walking and biking path across the river. BNSF has received federal and state permission to build a new bridge next to the existing structure — which has long had speed restrictions because of its age — and then tear the old one down. [The Bismarck Tribune reports](#) that in Thursday's hearing, the preservation group argued that the state Department of Water Resources did not follow the law in issuing the two "sovereign land" permits needed by BNSF for work within the boundaries of the river. One permit covers construction of the new bridge; the other is for demolition of the old bridge.

The Friends group argued that the state agency did not get necessary approval from the State Historical Board before issuing the permits, because State Historical Society directors have termed the bridge a historical resource. That need for approval, however, appears to rest on the Friends group's argument that the state, not the railroad, owns the bridge ([an argument it makes here](#)). .

North Dakota's Attorney General has previously said the State Historical Board did not have the authority to prevent demolition of the bridge because it is privately owned.

BNSF and the state, meanwhile, claim the issue is whether the preservation group's previous effort to challenge the permits was properly dismissed by a lower court.

District Judge Jackson Lofgren dismissed the Friends' appeal of the permits on technical grounds in June, saying that the matter could be brought to court only after a hearing by the Department of Water Resources on its decision. [see "[Judge dismisses preservation group's appeal ...](#)" *Trains News Wire*, June 24, 2023]. The Friends group contends that public meetings prior to the issuance of the permits met that requirement, but Lofgren said that, because they were before, not after, the decision to issue the permits, no required hearing had been held.

The court will rule at a later date.

This was the second state Supreme Court hearing on the bridge case; it had earlier turned down a bid from the Friends group to have the court assert "original jurisdiction" and rule on its argument regarding state ownership, as well as the permit question [see "[North Dakota Supreme Court denies ...](#)" *News Wire*, Sept. 18, 2023].

BNSF has begun work on the new bridge, which it expects to be complete in 2026. The railroad has seen the cost of the project rise from \$60 million to \$100 million during the five years it took to complete the permitting process.



# BNSF and J.B. Hunt to Shift Mexico Cross-border Intermodal Service to Ferromex via Eagle Pass Gateway (updated)

By Bill Stephens | November 13, 2023 Canadian Pacific Kansas City currently handles the traffic via Laredo



*BNSF Railway and Ferromex will handle J.B. Hunt's cross-border intermodal service via the Eagle Pass, Texas, gateway*



*This J.B. Hunt map shows rail traffic flows for its Mexico intermodal service via BNSF and connecting railroads. J.B. Hunt*



*L: BNSF Railway will handle J.B. Hunt cross-border intermodal traffic via Union Pacific trackage rights from the border at Eagle Pass to home rails at Caldwell, Texas. BNSF*

*R: BNSF Railway currently interchanges J.B. Hunt cross-border traffic with Canadian Pacific Kansas City at Robstown, Texas. BNSF*



FORT WORTH, Texas — BNSF Railway and J.B. Hunt are shifting their Mexico intermodal service to Ferromex via the Eagle Pass gateway, a route they say is a day faster than the current BNSF-Canadian Pacific Kansas City routing via Laredo, Texas. The cross-border service will move to Eagle Pass on Jan. 1, BNSF and J.B. Hunt announced today. South of the border, the intermodal service will reach Monterrey, Silao-Bajio, and Pantaco-Mexico City regions, key markets in Northern and Central Mexico, via Grupo Mexico's Ferromex.

"Our organizations are committed to growth in Mexico and this joint service offering is a direct reflection of that commitment," BNSF CEO Katie Farmer said in a statement. "By utilizing the capacity and expertise of the largest intermodal railroad in the U.S., the largest railroad in Mexico, and the largest domestic intermodal carrier, this product will seamlessly connect the North American intermodal network."

The six-day per week service — which will use BNSF's trackage rights over Union Pacific between Caldwell, Texas, and Eagle Pass — will be a day faster for Chicago-Monterrey traffic, BNSF said. BNSF and J.B. Hunt say they also will offer an alternative option via the El Paso, Texas, gateway.

"This new service offering will provide resilient, cross-border solutions that give our customers optionality to support their growing supply chain needs in Mexico," J.B. Hunt CEO John Roberts said in a statement. "The cost savings and sustainability benefits of intermodal service are proven, and we're proud to collaborate with our rail providers BNSF and GMXT to bring this robust service offering to reality."

"GMXT is ready to support the freight demand growth that nearshoring presents with North America by providing flexible and top-notch rail services to our customers," Grupo Mexico Transportes CEO Fernando López said in a statement. "Eagle Pass is a strategic gateway, and we are committed to connecting México and the U.S. through smart and secure borders while helping our countries facilitate the trade."

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CPKC will continue to handle J.B. Hunt cross-border traffic bound to and from the Southeast via the Meridian Speedway and Norfolk Southern.

But the loss of BNSF-J.B. Hunt traffic will be a blow to CPKC. BNSF and CPKC currently interchange J.B. Hunt's cross-border intermodal traffic at Robstown, Texas. BNSF reaches Robstown via UP trackage rights from Algona, Texas, just south of Houston.

During regulatory hearings on the Canadian Pacific-Kansas City Southern merger, BNSF expressed concerns about CPKC crimping volume at the Laredo gateway. CPKC pledged to keep Laredo open on commercially reasonable terms and said it welcomed more interchange traffic. The new competitive landscape — including new and improved cross-border intermodal services — has played out like CPKC thought it would.

"They're all proving our thesis from day one. We told the STB ... we told our customers that we're going to be a disrupter. We're going to create more competition," CPKC Chief Marketing Officer John Brooks told an investor conference on Tuesday. "The better products we put in place, our competition is going to have to react. And I think that's exactly what we've seen."

Customers appreciate having more rail options, he adds, including CPKC's new single-line service.

"At the end of the day, a single-line haul, one-stop shop, fastest service in the industry matters. It usually wins," Brooks says.

Kansas City Southern de Mexico has long been the dominant intermodal player in the country. "The routes are good, the capacity is strong, and the service product in the marketplace has traditionally outperformed," Brooks says. "And we expect the same going forward."

BNSF's move away from CPKC is the latest intermodal domino to fall from the April 14 combination of CP and KCS.

In October 2022, UP booted CP from the EMP domestic container pool. Canadian National then became the only Canadian railway in the container pool that's used across North America.

CPKC this year won Schneider and Knight-Swift cross-border intermodal traffic, which previously had moved on UP. Schneider and Knight-Swift became anchor customers on CPKC's premium Mexico Midwest Express service linking Chicago with Texas and points in Mexico, which launched in May.

CN, UP, and Ferromex in May began interline cross-border Falcon Premium intermodal service that links CN's intermodal terminals in Detroit and Canada with points in Mexico.

UP last month announced it was beginning Mexico-Southeast interline intermodal service via the Memphis gateway and interchanges with both CSX and NS.

That service aims to give UP and its intermodal customers a head start on anticipated Mexico-Southeast intermodal service that CPKC and CSX aim to begin for Schneider and other customers — assuming regulatory approval of their deal to connect their networks in Alabama by acquiring and operating Genesee & Wyoming short line Meridian & Bigbee.

"This might be the first share shift away from CPKC," independent analyst Anthony B. Hatch says. BNSF and J.B. Hunt are scheduled to provide more details about the cross-border service at the RailTrends conference in New York this week.

*Note: Updated at 12:45 p.m. Central on Nov. 14 to include new comments from CPKC Chief Marketing Officer John Brooks.*

## **BNSF Train Derails West of Denver, Blocking Zephyr Route (corrected)**

[By](#) | November 12, 2023 No injuries or spills reported as 15 cars derail



*L: Some 15 cars of a BNSF Railway train derailed Sunday, Nov. 12, at Pinecliffe, Colo. Gilpin County Sheriff's Office*

PINECLIFFE, Colo. — Fifteen cars of a BNSF freight train derailed early today (Sunday, Nov. 12) in the Rocky Mountain foothills west of Denver, leading to a closure expected to block Union Pacific's main line for 36 hours, according to preliminary estimates.

[KCNC-TV reports](#) the Gilpin County Sheriff's Office was informed of the derailment at 6:49 a.m., and that UP had offered the initial estimate of the closure to the sheriff's office. A 78-car train was involved; the derailed cars — eight of which remained upright while seven overturned — were either empty or carrying diesel fuel or magnesium. No fuels, leaks, or injuries were reported, according to the Timberline Fire Protection District. The derailment has disrupted operations for both directions of Amtrak's *California Zephyr*. "A note on the "Train Status" feature of [the Amtrak website](#) says eastbound No. 6 was being held in Grand Junction, Colo., as of 10:49 a.m. MT because of the derailment; while westbound No. 5 was being held at Denver as of 9:30 a.m. MT. "A lengthy delay is anticipated, and we will provide an update as more information becomes available," according to the note for No. 5. Amtrak no longer provides regular updates for long-distance issues on its Amtrak Alerts social media feed, so additional details are not available. — Updated at 3:30 p.m. CST with correction of report from sheriff's office regarding railroad whose train was involved



## BNSF Railway's Third Quarter Earnings Decline Nearly 15% Amid Volume Slump

[By Bill Stephens](#) | November 5, 2023 Industrial products traffic eeks out a small volume gain, but all other business segments were down



*A BNSF crew member reboards his locomotive after providing protection at a pedestrian crossing during a maintenance-of-way project in Hinsdale, Ill., on Nov. 6, 2021. David Lassen*

OMAHA, Neb. — BNSF Railway's profits, revenue, and volume all declined in the third quarter, parent company Berkshire Hathaway reported on Saturday. BNSF's pre-tax earnings fell 14.6%, to \$1.6 billion, as revenue declined 12.4%, to \$5.6 billion. The railway's operating ratio increased 0.7 points to 68.4%. Overall volume declined 4.8% in the quarter, while average revenue per carload and intermodal unit fell 7.1% due to a combination of lower rates and lower fuel surcharge revenue.

Consumer products volume — which includes intermodal and automotive traffic — was down 6.6%. "The volume decreases were primarily due to lower intermodal shipments resulting from reduced west coast imports, the loss of an intermodal customer and competition from lower spot rates in the trucking market, which has impacted our domestic intermodal demand. These decreases were partially offset by an increase in automotive volume from higher vehicle production," Berkshire said. Industrial products traffic was up 0.7% for the quarter. Berkshire said this was "primarily due to increased demand for construction products from infrastructure demand, partially offset by lower demand for plastics, chemicals and sand."

Agricultural shipments declined 2.9%. "The volume decreases were mainly due to lower grain exports, partially offset by higher volumes of domestic grains, renewable diesel, feedstocks and oilseeds and meals," Berkshire said. Coal volume declined 5.8%. "The volume decreases derived from moderating demand attributable to lower natural gas prices and weather-related impacts," Berkshire reported.

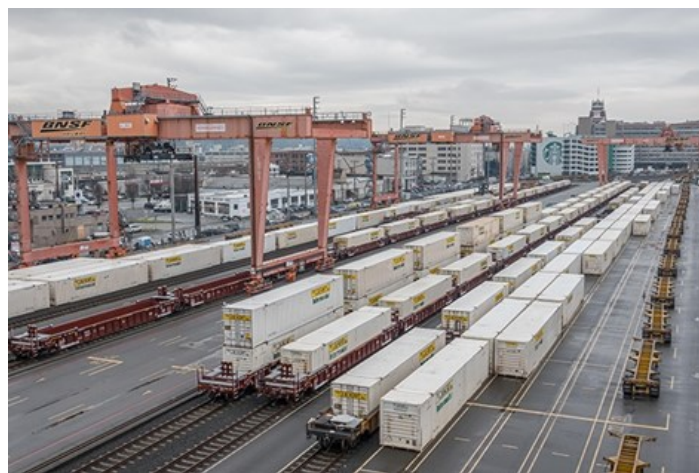


## Analysis: BNSF and J.B. Hunt Quantum Service Promises to Jump-start Intermodal Growth

[By Bill Stephens](#) | November 8, 2023 By targeting highly service-sensitive freight, the rail and trucking partners aim to crack open an entirely new domestic intermodal market



*The J.B. Hunt and BNSF Railway Quantum intermodal service was launched on Nov. 7, 2023. J.B. Hunt and BNSF*



*BNSF Railway has made capacity and technology improvements at its intermodal terminals, which should help the reliability of new BNSF-J.B. Hunt Quantum service. BNSF*

Intermodal analyst Larry Gross is fond of pointing out that rather than creating a truly competitive intermodal service that can attract freight from the highway, the Class I railroads have for too long relied on outside forces like truck driver shortages or high diesel fuel prices to *push* freight their way. The strategy — or lack of one — hasn't played out so well. You can see this in the market share that domestic intermodal has lost to long-haul trucking since 2017. Had railroads simply maintained their market share, Gross says, they would have carried nearly 18% more containers and trailers this year. Put another way, that translates into an additional 1.4 million loads and \$3.5 billion in revenue. In a move that counters this trend, J.B. Hunt and BNSF Railway [this week unveiled a new premium domestic intermodal service](#). Their Quantum service is a day faster than traditional intermodal, shoots for 95% on-time performance, is built around each customer's specific transit-time needs, and offers flexible pricing that sits between regular intermodal and over-the-road trucking rates.

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BNSF Railway's [Truxton Flyover](#) bridge in Truxton, Ariz., not only had to cross the BNSF Railway main line below, but the Truxton Wash, subject to occasional extreme water flows. The flyover, which opened in 2020, eliminated 900 dispatching conflicts per week. Jeff Wojciechowski

The faster transit times come largely from trimming fat from the dray moves at origin and destination. Inside of terminals, think of Quantum freight as first-class passengers, who are guaranteed seats, pay more for getting extra attention en route, and are the first ones off the train upon arrival.

The key question, of course, is whether BNSF and J.B. Hunt can maintain stellar on-time performance once the railroad and its terminals get busy. Railroads perform well when traffic is light, but have congested-related challenges once volume ramps up. Erratic service will drive Quantum traffic back to the highway faster than you can say traffic jam.

BNSF considers the railroad busy when weekly volume totals 200,000 or more intermodal units and carloads. During the Quantum trial moves, volume was well below that threshold: It averaged around 169,000 in July and rose to an average of about 187,000 in October.

Intermodal volume increased over that period, going from around 91,000 weekly loads in July to 101,000 in October. And in the last week of October, J.B. Hunt sent record volume across the BNSF network. To handle the surge, BNSF had to pull equipment out of storage and add train starts. It was a volume flex test — and one that BNSF aced, according to J.B. Hunt.

BNSF says it's trying to make its intermodal service immune from swings in volume. It's doing this by adopting new technology that should keep terminals fluid, as well as capitalizing on capacity investments in terminals and out on the main line. In recent years on the Southern Transcon, for example, BNSF has added third and fourth tracks at crew change points, built a third main track on heavy grades to allow intermodal trains to overtake drag freights, is double-tracking the few remaining single-track sections between L.A. and Chicago, and has constructed a flyover to speed the flow of trains across Arizona. Still to come: The massive [Barstow International Gateway](#) intermodal terminal and transload center.

What's encouraging is that BNSF, like other Class I railroads, routinely provides flawless peak season service for UPS. This should mean that Quantum service can be reliable, too. Still, J.B. Hunt and BNSF — who now have a team of employees working shoulder to shoulder in the railroad's headquarters in Fort Worth — will have to prove to customers that Quantum can deliver on the advertised.

Quantum revives a name that Santa Fe and J.B. Hunt initially applied to the TOFC service that sprang from a 1989 business-car handshake deal between ATSF President Michael Haverty and J.B. Hunt. Hunt saw the potential of intermodal, and his trucking company became the first to align itself with a railroad. It's now by far the largest domestic intermodal company.

Is the new Quantum service the biggest thing to happen in domestic intermodal since The Handshake aboard train QNYLA?

"I think that it is," Haverty says. "They are trying to get more quality truckload customers that are willing to pay the higher rates for premium service, maybe along the level of UPS, FedEx, and Amazon. When we started Quantum in 1989, our strategy was to offer premium service at rates below truckload rates, but above normal intermodal rates. Premium service, but not equal to our then-largest customer at the time, UPS, that ran trainloads of intermodal units on our expedited trains."

If there's a downside to the new Quantum, it's that it's a unicorn. It's only possible due to the unique long-term partnership between BNSF and Hunt and the fact that J.B. Hunt is now BNSF's lone domestic truckload customer. That makes it very difficult if not impossible to replicate on other railroads.

But on its own Quantum holds the potential to change the trajectory of domestic intermodal service.

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This seems to be the right combination of speed, reliability, customization, and price necessary to attract the highly service-sensitive freight that has never ridden the rails before due to intermodal's history of not being reliable enough. In other words, this bespoke service opens up a brand-new intermodal market. And it's a big one: J.B. Hunt and BNSF estimate that Quantum can convert 7 million to 11 million truckloads to intermodal.

To put that into perspective, consider that J.B. Hunt handles a total of 2 million intermodal loads per year now and that overall U.S. domestic intermodal volume was 7.9 million containers and trailers last year.

But winning and keeping Quantum traffic will hinge on how well J.B. Hunt and BNSF meet their service commitments. The early results are promising:

The Quantum pilot program loads posted an impressive 98% on-time performance record from door to door despite tighter schedules





# — Canadian Pacific Kansas City News —

## CPKC Asks Federal Regulators to Settle Dispute Over Wisconsin Bridge Repair

[By Bill Stephens](#) | October 30, 2023 State officials say CPKC should have performed studies and obtained permits before making emergency bridge repairs; railway says federal law preempts state environmental permitting regulations



Photo 1 – Looking southeast at Abutment 1 of BR 88.74.

*The Menomonee River scoured beneath the abutment at left on this Canadian Pacific Kansas City bridge in Milwaukee in 2017. CPKC*

WASHINGTON — Canadian Pacific Kansas City has asked federal regulators to wade into a dispute with Wisconsin officials regarding emergency repairs the railway made to a bridge over the Menomonee River in Milwaukee. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is threatening to sue CPKC for its 2017 bridge work, arguing that it was performed without the necessary studies and permits. State officials also want CPKC to undo the repair work and then use a different repair method. CPKC last week asked the Surface Transportation Board to issue an order declaring that federal law preempts enforcement of Wisconsin’s environmental permitting requirements. “In late 2017, CPKC discovered that the Menomonee River had severely eroded the river bed surrounding and under an abutment on a CPKC railroad bridge. The bridge needed emergency repair. CPKC notified the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (“DNR”) of its plans for this emergency repair. In response, DNR cited certain state law provisions that, according to DNR, required extensive studies, a different repair method, and a lengthy permit process before the work could be done,” [CPKC said in its filing with the STB](#). “Due to the urgency and seriousness of a potential bridge failure, and consistent with Board and Court precedent that [federal law] preempts state pre-construction permitting requirements, CPKC made the emergency repairs in line with accepted practice, causing the least disruption to the busy freight and passenger rail line, and holding to the highest degree of safety.”

The Menomonee bridge at Milepost 88.74 on CPKC’s Watertown Subdivision carries 16 freights per day — including those that handle hazardous materials — as well as Amtrak’s *Empire Builder*.

An October 2017 bridge inspection found significant scouring around and under one of the bridge abutments. “This created an emergency situation: because one of the abutments was no longer fully supported by the river bed, the bridge was in danger of becoming structurally unsound,” CPKC told the STB.

CPKC pumped grout into the void and then installed a grout mat filled with cement to protect the bridge against further scour. Wisconsin officials say CPKC should have used rip-rap, a method the railway considered and rejected because it would require excavation of the riverbed, which would cause further scouring to the bridge abutment.

The railway and state officials have tried to resolve the dispute but have been unable to do so, CPKC told the STB.

## Federal Regulators Set Schedule for Review of CPKC and CSX Acquisition and Operation of Meridian & Bigbee Short Line

[By Bill Stephens](#) | November 3, 2023 Surface Transportation Board says the deals to create a shortcut linking Southeast and Mexico qualify as a minor transaction

WASHINGTON — Federal regulators have accepted the applications Canadian Pacific Kansas City and CSX Transportation have filed seeking permission to acquire and operate Genesee & Wyoming short line Meridian & Bigbee.

The 168-mile MNBR will connect the CPKC and CSX systems via a new interchange at Myrtlewood, Ala., that will create a shortcut linking Mexico and Texas with the Southeast.

The Surface Transportation Board [today said the separate deals involving CPKC, CSX, and G&W qualify as a minor transaction](#) based on its preliminary review of the paperwork the railroads filed last month.

The board set a procedural schedule for the review of the deals, said it would require the railroads to submit more information, and that the transactions would have to undergo an environmental assessment under federal law.

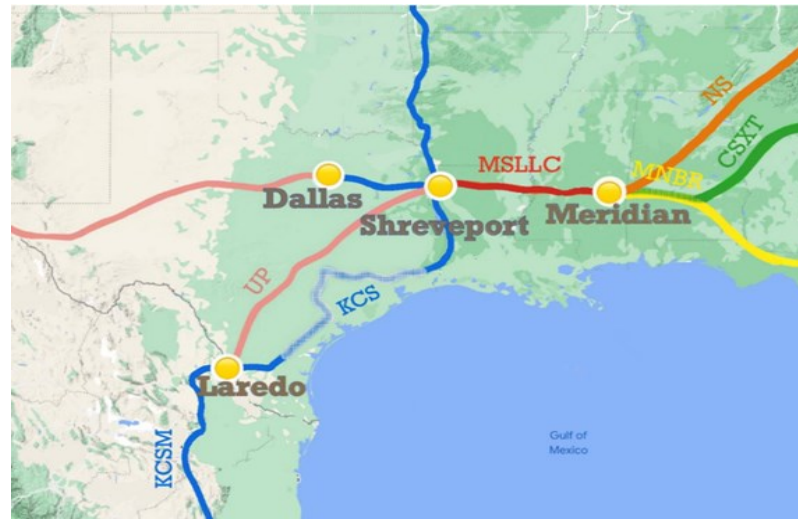
The supplemental information is due Nov. 20; other parties wishing to participate in the review are due Nov. 24; and all comments, protests, requests for conditions, and any other arguments against the transactions are due by Dec. 8. Responses to those comments are due by Jan. 8. The date the record closes for the proceedings has yet to be determined, but the board must issue a decision no later than 45 days after the close of the record. The decision would become effective 30 days after it is issued. The board cannot issue a decision until the environmental assessment is complete.

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*Kansas City Southern container train I-ATDA2 rolls through Meehan, Miss., on the Meridian Speedway on April 22, 2022.*  
Dylan Jones

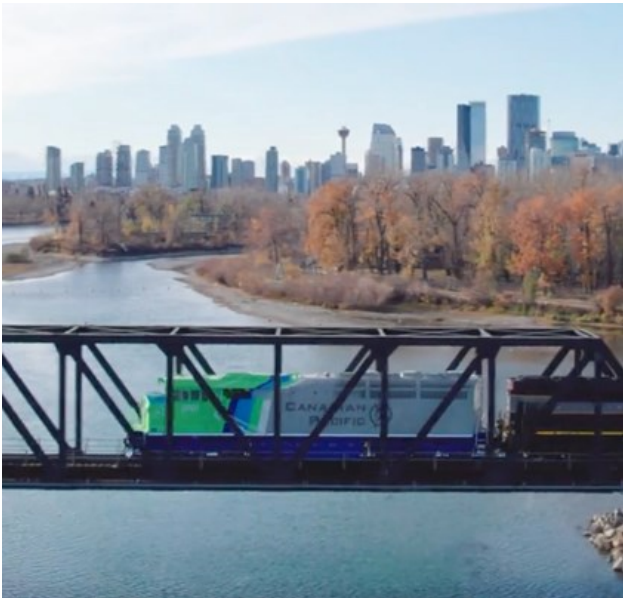


*The Meridian & Bigbee acquisition will allow CSX and CPKC to interchange directly in Alabama. The MNBR is shaded in green. CSX and CPKC*

Today's decision denies Norfolk Southern's request that the board should suspend review of the three-railroad deal. NS had argued that the various transactions should be considered as a single deal with wide-ranging impacts. The Meridian & Bigbee, or MNBR, owns the 50.4-mile route west of Myrtlewood and leases from CSX the 107 miles between Myrtlewood and Burkville, Ala., which is just west of the CSX hub of Montgomery, Ala. MNBR operates the 10 miles between Burkville and Montgomery via overhead trackage rights on CSX. CPKC subsidiary Kansas City Southern will acquire the 50.4-mile segment of the MNBR between Meridian and Myrtlewood, which it's calling the Western Line. MNBR will continue to provide local service on the route after the transaction. In a separate transaction, CSX will resume operations on its line between Myrtlewood and Burkville — dubbed the Eastern Line — which has been leased to MNBR since 2003. As part of that transaction, MNBR will cease operations on the Eastern Line. CPKC and CSX said the transactions will enable them to make the investments necessary to create a Class I railroad freight corridor that will expand shipping options for intermodal, automotive, and forest products moving between the Southeast and Texas and Mexico. The board is requiring CPKC and CSX to submit additional information in order to help regulators decide whether any conditions might be warranted given the potential change in traffic flows. CPKC was ordered to provide information about Kansas City Southern's commitment to keep the Laredo, Texas, gateway open on commercially reasonable terms. CPKC also was ordered to submit detailed data on potential origins and destinations for traffic it would interchange with CSX and other railroads. CSX and CPKC also must provide the board with more information about the transaction's potential impact on Amtrak as well as more detail on their plans to upgrade the Meridian & Bigbee.

## CPKC Orders More Hydrogen Fuel Cell Engines

[By](#) | November 7, 2023 **Ballard Power provides 12 engines for further expansion of railroad's hydrogen locomotive project**



*L: Canadian Pacific's first hydrogen locomotive makes its first revenue run, as shown in a screen shot from a video posted by CP to Twitter. CPKC, which now has three hydrogen units, has ordered more fuel cell engines to further expand its fleet.*

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Ballard Power Systems, which has provided the fuel cell engines for CPKC's first hydrogen-powered locomotives, announced it has received an order for another 12 engines totaling 2.4 megawatts of power. The dozen 200-kilowatt engines, to be delivered this year, will support CPKC development of additional hydrogen fuel-cell locomotives for switching and local freight service in Alberta, Ballard said. Part of the funding for the additional locomotives will come from the Emissions Reduction Alberta program, which has also helped fund an earlier expansion of the railroad's hydrogen program from one locomotive to three [see "CP to build additional hydrogen locomotives ...," *Trains News Wire*, Nov. 1, 2021]. Ballard has provided CPKC with 38 fuel-cell engines, providing 7.6 megawatts of power, over the last two years. The locomotives powered by the additional engines are expected to enter service in late 2024.

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“Our hydrogen locomotive program demonstrates our commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and we are pleased to continue to work with the team at Ballard to implement effective alternative fuel solutions,” Kyle Mulligan, CPKC assistant vice president, operations technology, said in [a press release](#). “We are excited by CPKC’s vision and action plan to demonstrate and validate the use of hydrogen-powered locomotives to decarbonize their locomotive fleet,” said Seungsoo Jung, Ballard’s vice president of rail & emerging markets. “This latest order demonstrates CPKC’s continued progress against this vision and plan, while also serving as another proof point for the enabling role of Ballard’s fuel cell engines in the electrification of locomotive rail applications in North America.”

## Competition from CPKC Makes the Rail Industry Better, CEO Keith Creel Says

[By Bill Stephens](#) | November 17, 2023 New and faster cross-border intermodal service will win market share from trucks even as CPKC goes head to head with Union Pacific, BNSF, CN, and Ferromex



*Four Kansas City Southern units lead a northbound container train across the Rio Grande and into the United States at Laredo, Texas, in November 2017. Bill Stephens*



*The first CPKC MMX-181 intermodal train approaches a celebratory banner on CPKC de Mexico in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, on May 11. the Mexico Midwest Express service links Chicago and points in Mexico. CPKC*

NEW YORK — Canadian Pacific Kansas City CEO Keith Creel is not the least bit surprised at how rival Class I railroads have responded to the CP-KCS merger by launching new and faster cross-border intermodal service.

“We’re creating competition and this industry is getting stronger as a result,” Creel told the RailTrends conference on Thursday. CPKC’s flagship Mexico Midwest Express intermodal service, which began in May, is taking trucks off the highway and has created the first cross-border intermodal perishables moves using the railway’s 1,000 new reefer containers.

“I knew that we needed a proof point. I knew that we needed something that showed the power of this single-line network ... from Chicago deep into Mexico,” Creel says.

“So we introduced the MMX with a mandate and an objective to make it truck-like reliable, best in class, truck-competitive service,” he says. Trains 180 and 181 are providing 95% on-time reliability with a transit time of just under four days between Chicago and Monterrey, Mexico. The MMX service prompted Canadian National, Union Pacific, and Ferromex to team up for Falcon Premium service that links CN’s terminals in Canada and Detroit with points in Mexico. Like MMX, the service was launched in May. New UP CEO Jim Vena subsequently took 24 hours out of the schedule after he rejoined the railroad in August. BNSF Railway and intermodal partner J.B. Hunt this week announced that on Jan. 1 they’re shifting their cross-border service away from CPKC and the Laredo, Texas, gateway to a Ferromex routing via the Eagle Pass, Texas, gateway. The service via Eagle Pass will be 24 hours faster than the current Chicago-Monterrey route, BNSF and J.B. Hunt say. The route is 5% shorter between Monterrey and BNSF’s terminal in Alliance, Texas, where traffic can be routed to various destinations on the BNSF system. CPKC will continue to handle J.B. Hunt traffic bound to and from the Southeast via the Meridian Speedway and Norfolk Southern. “The UP, they’ve introduced their service. They’ve always had the best route to the border, but they never had the best transit time. Now they’re inspired to compete and are matching, with their combined three-line move, similar transit times,” Creel says. “And then ... BNSF and J.B. Hunt got into the fray, too. And they are shaving time off their existing transit times. So you’ve got three railroads that are motivated, that are inspired.” Creel says Class I railroads got complacent after the last round of mergers two decades ago.

“When you’re not challenged — and this is human nature, this is railroading nature, this is any business nature, this is competitive sport nature, this is just a fact of life — sometimes complacency can set in,” Creel says. “And this industry is in a place where we needed to be better. We need to be better for all stakeholders, not just our own, but for this nation.” The rail competition will extend to automotive and merchandise traffic, as well, Creel says. With 10,000 trucks crossing the U.S.-Mexico border at Laredo every day, Creel says there is plenty of business to go around for CPKC, UP, and BNSF to all be successful.

The RailTrends conference is sponsored by trade publication Progressive Railroading and independent analyst Anthony B. Hatch.



## ---Union Pacific News ---

### Union Pacific Announces Management Layoffs in Bid to Speed Decision Making

[By Bill Stephens](#) | November 1, 2023 The cutback represents less than 5% of UP's management workforce, the railroad says

OMAHA, Neb. — A round of layoffs are under way today at Union Pacific headquarters as new CEO Jim Vena aims to streamline management and speed up decision making at the sprawling railroad.

“Union Pacific is changing its culture and announced organizational changes to reduce layers, expand spans of control and focus on empowering employees on the front lines to drive decision-making,” spokeswoman Kristen South says. “These changes included some reductions, which represent less than 5% of the total management workforce. All employees whose UP was unable to provide a precise number of layoffs because some people whose jobs are being eliminated will be assigned to special projects that may last several months, while others may move back to union jobs.

On UP's third-quarter earnings call Oct. 19, Vena emphasized the need to reduce bureaucracy. “We need to make decisions quicker, we need to react quicker, we need to quit having so many layers that slow down the decision making,” Vena said. Roles were impacted were given the opportunity to apply for hard-to-hire craft professional roles in other parts of the railroad.”



*An eastbound Union Pacific soda ash unit train climbs Sherman Hill in Wyoming in June 2018. Bill Stephens*

UP was unable to provide a precise number of layoffs because some people whose jobs are being eliminated will be assigned to special projects that may last several months, while others may move back to union jobs. On UP's third-quarter earnings call Oct. 19, Vena emphasized the need to reduce bureaucracy. “We need to make decisions quicker, we need to react quicker, we need to quit having so many layers that slow down the decision making,” Vena said.

Vena, who served as chief operating officer in 2019 and 2020, returned as CEO on Aug. 14. “Last time I came with one goal: I came to work to drive operational efficiency. I didn't look at the rest of the company very much, and the rest of the company needs to be looked at. And that's what we're doing now,” he said on the earnings call. “You can't have nine levels from CEO to the people who actually do the work and expect that the message is clear, decisions are made clear ... I want to drive it so we have way less layers. And that means with less layers the people out in the field are empowered to make the right decisions.”

Vena also said on that call that he had spoken with a Wyoming soda ash producer that is expanding production and wanted assurances that UP would be able to provide capacity as part of the build out.

“It was taking us over a year to give them a decision on whether we could do that. We need to change that,” Vena said. “We were able to make the decision in four days. I got it: We can't make decisions in four days all the time, but we sure can make them in a few weeks instead of months. That's real important. That's a change in the way we want to do business.”

During a May speech at the North American Rail Shippers conference, Surface Transportation Board Chairman Martin J. Oberman was critical of UP's sluggish response to soda ash customers that aim to increase production by as much as 65% over the next five years. “They have not been able to obtain from UP a concrete plan to increase rail capacity to handle the huge growth,” Oberman says. “Only after I personally intervened in the last few days ... has UP even been willing to provide a written description of its plans for the line which moves the Green River soda ash to market. But that response sent to me was labeled confidential. It was not sent to the miners who are the ones who need the information. And unfortunately, while referring to UP's capacity strategy, UP's letter was silent as to whether that strategy will enable them to actually move all additional 65,000 carloads.”

Oberman said the lack of capacity assurances from UP has hurt the mining companies' ability to plan for expansions. “What kind of business needs a government official to lean on it in order to relate to its own customers in order to increase its own sales and make more money? Apparently, only a railroad,” Oberman said.

Overall employment at UP has dropped by 25% since the railroad adopted a Precision Scheduled Railroading operating model in October 2018, according to STB data. The railroad's ranks of executive officials, staff, and assistants has fallen by 12.4%, while professional and administrative employment has dropped 24%, according to STB data.

Vena outlined the rationale for the layoffs [in a memo to employees this afternoon](#)

### Planned Union Pacific Maintenance-of-way Furloughs Spark Controversy (updated)

[By Bill Stephens](#) | November 1, 2023 Union leader sounds alarm on safety, but the railroad says the budgetary move is not

OMAHA, Neb. — The head of the track workers' union has warned federal regulators that Union Pacific aims to furlough up to 1,350 maintenance-of-way employees next month and will push the remainder of this year's planned trackwork projects into 2024 as a cost-saving measure. But the railroad says the move is nothing unusual. “This is a normal part of our capital planning process. Given the timing to post for the 2024 capital program bidding, we do not anticipate significant furloughs,” spokeswoman Kristen South says.

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*Flash flooding from Tropical Storm Hilary damaged Union Pacific's Yuma Subdivision in California in August. UP*

OMAHA, Neb. — The head of the track workers' union has warned federal regulators that Union Pacific aims to furlough up to 1,350 maintenance-of-way employees next month and will push the remainder of this year's planned trackwork projects into 2024 as a cost-saving measure. But the railroad says the move is nothing unusual. "This is a normal part of our capital planning process. Given the timing to post for the 2024 capital program bidding, we do not anticipate significant furloughs," spokeswoman Kristen South says. UP's Engineering Department is running approximately \$80 million over budget due to a combination of inflation and the impact of harsh weather on the railroad's network this year, including a rare tropical storm that hit Southern California in August. "Simply put, unforeseen, large-scale service interruptions greatly accelerated our spend through the first three quarters of the year," Terrill Maxwell, the railroad's general director of labor relations, wrote in an Oct. 13 email to leaders of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division. "The need to balance the workforce was not readily apparent until very recently, thus leadership made the difficult decision to push a number of projects into 2024. It's been about five years since we've had to cut gangs due to budget, so although many of our veteran employees have experienced this reality, it will be new to others."

Although we have several open maintenance jobs on both the North and South, it's conceivable we will have folks furloughed in December."

The majority of the affected track and rail gangs will be abolished on Nov. 19. UP expects to re-post the jobs in mid-December with a start date of early January. "Most distribution teams will continue working, delivering material required for 2024 projects," Maxwell wrote.

The furlough of 1,350 people – a total which UP now says is highly unlikely – would be a 16.7% cut to UP's overall maintenance of way workforce, according to September employment data the railroad submitted to the Surface Transportation Board.

Pushing some track projects into 2024 comes amid what UP says is its highest capital spending in years.

"We continue to make record capital investments to increase capacity for our customers and harden the infrastructure across our 32,000-mile network," Kenny Rucker, UP's executive vice president of marketing and sales, [wrote in an Oct. 27 customer update](#). "This year we plan to spend \$3.7 billion, the highest we've seen in seven years. So far this year we have replaced three million railroad ties and over 400 miles of rail to keep the network running smooth."

In the past four years, the average number of miles of track UP has resurfaced annually has declined by 10% compared to the average of the prior four years, according to data from the railroad's annual reports. The decline is in line with the 9% drop in average annual gross ton-miles the railroad handled in each four-year period.

But UP replaced an average of 31.5% fewer miles of rail annually from 2019 to 2022 than it did from 2015 to 2018, according to the railroad's data.

Tony Cardwell, president of the BMWED, claims that UP's decision to postpone trackwork and furlough union members poses a safety risk.

"This drastic reduction in Maintenance of Way employees will only compromise the quality and frequency of inspections and necessary maintenance, thereby endangering the safety and reliability of our nation's railroad infrastructure," [he wrote in an Oct. 27 letter to members of the STB](#).

Since adopting a Precision Scheduled Railroading operating model in October 2018, UP's maintenance-of-way workforce has declined by 19.2%, according to STB data.

Cardwell wrote: "Union Pacific outright acknowledges that it is pushing projects into next year for fourth-quarter financial gain. In other words, Union Pacific intends to defer much-needed maintenance on its right of ways, tracks, buildings, and bridges for the sole purpose of showing a larger profit to its shareholders in the fourth quarter. As you are well aware, deferred maintenance will only lead to catastrophic outcomes."

UP's adjustments of its capital plan are normal at this time of year, Maqui Parkerson, vice president of labor relations at UP, wrote in an Oct. 30 letter to Cardwell that was [posted on the STB website this week](#). The timing

## Union Pacific Eyes Faster Domestic Intermodal Schedules

[By Bill Stephens](#) | November 15, 2023 **Railroad is looking at where it can cut transit times to be more competitive with trucks and other railroads, CEO Jim Vena says**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — One of the first decisions that Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena made after rejoining the railroad in August was to take 24 hours out of the schedule for Falcon Premium interline cross-border intermodal service.

At an investor conference on Tuesday, he was asked whether there were other similar opportunities to improve intermodal transit times by taking some fat out of existing schedules. "Well, you must be sitting in on some of my meetings with my marketing and sales people," Vena responded. "Yes there is. And stay tuned."

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*Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena. UP*



*A short Union Pacific intermodal train heads east across Sherman Hill on Aug. 31, 2022. David Lassen*

UP already offers fast premium service between Los Angeles and Chicago, he notes. “We’ve got to continue to build on that and be consistent and be able to leverage this network that we have,” he says. “That’s what I’m excited about.”

Both speed and consistent service are important for intermodal to take freight off the highway and from other railroads, Vena says. The Falcon Premium service, launched in May, connects Canadian National intermodal terminals in Canada and Detroit with points in Mexico via UP and Ferromex.

“Out of Mexico I want to win,” Vena says. “I didn’t come back to be in second place. Second place is the first loser.”

On the international intermodal side, Vena says UP needs to work closely with West Coast ports in order to regain volume lost over the years to Vancouver and Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

“We need to work together as partners,” Vena says. “We need to be able to optimize what’s possible for this railroad ... There’s business that’s gone to other ports that we think that if we work hard together and over the next two or three years we change peoples’ minds, we can get them to come to those ports. We’re as fast as anybody.”

The July dockworkers strike at British Columbia ports resulted in U.S. West Coast ports picking up additional volume — particularly at Seattle and Tacoma, Wash. UP was able to efficiently handle the volume spike at the Pacific Northwest ports, says Eric Gehringer, executive vice president of operations.

On their third-quarter earnings call last month, CN executives said it could take up to a year for U.S.-bound international intermodal traffic to fully recover at British Columbia ports. But at yesterday’s investor conference they said that shipment data from Asia indicates that Prince Rupert volume will begin to recover in the next few weeks.

## **STB Moves Ahead with Small Shipper’s Common Carrier Complaint Against Union Pacific**

[By Bill Stephens](#) | November 3, 2023 The board also is considering a coal shipper’s case against BNSF Railway



*Railcars on the incorrect tracks at Sanimax’s facility. In a May 2022 view from Google Maps, covered hoppers and tank cars are spotted on Sanimax’s spur tracks in South Saint Paul, Minn. Sanimax says Union Pacific has violated its common carrier obligation by unilaterally reducing local service to three days per week from five. Google Maps*

WASHINGTON – The Surface Transportation Board has denied Union Pacific’s request to dismiss a common-carrier case filed by a small shipper in the Twin Cities.

[In a 3-2 decision issued Thursday](#), the STB also ordered the shipper, Sanimax, to provide evidence for damages allegedly incurred when UP unilaterally curtailed local service to three days per week, down from five, in August 2020. That evidence is due by Dec. 18, while UP has until Jan. 17 to respond to Sanimax’s request for damages. Two board members, Patrick Fuchs and Michelle Schulz, dissented, noting that Sanimax should have already sought and presented damages evidence. Schultz also argues that Sanimax’s claim is moot since UP in May 2022 restored Sanimax’s switching service to five days per week. Sanimax brought the case to the STB in November 2020. It asked the board to order UP to restore service to five days per week at its rendering facility in South St. Paul, Minn.

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UP subsequently sought to have the case tossed out, arguing that the animal byproducts that Sanimax ships are exempt from regulation. But the STB in November 2021 revoked the exemption and allowed the case to proceed, saying the “issues raised by Sanimax ... warrant closer examination and further development of the record.” The case could set a precedent because common-carrier rules — which require railroads to provide service upon reasonable request — are ill-defined. Sanimax contends that UP failed to meet its common-carrier obligations by reducing service to three days per week and subsequently failing to supply railcars on scheduled service days, providing late service, and placing rUP warned the STB that a decision prioritizing Sanimax over the needs of higher-volume customers would micromanage operational decisions “by regulatory fiat,” reduce network efficiency, and further stress the supply chain.

UP says the case should be moot because it continues to provide Sanimax with five days of service per week.

In a June update to the STB, UP said it was continuing to provide Sanimax with five days of service. In its June update, Sanimax claimed that UP’s service frequency had fallen short of the railroad’s commitments.

The STB’s decision yesterday said the case was not moot. “UP’s commitment to provide five-days-per-week service was for a finite and relatively short period of time, after which UP could decide to revert to the same practices that prompted Sanimax’s complaint,” the decision says. “Moreover, in its June 7, 2023, report, UP itself stated that it had not made any further commitments regarding service frequency. Accordingly, the Board finds that Sanimax’s injunctive relief claim is not moot.”

The STB also is considering a common-carrier complaint involving a Powder River Basin coal shipper and BNSF Railway.

In April, Navajo Transitional Energy Co. said BNSF Railway violated its common-carrier obligations by failing to provide adequate service from the Spring Creek Mine in Montana to the Westshore Terminals at Roberts Bank in Delta, British Columbia, Canada.

In a 3-2 decision in May, the STB ordered BNSF to handle 23 trains per month from Spring Creek Mine to the Westshore Terminal — and an additional six trains per month once there is sufficient crew and train set capacity.

BNSF challenged in federal court some elements of the STB’s decision and also asked the board for a partial stay of the order while a judicial review is under way. The railroad said it did not object to the 23 trains per month or 4.2 million annual tons quota, but it did take issue with the requirement to handle an additional six NTEC trains per month. And so the railroad asked the STB to put a stay on the requirement to handle an additional million tons this year.

The STB rejected BNSF’s request for a partial stay.



----CN News----

## CN Acquires Stake in G&W’s Cape Breton & Central Nova Scotia Railway

[By](#) November 2, 2023 The 145-mile short line operates the easternmost trackage in North America



*Genesee & Wyoming*

Canadian National has acquired a stake in Genesee & Wyoming short line Cape Breton & Central Nova Scotia Railway, which operates the easternmost trackage in North America.

Under the deal announced on Wednesday, CN will manage interline shipments for customers on the 145-mile CBNS. G&W will continue to operate the railroad, which connects with CN at Truro, Nova Scotia. G&W previously managed interline shipments. We are proud to be partnering with Genesee & Wyoming to serve existing customers on this line,” Patrick Lortie, CN’s chief strategy officer, said in a statement. “This partnership will further reinforce CN’s presence in eastern Canada where we believe there will be a growing role to play in the competitiveness of North American trade.

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It will also enable our network to reach new opportunities in the longer-term, further advancing our strategic agenda of accelerating profitable, sustainable growth.”

“This partnership fully leverages the expertise of both a local, first- and last-mile railroad and a Class I railway that is part of the broader North American freight rail network,” Rick McLellan, president of G&W’s Canadian operations, said in a statement. “As G&W and CN work together to enhance service for rail-served industries in the Nova Scotia region, customers can continue to rely on the safe and efficient transportation service they have received for more than a decade.”

Terms of the transaction were not disclosed. CN spun off the CBNS to shortline operator RailTex in 1993; that company was purchased by Rail America in 2000, and G&W acquired RailAmerica in 2012. The trackage between Port Tupper and Sydney has been out of service since 2016.

## Canadian National Train Derails in Rural Wisconsin

[By](#) | November 1, 2023 **10 cars involved; no injuries reported**

STANLEY, Wis. — Approximately 10 cars of a Canadian National Railway train derailed early this morning (Wednesday, Nov. 1), the Stanley Police department said in [a press release](#) posted on Facebook.

The derailment occurred about 1:07 a.m. No injuries were reported and no hazardous materials were involved, police said.

Stanley, population 3,378, is about 30 miles northeast of Eau Claire, Wis., and about 22 miles east of Chippewa Falls. It is located on CN’s Minneapolis subdivision. It will also enable our network to reach new opportunities in the longer-term, further advancing our strategic agenda of accelerating profitable, sustainable growth.”

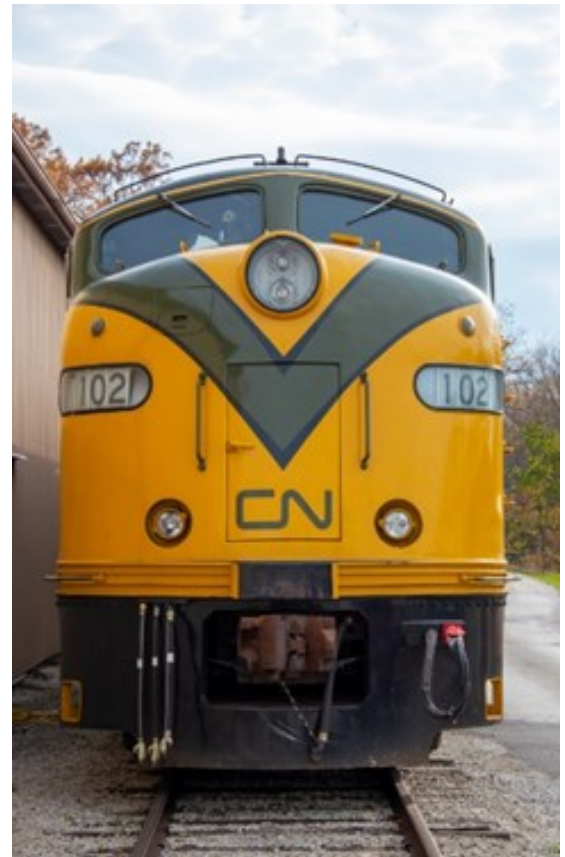
## Canadian National Donates Former Illinois Central E9 to Monticello Museum

[By Steve Smedley](#) | November 8, 2023 **Locomotive, built for CB&Q, wears version of classic CN scheme**



*Above: Canadian National has donated this E9 to the Monticello Railway Museum. Steve Smedley*

*Right: A front view of CN No. 102. Steve Smedley*



MONTICELLO, Ill. — Canadian National Railway has donated a former Illinois Central E9 to the Monticello Railway Museum in central Illinois. The locomotive arrived at the museum via Norfolk Southern earlier this month.

The unit wears a variation of CN’s classic 1950s green-and-black paint scheme — most notably with the CN “noodle” logo in place of the original maple-leaf emblem — applied at the railroad’s Woodcrest Shop in Homewood, Ill., in 2014. It is the fourth paint scheme No. 102 has worn since the 1990s.

The locomotive was built in January 1950 for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy as its No. 9940-A, and became Burlington Northern No. 9940 in 1970. It was part of the purchase of the BN E-unit fleet by Chicago’s West Suburban Mass Transit District in 1972, and along with the other locomotives was sent to Morrison-Knudson for rebuilding for commuter service. The resulting units were designated as E9s.

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Tom Biscan, son of a former Illinois Central official, worked through Ed Harris, outgoing CN chief operating officer, to get the locomotive donated. Museum President John Sciutto told *Trains News Wire*, “We graciously accepted the donation of CN No. 102 and it’s a wonderful addition to our historic locomotive fleet. This is a windfall donation to our museum; it’s basically our own version of a heritage unit.” There are no plans to repaint No. 102, Sciutto said: “We have other projects in the queue. We are putting in a new water tank and a pumphouse for Southern Railway 2-8-0 No. 401, along with a turntable and roundhouse as major projects for the museum.” This is the second E unit to arrive at the Monticello museum. Former Pennsylvania Railroad E8 No. 5764, last used by the Tennessee Central Railroad Museum in Nashville, is privately owned by John Downing of White Heath, Ill. That unit will be painted in Illinois Central’s chocolate brown and orange, and numbered IC No. 4044 — one spot above the last IC E unit.

## CN to Launch Intermodal Service From the Port of Gulfport, Miss

[By Bill Stephens](#) | November 10, 2023 Test runs from the Gulf Coast port will begin in the next few weeks



*A Canadian National intermodal train makes the transition from the former Illinois Central to the former Elgin, Joliet & Eastern at Matteson, Ill., to begin its trip west and north around the Chicago area on Feb. 11, 2023. David Lassen*



*Canadian National is beginning intermodal service from the Port of Gulfport, Miss. Port of Gulfport*

MONTREAL — Canadian National will launch new intermodal service from the Port of Gulfport, Miss., under a new agreement with the state’s port authority. Test moves from the Gulf Coast port — which specializes in refrigerated cargo such as Dole and Chiquita bananas and other produce — will begin in the next few weeks, CN announced this week. “We are proud to be partnering with the Mississippi State Port Authority at Gulfport and Ports America to launch this new service,” Dan Bresolin, CN’s intermodal vice president, said in a statement. “It will provide shippers with new ocean connectivity options to move goods between the Gulf Coast, U.S. MidBy working collaboratively with partners, CN will continue to maximize the use of its capacity in its southern network to accelerate sustainable, profitable growth.” CN reaches the port via haulage rights over Canadian Pacific Kansas City’s former Kansas City Southern Gulfport Subdivision between Hattiesburg and Gulfport. CPKC, in turn, reaches its isolated Gulfport Sub via trackage rights over CN between Jackson, Miss., and Hattiesburg. “With CN being the industry leader in refrigerated service and the Port of Gulfport being one of the largest importers of green fruit in the U.S., we see this as a natural fit with great potential,” Rob Kusiciel, chief commercial officer at terminal operator Ports America, said in a statement. Hurricane Katrina leveled Gulfport’s facilities in 2005. The port is now the third-largest container port on the Gulf of Mexico, among the top 20 U.S. container ports, and the second-largest importer of green fruit in the nation, according to the port authority..

## Outstanding Railroad Preservation Award Winner On Thursday, October 5, 2023, 8:39 AM, NRHS



*Iowa Traction 50, a Baldwin steeplecab built in 1920, rests between assignments at an agribusiness in Mason City, Iowa. Photo by Mike Yuhas.*



*L: Iowa Traction Railway Roadmaster Mike Rumeliote and former Iowa Traction Railway owner Dave Johnson accepted the award from NRHS representative Mike Yuhas, Railway Age Editor-in-Chief William C. Vantuono, and Railway Track & Structures Editor-in-Chief David C. Lester. Photo by David Lassen*

The National Railway Historical Society, Railway Age and Railway Track & Structures presented Class III [Iowa Traction Railway](#) with the inaugural “Outstanding Railroad Historic Preservation Award,” the intent of which is “to honor and recognize a North American common-carrier railroad for a historically significant preservation project.” Iowa Traction was one of [five finalists](#); the award was presented in front of an audience of railroad industry professionals at the Railway Interchange trade show in Indianapolis, October 2, 2023.



## Metro News - Elroy-Sparta State Trail -Provided by Rick Krenske Tue 10/31/2023



*Westbound train No. 501, the Viking, heads out of Elroy, Wis., for Minneapolis on Sept. 17, 1955.*

The train operated from Chicago behind a Chicago & North Western 4-6-2 Pacific. An Omaha Road E Class 4-6-2 Pacific took over the train at Elroy. The present-day Elroy-Sparta State Trail runs west from here. William D. Middleton photo

Wisconsin isn't usually associated with railroad tunnels, but it once had a number of them. Today only Canadian Pacific's bore at Tunnel City is active, but next door is the closed tunnel of the Chicago & North Western. The C&NW system once had six tunnels in the state, all closed to rail traffic today. You can still walk or ride a bike through three of them on the North Western's 32-mile former Elroy-Sparta Cut-Off or "Tunnel District" as it was known in its later years. From April 1950 until June 1957, the line was used westbound by the Chicago-Huron-Rapid City Dakota 400.

The route was constructed in 1872 when the Chicago & North Western was building north from Madison, Wis. toward a link with the Winona & St. Peter Railroad in Winona. C&NW's construction company, the Baraboo Air Line Railroad, faced rugged country along the Baraboo River north of Elroy where the river wound through high bluffs. The railroad decided to tunnel through the ridges, but it was a costly proposition: it reported a cost of \$476,743.32 for building three tunnels, with the longest stretching 3,833 feet.

The railroad opened the route to Winona in September 1873. The Cut-Off had mountainous topography, and some early Elroy railroaders called it going "over the hills."

Also serving Elroy was the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha, or simply the "Omaha Road," which came under the control of C&NW beginning in 1882 but was operated separately. In 1878 the Omaha acquired the West Wisconsin Railway, which had built their own 900-foot tunnel north of Elroy on a route to Wyeville and Hudson, Wis. Elroy became a rail center, with C&NW trains from Chicago and Madison being handed off to the Omaha Road for forwarding to the Twin Cities or Superior, Wis. C&NW trains headed west for Winona and Mankato, Minn. and South Dakota points used the Cut-Off. Like the Dakota 400, the predecessor Minnesota 400 operated in one direction over the Cut-Off when it was expanded to a Chicago-Mankato service in August 1937. The "one direction" running was utilized to allow connections with other trains at Wyeville. This was short lived, and the Minnesota 400 reverted to its original Wyeville-Mankato route in June 1938 until the birth of the Dakota 400 in April 1950.

The connections at Wyeville were made possible when C&NW opened its 177-mile, \$15 million Milwaukee-Sparta Adams Cut-Off in 1911. The well-engineered route bypassed the curves, grades and tunnels of C&NW's Madison Division, although it did require construction of a tunnel next to the Milwaukee Road's bore at Tunnel City. Now Chicago-Twin Cities and Chicago-Twin Ports passenger trains could travel to Milwaukee, then west on the Adams Cut-Off, although several continued to travel via Madison and Elroy.

The C&NW leased and began integration of the Omaha Road in 1957. That June the westbound Dakota 400 was rerouted off the Elroy-Sparta line to the route via Wyeville. Another passenger train, the Rochester Special, continued to use the Cut-Off in both directions. Traveling from Chicago to Mankato, the Special once continued west of Mankato into South Dakota as the Minnesota & Black Hill Express, but by the late 1950s it had been cut back to Mankato.



## Big Sky Passenger Organization Receives \$150,000 Grant [By](#) November 13, 2023 Funds will support study of track projects to improve rail lines for freight and passenger service

BILLINGS, Mont. — The Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority has received a \$150,000 grant to support its efforts to revive Amtrak service on Montana's "southern tier" route, as well as other rail projects in a five-state region in the Pacific Northwest.

[The Missoula Current news site reports](#) the grant was awarded by the [Pacific Northwest Economic Region Foundation](#) and its Regional Infrastructure Accelerator, which aims to help bring public-private project partnerships to the area as part of the foundation's efforts to foster collaboration and coordination across state lines and other jurisdictional boundaries. The grant will help fund analysis of track improvements that could benefit freight and passenger traffic, as well as making an economic case for reviving Amtrak's small parcel delivery service as an economic driver for rural and tribal communities along passenger lines in Montana.

"These funds will further our work both in southern Montana and also along the *Empire Builder* [route], to the benefit of both freight and passenger operations," Dave Strohmaier, chairman of the rail authority, told the Current. "This is a great example of how working together at a regional scale, with the sweat equity and financial support of partners, is moving this train down the tracks."

The Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority was founded in 2020 by a group of 12 counties to promote efforts to return Amtrak service to communities including Billings, Bozeman, Butte, and Missoula, on the route once served by the *North Coast Hiawatha*. That train was discontinued in 1979.

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## — Other RR News —

**Cumbres & Toltec Buys White Pass & Yukon Diesel**By | November 14, 2023 Locomotive will be used for maintenance, as rescue unit

*The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad has bought this Bombardier DL535E diesel from the White Pass & Yukon, shown on the WP&Y in 2015. White Pass & Yukon via Facebook*

CHAMA, N.M. — The bi-state agency overseeing the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad has agreed to purchase a diesel locomotive from the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway, a first for the classic line preserving the former Denver & Rio Grande Western line between Chama and Antonito, Colo. The commission agreed to the purchase of Bombardier DL535E No. 114 for \$120,000, as well as all related acquisition costs, at its Nov. 11 meeting, saying [in a resolution](#) that it “recognizes the need for additional motive power ... outside the confines of the existing locomotive fleet.” Funding will come from money received under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. [Meeting notes from Samuel Seiber](#), who reports on the commission as a citizen journalist, indicate commissioners said the locomotive would be used for maintenance-of-way work and as a rescue locomotive, and would allow the railroad to save the \$1,000 or more per day in expense of keeping a steam locomotive hot as a rescue engine. The commission hopes the 1,200-hp C-C locomotive could be on hand by late spring or early summer 2024.

The Cumbres & Toltec purchase follows a similar acquisition of four DL535Cs by the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad from the White Pass & Yukon in 2020 [see [“Durango & Silverton buys ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, April 13, 2020]. That purchase has helped the Durango & Silverton continue to operate during periods of higher fire danger [see [“Durango & Silverton set to go coal-free ...”](#) *News Wire*, June 25, 2021].

**Pere Marquette No. 1225 Debuts in 2023 for the North Pole Express (with video)**By Lucas Iverson | November 21, 2023 **Five-consecutive weekends considered as continual break-in runs for 2-8-4’s rebuilt wheels and running gear**

*Pere Marquette No. 1225 rounds a curve near Carland, Mich., while pulling the North Pole Express excursion on Nov. 18, 2023. The Berkshire-type 2-8-4 is fresh from a wheel and running gear rebuild along with a recent repaint.*

OWOSSO, Mich. — [Pere Marquette steam locomotive No. 1225](#) made its public debut over the weekend by operating the *North Pole Express* excursions – organized by the 2-8-4’s owners, the [Steam Railroading Institute](#) (SRI) of Owosso.

The Berkshire-type locomotive is fresh from an extensive rebuild of the driving wheels and running gear with test runs completed in early November [See [“Pere Marquette No. 1225 returns to service...”](#) *News Wire*, Nov. 9, 2023].

“Overall, No. 1225 performed outstanding,” said Justin Hamilton, SRI’s Master Mechanic of Motive Power. “There were a couple of little appliance setbacks [not related to the running gear] which were more of an inconvenience than a defect.

“We’re going to tune those up before next weekend’s trips.”

With the engine having completed four 51.2-mile round trips along the Great Lakes Central Railroad between the Institute and Ashley, Mich. — destination for the holiday excursions — Hamilton reports no significant changes in the performance of the wheels and running gear compared to the Nov. 3 test runs. There was no pounding in the frame from the new shoes and wedges to the axle boxes and nothing ran hot, he said. However, both Hamilton and SRI are still considering the next 200-300 miles of operation as continual break-in runs. “I doubt we have enough miles on it to get all the bearings seated fully yet.”

**National Railroad Museum to Receive \$7 Million for Expansion Project**By | November 2, 2023 **Project is one of five in Wisconsin to receive COVID stimulus money, governor announces**

*A rendering of the planned expansion of the National Railroad Museum's Lenfestey Center. The museum will receive \$7 million for the project, Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers has announced. National Railroad Museum*

GREEN BAY, Wis. — The National Railroad Museum in Green Bay will receive \$7 million in funding for expansion of its facilities, Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers announced today (Thursday, Nov. 2.) The museum expansion is one of five projects, totaling \$36.6 million, selected for funding under the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 legislation intended to provide economic stimulus in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. “These five projects will have a long-term impact on our state’s economy and on economic development in these communities from Green Bay to Janesville,” Evers said in [a press release](#). Other projects receiving funding include a sports and convention center in Janesville, Wis.; a new Milwaukee soccer stadium; the Bronsville Center for the Arts in Milwaukee, and upgrades to a theater in Door County. Plans for a \$15 million expansion at the Green Bay museum were approved by local officials earlier this year. The more than 32,000-square-foot addition to the museum’s Lenfestey Center would permit additional enclosed rolling stock exhibits and provide space for educational programming and events [see [“National Railroad Museum submits expansion plans.”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 3, 2023]. “We deeply appreciate the support we have received from Gov. Tony Evers, Republican and Democratic state legislators, and local leaders,” the museum said [in a statement](#) on its Facebook page, “and are excited to be a step closer toward expanding our facility to better meet the needs of our community.”



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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## NORTH POLE EXPRESS Now On Sale! Dec 1-3 & Dec 7-10, 2023

Buy Tickets Today Or See 261.com



Night Trains 2023 – 2024 Season Night Trains runs from October 2023 through February 2024 with additional bonus nights, including **Black Friday Night Trains – Friday, November 24th, Santa Visits the museum on December 16th and 23rd, and Christmas and New Year's Week Bonus Nights – December 18th, 20th, 22nd, 27th and 29th.** Its open Every Saturday (Except Christmas Eve) from October 21st, 2023 to February 24, 2024. The event runs from 3:00pm to 7pm, tickets will be sold for 2 hour time blocks. \$15 per guest, children 4 and under are free. Location: **668 Transfer Road Suite 8 Saint Paul, MN 55114 651-647-9628**

### Railfan Events (Thanks to Rick Krenske, Bill Dredge)

<b>Northstar Chapter NRHS Holiday Banquet</b>	<b>Sunday December 3rd 2023 3:15—5:45 pm</b>	<b>Mancini's Restaurant West 7th Street St Paul MN</b>	<b>\$35</b>
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