



NRHS

Northstar News

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

CP #2816 is coming to St Paul May 3, 2024!



L: Steam Double Header with CP #2816 September 9 2007 at Maple Springs MN -R Tubbesing

R: Amtrak #8 EB at Red Wing MN (15 cars) August 1997 -Gary Rumler



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Meeting Notice:

Saturday April 13th 2024 6:15 pm At Roseville Lutheran Church,

Program: Jack Barbier's fabulous Video from 1998 of "Steamfest in the Valley" at Osceola, Wisconsin featuring a steam tripleheader that included Northern Pacific 328, Soo Line 2719 and Soo Line 1003!

Informal Dinner at Keys Restaurant -Lexington and Larpen-
teur Avenues at 4:15 pm April 13th, 2024.

Please join us in-person at Roseville Lutheran Church, Satur-
day April 13th 2024 at 6 pm. Doors open at 5:50pm. Our busi-
ness meeting will begin at 6:15 followed by the program. If
you are unable to join us in person, the Zoom Meeting login
information are here:

Topic: Northstar Chapter, NRHS April Meeting

Time: April9th 2024 17:30 Central Time

To join the Zoom Meeting Click on this link:

Join the Zoom Meeting at

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86425139109?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86425139109?pwd=RkRrZjBmcFl1ZmI4NEY5dINxQVArUT09)

[pwd=RkRrZjBmcFl1ZmI4NEY5dINxQVArUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86425139109?pwd=RkRrZjBmcFl1ZmI4NEY5dINxQVArUT09) or [https://](https://tinyurl.com/583ucjuv)

tinyurl.com/583ucjuv Meeting ID: 864 2513 9109

Passcode: 120832---

If you are having problems with audio, you may dial in at 507
-473-4847 or 312-626-6799. Use the meeting ID above when
prompted. There have been updates to the Zoom software, so
allow an extra 5 minutes for your computer to update before
joining the meeting. You may be prompted for Meeting ID:
817 3939 7560 and Passcode: 196905 Dial in (audio-only)

• +1 507 473 4847 • +1 312 626 6799

Note: CP #2816 schedule is in the March 2024 newsletter!

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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: "We are in dire need of a treasurer", The Board of Directors has received formal notice from Russ Isbrandt that he is resigning the Treasurer position effective when the chapter finds a replacement or December 31st, 2024, whichever comes first. Please consider taking on this job! If you have ever balanced your checkbook or created a budget for your family, you have the skills required for this job. The main responsibilities are paying our bills, monitoring our checkbook, filing IRS form 990ez every year and also keeping the Minnesota Secretary of State up to date that we are a going concern. Both the IRS and Secretary of State filing are done on-line and take very little time. If you can help, please contact any board member; contact information for each board member is listed on page 2 of the Northstar News."

Obituary "Dee Smith Lundeen"



Longtime member Dee Smith Lundeen Passed away Mar 2nd in her winter home in Mesa Arizona. She passed of complications of a fall in February which broke her hip. She is survived by her husband Chuck Lundeen. She loved the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. She has requested that no service be held in her honor. She was cremated and her ashes are to be spread at her Wisconsin Hometown. Thanks to Greg Smith for this report. She will be sorely missed.



Meeting Minutes March 9th, 2024, Roseville Lutheran Church

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 pm by President Dan Meyer. There were about 25 members and Guests present. A quorum was determined. A motion was made by Dan Meyer to approve the Minutes of the Meeting on February 10th, 2024 in the March 2024 newsletter. The motion was carried.

Cheer Committee. President Dan Meyer stated that longtime member Dee Smith Lundeen has passed away. Greg Smith reported She had a fall February 4th, and complications resulted in her passing on March 2nd in her winter home in Mesa Arizona.

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Greg reported that she was from Wisconsin and did not want any Ceremony. Her ashes will be deposited near her Wisconsin home and in Arizona. Dan Meyer called for a moment of silence in Memory of Dee. A motion to members by President Dan Meyer to approve the meeting minutes from February 2024 meeting in the March 2024 newsletter was floored. The motion was carried.

Treasurer's Report. Russ Isbrandt gave the Treasurers Report. The Chapter cash balance as of March 2nd with the sum of Calendar and Chapter accounts is in good shape. Membership: There are 29 Regular renewals and there are 14 subscribers. Russ stated that thanks to John Goodman, there is a \$3525 additional in the calendar account from 2023 sales in the calendar account less any calendars not sold. The calendar amount does not include any funds that are in our paypal account. Dan Meyer stated that as in the Northstar News that Russ Isbrandt is resigning his position of treasurer pending finding a replacement or till the end of the 2024 year.

Library Report. The library report was reported by John Goodman. Our remaining library contents are in temperature-controlled storage facility, and we really miss have a library building to meet. We have been meeting at the Roseville library to review photos for the 2025 calendar. Dan Meyer stated we have brought a few things from the library(duplicates) that are free for the taking by the attendees. There were old Passenger Train Journals, Classic Trains magazines and items from the Dave Herbert donations.

Calendar Report. The Calendar Report was given by Dawn Holmberg. We have only a few good calendars left for sale. We are still getting a few calendar orders. We have a few calendars left and the price is \$10.85

Trip Director Report. The Trip Director report was given by John Goodman. John attended a meeting with Jack Barbier of the Great River Rail Association in Red wing on the 2nd Amtrak train to Chicago. There is hope by June of 2024 that service will be started. If the new Amtrak Train does not start in June, we usually have a light rail trip in June, and since the Northstar train runs only on weekdays there is a possibility to ride the Northstar from Minneapolis to Big Lake and return in the late afternoon. July is the picnic at Maiden Rock WI on the 2nd Saturday in July. It was decided that we will plan a trip to Trego Wisconsin and ride the Pizza train on August 10th, 2024. We have Received an Estimate on Bus rental from Voigt Transportation. A 40-seat bus is estimated at \$1600 for a 40-seat bus with restroom. That would make the individual cost for the bus for 20 members to be about \$80 and the cost would be less if more people would sign-up. John proposed that due to the bus cost, we carpool up to Trego WI.

Newsletter Report. The newsletter report was given by Richard Tubbesing. Richard Tubbesing stated that there will be newsletters in April and May, and then an issue in July. The July issue will have official signup for the Trego Pizza Train trip. The newsletter costs about \$65 a month. Richard Tubbesing made a request to chapter members that the newsletter would like to have stories and photos submitted for the newsletter by members and friends.

National Representative Report. The National (NRHS) report was given by Dawn Holmberg. There was an Email to all NRHS members about the Conference in May 2024 at Cedar Rapids Iowa. Registration is open at \$35 for this Conference. A trip is planned for Monday, but the trip is sold out. Mike Youhas gave an update of the conference and stated there are just a couple of seats remaining for the Monday trip. Hotel Information for the conference is forthcoming. The NRHS Web site has completed more updates on some of the Web-site pages. Dawn stated that she and John Goodman are working on the Brochure for the NRHS convention in August and should be available by May 1, 2024.

Web Report The web report was given by Dan Meyer. There was nothing new to report. The new Web Server is working fine.

Program Report. Richard Tubbesing gave the program report. Mike Yuhas will give a slide program from his collection. Richard Tubbesing solicited members to Volunteer a program of their trips and Raillfanning to one of our meetings soon. April meeting probably will be a video by Jack Barbier on a Steam Triple header. May 2024 is still open. Dan Meyer asked Greg Smith about his new slide acquisition. He has sent them out for processing and are mostly Black and White. Greg was Asked if he could do the program in May 2024. That might be a program for the May meeting.

There was No Old Business to report.

There was No New Business to report.

Bob Ball stated that Kurt Mahre lives in Luck Wisconsin and is trying to get display items to display in the Luck WI Depot. If anyone has photos or other items of the Soo Line in Luck Wisconsin, please contact Bob Ball or Kurt Mahre.

The meeting was called to adjourn at about 6:45pm. Motion was carried.

Announcements:

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Dan Meyer stated that if you need assistance if viewing any or you old media, with our projectors and slide projectors we can assist in transferring media to digital. Dan Meyer also stated we would like to see more guests attend our meetings. Ross Hammond and Greg Smith Stated that the Steve Kopasz movie collection has been given Chris Laskoski of C-Vision Video.

-Mark Quam was asked on the status of the 2nd Amtrak Train to Chicago. It is hoped that Start-up will be the spring of this year. Mark stated there is a Federal Grant to further the study of the West Wisconsin Train and there are continued meetings planned. There is a meeting of the Wisconsin Association of Rail Passengers in Wisconsin Dells coming up. You can attend by Zoom, and if wanted Mark will give the link to Dan & Dawn. Mark also reported that Wisconsin DOT and Amtrak are looking to add service to Madison.

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Amtrak has stated it needs to look at stations on this possible route in the future. Green Bay also wants Amtrak service and is looking now at a bus connection to existing Amtrak Routes. There is a Federal Grant that the Big-Sky Coalition on a look at Amtrak service on the former North Coast Hiawatha route in Southern Montana. Respectfully Submitted Richard Tubbesing Secretary

Northstar Commuter Service to Twins Games to Return [By Trains Staff](#) | March 9, 2024



Northstar commuter trains await departure from the Target Field station in Minneapolis in 2020. Northstar will restore service for some Minnesota Twins games this season. David Lassen

MINNEAPOLIS — Metro Transit will resume Northstar commuter train service for 38 Minnesota Twins home games this season, the transit agency announced Friday, March 8.

Trains will run for the Twins' home opener April 4, for all Saturday and Sunday games, week day day games, and on Memorial Day and July 4. A complete game schedule [is available here](#); updates with specific train scheduling are still to come. Service will not be offered for weekday evening games.

Metro Transit had discontinued the dedicated Twins service in 2022 because of funding issues [see "[Northstar ends service ...](#)," *Trains News Wire*, April 5, 2022], although trains did run for playoff games last year.

The Northstar station in Minneapolis is immediately adjacent to Target Field, the Twins' ballpark.

The agency also plans Northstar service for Minnesota Vikings games at U.S. Bank Stadium this fall.

Minnesota Bill Seeks to Limit Train Lengths [By Trains Staff](#) | March 13, 2024



A Canadian Pacific train follows the Mississippi River through Red Wing, Minn., in September 2020. Minnesota's legislature is considering a bill to limit train lengths to 8,500 feet. David Lassen

ST. PAUL, Minn. — A Minnesota bill to limit the length of freight trains has cleared its first legislative hurdle, passing a committee of the state's House of Representatives on Tuesday.

[HF3499](#), introduced by Rep. Jeff Brand (Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, St. Peter, Minn.), would limit trains to 8,500 feet, with penalties escalating from as little as \$1,000 for a first offense to no less than \$25,000 for a third in a three-year period. In passing the House Transportation Finance and Policy Committee on a 9-6 party-line vote, it was also [amended](#) to require a minimum of \$5 million in insurance for crews traveling to work.

The bill now goes to the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee.

[An article on the House website](#) says the bill aims to improve safety for railroad workers and communities, but opponents say the limit is arbitrary, would lead to more trains, and would drive up costs for consumers.

CBS News: Plastic Pellets, Diesel Spill into Pennsylvania River after Train Derailment: Police

Joe Brandt, Terra Sullivan Updated March 2, 2024 · 4 min read Provided by John Goodman



Plastic pellets, diesel spill into Pennsylvania river after train derailment: police

LOWER SAUCON TOWNSHIP, Pa. (CBS) -- A derailment involving three Norfolk Southern trains near Bethlehem, Pennsylvania spilled some diesel fuel and plastic pellets along the Lehigh River on Saturday morning, the company and local authorities said. The National Transportation Safety Board said preliminary information revealed an eastbound Norfolk Southern train struck a still train on the same track. The wreckage from the striking train then spilled onto an adjacent track and was subsequently struck by a westbound Norfolk Southern train, NTSB officials said. The crash led to the derailment of an "unknown number of cars," NTSB told CBS News Philadelphia. Officials said there was no danger to the public from the derailment or the spills and no evacuation orders were in effect. There are no reported injuries. Members of responding crews on the scene near Riverside Drive have contained diesel fuel that spilled from the locomotive with "booms," or barriers, and are vacuuming it out of the river.

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Others are cleaning up the polypropylene plastic pellets, which a Norfolk Southern spokesperson said spilled out of a single train car during the derailment and landed "predominantly onto the ground."

Emergency responders were dispatched to the derailment site at 7:15 a.m., just east of the Steel City village, Lower Saucon Township Police Chief Thomas Barndt said in a news release.

"There was a diesel fuel spill into the Lehigh River from the accident and containment booms have been deployed," Barndt said.

"There is also a spill of polypropylene plastic pellets from one of the derailed cars."

Some Lehigh Valley residents on social media reported hearing about the derailment.

Images from the Nancy Run Fire Company's Facebook page showed train cars off the tracks along the Lehigh River. The train was hauling boxcars and tanker cars, the photos show.

Norfolk Southern sent the following statement to CBS News Philadelphia:

"Norfolk Southern has responded to a derailment in Lower Saucon Township, PA. There is no threat to the public, no hazardous material concerns from the railcars, and no reports of injuries to our crew members. We appreciate the quick, professional response by local emergency agencies. Our crews and contractors will remain on-scene over the coming days to cleanup, and we appreciate the public's patience while they work as quickly, thoroughly, and as safely as possible. We are always working to advance safety. We will investigate this incident to understand how it happened and prevent others like it."

NTSB said on X that it is now investigating "the collision and derailment involving three Norfolk Southern trains." The investigative agency said they will send in "a team comprised of experts in train operations, signals & train control, mechanical systems, and human performance." The group is expected to arrive later Saturday.

"I'm very concerned about this because we in Northampton County have one of the busiest sections of Norfolk Southern Commercial System," Northampton County Executive Lamont McClure told CBS News Philadelphia. "So, it is very important that Norfolk Southern working with NTSB and the state government figure out what happened and make sure it doesn't happen again."

McClure previously said on social media earlier Saturday nothing appeared to be leaking from the containers on the train. Later statements from police mentioned the diesel fuel and polypropylene.

"Norfolk Southern is on site and is doing an assessment. The most important thing we can do for our first responders is stay away from the site!" the county's Facebook post timestamped just before 8:30 a.m. said.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection was called out to the scene along with the PA Fish Commission and responders from local fire and EMS crews in both Northampton and Lehigh Counties, Barndt said.

The Milwaukee County Zoo is Replacing the Zoo Train's Steam Locomotive Engines

[Amy Schwabe](#) Milwaukee Journal Sentinel **From:** RAY BENSEN <rayande@comcast.net> Provided by John Goodman

Sent: Saturday, March 16, 2024 at 11:12:42 AM CDT



[The Milwaukee County Zoo train's steam locomotives are being retired \(jsonline.com\)](https://www.jsonline.com)

The passenger coaches won't be affected by the change to the engines, although preventive maintenance is performed on the coaches each year. The new engines are expected to allow the zoo train to run year-round, weather permitting. Currently, the zoo train typically operates March through November.

The steam engines will be preserved and continue to operate in their new home; Riverside & Great Northern Preservation Society functions as a living museum. The zoo is planning to announce one more chance for train riders to experience the No. 1924 steam engine in a limited run before its Oct. 31 departure.

The train has been at the Milwaukee County Zoo since 1958, and [the steam engines were gifts from The Milwaukee Journal](#); they're named after then-Journal executives Harry Grant and Irwin Maier.

2023 Annual Report March 22, 2024 Provided by John Goodman

Welcome to Great River Rail

The Great River Rail Commission aims to increase passenger rail options along the Mississippi River Route between the Twin Cities and Chicago. The Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago Intercity Passenger Rail Service (TCMC Second Train project) will do just that. A second daily round-trip train now, to complement the existing Amtrak Empire Builder service, is a great first step toward more frequent and faster passenger rail service in the future.

Please forward this newsletter to friends and colleagues who may be interested in passenger rail news.

TCMC Second Train

Amendments Approved – Second Train Launch Date Closer GRR Admin 5 days ago

The Second Train moved one step closer to becoming a reality on March 19 with approval of agreements between Ramsey County and Amtrak. During its regular meeting, the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) voted unanimously to approve amendments to the operating and lease agreements with Amtrak that will allow the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago Second Train to serve Union Depot in Saint Paul.

The amended agreements provide for the overnight storage of one train at Union Depot, use of an expanded area of the terminal tracks, and use of ancillary space and services with expanded use of Union Depot. While Amtrak passenger train service is still the priority, the amended agreements allow for easier access by special trains and other non-Amtrak service.

Approval of these amended agreements between the RCRRA and Amtrak is an important step toward implementation of the additional round-trip service between Saint Paul and Chicago.

This service expansion involves partnership agreements among the Federal Railroad Administration, the state departments of transportation, the host railroad, the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority, and Amtrak. These agreements are in progress and finalization was dependent on completion of the agreements between the RCRRA and Amtrak.

A service announcement is expected this spring. The schedules, fares, start date and official name of the train service will be jointly announced when all the agreements have been finalized between the parties.



TCMC ON TRACK
Moving Freight, Moving People

**TCMC Funding
Approved!**

TCMC ON TRACK
Moving Freight, Moving People

**Safe, Reliable, Relaxing,
Productive Travel**



Operations Funding Secured from the State of Minnesota in 2023

In the 2023 legislative session, Minnesota approved funding for two years of operating expenses for the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago Intercity Passenger Rail service (TCMC Second Train) and funds to address construction inflation for track, signal and bridge work. Wisconsin has already committed to provide a similar amount for operations as will the state of Illinois. New Minnesota legislation will have to be approved to continue operations into the future.

When will the train begin running?

The Second Train still does not have an official start date, but strong progress has been made toward getting the train on track.

Accomplishments:

Amtrak has committed that equipment will be available when the service begins.

A System Safety Plan was submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration. An agreement was reached on operating cost sharing among the three states. Minnesota and Wisconsin will each contribute 35% of the operating cost not covered by fares, Illinois will contribute 30%. Agreements approved between Amtrak and Ramsey County.

To be completed:

A route and service plan (nearly complete). Service Agreements between Amtrak and Canadian Pacific (the owner of the rail line), between Amtrak and the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois, the owner of St. Paul Union Depot, and between Wisconsin and the Federal Railroad Administration. "All parties are actively working on getting the service started as soon as possible," said Ramsey County Commissioner Trista Martinson, chair of the Great River Rail Commission, "Members of the Great River Rail Commission have worked a long time to secure a second daily train to/from Chicago and we are so close to the final agreements that will ensure long term success and reliability of service. Once agreements are executed we eagerly wait for the announcement of the start date."

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Design and Construction Progress

Final design continues to move forward on several fronts to complete work on railroad tracks, signals, and bridges that will speed trains up and reduce travel time. This includes some additional environmental work, as well as moving forward with the property acquisition process and utility relocation planning. While most of the acquisitions are temporary easements, they still take time based on state requirements. WisDOT, MnDOT and the consultant team are working on some updates to the design and construction schedule and will update the project website once they are ready. Construction is funded by the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota are providing matching funds to the \$31.8 million federal grant awarded in 2020 proportionate to the amount of work being done in each state, with more work and more investment in Minnesota.

Promoting the TCMC Second Train Service

Planning is underway to implement a publicity plan as soon as a service start date is announced. A coordinated effort to promote the service will be launched by the major players, including Amtrak, the states, and local communities along the route, including the Great River Rail Commission.

More Passenger Rail Coming to Minnesota?

Minnesota residents could benefit from additional passenger rail service that was approved by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for funding of planning studies. The FRA announced 69 passenger-rail corridor selections across 44 states through the new [Corridor Identification and Development Program](#). Neighboring Wisconsin received seven grants, including funding to study development of another train on the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago (TCMC) route, as well as extending a train from the Chicago-Milwaukee Hiawatha route through Madison and Eau Claire to the Twin Cities. The selections were awarded up to \$500,000 for further study and planning activities. The Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission received a grant to study the Eau Claire-Hudson-Twin Cities route as a multi-frequency regional corridor. The Commission's application is unique in that it proposes a competitive process for selecting a train operator.

Commission Update

In 2023, the Great River Rail Commission's major priority was securing operations funding for the state of Minnesota's portion of operating costs for the TCMC Second Train. The Commission also worked on other initiatives including:

Expanded membership. The Commission sent invitations to additional counties, cities, towns, villages and other eligible organizations in Minnesota and Wisconsin between Saint Paul and La Crosse. The Commission welcomed Washington County, the city of Newport and Wacouta Township as new members.

Business Roundtables. Commission consultants worked with local community members in La Crosse, Winona, and Red Wing to preliminarily form groups of local advocates for the Second Train service. When service start is scheduled, these groups will work together to promote destinations within their River Route cities with Amtrak stations.

Public Outreach. The Great River Rail Commission's major public outreach focus for 2024 will be to get people on board the Second Train to visit the great destinations along the Mississippi River Route. The Commission will work with local governments, tourism agencies, business owners, and other organizations to coordinate efforts.



Remembering Janice Rettman: Former Great River Rail Commission Chair

Janice Rettman, former chair of the Great River Rail Commission, passed away on Nov. 18, 2023 at the age of 75, following a brief illness. For more than 30 years, Rettman served the community, holding an array of positions, including Ramsey County Commissioner, where she focused on public transit and affordable housing. In addition to Rettman's focus on affordable housing, she served the Ramsey County community as an advocate for public transportation, where she served for 6 years with the Great River Rail Commission, taking on the leadership role from 2015 to 2019.

Chehalis-Centralia Railroad Set to Resume Excursions April 6

[By Trains Staff](#) | March 23, 2024 | Last updated on March 25, 2024

CHEHALIS, Wash. — The Chehalis-Centralia Railroad and Museum will resume excursion train operations April 6 after a lengthy hiatus, the organization has announced.

[The Centralia Chronicle reports](#) Saturday and Sunday excursions are scheduled through Sept. 29, plus Polar Express trains that will begin Nov. 9.

The heritage operation halted operations in March 2022 after losing its liability insurance as a result of accident claims over a six-year period, with no other insurer willing to step in and provide coverage [see [“Accident losses led to end of insurance”](#) *Trains News Wire*, March 10, 2022]. The organization is resuming operations through an agreement reached last year with the operator of the Goose Lake Railway, a short line in Oregon and California. Goose Lake will provide crew members and operate the trains, while Chehalis-Centralia maintains the track and rolling stock and manages events [see [“Chehalis-Centralia Railroad agreement”](#) *News Wire*, Oct. 5, 2023]. Excursions will be powered by former Puget Sound Shipyard GE 65-ton diesel No. 6, as repairs are continuing on the railroad's steam locomotive, a 2-8-2 built by Baldwin in 1916. Visit [the railroad and museum website](#) for more information.



—AMTRAK News—

Amtrak Awards Contract for Philadelphia Maintenance Facility

[By Trains Staff](#) | March 1, 2024 | Last updated on March 5, 2024



PHILADELPHIA — Amtrak has awarded a contract to Herzog Contracting Corp. for design and construction of a new Heavy Maintenance Facility at the passenger operator's Penn Coach Yard in Philadelphia, the first of six major projects planned for maintenance facilities around the country.

The projects at five locations in the Northeast and one in the Pacific Northwest will prepare the facilities to support maintenance, inspections, repairs, and minor service and cleaning for Amtrak's next-generation Acelas and Airo equipment, currently under construction, as well as proposed new long-distance trainsets. Still to come over the next year are contracts for facilities in Washington, New York City, Boston, and Seattle.

A rendering of Amtrak's new planned Heavy Maintenance Facility in Philadelphia. Amtrak

"We look forward to breaking ground in 2024 on this critical infrastructure investment along the NEC, America's busiest passenger corridor," Laura Mason, Amtrak executive vice president, capital delivery, said in [a press release](#). "This new facility will speed up train maintenance and reduce turnaround times, providing Amtrak customers with more reliable and frequent service." Early work is expected to begin this spring. The project is being funded from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act; the total cost is expected to be in the \$450 million to \$475 million range, with the Herzog contract representing a large portion of that. Completion is projected for 2027.

— Updated on March 5 at 2 p.m. CT with information on project cost and completion date.

West Coast Winter Weather Affects California Zephyr, Empire Builder

[By Bob Johnston](#) | March 1, 2024 **Trains canceled or routes truncated after cascading delays this week**



The eastbound California Zephyr meets Winter Park Express equipment at the Fraser-Winter Park station on Feb. 16, 2024. Steve Patterson

CHICAGO — Amtrak's *California Zephyr* has been cancelled west of Salt Lake City through the weekend as weather forecasters are predicting heavy snow will pound Donner Pass and the Sierra Nevada mountains through Saturday. Service on the Seattle segment of the *Empire Builder* route was also disrupted this week. Trouble started early Thursday when the westbound *Zephyr* was delayed more than 9 hours on Union Pacific's former Western Pacific main line east of Elko, Nev., and straggled into Emeryville, Calif., 10 hours, 35 minutes late Friday morning. A Union Pacific train had derailed in Elko on Wednesday [see ["UP train details ..."](#), *Trains* News Wire, Feb. 28, 2024].

The eastbound *Zephyr* departing Wednesday was held 3 hours at Reno, Nev., then lost another 3 hours into Salt Lake City. More delays to that train occurred east of Glenwood Springs, Colo., and it was running almost 10 hours late across central Nebraska today (Friday, March 1). Since then, *Zephyrs* have turned at Salt Lake City. The next scheduled Amtrak operation over Donner Pass between Reno and Sacramento, Calif., at this writing is Sunday's eastbound and the westbound crossing on Monday after its scheduled departure from Chicago on Saturday, March 2.

Earlier in the week, the *Empire Builder* departing Chicago on Tuesday, Feb. 27, did not run between Spokane and Seattle as a result of a line blockage, though the Portland section did operate. The eastbound *Builder's* Seattle section of Feb. 28 thus began its run at Spokane once the westbound train had arrived. After switching, it left Spokane four hours late Thursday morning and had shaved an hour from that tardiness into the Twin Cities on Friday, March 1.

Amtrak does a good job of notifying passengers already ticketed of the delays through cell phone push messages, but at least in these two instances the booking system didn't adjust departure times at major stops such as Omaha and St. Paul to allow purchase of tickets on the tardy train.

Coach Passengers Now can Buy Meals in Silver Star and Silver Meteor Dining Cars

By Bob Johnston | March 4, 2024



It's 8:37 p.m. on the Silver Star's dining car on September 26, 2023. Sleeping car passengers boarding at Orlando received a suggestion to eat in their rooms after the train departed one hour late. Bob Johnston

WASHINGTON — Amtrak's New York-Miami trains will begin offering "traditional dining" to "a limited number of coach customers" starting today (Monday, March 4), according to spokeswoman Kimberly Woods. The company dropped meal-in-a-bowl "flexible dining" last March on the *Silver Star* and last June on the *Silver Meteor* [see "[Amtrak returns 'traditional dining' ...](#)" *Trains* News Wire, June 27, 2023]. The March debut was billed as a "pilot" to determine whether the chef and lead service attendant would be overwhelmed by the extra preparation and serving protocols that would be required.

Coach passengers were also allowed to purchase breakfasts at \$20, lunches at \$25, and dinners at \$45 aboard Superliner-equipped western long-distance trains offering freshly-prepared meals since last March, but it has taken until now for Amtrak management to begin generating extra revenue on the *Silver* trains' dining cars.

News Wire has yet to receive a response to inquiries whether that pricing will remain constant or how the "limited number" is determined.

Riding the *Star* in June and September northbound from Orlando, the dining car staff was anything but overwhelmed. On the September trip, the lead service attendant suggested to people coming to the diner after boarding at Orlando that they have meals brought to their rooms, "because it is after the 8 p.m. seating." (This was about 8:20 p.m.; the train was running an hour late.)

At the time, there was only one table occupied. This obviously made it difficult for the sleeping car attendants to prepare beds for use; and a couple boarding at Winter Park, the first stop after Orlando, came into the diner and were seated because their room had already been converted.

The chicken entree was tasty and the service was fast if not necessarily cordial. The entrée arrived in 5 minutes; I asked for a glass of water and was brought a plastic bottle. I asked for a glass, and was corrected by the service attendant, "You mean a cup."

"Flexible" meals are still being served to sleeping car passengers only on the *Lake Shore Limited's* Viewliner diner. The single-level *Cardinal* and *Crescent*, trains whose trips involve four or more meal periods, only have café cars. The *Crescent* and *Meteor* served both coach and sleeping car passengers in their Viewliner dining cars until October 2019, so it would not seem difficult to restore a diner on the New York-New Orleans train to serve all passengers.

Amtrak Adds Eight Weekday, Four Weekend Northeast Corridor Trains

By Bob Johnston | March 4, 2024



A southbound Northeast Regional flies through Princeton Junction, N.J., at 125 mph on April 26, 2019. Bob Johnston

Amtrak Northeast Corridor service

	Weekdays	Saturday	Sunday
Washington to New York	36-38	25	34
New York to Washington	39-40	28	37

WASHINGTON — Beginning today (Monday, March 4), Amtrak is scheduling four additional *Northeast Regional* round trips weekdays and two on the weekends between New York and Washington, D.C.

The decision to reconfigure seating in each coach so that half of the seats face in different directions [see "[Fixed forward and backward seating to speed Northeast Regional equipment turns ...](#)" *Trains* News Wire, Feb. 28, 2024] means trains can forego a time-consuming, non-revenue trip to a wye or loop track at Washington and New York, allowing trains to be sent back out more quickly.

[Amtrak's announcement](#) of the additional service does not specify exactly when the new round trips are added. It also refers to a new early-morning weekday Philadelphia-to-New York departure and a Philadelphia-to-Boston train on the weekend, but it isn't clear from the booking system what time of day these new frequencies are operating.

Three of the additional weekday round trips out of New York are morning departures interspersed with through trains from Springfield, Mass., and Boston. Their arrivals are timed for reversals to northbound departures at Washington of a little more than an hour. The weekend additions fill in some previously scheduled longer gaps.

The extra trains provide additional service to less frequently served intermediate stops, though the company still does not produce a downloadable grid timetable to show comparative speed vs. stop options at a glance.

California Zephyr Resumes Full Route after a Week of Cancellations

[By Trains Staff](#) | March 6, 2024



The California Zephyr heads west through Hinsdale, Ill., on Feb. 25, 2024 — one of the last Zephyrs to make a normal trip before a week-long disruption. David Lassen

CHICAGO — Beginning today (Wednesday, March 6) Amtrak's westbound *California Zephyr* will depart Chicago for California for the first time the Feb. 27 departure encountered freight congestion and weather obstacles that resulted in arrival into Emeryville, Calif., 10 hours, 35 minutes late.

Those cars and locomotives, stranded for more than a week at Amtrak's Oakland Maintenance Facility by continuous whiteout blizzard conditions making rails and highways impassable around Donner Pass east of Truckee, Calif., will head east tomorrow (Thursday, March 7) for the first time since a train left the Bay Area on Feb. 28.

Zephyrs from Chicago were initially short-turned at Salt Lake City [see ["West Coast winter weather affects ..."](#), News Wire, March 1, 2024]. Westbound trains were able to assume on-time eastbound departure schedules overnight at Salt Lake City for three days, but the train arriving from Chicago into Denver on Sunday, March 4, was cancelled west of there after the eastbound encountered delays. As a result, no trains have operated in either direction west of Denver since then.

Although the first eastbound *Zephyr* is set to depart Emeryville on Thursday, the booking system shows no coach seats available in the train's lone Superliner coach and coach baggage car to Reno, Nev., until next Monday, March 11, as of midday today. Westbound, the choke point on the route is Denver-Glenwood Springs, Colo., where coach seats are sold out Saturday through Monday.

Colorado Officials Ride Inspection Train From Denver to Longmont

[By Trains Staff](#) | March 7, 2024 | Last updated on March 8, 2024



An inspection train for Colorado Gov. Jared Polis and other state and local officials departs Denver on Thursday, March 7, 2024. Chip Sherman

LONGMONT, Colo. — Using the idle equipment from Amtrak's *Winter Park Express*, Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, state legislators, and local officials rode an inspection train from Denver to Longmont today (Thursday, March 7). The 44-mile, 90-minute trip used the BNSF Railway route via Boulder that is proposed for passenger service that would continue north to Loveland and Fort Collins, Colo.

That route is part of the Front Rail Passenger Rail route selected for the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program, as well as new concept to join efforts by Front Range and the Regional Transportation District's long-stalled FasTracks service to develop the Denver-Longmont route [see ["New proposal seeks to combine efforts ..."](#), Trains News Wire, Feb. 25, 2024]

"I'm excited to take the first demo train for Front Range passenger rail, which we are building out to improve our quality of life and reduce traffic," Polis said

"Historic federal funding for passenger rail is giving our state the opportunity of a lifetime to provide Coloradans with easy, convenient, and safe travel by train."

[KDVR-TV reports](#) that the officials' goal was to show the promise of the northwest rail route.

"We certainly will have a few kinks to work out before we are fully up and running," state Senate President Steve Fenberg (D-Boulder) told the station, "but this is a very exciting moment. ... While today marks the first train to Longmont, we are here because we want to ensure that it absolutely, most certainly, will not be the last."

News Photos: Amtrak Celebrates California Zephyr's 75th Birthday

[By Bob Johnston](#) | March 20, 2024 Events mark March 20, 1949, launch of classic streamliner

CHICAGO — Passengers who drifted in to the westbound *California Zephyr's* crowded Sightseer Lounge leaving Chicago on Tuesday found themselves in the middle of an Amtrak-sponsored onboard event commemorating the first runs of the original Burlington-Rio Grande-Western Pacific streamliner on March 20, 1949.

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A sticker displays the original California Zephyr logo. Bob Johnston



Thomas Whitt recounts the history of the original California Zephyr in the Sightseer Lounge of Amtrak's version of the train on March 19, 2024. Bob Johnston

They were treated to an informative lecture by Thomas Whitt, director and president of the Illinois-based Burlington Route Historical Society. He brought along a generous supply of detailed handouts tracing the pre-Amtrak history of the CZ, and its speedy shovel-nosed predecessor, the *Pioneer Zephyr*.

Both onboard and at Galesburg, Ill., where Whitt repeated his talk for a large crowd that included the mayor of nearby Macomb, Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari filled in developments from 1971 on. His audience included some behind-the-scenes company employees and members of the Young Professionals in Transportation Chicago Chapter who came along for a trip on the *Zephyr*, with a return on the Illinois-sponsored *Carl Sandburg*.

Souvenirs for passengers included individually numbered "proof of travel" certificates signed by Amtrak's top management. The handout was accompanied with stickers and pins featuring original branding artwork.

But the big surprise was the *Zephyr's* brief stop at Princeton, Ill., where a raucous crowd of more than 50 townspeople sang "Happy Birthday" as the train pulled in. They presented Magliari with two boxes of Princeton tote bags, which the onboard crew promptly passed out to coach passengers.

he Princeton stop illustrates how — with a little effort — enthusiasm can be generated in a rural community that has grown to value the mobility Amtrak provides with trains like the *Zephyr*, *Southwest Chief*, and two state-supported roundtrips.

As expected, this anniversary version of Amtrak's *California Zephyr* was sold out with one standard Superliner coach and one coach baggage with no lower level seating. With its shortened consist, travelers are turned away daily on at least a part of its route. Yet for the people who managed to make it on board and those who came out at Princeton and Galesburg to witness this little celebration, the *Zephyr's* 75th anniversary event turned out to be something special.

Amtrak also marked the anniversary today by posting [a series of "fun facts" and a collection of images](#) from throughout the *Zephyr's* history on its website.



Westward: the California Zephyr departs Galesburg on March 19, 2024. Bob Johnston

Gulf Coast Impasse at Mobile Remains Unresolved: Analysis [By Bob Johnston](#) | March 18, 2024



A sign inside the Mobile, Ala., station On July 29, 1996, touts the triweekly Sunset Limited and soon to be discontinued Gulf Coast Limited. The Mobile station was destroyed nine years later by Hurricane Katrina. Bob Johnston

WASHINGTON — Parties in the settlement intended to lead to the start of Gulf Coast passenger service said in a status report to the Surface Transportation Board that negotiations between Amtrak and the city of Mobile for a lease of downtown city land “are continuing to move forward.” The report filed Friday by Amtrak, Norfolk Southern, CSX Transportation, and the Port of Mobile responds to a request made by the regulatory agency last month, after it failed to get answers it sought at a Valentine’s Day hearing [see [“STB members question Gulf Coast delays”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Feb. 15, 2024].

The city is not a party to the still-confidential 2022 agreement the parties forged to avert a possible STB-imposed decision. The small parcel — part of a parking lot — is needed so a pocket track and platform can be built that would allow two daily New Orleans-Mobile Amtrak round trips to clear the CSX main line. The adjacent double track, where a February 2016 inspection train stopped — and Amtrak’s *Sunset Limited* previously paused until Hurricane Katrina blasted through in 2005, ending that service — is also used by Alabama State Docks and CSX transfer runs. Approval of a lease acceptable to both Amtrak and the city is one of the prerequisites before the parties can begin to spend a \$178 million federal Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) grant to improve route capacity.

[The status report](#) reveals timeline information requested by the STB previously not disclosed by Amtrak. It says the first meeting with Mobile officials occurred in October 2021, and land lease discussions initially took place in March 2022.

This was after STB Gulf Coast hearings began on Feb. 15-16, 2022. During those hearings, comments from Mobile leaders echoed opposition to the passenger service in support of CSX and the Port, who both disputed Amtrak’s original contention that infrastructure upgrades weren’t needed to begin two round trips. Board Chairman Martin Oberman deduced at the time that some local critics of the passenger service seemed to depend on CSX for information [see [“First day of Gulf Coast hearing”](#) *News Wire*, Feb. 15, 2022].

As a total of 13 hearings were held throughout 2022, it became clear a negotiated settlement needed to include a layover track for the downtown Mobile station. The report says Amtrak and city officials “had regular discussions regarding the layover track, as well as temporary and permanent station designs,” through 2022. After sharing plans developed with CSX for the station area in February 2023, Amtrak provided a draft land use lease agreement to the city on an unspecified date. But as talks continued intermittently between Amtrak and city officials for the next year — most recently on Feb. 29, 2024 — no agreement was reached.

At the latest meeting, Amtrak assured civic leaders that Mobile’s only financial obligation would be \$3.048 million, a total approved by the city council in 2020, for the first three years of service.

“Amtrak is hopeful that [the current] city council will schedule a vote to approve both the land use agreement and funding agreement in April or May 2024,” the report concludes.

Louisiana and Mississippi have previously agreed to fund operations; in part, Mississippi is using a share of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds, as Maine’s Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority does for its *Downeaster* corridor. But the state of Alabama has not been involved in any agreement up to this point.

The status report notes other concerns are contributing to delays in executing the CRISI grant. These stem from recent changes made by the Federal Railroad Administration in “General” and “Project Specific” terms and conditions during the contracting and compliance process.

Another holdup has been receipt from the FRA of a required “categorical exclusion,” confirming there would be no harmful environmental impact from building a layover track and platform. It couldn’t be requested until 30% design plans for a project were completed; those were not finalized between Amtrak and CSX until mid-January, and that approval is now expected April 26, 2024. Also, the Alabama and tribal historic preservation offices must sign off on a construction monitoring plan.

With uncertainty over Mobile’s financial obligation now resolved, it remains to be seen if other obstacles prevent execution of a lease agreement. A package benefitting CSX, NS, and Port freight operations along with the passenger trains remains delayed, or could possibly be cancelled entirely, without city approval.

Mobile officials previously said they had forwarded a lease to Amtrak in early November 2023 [see [“City of Mobile sends lease”](#) *News Wire*, Nov. 6, 2023]. The status report characterizes this as “feedback” to Amtrak’s draft easement agreement first presented months earlier, but does not elaborate on issues that might have been considered a “deal breaker,” preventing its execution.

The Gulf Coast project has exposed the challenges in establishing a passenger corridor, even in the case of a route such as this one that previously hosted Amtrak trains. That’s one reason it has been the subject of extensive STB attention. Establishing a workable blueprint to launch new service is essential, given the FRA’s Corridor ID program, which has provided \$500,000 grants to 69 routes nationwide to explore potential new or expanded service. Because many elements necessary to start New Orleans-Mobile service remain unresolved, the parties can expect continued scrutiny from the STB.

Amtrak Track Project Between Harrisburg and Lancaster, Pa., to Require Significant Service Outages [By Trains Staff](#) | March 20, 2024

Midday Keystone Service trains to be replaced with buses four days a week April 8-Nov. 21

PHILADELPHIA — Amtrak has begun a \$122 million project to improve its Harrisburg line between Lancaster, Pa., and Harrisburg, a project that will see some trains replaced by a bus bridge on that 36-mile segment four days a week for more than six months beginning April 8.

Those outages, along with schedule adjustments at other times, will allow Amtrak to complete the project in nearly half the original two-year timeline.

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ACS64 No. 665 leads Amtrak Keystone Service train No. 665 into the Middletown, Pa., station. The station is one of those to be affected when trains are replaced by buses during track work between Harrisburg and Lancaster, Pa. Dan Cupper

“Amtrak is making historic infrastructure investments through projects like this one, which will replace obsolete 1950s-era rail infrastructure which is at the end of its useful life,” Laura Mason, Amtrak executive vice president of capital delivery, said in [a press release](#). “We’re taking a fresh approach and expediting this important project with a combination of single- and full-track outages that will improve work efficiencies and reduce the duration of customer impacts.”

Overall, work began March 15 and is slated to be completed in late December. The outages are scheduled to begin April 8 and run through Nov. 21. Mondays through Thursdays, between approximately 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., *Keystone Service* trains will be replaced by buses, which is estimated to add approximately 45 minutes to trip times.

[Current schedules available on the Rail Passengers Association website](#) suggest this will affect five trains a day in each direction; Amtrak says it will affect fewer than 450 passengers daily. The New York-Pittsburgh Pennsylvanians will continue to operate through that segment middays, and will offer additional seating capacity. More schedule information is available at [the Amtrak website](#) or on the Amtrak mobile app.

Work will include replacement of the existing wood ties with 113,000 concrete ties, which have an expected lifespan of 60 years compared to the 25-year estimate for wood ties; installation of 43 track miles of rail; and cleaning and refreshing of 226,500 feet of ballast.

Amtrak Modifies April 8 Schedules for Eclipse Viewing in Carbondale, Ill

[By Trains Staff](#) | March 22, 2024 Saluki, Illini will adjust times to allow passengers to reach Path of Totality



Amtrak’s Illini stops at Kankakee, Ill. Illini and Saluki schedules will be modified April 8 to accomodate eclipse viewing. David Lassen



Map of the Eclipse April 8 2024

CHICAGO — Amtrak will operate modified schedules for two Illinois Service trains to allow passengers to better view the solar eclipse coming up on April 8, the passenger operator has announced.

On that day, Saluki train No. 391 will depart Chicago earlier, at 6:35 a.m., arriving at Carbondale, Ill., at 12:05 p.m. to reach the Area of Totality in time for the eclipse. A returning train, Illini No. 392, will depart Carbondale later, at 6:40 p.m., returning to Chicago at 12:10 a.m.

While the regular departure time for No. 392 is well after the conclusion of the eclipse, Amtrak has negotiated a later departure time with Canadian National because gridlocked roads following a 2017 eclipse made it difficult for some passengers to reach the station in time for the regular departure, an Amtrak spokesman said in an email to Trains News Wire.

Carbondale is on the center line for the path of totality and will see 4 minutes, 9 seconds of totality, according to [this state of Illinois website](#), which has information on viewing the eclipse. The state Department of Transportation also has [eclipse information here](#).

There’s also much more on the eclipse at Trains.com’s sister website, [Astronomy.com](#).

The schedule changes could affect those who normally make connections with Metra or other commuter services. Please see the Metra website or Ventra app for schedule information.

— Updated at 12:20 p.m. CT with additional information on departure time for Train No. 392.



--- BNSF News ---

BNSF Desperate for an Inflection

Railway Age Written by **Rick Paterson, Managing Director, Loop Capital Markets** March 15, 2024 **Class I**
Provided by John Goodman



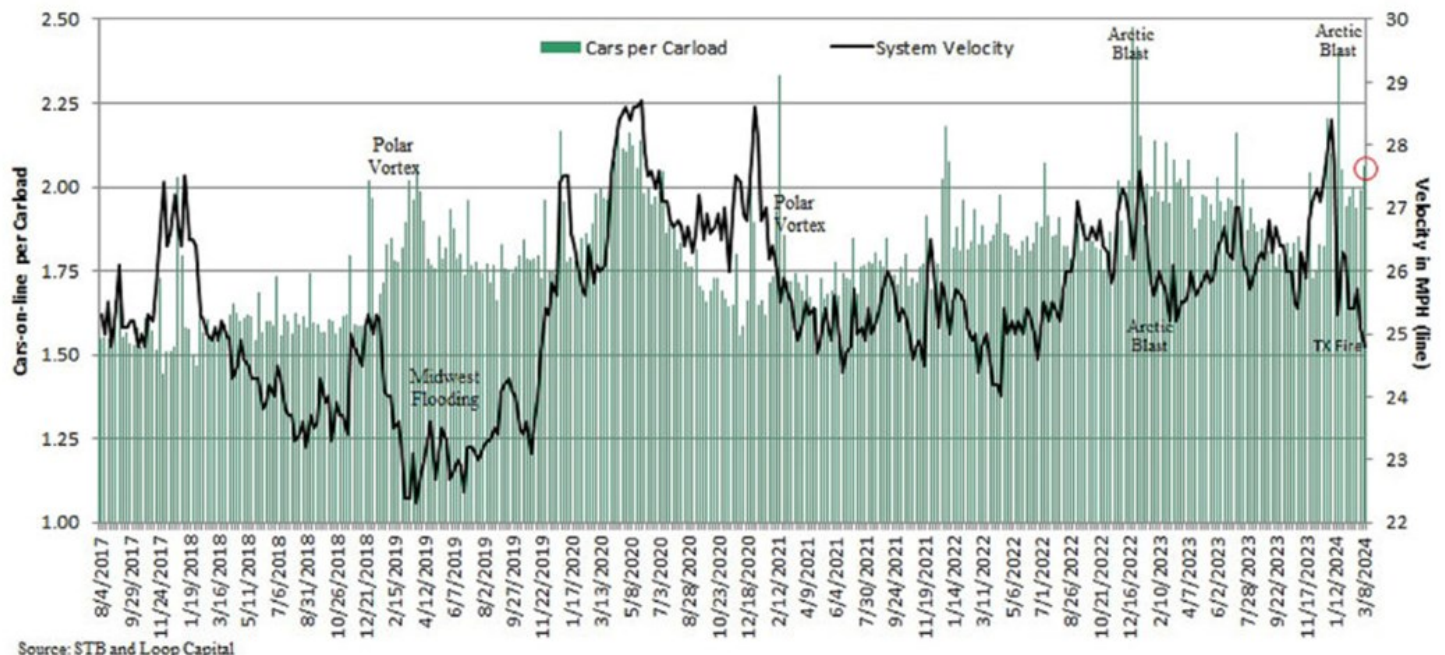
The Smokehouse Creek wildfire in Texas, which severed BNSF's Transcon route on February 27, was the latest in a series of problems that have significantly slowed BNSF's network and impacted service. After running well as recently as December, BNSF now finds itself in a hole.

We were hoping for an inflection in network velocity in the week following the wildfire effect, ending March 8, but instead we saw another sequential deterioration, from 25.1 to 24.8 mph. Within this number, Manifest service average speed fell from 22.3 to 21.7 mph, and Intermodal from 30.1 to 29.5 mph. All these speeds are materially lower than where they bottomed during the Arctic Blast in the third week of January, and except for Manifest you need to go back to June 2022—in the depths of the service crisis—to find comparable numbers.

Just as worrisome is the recent increase in cars on line. From a weekly average of 248,000 in 2023, it rose to 256,000 in January, 261,000 in February, and hit 263,326 the week of March 4, which is a high we haven't seen since November 2019. Part of this is simply due to higher volumes as BNSF handily leads the industry in terms of YTD volume growth (+5.5%), but there's also no doubt a worrying congestion element that threatens the speed at which the network can get back in sync.

A good way to adjust for volumes and sanity check car congestion is to look at “cars per carload,” which is basically a ratio of rolling stock relative to the loads they're transporting. In the chart below, we've divided weekly intermodal units by two to account for double-stacking, and added that count to non-intermodal loads to get total “carloads.” We then divide cars on line by this number to generate cars per carload, with the lower the ratio the better. If we look at BNSF's recent history, this averaged 1.6 in 2017 and 2018, then between 1.8-1.9 in each year between 2019 through 2023. You can see by the green columns that it sometimes spikes above two times, and it was 2.1 the week of March 4 (red circle). So even after adjusting for the current strength in intermodal volumes, there's still some evidence of car congestion. Our assumption of a two-week bounce back from the wildfire effect now looks too optimistic, and it may be more of a slower grind higher.

BNSF Cars per Carload, 2017-Present



In terms of critical resources, trains holding for crews and power also both deteriorated sequentially the week of March 4: crews from 31 to 39 per day, and power from 13 to 17 per day

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To put this in perspective, these topped out at 167 (crews) and 38 (power) during the service crisis, so thankfully we're nowhere near those levels. Also notice we haven't yet used the "M word" (meltdown) because BNSF has ample crews; albeit there are some crew districts with too few and others with too many, so there are imbalances to iron out. This, of course, isn't unique to BNSF.

The bottom line is that BNSF needs to be careful here, because after what we all went through in 2022 there will be no tolerance from its stakeholders and Washington D.C. for another bout of extended service failures from a major railroad. We're at least assured that BNSF is a quality organization that fully understands the urgency of the situation.

Tags: [BNSF](#), [Loop Capital Markets](#), [Opinion](#)

BNSF Train Derails in Nebraska after Grade-crossing Collision

[By Trains Staff](#) | March 1, 2024 --- **One crew member suffers minor injuries**

EXETER, Neb. — One crew member was transported to a hospital with minor injuries after a BNSF intermodal train struck a semi-truck and derailed today (Friday, March 1) near Exeter, Neb., [KOLN-TV reports](#). Fifteen to 20 railcars derailed, according to the Fillmore County Sheriff's Office.

The collision occurred about 10 a.m., just west of Exeter at the Road 20 grade crossing north of U.S. Route 6. The driver of the truck, which was carrying an empty fertilizer hopper, was examined at the scene and did not require hospitalization, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Exeter is 51 miles east of Hastings, Neb., on BNSF's Hastings Subdivision, and about 40 miles southwest of Lincoln, Neb.

BNSF Eliminates Management Jobs Amid Uncertain Freight Outlook

[By Bill Stephens](#) | March 11, 2024

Berkshire Hathaway Chairman Warren Buffett said last month that the railway needed to improve its profit margins



A southbound BNSF Railway coal train rolls through Palmer Lake, Colo., on March 5, 2024. Bill Stephens

FORT WORTH, Texas — BNSF Railway eliminated several hundred management positions at its headquarters and across the system last week as part of a belt-tightening move.

The railroad did not disclose how many jobs were affected, but people familiar with the matter say that BNSF cut 8% of its management workforce. That would translate into roughly 400 positions based on the January employment figures the railroad reported to the Surface Transportation Board.

"As a business tied to the industrial and consumer economies, we must always adapt our resources to meet demand. The freight market faced significant headwinds last year and our outlook for 2024 remains uncertain, as it does for many of our customers," the railroad said in a statement. "To ensure our long-term success, it is necessary to make workforce decisions that respond to a complex and ever-changing freight environment."

While these decisions are never easy, we must position ourselves to continue providing the industry-leading service our customers expect."

The cutbacks come less than two weeks after Warren Buffett, chairman of BNSF parent Berkshire Hathaway, said the railroad's 14% earnings decline in 2023 was deeper than expected. The railway's operating ratio increased 2.5 points to 68.4% last year, which lagged the other five big systems.

"Though BNSF carries more freight and spends more on capital expenditures than any of the five other major North American railroads, its profit margins have slipped relative to all five since our purchase. I believe that our vast service territory is second to none and that therefore our margin comparisons can and should improve," Buffett wrote in his annual letter to shareholders.

BNSF furloughed 362 mechanical workers across the system earlier this month, according to a union tally. Those workers were offered positions at BNSF shops that are currently hiring.

BNSF is not the only railroad to reduce its workforce in recent months.

Norfolk Southern in January said it would eliminate 7% of its management and staff positions through a voluntary severance program. The cutbacks were intended to offset hiring in the operating department, including new mechanical jobs, and came amid pressure from an activist investor.

Union Pacific in November reduced its management workforce by nearly 5% in what it said was a bid to speed decision-making.



--- Union Pacific News-

UP and BNSF Shop Worker Layoffs Prompt Scrutiny From FRA and Union Leaders

[By Bill Stephens](#) | March 1, 2024 **FRA chief questions UP's safety commitment, while union leaders urge FRA to conduct a safety blitz at BNSF; railroads say they are aligning workforce levels with demand**

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

WASHINGTON — The head of the Federal Railroad Administration has questioned Union Pacific's commitment to safety after the furloughs of shop workers who maintain the railroad's freight cars and locomotives.

Meanwhile, the Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO has asked the FRA to conduct random focused inspections at BNSF Railway in the wake of the furlough of 362 shop workers this week. "It has come to the Federal Railroad Administration's attention that UP has again chosen to prioritize cost-cutting measures over ensuring safe operations, jeopardizing the well-being of both UP's workers and the public," Administrator Amit Bose [wrote in a Thursday letter to UP CEO Jim Vena](#).

According to Surface Transportation Board data, UP's maintenance of equipment furloughs had been gradually trending down for more than a year, from 101 in April 2022 to just four in July 2023, Bose noted. But UP furloughed nearly 100 shop workers in August after Vena became chief executive. The number of furloughed shop workers rose to 145 in October.

"The data ... demonstrates a disturbing trend that makes me question UP's commitment to safety," Bose wrote. "I will also note the furlough data does not include January 2024 due entirely to UP's unprecedented decision to file a motion for a protective order on its ... employment data submissions. Should that order be granted, UP will become the only Class I railroad where FRA cannot track furlough counts, further causing me to question UP's priorities."

The FRA has no regulatory authority over railroad employment levels. But Bose urged Vena to reconsider shop worker furloughs. In the fourth quarter, employment was up at all of the major railroads with the exception of UP.

[In a written response to Bose today](#), Vena wrote that UP and FRA share the same goal: Ensuring that safety is always the railroad's top priority. But Vena said there was no link between UP's employment levels and its safety.

"I am concerned about the inaccurate correlation between natural workforce fluctuations and safety. Your letter combines different types of workers (Mechanical employees and Engineering employees) and work done on the railroad (equipment maintenance and capital projects), and therefore paints an incorrect and incomplete picture of the natural role workforce fluctuations play in operating a railroad year-round," Vena said. "Numbers without accurate context can be misconstrued and misunderstood, and I know that is not the message you intend to send."

Although UP's engineering workforce declined by 700 seasonal positions in December, Vena said the railroad is confident it has enough people on hand to maintain equipment and infrastructure. As traffic demand has increased this year, UP has increased employment levels in January and February, Vena said.

The number of mechanical employees fluctuates with volume, Vena explained, while the engineering employment levels typically fall when track projects are completed. In both instances, furloughed employees are offered the opportunity to fill open positions elsewhere on the railroad, he said.

Through the first 11 months of 2023, UP's train accident rate improved by 10% but remained the highest among the Class I systems, according to FRA data. The employee injury rate rose by 2.6%, however, and was the highest among the big railroads.

Vena said the railroad had no work-related fatalities in 2023, reduced the incidence of serious injuries by 15%, and the number of "serious derailments" declined 26% in 2023 compared to 2019 even as train length grew.

UP will continue to share monthly employment data with the FRA, Vena said.

On Thursday TTD President Greg Regan urged Bose to conduct unannounced, focused inspections of BNSF locomotives and freight cars that are at or en route to the railway's locomotive maintenance inspection terminals.

"We have long-held concerns about numerous defects that are intentionally being ignored and neglected by BNSF because managers that are under pressure to perform work with an inadequate number of workers. These problems will only be exacerbated by the extreme Mechanical Department cuts that were callously carried out by BNSF on February 27, 2024," [Regan wrote](#).

Last month, in meetings with FRA officials, union leaders claimed that BNSF managers were instructing shop workers to not perform required safety inspections, to ignore the findings and reporting of defects, and to fabricate federally mandated inspection reports.

BNSF denied the unions' claims. "We believe any presumption that BNSF is shifting its priority away from safety is inaccurate. We consider safety in every decision we make, and we strongly believe our record year in safety last year is proof of that," spokeswoman Kendall Kirkham Sloan said. "In 2023, BNSF led the industry with the lowest number of injuries in the company's 175-year history. Through our robust inspection processes with an emphasis on qualified training complemented by technology, we are confident operations will continue to be safer than ever as we work toward our safety vision of zero accidents and injuries."

While BNSF's personal injury rate improved by 23% through the first 11 months of 2023, the railway's train accident rate increased 7.5%, according to FRA data. BNSF's train accident rate remained the lowest of the big four U.S. systems, however.

BNSF said the voluntary furloughs announced this week were part of an effort to rebalance shop employees to locations where the railroad is seeing growth and needs more mechanical workers. The railway offered affected employees incentives to transfer to shop locations where there are several hundred open mechanical and engineering positions.

One injured in Low-speed Collision of UP trains in Idaho

[By Trains Staff](#) | March 5, 2024 **Derailment occurs in accident in Bonners Ferry**

BONNERS FERRY, Idaho — One crew member was taken to the hospital with a wrist injury after a low-speed, head-on collision between two Union Pacific trains on Monday, [the Bonners Ferry Herald reports](#). The trains collided at an estimated 17 mph shortly before noon, Boundary County public information officer Andrew O’Neel told the newspaper. One train was moving grain and the other was hauling empty log cars; there was no derailment and no spill of cargo or fuel.

Bonnors Ferry, on UP’s Spokane Subdivision, the former Spokane International Railroad, is approximately 30 miles from the Canadian border on the Idaho panhandle and about 105 miles from Spokane, Wash.. The line connects with CPKC at Kingsgate, British Columbia.

Union Pacific to Launch New Domestic Intermodal Service Between Southern California and Chicago

[By Bill Stephens](#) | March 8, 2024 **The service will link the Inland Empire intermodal terminal with Global 2 in Chicago**



“This service will provide access from the Los Angeles Basin’s busiest warehouse district direct to the heart of the Chicago metro, supplementing existing service between IEIT and Global 4,” [UP said in a customer advisory this week](#).

The service between the Inland Empire and both Global 2 and Global 4 will be available to all domestic container shippers, the railroad says.

UP is offering priority service with four-day transit times eastbound and six-day transit times westbound, and standard service featuring six-day transit times. The services will run daily.

OMAHA, Neb. — Union Pacific will launch domestic intermodal service between its Inland Empire terminal in California and its Global 2 terminal in Chicago on April 1.

Union Pacific Gets State-court Win in Effort to Close Palestine, Texas, Shop

[By Trains Staff](#) | March 10, 2024



A boxcar undergoes repairs at Missouri Pacific’s Palestine, Texas, shops in 1963. The shops are the subject of a court fight between successor Union Pacific, the city of Palestine, and Anderson County, Texas. Steve Patterson

PALESTINE, Texas — Efforts by the city of Palestine and Anderson County, Texas, to require Union Pacific to maintain jobs at its Palestine car shop have suffered another setback, with a Texas appeals court declaring a 1954 agreement between the city and UP predecessor Missouri Pacific is unenforceable.

[The Palestine Herald-Press reports](#) the 12th Court of Appeals issued that opinion on Feb. 22, finding that the agreement requiring UP to maintain a set number of jobs in Palestine — a requirement dating to an 1872 agreement between the city and a Missouri Pacific predecessor and updated in 1954 — places restraints on interstate commerce not permitted by federal law.

UP has previously won a similar ruling in federal court [see [“Union Pacific wins another round ...,”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Sept. 1, 2022]; the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of that decision last year [see [“U.S. Supreme Court declines to hear ...,”](#) *News Wire*, Jan. 12, 2023].

The ruling is automatically stayed pending appeal. Harris Lohmeyer, a retired Union Pacific employee who has led fundraising efforts to continue the court case, told the newspaper lawyers for the county would request a rehearing and, if necessary, review by the state Supreme Court.

The legal battles over the Palestine shops date to 2019, when UP filed suit to overturn the job provision in the contract, saying it should have been invalidated by a number of prior events [see [“UP sues to end employment provision ...,”](#) *News Wire*, Dec. 2, 2019]. UP announced plans to close the shop in April 2021, but the closure has been delayed by the ongoing court cases.



STB Orders Union Pacific to Submit Public Versions of its Employment Data (updated) [By Bill Stephens](#) | March 15, 2024

UP argued that the detailed workforce information was proprietary

WASHINGTON — The Surface Transportation Board on Thursday denied Union Pacific's request for a protective order that would have put a cloak of confidentiality over the temporary employment data the railroad is required to submit.

[In its decision](#), the board also directed UP to submit public versions of previously submitted data.

UP submitted its petition for a protective order after the STB's Jan. 31 decision that extended the reporting of detailed employment data to Dec. 31 and required updated information from UP, BNSF Railway, CSX, and Norfolk Southern.

UP now must file public versions of its Feb. 15 and Feb. 29 data submissions within five days.

"With today's decision, the Board emphasizes its commitment to transparency," Chairman Martin J. Oberman said in a statement.

"While the Board takes seriously confidentiality concerns, UP has not demonstrated that releasing this employment data would cause competitive harm. On the contrary, given the crucial importance of reporting on employment data to the restoration of robust rail service and the growth of the national economy, the public's right of access to this information is paramount. Indeed, the other railroads have reported their data publicly and understand the public interest in knowing this information."

Union Pacific said it was disappointed with the decision.

"We continue to provide the information requested by the Surface Transportation Board and share the same goal – a safe operating environment where we provide the service we promised our customers," the railroad said in a statement. "Union Pacific is disappointed in the STB's decision; we believe some of the data is sensitive and could provide our competitors an advantage."

Note: Updated at 2:39 p.m. Central with comment from UP.

Union Pacific Announces Three Executive Retirements, Multiple Appointments

[By Trains Staff](#) | March 22, 2024 **Majority of changes address operating positions across system**

OMAHA — Union Pacific has announced the retirement of three executives, along with a series of appointments to new positions. Retiring are Shane Keller, senior vice president-operations, Northern Region; David Giandinoto, senior vice president-operations, Southern Region; and Lee Myers, assistant vice president-risk management, law.

Keller has spent 33 years at UP, joining as an operations management trainee, and has had leadership roles in transportation, dispatching, network operations, engineering, and mechanical. Giandinoto spent 30 years at the railroad after six years as a Marine, working in the transportation department at locations including Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, and Omaha, as well as spending time in marketing and sales. Myers was a member of the law department for 34 years in locations including St. Louis, North Platte, Neb.; North Little Rock, Ark.; Roseville, Calif.; and Omaha.

Following those retirements, CEO Jim Vena announced [these new appointments](#):

— John Turner, currently senior vice president, Harriman Dispatch Center (HDC) and Network Planning, will succeed Keller as senior vice president-operations, Northern Region. He has been with UP for more than 22 years.

— Steven Bybee, assistance vice president-network resources, HDC, succeeds Giandinoto as senior vice president-operations, Southern Region. He has been at the railroad for 19 years, spending most of his career in the Transportation department.

— Carl Garrison, assistant vice president-labor operations, is promoted to vice president-network planning and operations.

— Erin Batt, vice president, HDC, becomes the first woman to lead the HDC, adding customer care and support and crew management services responsibilities.

— Mike Santa Maria, general manager-transportation, Los Angeles Service Unit, becomes assistant vice president, network resources, HDC.

— Ryan Curtis, general superintendent-transportation, Mid-America Service Unit, becomes general manager-transportation, Los Angeles Service Unit.

— Mike Shults, general superintendent-transportation, Chicago Service Unit, becomes general superintendent-transportation, Mid-America Service Unit.

— Luke Slawson, prior general manager-intermodal operations, premium operations, becomes general superintendent-transportation, Chicago Service Unit.

— Naomi Deines, assistant vice president-crew management services, HDC, succeeds Myers as assistant vice president-risk management, law.



---- CPKC News ----

CPKC and Iowa Interstate Ask Regulators to Take Closer Look at CN-Iowa Northern Deal [By Bill Stephens](#) |

March 4, 2024

WASHINGTON — Canadian Pacific Kansas City and Iowa Interstate on Friday asked federal regulators to designate Canadian National's proposed acquisition of Iowa Northern as a "significant" transaction that would require a longer and more rigorous review process.

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Canadian National will acquire Iowa Northern Railway, the short line operating on a portion of the former Rock Island founded in 1984. Iowa Northern

A significant transaction requires a two- to four-month pre-filing notice, an evidentiary proceeding that's 75 days longer than that of a minor transaction, and also requires a 90-day period between close of record and a decision, compared to 45 days for a minor deal.

STB Must Give CN-Iowa Northern Deal More Scrutiny, CPKC Says

By Bill Stephens | March 7, 2024



Canadian National ES44AC No. 2832 leads an Iowa Northern train at Rockford, Iowa. Chris Guss

Last week the Surface Transportation Board accepted CN's application to acquire Iowa Northern and said the \$230 million deal qualifies as a minor transaction.

But CPKC and Iowa Interstate, in separate filings, said they disagree.

"CN fails to account for the significance of the region served by Iowa Northern and the over-sized competitive role that Iowa Northern plays in that region – including as a significant head-to-head competitor of CN," [CPKC argues in its filing](#).

[In its filing](#), the Iowa Interstate says the CN-IANR deal would deprive shippers of a competitive alternative for the movement of ethanol, denatured alcohol, and agricultural commodities originating on the Iowa Northern bound for Chicago and beyond.

CPKC notes substantial overlap of the CN and Iowa Northern service territories in Iowa and says that would reduce rail competition in the Hawkeye State. The National Feed and Grain Association also asked the STB to consider the deal a significant transaction.

WASHINGTON — Canadian Pacific Kansas City insists that it did not miss any deadlines when it asked federal regulators to give Canadian National's proposed acquisition of Iowa Northern Railway a more thorough review.

CN this week claimed that CPKC missed two deadlines when it asked the Surface Transportation Board to consider the \$230 million deal a significant transaction, rather than a minor acquisition.

"CPKC did not miss any deadline, as there is no regulatory deadline restricting submission of evidence regarding the appropriate classification of a transaction to the first 20 days following the filing of a putatively 'minor' application,"

[CPKC said in a regulatory filing yesterday](#). "The Acceptance Decision explained ... that its classification of the Transaction as Minor was based solely on information appearing on 'the face of the Application,' and it 'emphasize[d] that this [classification] is not a final determination and may be rebutted by subsequent filings and evidence submitted into the record for this proceeding.' ... CPKC's Comment was such a 'subsequent filing,' and the Board cannot be precluded from reconsidering its preliminary classification in light of the evidence that CPKC submitted last week."

The Surface Transportation Board on Feb. 29 designated the acquisition as a minor transaction. CPKC on March 1 asked the board to consider it a significant transaction that would require a longer and more rigorous regulatory review.

CPKC says CN's acquisition of Iowa Northern raises competitive concerns that should make the deal a significant transaction.

"Through their offer of gateway protections, Applicants acknowledge competitive issues and attempt to get out in front of them. But that one commitment does not address at all the reduction in horizontal competition, and it cannot suffice to preclude the need for a thorough analysis of all of the competitive issues in the case, which a 'Minor' classification is not designed to accomplish. As the Board's regulations state unequivocally, a Minor classification is only possible when 'the transaction clearly will not have any anti-competitive effects,'" CPKC said.

CPKC and regional Iowa Interstate say CN's acquisition of the Iowa Northern would stifle competition in the Hawkeye State.

"In sum, Applicants are trying to run from the fact that the Transaction raises real competitive concerns. Under the Board's procedures those concerns can and should be brought to light at an early stage, which is what CPKC has properly done. Applicants would like to force the Board to make a binding determination that the Transaction is Minor based on the face of the Application and whatever was filed within 20 days thereof, and nothing else," CPKC said. "But that is not the law, and it would be terrible policy. In fact, the Board made only a preliminary determination and it now has evidence showing that that determination should be revised. It should do so promptly, so that the real competitive issues in this case can be examined in accord with the procedures that the Board's regulations demand." The U.S. Department of Agriculture yesterday said it would submit comments on the acquisition, and the National Grain and Feed Association has said that the STB should review the CN-IANR deal as a significant transaction in light of consolidation in the industry.

The STB must approve minor transactions unless it finds a merger would harm competition. CN says acquisition of the 218-mile Iowa Northern will boost rail competition, divert freight off the highway, and give Iowa shippers broader access to single-line service.

Draft Report: CSX and CPKC Acquisition of G&W Short line Would Have No Environmental Impacts

By Bill Stephens | March 18, 2024 The railroads aim to acquire and operate the Meridian & Bigbee in order to create a new through route linking the Southeast with Texas and Mexico



Canadian Pacific Kansas City will acquire the Meridian & Bigbee west of Myrtlewood, Ala., while CSX will resume operations east of Myrtlewood. G&W

WASHINGTON — CSX and CPKC's proposed acquisition of Genesee & Wyoming short line Meridian & Bigbee will have no significant environmental impacts, federal regulators said in a draft environmental assessment released today.

The Class I railroads aim to link their systems — and create a new through route connecting the Southeast with Texas and Mexico — via a new interchange at Myrtlewood, Ala., on the Meridian & Bigbee.

The Surface Transportation Board's Office of Environmental Analysis [draft report](#) says the transaction's only minimal impact would be increased noise at a 32 homes and a church along the route between Meridian, Miss., and Burkeville, Ala., which is 10 miles west of Montgomery.

The noise impacts could be mitigated through railroad-funded installation of sound insulation, the report says. The draft report recommends that the STB order four mitigation measures to reduce noise-related impacts.

The transaction would have no impact on grade crossing delays, energy use, air quality and climate change, vibration, or environmental justice, according to the draft environmental assessment.

Comments on the draft report are due by April 17.

CPKC, Shipper Urge STB to Resolve Texas Trackage Rights Dispute

By Bill Stephens | March 25, 2024

Union Pacific says grain from the Upper Midwest is not eligible to use trackage rights over UP south of Beaumont, Texas

WASHINGTON — Canadian Pacific Kansas City says it has shippers lined up to export grain through the ports of Houston and Galveston, but they're awaiting a regulatory decision regarding whether unit trains can move over Union Pacific trackage rights south of Beaumont, Texas.

CPKC told the Surface Transportation Board last week that it has four customers in CP's Soo Line territory who would like to ship grain to the Gulf Coast via Kansas City.

"CPKC has had at least four concrete requests, including being notified this week that a customer that needs to move grain to Houston is delaying the shipment in hopes that a resolution by the Board will confirm the availability of the KCSR-direct route," [CPKC told the board](#).

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A pair of Kansas City Southern locomotives lead loaded grain cars in matching paint just north of Dequincy, La., on April 29, 2008. Chris Guss

. “Unfortunately, UP continues to object to KCSR providing that competition, preferring that CPKC interchange traffic to UP at Kansas City so that UP can charge its tariff rates south of Kansas City.”

CPKC sought to route grain trains from the Upper Midwest to Houston and Galveston last summer. But UP says grain from the Upper Midwest is not eligible to use the trackage or haulage rights south of Beaumont.

UP says the trackage rights, which are related to UP’s 1988 acquisition of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad, were never intended for grain shipments originating outside of the Omaha/Council Bluffs-Kansas City corridor.

“As KCS’s letter recognizes, Union Pacific stands ready and willing to cooperate with CPKC to serve shippers seeking to move grain via Kansas City to Houston and Galveston, so no shipper is being deprived of service to any destination served by Union Pacific,” [the railroad told the STB](#). “Further, and as relevant to the parties’ dispute, CPKC-served shippers continue to have access to essentially the same routing options that existed before the ICC approved the Union Pacific-MKT merger in 1988, consistent with the ICC’s goal of preserving—not expanding—the pre-merger level of competition.”

UP last year sought to have a federal court rule on what it considered to be a contract dispute. But in February the court dismissed the case and sent it back to the STB.

Ceres Global Ag, a grain shipper based in Golden Valley, Minn., that wants to use a CPKC route to Houston/Galveston, wrote to the board last month. “A timely decision confirming KCSR’s rights would improve the competitive rail environment and benefit our company and other market participants by creating efficient, single-line transportation options that are not yet available,” Carlos Paz, the company’s CEO, wrote.

The letter was made public [in an STB filing last week](#).



---- CN News ----

Illinois Senators Meet with CN CEO about Chicago Hub Project

[By David Lassen](#) | March 20, 2024 Legislators describe meeting to advance passenger improvements as ‘productive’



Amtrak’s California Zephyr departs Chicago Union Station on Dec. 2, 2023. Illinois senators met with Canadian National’s CEO on Tuesday regarding plans to modernize Union Station and passenger routes. David Lassen

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sens. Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth (both D-Ill.) met with Canadian National Railway CEO Tracy Robinson on Tuesday to discuss the railroad’s involvement in the Chicago Hub Improvement Program, the plan to modernize Chicago Union Station and rail routes leading to the station.

U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley (D-Chicago) also participated in the meeting by phone.

Durbin, in [a press release](#), described the meeting as “productive,” saying, “we want all stakeholders, including CN, to share the same vision of modernizing Midwest rail for the future, though improvements to Chicago Union Station and its connectivity.” Said Duckworth, “To move forward with the improvements needed at Chicago’s Union Station that will improve rail service and reliability across the Midwest, it’s critical for all parties to work together. ... I’ll keep pushing for more funding and to move this forward, because this critical project isn’t just beneficial for Chicago and Illinois, it’s also a win for the Midwest and a win for our entire country.”

According to the press release, CN has been closely engaged in the project and Robinson expressed her willingness to help it advance.

[The Hub program](#) is a more than \$1.1 billion plan that would involve track realignment on Chicago’s south side and infrastructure improvements near Dowagiac, Mich., as well as improvements at Union Station.

Amtrak and its partners have made unsuccessful bids for major federal funding each of the last two years. They sought more than \$250 million from the National Infrastructure Project Assistance (or Mega) Program in 2022, and an \$872.8 million Federal-State Partnership grant last year [see [“Chicago Hub project vies for big chunk of federal grant money,”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Aug. 3, 2023]. Union Station did receive \$93.6 million in Federal-State Partnership money for station platform and ventilation-system improvements, as well as a project to repurpose the station’s mail platform, out of use since 2005, to be repurposed for passenger use [see [“Chicago Union Station to receive more than \\$93 million”](#) *News Wire*, Dec. 6, 2023].

News Photos: CN Business Train in Illinois

By Trains Staff | March 21, 2024 Special operates on former Elgin, Joliet & Eastern



Canadian National's business train stops at Spaulding Junction on the former Elgin, Joliet & Eastern on March 20, 2024. Mark Llanuza



Theater car Sandford Fleming, named for a noted Canadian engineer and surveyor, brings up the rear of the CN business train as it awaits passengers at dawn on March 20, 2024. Mark

BARTLETT, Ill. — Canadian National's business train makes a stop Theater car *Sandford Fleming*, named for a noted Canadian engineer and surveyor, brings up the rear of the CN business train as it awaits passengers at dawn on March 20, 2024. Mark Llanuzaop at Spaulding Junction in Chicago's western suburbs to board officials and invited guests during a trip on Wednesday, March 20. The train was led by Wabtec AC44C6M No. 3309, the locomotive featuring the revived steam-era "wafer" logo [see "[Canadian National revives ...](#)" *Trains News Wire*, Sept. 19, 2023]. It was on a trip marking CN CEO [Tracy Robinson's selection as 2024 Railroader of the Year](#) by *Railway Age* magazine, according to photographer Mark Llanuza.

Spaulding, on the former Elgin, Joliet & Eastern, has gained a degree of notoriety as the interchange point that has triggered a long-running dispute between CN and Canadian Pacific Kansas City involving the Surface Transportation Board as well as federal courts [see "[STB rules against CN in Chicago interchange dispute ...](#)" *News Wire*, Jan. 30, 2024]. It is between Bartlett and Elgin, Ill.

Union, Railroad Take Issue with TSB Report on Alcohol's Role in 2021 CN Collision

By Trains Staff | March 20, 2024 Teamsters Canada says existing safety issues are overlooked; CN says incident shows need



Three crew members were injured, one seriously, in this Sept. 2, 2021, collision of two CN trains at Prescott, Ontario. The union representing CN rail traffic controllers has taken issue with the Transportation Safety Board report on the incident. Ontario Provincial Police via TSB

PRESCOTT, Ontario — The union representing rail traffic controllers and Canadian National Railway have both taken issue with a report by the Transportation Safety Board of Canada citing alcohol use by a controller as a factor in a September 2021 collision involving two CN trains — although for very different reasons. The report issued March 13 called for regulation of the period between consumption of alcohol and work for those "safety-critical" positions as a result of the Sept. 2, 2021, collision that injured three crew members, one seriously. An intermodal train was sent through an incorrectly lined switch and collided with a local; the report determined the controller on duty was "likely affected by the persistent effects of alcohol consumption" that had occurred the morning of or night before his shift. [See "[Effects of alcohol consumption by controller ...](#)" *Trains News Wire*, March 13, 2024]. [A Morrisburg Leader report](#) under the Local Journalism Initiative says Teamsters Canada, which represents CN's rail traffic controllers, feels the report ignores existing safety factors, particularly the lack of electronic locks, which the union says could have prevented the accident. "Had the switch been equipped with an electronic lock, it would have detected the oncoming train, preventing the switch's operation until safe," Christopher Monette, the union's director of public affairs, told the newspaper. He also said that switch and two others have since been upgraded with electronic locks, "a clear case of too little, too late." The incident could have easily occurred even if the controller was fully sober, he said.

The union says the report's call for "dry periods" before work is "not a workable solution" given the on-call nature of many operating positions. Teamster Canada is challenging the dismissal of the controller involved in the incident.

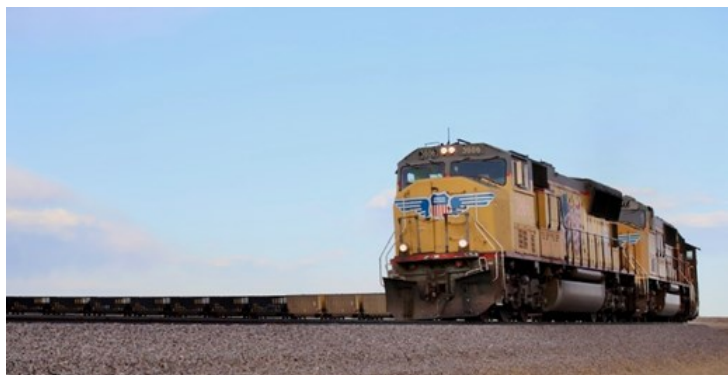
CN, meanwhile, said in a statement that it is "disappointed that the report did not recommend a clearer framework regarding drug and alcohol consumption in safety-critical positions. CN remains firm in its belief that random testing employees in safety-critical positions is the only way to deter impairment at work."

--- Other RR News ---

Railroading's New Proving Ground: The MxV Rail FAST Test Track Loop

By Bill Stephens | March 18, 2024

The 2.8-mile loop in Pueblo, Colo., began regular test operations in January, allowing MxV researchers to scientifically evaluate track and equipment faster than can be done in revenue service



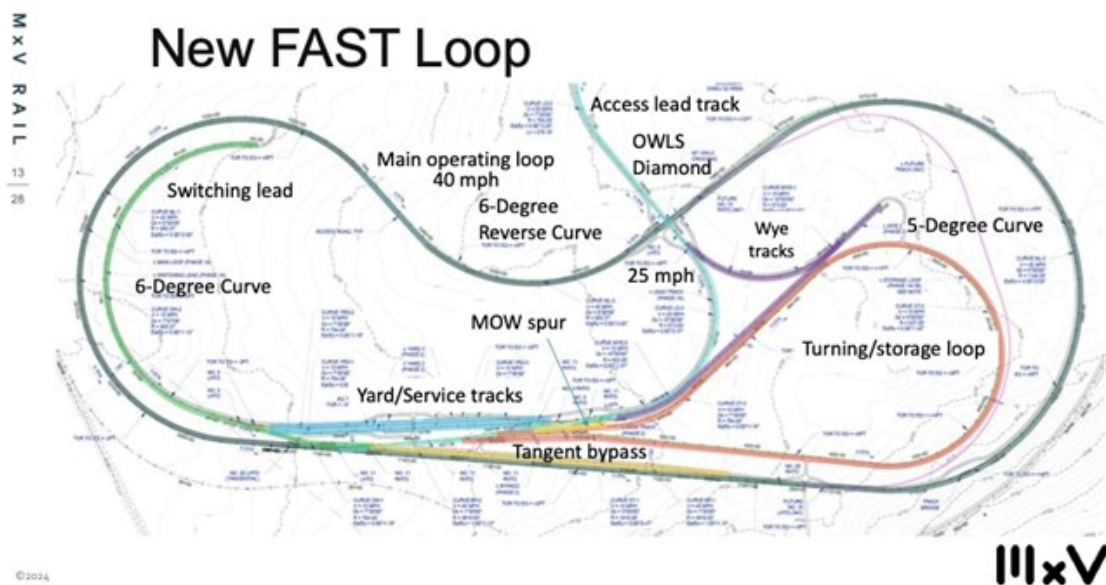
The MxV Rail FAST loop train, which consists primarily of 315,000-pound gross rail load coal gondolas, rounds the 5-degree curve at the test track's south end in Pueblo, Colo., on March 6, 2024. Bill Stephens



With the tail end of the 6,325-foot train still rolling around the 6-degree curve at the north end of the FAST loop, the head end of the MxV Rail test train negotiates the 6-degree reverse curve. In the foreground: The outside rail of the 5-degree curve at the loop's south end, the reverse loop track that's under construction, and the loop's access track. Bill Stephens



Scott Cummings, MxV Rail's assistant vice president of research and innovation, shows off an Innerspec Technologies, Inc. prototype ultrasonic cracked wheel detector at the FAST track loop in Pueblo, Colo. Bill Stephens



This diagram of the MxV Rail FAST track shows the new loop and its potential track buildouts at PuebloPlex. MxV Rail

PUEBLO, Colo. — For a guy who goes around in circles at work every day, MxV Rail locomotive engineer Mike Walfoort sure gets a lot done. At the beginning of each 10-hour shift he climbs aboard an SD70M that's on the point of a 114-car train of surplus coal gondolas. He slowly notches the throttle out to get the train's 18,000 tons up to 40 mph. And then, if all goes well, by the end of his shift Walfoort will have made 120 to 130 laps around MxV Rail's new Facility for Accelerated Service Testing. Walfoort's 4-minute, 11-second trips around the 2.8-mile FAST loop track in Pueblo, Colo., add up in a hurry. Over the course of a year, the train will roll off nearly 25,000 miles and put an astounding 140 million gross tons on FAST's single track. That's more tonnage than the CSX or Norfolk Southern multi-track main lines carry in and out of Chicago every year. Concentrating so much tonnage on so little mileage is what makes the \$10 million FAST track the railroad industry's proving ground. "We're hitting it with a bigger hammer than revenue service does," FAST Program Manager Chris Johnson says of the loop.

Data gleaned from 31 test sites scattered around FAST allow the MxV Rail research team to better understand the punishment that the one-two punch of high tonnage and heavy axle loads inflict on track. And their research in a controlled environment that mimics revenue service helps suppliers and railroads design, test, and develop track and equipment that is safer, lasts longer, and requires less maintenance. "This could be the most impactful 2.8 miles of track in the industry in terms of advancing the science of railroad-ing," says MxV Rail CEO Kari Gonzales.

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Moving Forward

FAST operations began in 1976. The previous FAST track accumulated more than 5 billion gross tons in its nearly four decades of operation. That loop was located at the Transportation Technology Center in Pueblo, a Federal Railroad Administration facility that the Association of American Railroads took over amid federal budget cuts in 1982.

The FRA and AAR subsidiary TTCI went their separate ways in 2022, however, after ENSCO was awarded the contract to operate the Transportation Technology Center. TTCI was rebranded as MxV Rail — a name that represents the “mass times velocity” formula for momentum — and relocated to a new facility 10 miles away at PuebloPlex on land from the former U.S. Army Pueblo Chemical Depot. MxV Rail’s headquarters and labs, meanwhile, relocated to the nearby Pueblo Industrial Park.

“Being able to design and build out the new FAST loop, based on more than 40 years of institutional knowledge and expertise, was a unique opportunity,” Gonzales says. “We’re grateful to all the Class I advisors and industry suppliers who helped us work through the design and construction process and make these world-class engineering capabilities available here in North America.”

While design work was under way for the new FAST loop and other test tracks, MxV Rail began moving \$100 million worth of assets — including laboratory test equipment, a hodgepodge of rolling stock, and a derailment scene used to train first responders — from TTC to their new homes at PuebloPlex and the industrial park.

Phase one of FAST loop construction began in February 2023 and was substantially complete by November. The first tonnage rolled over the loop on Nov. 20. Regular test operations began on Jan. 22, 2024, kicking off a new era for FAST. The loop is the largest component of the MxV Rail Strategic Rail Initiatives Program that’s designed to improve the safety, reliability, and efficiency of the rail network.

FAST Facts

Pikes Peak comes into view through the windshield every time Union Pacific SD70M No. 3886 is running clockwise and rounds the 5-degree curve at FAST’s south end. As the train enters the loop’s tangent track, four white signs pass by in Burma Shave style.

Each sign marks a test section where MxV Rail evaluates different types of rail, cross ties, or fastener systems, along with things like welds, rail neutral temperature, track settlement, lateral track strength, insulated joints, and bridge deck materials.

The train negotiates a 6-degree curve at the loop’s north end, enters a 6-degree reverse curve on the east side of the loop, crosses the FAST access track on a diamond, and then heads back into the 5-degree curve to begin another lap.

The old loop was cobbled together from different sections of test track and had morphed over the years. Like its predecessor, MxV Rail’s FAST loop was designed to maintain 40 mph operation while avoiding overheating the rail. Its improvements include a longer stretch of tangent track and the longer, sharper unlubricated reverse curve that increases the rate of rail wear while allowing more types of rail to be tested at any given time. FAST also is designed to be self-contained so that its operations don’t interfere with tests on MxV Rail’s other tracks: [the High Speed Loop, Suspension Resonance Track, and Curving Performance Track](#).

The FAST loop’s access track, which links to other MxV Rail trackage as well as the outside world via BNSF Railway’s Pueblo Subdivision, features a 25-mph one-way low-speed diamond (OWLS) and a No. 11 turnout with a jump frog.

OWLS are used where a lightly trafficked line crosses a busier main line. The main line features normal rails through the diamond so that trains can operate at maximum allowable speed. Trains operating over the typical OWLS diamond on the branch line route must operate at 10 mph or below because the train rides up and over the main route’s rails in flange-bearing mode. But FAST’s is not your typical diamond. “We designed this for 25-mile-an-hour operation. We installed longer ramps on the diamond so we can test to see if we can run across it faster, which will help efficiency and safety,” Johnson explains. “If you get that crossing train across the diamond faster, you have less chance of an incident.”

A balloon track reverse loop is currently under construction to store the test train and support the once-weekly shift between clockwise and counterclockwise operation around the test track. It will allow the entire train to be turned more easily than using a wye. Plans are in the works to add a 1,200-foot bypass track on the FAST loop’s tangent. “The bypass allows us to put tests in that maybe can’t survive an entire night of operation. ... If we’re testing something that we only need a limited amount of tonnage over, we can install it in the bypass, run over it the required amount, and then go back to the main line and not affect the other tests,” Johnson says.

The loop was built with expansion in mind, including the potential to add a switching lead, wye, and maintenance-of-way spur. Those may or may not be built depending on how MxV Rail operations develop on the new FAST track.

“We’ve been trying to phase all of our construction in a way that says ‘what’s the minimum that we need to achieve the outcomes we need?’ And then once we do that, let’s grow into it and make sure that what we’re visualizing is really necessary,” Gonzales says.

Also on the drawing board: A slower alternate route with a sharp 10-degree curve that would be tucked inside FAST’s south end. “There’s no plans to build it at this time, but if that’s what the industry decides we need, we have room for it,” Johnson says.

Operations Testing

The ideas for the tests under way at FAST — 28 part of the MxV Rail research program, and three involving prototypes rail suppliers have developed — come from the MxV Rail team, railroads, and suppliers. And they typically tackle problems that go beyond one railroad, one type of car, or one manufacturer.

“Safety, reliability, and efficiency are the three legs of the stool. You really can’t have a functioning, healthy North American railway system without all three of those,” says Scott Cummings, MxV Rail’s assistant vice president of research and innovation. “And so anything that we’re doing in the research program will fit into at least one of those three buckets.”

Bill Seeks Privatization of Alaska Railroad

By David Lassen | March 25, 2024

Sponsor seeks ‘conversation about direction of railroad and resource development’



Route of the Alaska Railroad. ARR



Alaska Railroad's northbound Denali Star rolls through 6.2-million-acre Denali National Park on Sept. 12, 2023, behind a pair of SD70MACs. Carl Swanson

JUNEAU, Alaska — A state legislator has introduced a bill calling for privatization of the Alaska Railroad — although even the bill's sponsor says the purpose is as much about inspiring discussion as it is about potentially triggering a sale. [HB 332](#), introduced by Rep. Jesse Sumner (R-Wasilla), calls for the state's governor to request proposals for purchase of the railroad and related assets by June 15 of this year, and sell the railroad by Feb. 15, 2025, to the party that makes the best offer to continue to operate the railroad for a minimum of 50 years while assuming all existing contracts, including those with labor, shippers, and connecting carriers. The agreement would be subject to approval by the legislature.

Sumner's [Sponsor Statement](#) for the bill says the railroad, under state ownership, “has faced limitations in terms of investment, innovation, and strategic expansion” and that the sale would “streamline governance and inject much-needed private sector expertise into the railroad's operations.” It also includes a resource development agreement that the statement says “positions the Alaska Railroad to be a key catalyst for unlocking responsible, sustainable expansion of our state's vast resources.”

“I think at least a conversation about the direction of the railroad is headed and resource development is in order,” Sumner told [a March 21 meeting](#) of the state House Transportation Committee. “Whether or not ultimately we should sell the railroad, certainly, is up for debate.”

The railroad, completed by the federal government in 1923, was transferred to state ownership in 1985 under a bill signed by President Ronald Reagan in 1983. Since that date, Transportation Committee Chair Kevin McCabe (R-Big Lake) said, “The railroad has not built one single mile of track. Our resource development since that time has been stifled beyond belief. ... They haven't kept up with our needs. Whether it's their fault or our [the legislature's] fault, or both ... we've got to do something.

“There are people out there that would be interested in building track and helping the state of Alaska develop its resources. Is this a motivational bill? Probably. But it's also a venue if we need it.”

McCabe also expressed concern that Port MacKenzie, a deepwater port across a body of water known as Knik Arm from Anchorage, does not have rail access. [A 32-mile spur](#) to reach the port remains in the planning stage.

“It's imperative that we get rail to Port MacKenzie, and if has to be through a private corporation rather than a state corporation, that's what we have to do,” McCabe said.

He also suggested that the stalled A2A project — seeking to link Alaska and Alberta, providing a through connection to the rest of the North American rail network — remains a consideration [see [“Company seeking to build Alaska-Alberta rail line enters bankruptcy.”](#) *Trains News Wire*, June 28, 2021].

“Yes, the private guy they had in there had some issues, and it fell apart, and it seems like pie in the sky,” McCabe said. “But there are many, many, many reasons to put that rail through Canada to the lower 48. It might be as small a reason as hauling that clean Alaska coal to a power plant in North Dakota ... or hauling potash from Saskatchewan back to Port MacKenzie or the Port of Anchorage for shipment to Asia.”

The Transportation Committee took no further action after its initial discussion.

Canadian Government Provides \$6.7 Million for Improvements at Port of Thunder Bay

[By Trains Staff](#) | March 16, 2024 Rail yard redevelopment one of two projects to receive funds



*Keefer Terminal at the Port of Thunder Bay, Ontario.
Port of Thunder Bay*

THUNDER BAY, Ontario — The Canadian government will provide up to C\$6.7 million for two projects to increase capacity at the Port of Thunder Bay, according to a Friday announcement.

Up to C\$3 million will go to a project to redevelop an existing rail yard at the Port's Keefer Terminal, adding heavyweight track and switches to increase cargo handling capabilities, providing opportunities to attract new markets and improve supply-chain fluidity.

Another C\$3.7 will address capacity with four actions: upgrading the wharf at Keefer Terminal; expanding the terminal's cargo laydown area; developing the electrical infrastructure for the new laydown area; and improving the rail infrastructure between the terminal and its rail yard. Marcus Powlowski, Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay-Rainy River, said in [a press release](#) that the port handles items ranging from components for tar sands and mining, to wind turbines, to fertilizers.

"Given the importance of the terminal to our country's economy," he said, "this funding is welcome news not just for Northwestern Ontario, but also for the Prairies and our entire country."

Money for the projects will come from the National Trade Corridors Fund, which has more than \$4.1 billion available for transportation infrastructure.

The port is served by Canadian National and CPKC



Volume 8 * Issue 3 March, 2024

Provided by John Goodman

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

There is a new membership system. Renewals and new members have been switched to almost all digital. Problems with emails going to spam will be corrected in the upcoming cycle and everyone will also get a paper invoice. The renewal and new membership form will also be in the magazine. The membership roster is current in real-time and is updated in a matter of minutes. **Please check your address and email in the roster and make sure it is correct.**

Rail Camp Looking forward to RailCamp in 2024! We need campers!

RailCamp East: June 23-29. RailCamp Northwest: August 4-11

As you know each year the RPCA, through the generosity of our members and our insurance vendors, Borden-Perlman/McRail and United Shortline Insurance Services, strives to send at least two deserving youth to the NRHS RailCamps via our Caldwell-Luebke RailCamp Fund and the Stanlee E. Weller Fund. The scholarship includes all activities, transfers to/from the airport or Amtrak, housing, meals, transportation during the week, and a free one-year membership in the NRHS. The RailCamp application is available on the NRHS website at: <https://nrhs.com/programs/railcamp/> Applications are due April 1, 2024.

RailCamp has had a successful and significant impact on creating future transportation industry professionals with a very high percentage of past attendees going into the field in one manner or another. Positions include train dispatchers, locomotive engineers, conductors, civil engineers and management positions.

As mentioned, RailCamp East partners with Amtrak, the Strasburg Railroad, and the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania. The base for the week is at the University of Delaware in Newark, DE. Our business partners go all out to arrange the best possible experiences with the students with minimal disruption to normal business activity.

If you have a potential scholarship candidate, please let me know. Scholarships are \$1,575 each.

We ask everyone to continue to support (and thank our) insurance partners and our educational business partners.

RPCA Foundation, Inc

The RPCA Foundation, Inc. is our 501(c)(3) non-profit arm that is happy to accept your tax-deductible contributions and gifts. It is a great way to remember a former member or friend through a memorial gift. The funds are used to continue our educational efforts including the Fuehring Fund Scholarships, RailCamp Scholarships and our other youth and outreach programs. We also accept direct contributions of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) payments from your retirement accounts if you make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) directly to us -- it's a great way to reduce your taxable income and support a great cause.

For more information, please contact our Treasurer, Roy Wullich at rjwullich2@aol.com or 650-245-2994. To donate, please mail it to: RPCA Foundation, Inc. PO Box 719 Quinton, VA 23141-0719

Continued on next page:

Continued from previous page:

UMLER

stands for

Uniform Machine Language
Equipment Register



Abbreviations.com

This month some basics again and some nice performance metrics.

If you know a RPCNB subscriber who is NOT getting this newsletter, please tell them to contact Borden Black to get on the list!! This is where the good or bad news gets reported as soon as it happens instead of waiting and attempting to jam into a one-hour seminar at the Annual Conference a whole year of important topics.

The RPCA group insurance program for your rolling stock using the RPCNB reporting mark renews in February. Don't forget to send or ask your agent to send your insurance certs identifying RPCNB as an "Additional Insured" for liability to the RPCNB office. Not having that is cause to have your rolling stock deleted!

All class one railroads now operate their own independent internal "Umler" system. Note the quote marks, because that isn't the real Railinc master Umler system!!!

If your equipment has not moved on that class one in more than 6 months, their computer automatically deleted it. If you are working with someone who only has access to the originating carrier's internal system and you ask to be set up for a move, you are going to be told your car or loco isn't in Umler. There again, there is Umler and then there is Railinc Umler.

Unless you've done something wrong, and you would know it, we don't delete rolling stock from the master Railinc Umler system. Almost all class one internal systems are set up to ping the Railinc master system when a Way Bill is generated to the railroad's internal system to download the data. But if you aren't generating that Way Bill directly into their system, the computer doesn't know to download the data from the Railinc master file. That is why we sent you the master Umler record for your car or loco when we uploaded it, both for you to check the data is correct, and for your reference and to show your local RRer telling you it ain't in, guess what, it is.

If you've lost that PDF of your record, let us know, and we'll send another. Then you have it available to stick under the nose of that local RRer telling you it isn't in Umler. You can correctly tell him/her to go check the master Umler.

It's a good idea to make multiple copies, including one to put in the electrical cabinet of your car.

We promised you some performance metrics. This is a summary of just 1 of the mileage notices we get from the carriers or the carrier contractor. The actual report can be confusing to some because some RRs report passenger car moves as a load, and others as empty, and some either depending on division moving on. Ditto for locos. It is from these notices that some states ping us for tax money because a car bearing the RPCNB reporting mark moved in their state.

Because these reports do not identify the car number, we can not pass through the tax due to the owner, and that is partly why the annual renewal fee is as high as it is because we have to pay the taxes to all states invoicing us out of the RPCNB general fund.

This specific report is "nice" because the 2023 mileage is up from 2022, which means our subscribers' equipment is moving!! Hopefully, that also means you are making some money!!

RR	State	Miles
AA	MI	92
BNSF	CA	878
	IA	20
	ID	148
	IL	252
	KS	290
	MO	302
	MT	54
	NE	557
	OK	117
	OR	341
	TX	244
	WA	851
	WY	409
	CA	878
	IA	20
	ID	148

RR (cont)	State	Miles
BNSF	IL	2520
	MO	302
	KS	290
	MT	54
	NE	557
	OK	117
	OR	341
	TX	244
	WA	851
	WY	409
	subtotal	4463
LBWR	TX	25
	NS	
	IN	165
	OH	333
Grand Total		5084

RAILROAD NEWS

This is a synopsis of Railroad-related news culled from various sources, including Trains Magazine, Progressive Railroading, Railway Age, and various websites.

Please submit your railroad news.

Continued on next page:

Museum and Excursion Trains



The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) is reviewing bids for the Flying Yankee, the diesel-electric streamliner built in late 1934 by the Budd Company for the Boston & Maine. Among the bidders is the Nashua, N.H.-based Flying Yankee Association. The engine was purchased by the state in 1997. The Flying Association says that its goal is to restore the train and run it rather than putting it in a museum.

The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad is completing its conversion to recycled motor oil as a fuel for its fleet of a half-dozen active steam locomotives. A coal-fired snow-train special powered by 2-8-2 No. 481, a former Rio Grande Class K-36 Mikado that is D&S's only remaining active coal-burning locomotive, marked the end of the era.

Mount Emily Lumber No. 1, a three-truck Shay locomotive, is now at the Oregon Rail Heritage Center in Portland. The locomotive, built by Lima in 1923, was donated by the lumber company to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry in 1955 and subsequently loaned to West Virginia in 1971. It was returned to Oregon in 1994, with the City of Prineville becoming its operator and caretaker. When Prineville requested an end to the loan, the Rail Heritage Center was selected to receive the engine. It will be on display and used for excursions.

The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad has received a \$200,000 state grant for track maintenance. Funding will be used for tie replacement and ballast tamping on a segment of the railroad near Frostburg, Md.

Amtrak/Freight/Federal Agencies

President Joe Biden has renominated Delaware River and Bay Authority commissioner Samuel Lathem for the Amtrak board. The U.S. Senate earlier confirmed two new members and reconfirmed Chairman Anthony Coscia, who all reside in the Northeast Corridor. Amtrak's reauthorization requires residency for six of the Board's voting-member slots to be split evenly between individuals representing Northeast Corridor, state-supported, and long-distance routes. Senators released holds on nominations after assurances from Biden that at least one replacement would be by someone residing outside the Northeast Corridor. Lathem's nomination does not meet that requirement. The white house has said a nominee from outside the Northeast Corridor will be forthcoming.

"Amtrak has rebounded from the pandemic and is growing again as part of our plan to double ridership by 2040," Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner said in a press release. Late last year, the federal government announced billions of dollars in grants to improve service on the nation's passenger rail network, especially along the busy Northeast Corridor. At the same time, the government also identified numerous new routes that could be added to the system. The railroad is also looking to modernize its long-distance fleet.

A new Federal Railroad Administration presentation lists fifteen new or revived long-distance routes for its ongoing Amtrak Daily Long-Distance Service Study. The presentation provides the rationale for pursuing those 15 routes. The planning exercise will culminate with a final report of recommendations to Congress after another round of meetings this spring. This long-distance study is independent of the FRA's selection of 69 routes for its Corridor Identification and Development Program.



CSX has released its 10th heritage locomotive, No. 1836, honoring the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac, founded in 1836. Richmond was the headquarters location for CSX before it moved to Jacksonville.

The Ohio-based Ancora Holdings Group LLC, with other participants, has launched a formal takeover attempt of Norfolk Southern. The group claims it will be able to drive NS's share price up by about 65% to \$420. Ancora, which recently acquired a \$1 billion-plus equity stake in NS, launched a blistering attack on the Class I and current CEO Alan Shaw.

The James E. Strates Shows carnival train – which has hauled midway attractions to fairs up and down the East Coast since 1934 – may have made its last trip. Strates and CSX have been unable to reach a contract agreement, which has kept the train parked since the end of the 2019 season. Strates has now changed its business model to an over-the-road show.

End of RPCA news

CSX CEO Unveils Family Lines Heritage Unit on Social Media [By Trains Staff](#) | March 8, 2024



The latest CSX heritage locomotive honors the Family Lines System. CSX

WAYCROSS, Ga. — CSX Transportation CEO Joe Hinrichs has debuted railroad's latest heritage locomotive, this one honoring the Family Lines System, in [a post on his LinkedIn account](#).

It is the 11th locomotive in the CSX series, and like the others combines the current CSX scheme at the front of the locomotive with the predecessor scheme on the long hood.

"This celebrates a time when Seaboard Coast Line, Clinchfield, and L&N rail lines all came together from 1972-1982, eventually becoming Seaboard System before CSX became a reality," Hinrichs wrote. "Another great job by our team in Waycross, Ga [where the locomotive was painted]. We enjoy celebrating our past while creating the future together as ONE CSX team! Thanks everyone."

The Family Lines unit follows February's unveiling of a locomotive honoring the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac. Others have honored the Baltimore & Ohio, Chessie System, Seaboard System, Conrail, Chesapeake & Ohio, Louisville & Nashville, Atlantic Coast Line, New York Central, and Monon.

Siemens to Build New Light Rail Equipment for St. Louis [By Trains Staff](#) | March 13, 2024

55-car order to feature battery hybrid technology



A rendering of the new light rail vehicles to be built by Siemens Mobility for the St. Louis-area MetroLink system. Siemens Mobility

ST. LOUIS — Siemens Mobility will build 55 new battery hybrid S200 high-floor light rail vehicles for the Metro Transit system, replacing the oldest vehicles in the MetroLink light rail system, the company has announced.

Bi-State Development, operator of Metro Transit, selected Siemens, which previously built the system's SD400 and SD460 LRVs in orders beginning in 1990.

"We are grateful to Bi-State Development for this fantastic order and for their continued confidence in Siemens Mobility," Michael Cahill, president rolling stock, Siemens Mobility North America, said in a press release. "We are excited to deliver these new state-of-the-art light rail vehicles, with our Onboard Energy Storage System, which will enhance operational flexibility, resiliency and convenience. The first of these vehicles will replace the first vehicle ever produced at our current location in Sacramento, more than 30 years ago, a great experience I remember fondly."

The vehicles will be just the second in the U.S. to feature the on-board energy storage batteries, which allows off-wire operation for up to 5 miles. The first LRVs so equipped were delivered to Charlotte, N.C., in 2021.

The new railcars feature large windows; are designed to allow easy entry for strollers, wheelchairs, and bikes; and have an interactive GPS mapping display allowing passengers to see their location in real time.

"Our MetroLink fleet has kept our region moving for more than 30 years. This is a rolling testament to the skill of our MetroLink maintenance team and the tremendous quality of these Siemens vehicles," said Taulby Roach, President & CEO of Bi-State Development. "As we look to the next generation of transit, we are grateful to have such a talented supplier manufacturing vehicles here in the USA."

News Photo: Final Coal-fired Train at Durango & Silverton

[By Trains Staff](#) | March 25, 2024 **K-36 No. 481 will join rest of roster in conversion to oil firing**



DURANGO, Colo. — The final chapter of the long history of coal-powered trains on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad came Saturday, March 23, with a round-trip excursion between Durango and Cascade, Colo., handled by a Baldwin Class K-36 2-8-2 No. 481. The locomotive will now be converted to oil firing, completing conversion of the roster that began with K-37 No. 493 in 2020 [see "[Tests continue on first Durango & Silverton oil-burner ...](#)," *Trains News Wire*, Feb. 5, 2020].

K-36 No. 481, the last coal-fired Durango & Silverton locomotive, handles its final excursion before conversion to oil firing on Saturday, March 23, 2024. William C. Diehl



668 Transfer Road
Suite 8
Saint Paul, MN

Monday: 10am – 3pm
Friday: 10am – 3pm
Saturday: 10am – 2pm (Regular Operations)
10am – 5pm (March to October)
Sunday: 12pm – 5pm

Adults \$10 (5 years and older)
Children 4 and under are FREE!



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

April 6, 7, 13(Trains after dark), 14, 20, 21, 27, 28(Pot luck)

Railfan Events (Thanks to Rick Krense, Bill Dredge)

Northstar Chapter NRHS Meeting	Saturday April 13th 2024 6:15—8:45 pm	Roseville Lutheran Church Roselawn Ave Roseville MN	Free—guests are welcome
Model Train Show at Century College	Saturday, April 6, 2024. 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM	Century College-West Campus Gymnasium. 3401 Century Avenue N. White Bear Lake, MN 55110	\$6
Twin City Model Railroad Museum Hobby Show and Sale	Saturday, May 11, 2024 from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm	MN State Fairgrounds – Education Building 1372 Cosgrove Street	\$7

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