



NRHS

Northstar News

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

Next Meeting Saturday February 8th 2025 Roseville Lutheran Church



L: Amtrak Borealis #1333 at Red Rock summer 2024 – Bob Ball



R: CPKC EB Grain Westminister Hill Feb 15 2019 –Bob Ball

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Meeting Notice:

Saturday February 8th 6:15 pm At Roseville Lutheran Church, our May Meeting also will be a ZOOM meeting. Note: in 2025 meetings will held on the 2nd Saturday of the month.

Program: Ross Hammond: Development and history of Twin City Railroads, Don't miss this program!

An informal Dinner at Keys Restaurant -Lexington and Larpenteur Avenues at 4:15 pm February 8th 2025. Please join us in-person at Roseville Lutheran Church, Saturday February 8th 2025 at 6 pm. Doors open at 5:50pm. Our business meeting will begin at 6:15 followed by the program.

If you are unable to join us in person, the Zoom Meeting log-in information are here: NRHS February 8th, 2025 Meeting: Be sure to allow time for any Zoom application updates to install before the meeting.

URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83109581696?pwd=OU4QqlmrUbLhTaumbLlxQILApNM2yd.1>

Or URL: <https://tinyurl.com/2jm2xr68>

Meeting ID: 810 5923 5666

Passcode: 231572

Dial-in, audio only 507 473 4847

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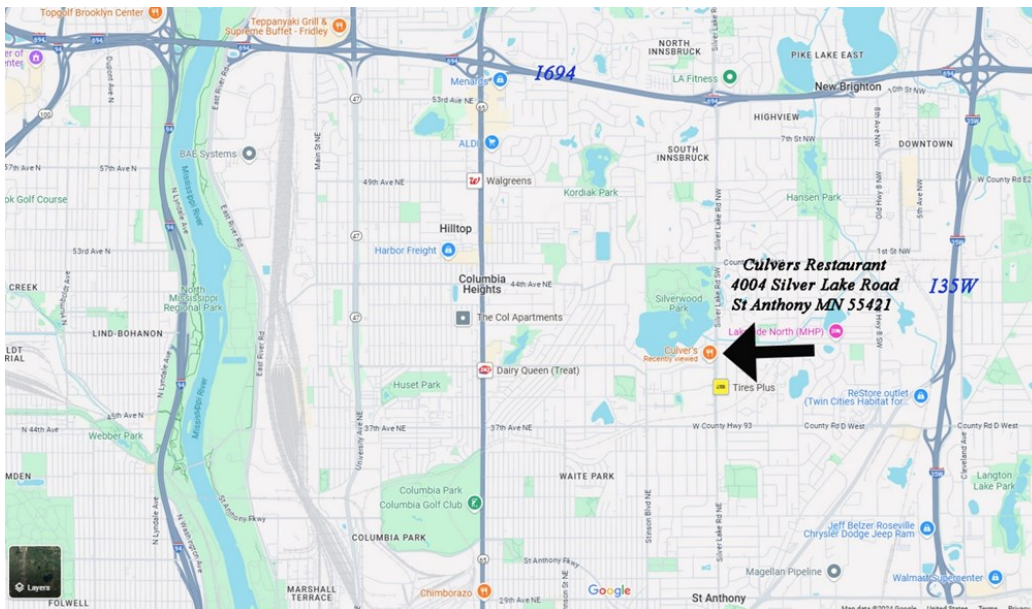
Meeting Location: From the east or west take MN 36 to Lexington Avenue. Drive south on Lexington Avenue to Roselawn Avenue and turn right. The large lighted parking lot is on your right as you travel west on Roselawn. Use the lower entrance to the church and turn left through the commons area. We'll be in room 40, The Diamond Room. (1215 Roselawn Ave W Roseville MN 55113)



From the Editor: Next issue will be out around March 1st 2025. If you haven't renewed your membership, this will be your last newsletter.

Note: Informal Diner at Keys Restaurant on Larpenteur and Lexington before the Meeting at 4:15 PM is still on. Always check your newsletter for any changes.

Note: Address or Email Change; if you want to continue to receive the newsletter with your change, YOU MUST CONTACT a BOD member with the change (by phone voice mail, or email!)



As noted at the November meeting and in the December NorthStar News meeting minutes: The Chapter Monthly Lunch will be at Culvers, 4004 Silver Lake Road, St Anthony MN 55421 at 1:00 PM. We are going to make this a monthly get-together on 4th Wednesday of the month, with the venue subject to change. Our next lunch is :
Wednesday February 26th,2025

Meeting Minutes January 11th 2025, Roseville Lutheran Church

The meeting was called to order at 6:22 pm by President Dan Meyer. There were about 15 members and Guests present. A quorum was determined. (4 of 4 directors and 20% of membership) A motion to members by President Dan Meyer to approve the meeting minutes from December 2024 Newsletter from the November 2024 meeting was floored. The motion was carried.

Trip Director Report. There was no report, John Goodman was ill.

Editors Note: There are four possible trips to be discussed by the BOD and membership at the next meeting.

-Trip to Duluth and ride #332 to Two Harbors.

-Trip to Boone and Scenic RR to ride behind their Chinese Steam Engine recently returned to operation.

-Trip to Trego Wisconsin and ride the Pizza train on the Wisconsin Great Northern.

-An Amtrak trip on the Borealis to LaCrosse or Wisconsin Dells and return on the Empire Builder.

Treasurer's Report. The Treasurer report was given by John Chute. Our Chapter (not Including the Calendar account) balance for January 2025 was on par from previous months. John stated that he has been receiving many membership renewals. We have 33 paid renewals so far for 2025. John will provide an updated membership renewal list at the end of February to Richard Tubbesing to update the recipient list for Newsletter distribution. Richard Tubbesing stated that if membership renewals have not been received by March 1st, 2025 you will be removed from the Newsletter distribution list.

Library /Storage/ Flea Market Report. Dan Meyer stated he hasn't been to the storage locker in the past month. Dan asked if there was any questions about the storage locker. Dan stated that the rent has gone up to around \$200 a month.

Calendar Report. Dawn Holmberg the Calendar report. Calendar Sales have been very good. Dawn says she has calendars for sale at this meeting. The Calendar Account now shows sales for the last year and has some checks to give John Chute for deposit to our account. There is some money in the Paypal account that will be transferred to the Calendar bank account. We have to determine the state sales tax as that is due to the state by February 5th. There are very few orders that are trickling in as the time period for orders coming in has past. Richard Tubbesing asked how many calendars (of 425) are left. Dawn guessed that we have about 50 or so calendars remaining.

Newsletter Report. The newsletter report was given by Richard Tubbesing. The cost for printing for the year 2024 totaled about \$850. He didn't have more details since he forgot the Spread sheet of costs that were done. There are 20 members that received the snail mail newsletter and 40 members that get the Email color version of the newsletter plus complimentary copies that we send to other NRHS chapters and Minnesota and Wisconsin state historical organizations. The next newsletter will be out around February 1st. Dan Meyer stated that the newsletter is available on our chapter website and has many years of newsletters.

National Representative Report. The National (NRHS) report was given by Dawn Holmberg. There are no upcoming activities until May. The next conference will be three days at Johnson City Tennessee in May. Planned, there will be a reception and a meeting as well as a trip on a Railroad in the area. Richard Tubbesing stated that repair of the former Clinchfield Railroad line from hurricane damage by CSX will take until the fall of this year. Dan Meyer stated more information of the conference will be posted soon by the NRHS.

WEB Report. Dan Meyer gave the web report. Updates of chapter meetings and news have been posted on Facebook. Northstar News has been updated on the chapter website.

Cheer Committee. Glen Holmberg gave a report on Dave Norman. Glen stated Dave is now at HCMC. Glen also reported on Bob Clarkson. Bob passed away on January 1st at 87 years old. His Obituary will be in the newspaper soon. Glen requested a moment of silence for the passing of Robert Clarkson. Richard Tubbesing stated that Gary Rumler's wife Nancy is recovering a health concern.. Dawn Holmberg stated that we have free issues of old NRHS Bulletins on the front table for anyone that wants one.

Old Business to report. Dan stated that we talked about in the last meeting for a monthly chapter lunch. We are planning to meet on the 4th Wednesday of the month at Culvers in St Anthony, The first lunch will be at 1pm on Wednesday Jan 22nd. Richard Tubbesing stated it will be posted on the newsletter, and January Lunch was posted in the January Newsletter.

New Business Report.

Dan Stated he wants to set up a meeting of the BOD before the next member meeting to discuss activities for 2025.

A guest by Zoom, Mr Stefan Babirad asked to give a presentation of a group of Volunteers that are restoring buildings in Finlayson Minnesota. Finlayson was on the NP Skally line to Duluth and is north of Hickley MN. He stated some of the activities that volunteers are doing in this ongoing historical effort. Primarily he was showing work on restoring the NP depot in Finlayson. He is requesting a grant from the NRHS to help fund the restoration of the NP Finlayson Depot .

Stefan showed many pictures of the restoration efforts in Finlayson. Finlayson was an import destination for people fleeing by rail of the Hinkley MN fire in the early 1900's. Photos of the NP depot are on the next page.

Thanks to Stefan for the presentation.

A motion to adjourn the meeting at about 6:50 pm was made. Motion was carried.

Programs: Bob Ball showed photos from his collection of Amtrak, Chicago & Northwestern, Milwaukee Road and Soo Line Railroads. Bob Wow 'ed the attendees of his professionally like RR photos. Announcements. Ross Hammond will do the program in February and will be a history of RR lines in the Twin Cities, and Roger Libra will present a video of a trip to NE Indiana and riding behind the NKP #765 at the March Meeting. Greg Smith and Joe Frischman are possibilities for programs in future.

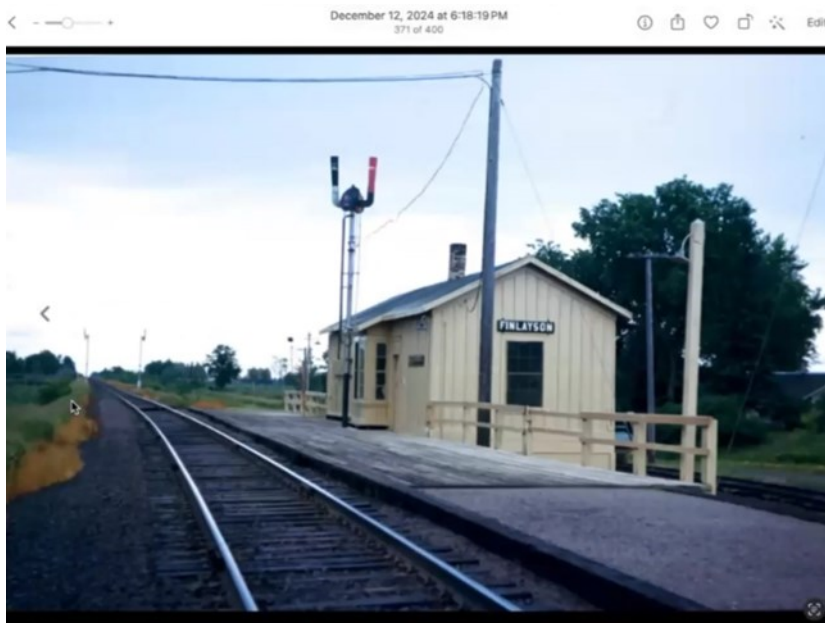
Respectfully Submitted by Secretary Richard Tubbesing

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November 14, 2024 at 8:30:31AM
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Photos of the Finlayson depot. The Black and White photo in 1942 shows an NP train approaching. The green paint was done by BN before the line was abandoned. NP painted its depots in Indian red from 1909 to 1940. There are artifacts found in the depot that will be documented. Photos from the Stefan Babirad collection.

OBITUARY: (Sad News) Longtime Member and Great Friend of Our Chapter:

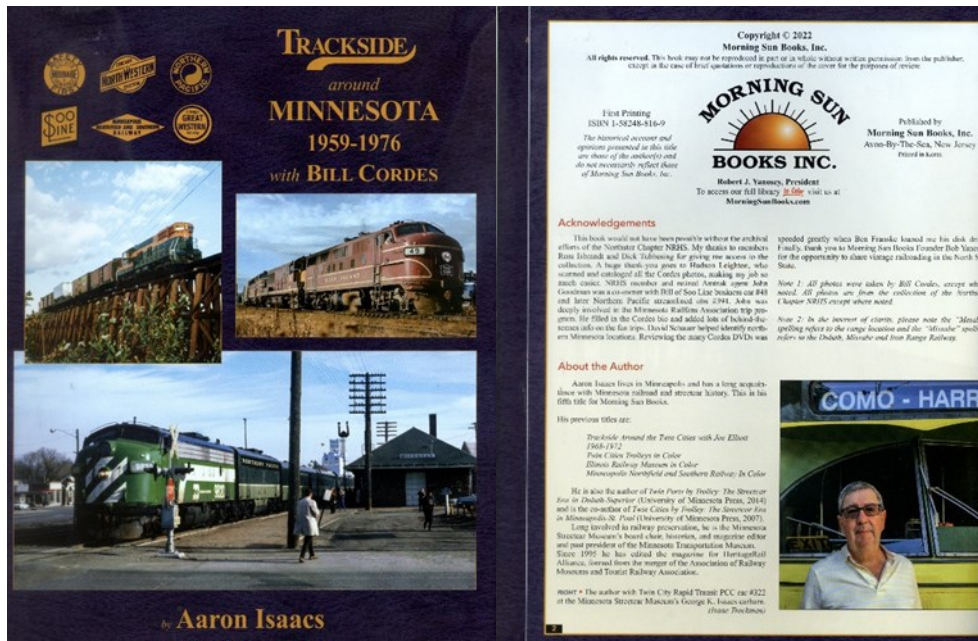
from the St Paul Pioneer Press –Thanks to Glen Holmberg



CLARKSON Robert E., Age 87 Passed away on January 1st, 2025, , He was preceded in death by his parents, Ernest and Sylvia Clarkson; and his beloved wife, Mary Clarkson. He is survived by his daughter, Linda; and grandchildren, Michael, Katie, and Tyler. He was a proud Army veteran, dedicated Roseville community member, and advocate for public transportation. His lifelong passion for railroads, especially steam locomotives, was a true reflection of his love for history and engineering. He will be remembered for his kindness, gratitude toward those around him and infectious enthusiasm for trains. He will be greatly missed by his family and friends but never forgotten. Memorial service will be held at Calvary Baptist Church in Roseville, MN on Saturday, March 1st at 10:00AM.

Robert E CLARKSON

A Recent Book about Minnesota Railroads! From Morning Sun Books.



From the Editor, Notes about Aaron Isaacs, Local Author and Historian.

Over the years Minnesota has produced more than its share of railroad history authors. They include Frank Donovan, Frank King, Richard Prosser and Russell Olson. More recent are Don Hofsommer, Lorenz Schrenk, John Luecke, Paul Spyhalski, David Shauer, John Diers, and Steve Glischinski. We can add another who is a Northstar Chapter member, Aaron Isaacs.

Trackside Around Minnesota with Bill Cordes, 1959-1976 was published in 2022 and is made up entirely of photos from the Northstar Chapter archive. Like all Morning Sun books, it's an all-color pictorial. Bill Cordes took all 252 photos and left behind notes on each one. Hudson Leighton scanned them to high resolution. Having the scans and notes so readily available made the book possible.

Available from McMillan Publications: link: <https://www.mcmillanpublications.com/en-tw/products/trackside-around-minnesota-11959-1976-with-cordes-isaacs>

Bill Cordes seemed to be everywhere with his camera, capturing all sorts of Minnesota railroading that have long disappeared. Bill was very active in the Minnesota Railfans Association and was one of the owners of the Soo Line business car 48, and later North Coast Limited streamlined observation car Minnesota Club. Many of the MRA trips appear in the book. Thanks to John Goodman who provided much background info on the trips.

Isaacs previously did these all-color books for Morning Sun.

Trackside Around the Twin Cities with Joe Elliot, 2008.

-Twin Cities Trolleys in Color, 2017.

Minneapolis, Northfield & Southern, 2021, featuring photos of Steve Glischinski, Greg Smith and Doug Hodgdon.

-Illinois Railway Museum, 2021.

His most recent book is *The Most Competitive Passenger Corridor: Chicago-Twin Cities, 2023* for the Shore Line Interurban Historical Society. It uses 11 photos from the Northstar Chapter's Archive.

Isaacs is the co-author of *Twin Cities by Trolley (2007)* and the author of *Twin Ports by Trolley (2014)*. Both are out of print, but copies can still be purchased from the Minnesota Streetcar Museum.

Isaacs has been the editor of the museum's quarterly *Twin City Lines Magazine* since it started in 2007, producing over 1800 pages to date. Back issues are available from the museum or can be viewed at trolleyride.org. Before that he was the editor of the *MTM Minnegazette* from 1990 to 2007. All the *Minnegazettes* are also online at trolleyride.org.

News Wire Recommended Reading

By Trains Staff | January 1, 2025

Amtrak Borealis, Colorado Mountain Rail are topics of recent articles



The news site [MinnPost looks at Amtrak's Borealis](#) and barriers to further service; even adding another car to the consist would require negotiations.

— The [Denver Post examines the proposed Denver-Craig "Colorado Mountain Rail" passenger service](#) and says trains could be running within two years.

A Trip Report From Russ Isbrandt around December 13th 2024.

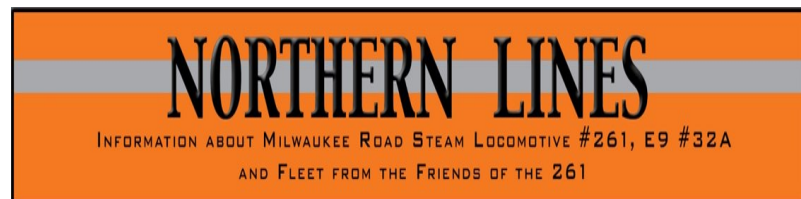


25-01-07 Attached are two screen shots of video taken arriving at 30th St ew Accela set -Russ Isbrandt

Mart and I attended our great granddaughter's birthday party in Mechanicsburg, PA. In winter I prefer direct flights to avoid getting stranded in an airport because of a broken connection. So we flew Delta to Philadelphia, SEPTA train to 30th St Station and Amtrak Keystone trains between Philadelphia and Harrisburg. Besides having a lower airfare and no connection in Detroit or Atlanta, I get a fast train ride. Going in to 30th St station our SEPTA Airport line train was overtaken by an Accela. Keystone train 647 left about 10 min late. I got to see the new station and platforms at Paoli. Shortly after departure it began to snow. Speed on SEPTA seems to be about 80 -90 mph. West of Thorndale speed was between 90 and 100 aside to two 40 mph curves. There are new platforms at Lancaster and I believe a new waiting room east of the original Lancaster station. West of Lancaster speed was between 100 and 110 mph, peaking briefly at 112 mph. There are new stations or platforms at Mt. Joy, Elizabethtown and Middletown. Returning to Philadelphia speeds were in the 90s most of the time. Train 646 also stops at Exton, Coatesville and Paoli. Apparently a lot of long-distance commuters get on at Exton. The Amtrak app crashed out on me while in Mechanicsburg and I couldn't get the timetable (no paper timetables anymore) and rather than miss the scenery trying to reload the app and establish a new password, I went without. I HATE technology.

Attached are two screen shots of video taken arriving at 30th St. I love high-density, high-speed passenger service and all the rail infrastructure from Zoo Junction where the Harrisburg line splits from the New York line on into 30th St.

Russ Isbrandt



2025 ANNUAL DUES NOTICE

As the year draws to a close, it's time to renew your membership with Friends of the 261. But first, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude. Your generosity has powered our efforts over the years, keeping the iconic 261 in operation and allowing us to make vital updates to our car fleet. Thank you for making it all possible!

Your support fuels our journey forward. In 2025, we're planning even more thrilling excursions with 261, additional car charters, and exciting international tours. By renewing your membership and making an additional donation, you'll help us continue preserving history, creating unforgettable experiences, and reaching new milestones.

Remember, your dues and donations are fully tax-deductible under federal and state laws. By acting before the end of the year, you can include your contribution on your 2024 income tax return. Renewing is easy—simply follow the link below.

Your continued support keeps our wheels turning, and we can't wait to welcome you aboard for another incredible year. Together, let's make 2025 a year to remember for Friends of the 261!

Thank you, and see you on our next adventure!

Support the Friends of the 261!

HELP US MAKE 2025 A LANDMARK YEAR FOR FRIENDS OF THE 261!

Our crews are gearing up for an exciting and ambitious 2025 season, packed with maintenance projects and memorable excursions. To make it all happen, we need your help. Your generosity will directly support these vital initiatives and keep our legacy alive for generations to come.

Here's what's ahead in 2025:

Exciting Excursions

We're planning Windy City Excursions, steam trips on the TC&W, and potentially more. These events will bring the magic of rail travel to life for thousands of enthusiasts.

Critical Maintenance for the Fleet

Super Dome & Wisconsin Valley 10-Year Inspection: These iconic cars will undergo Amtrak's extensive inspections and repairs, including rolling out the trucks for thorough evaluations.

Cedar Rapids 40-Year Truck Rebuild: At the end of 2025, this beloved car requires a complete teardown, inspection, and rebuilding of its trucks to meet Amtrak standards—a time-intensive and costly process.

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Fleet Repainting

Wisconsin Valley and St. Croix Valley are due for new paint to restore their classic beauty and create a unified look for our 12 Milwaukee Road cars. After an unfortunate graffiti incident, we're determined to restore these cars to their former glory.

Build a First-Class Car

Passenger preferences are evolving, and we're answering the call by converting one of our hardworking cars into a luxurious First-Class lounge car, creating an elevated experience for our guests.

Enhanced Security Measures

To protect our assets, we plan to upgrade the fence, lighting, and camera systems at our Minneapolis facility. Preventing vandalism and theft ensures that every dollar you donate goes directly toward preserving and operating our fleet.

Your Support is Crucial

These projects require significant resources, and we can't do it without you. Your tax-deductible donation will help us tackle these challenges and continue delivering the exceptional experiences that make Friends of the 261 special.

Please consider including us in your 2024 giving plans. Together, we can keep the 261 rolling strong into 2025 and beyond.

Thank you for being part of our journey—we can't wait to see you on board next year!

Support the Friends of the 261!



Amtrak Cancels More Midwest Trains Because of Approaching Cold Weather (updated) By Trains Staff | January 17, 2025

Some cancellations extend through Wednesday, Jan. 22



A Chicago-bound Amtrak Michigan Service train crosses the diamond with the South Shore Line in Michigan City, Ind., in February 2022. Amtrak has cancelled a number of Midwest trains over the next four days because of a forecast of cold weather. David Lassen

CHICAGO — Amtrak has expanded its list of train cancellations in and out of Chicago because of a forecast of “extremely cold temperatures” to include an extensive number of state-supported services to Illinois and adjacent states.

The company had previously announced cancellations of the Empire Builder in both directions between Chicago and Spokane, Wash., for today (Jan. 17, 2025) through Monday, Jan. 20 [see “[Storm cancellations, maintenance failures ...](#)” *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 13, 2025]. While the Builder is once again accepting reservations as of Tuesday, Jan. 21, some cancellations of state-supported trains have now been made through Wednesday, Jan. 22.

Cancelled in an advisory [updated at 8 p.m.. ET today](#) are the following trains. Alternate transportation is being provided as noted, although the advisory indicates that the company is still in the process of securing buses, so that information may change.

The Chicago-St. Paul, Minn., *Borealis*:

— Westbound train No. 1333 on Saturday, Jan. 18; in both directions (trains 1333 and 1340) Sunday through Tuesday, Jan. 19-21. Alternate bus transportation will be provided on Jan. 18 and Jan. 19

Hiawatha service between Chicago and Milwaukee:

— On Saturday, Jan. 18, northbound trains 339 (a 5:08 p.m. departure from Chicago) and 341 (8:05 p.m.). Bus transportation will be provided.

— On Sunday, Jan. 19, southbound trains 332 (an 8:05 a.m. departure from Milwaukee) and 336 (1:05 p.m.) and northbound trains 337 (3:15 p.m.) and 341. Bus transportation will be provided.

— On Monday, Jan. 20, and Tuesday, Jan. 21: southbound trains 330 (6:15 a.m. departure), 334 (11 a.m.) and 336, and northbound trains 331 (8:25 a.m.), 337, and 341.

— On Wednesday, Jan. 22, northbound trains 339 and 341.

Wolverine service between Chicago and Pontiac, Mich.:

— On Sunday, Jan. 19, eastbound trains 352 (departing Chicago at 2:15 p.m.) and 354 (departing 5:50 p.m.).

— On Monday, Jan. 20, and Tuesday, Jan. 21: eastbound trains 352 and 354; westbound trains 351 (a 5:43 a.m. departure from Pontiac) and 353 (an 8:50 a.m. departure).

— On Wednesday, Jan. 22, westbound trains 351 and 353.

The Chicago-Quincy, Ill., *Carl Sandburg*:

— On Sunday, Jan. 19, and Monday, Jan. 20: Westbound No. 381 (a 7:40 a.m. departure from Chicago) and eastbound No. 382 (a 5:30 p.m. departure from Quincy).

Amtrak cautions that additional cancellations or delays may occur because of the weather. Watch [the Amtrak website](#) or [Amtrak Alerts](#) and [Amtrak NEC Alerts](#) on X.com for additional updates.

The current Accuweather.com forecast calls for lows between -1 degree and 3 degrees in Chicago Sunday through Tuesday; of minus -1 to to minus-15 Saturday through Monday in St. Paul, Minn., and of 2 to minus-4 in Pontiac Sunday through Tuesday.

— Updated at 7:15 p.m. CT with information on alternate bus transportation.

Storm Cancellations, Maintenance Failures Continue to Plague Amtrak: Analysis (updated)

By Bob Johnston | January 13, 2025 | Last updated on January 15, 2025

Late departures and en-route miscues disrupt travel throughout week



The westbound Cardinal passes Amtrak's Chicago diesel maintenance facility Saturday, Jan. 11., 2025, with overhauled Superliner equipment from the Beach Grove (ind.) heavy maintenance facility coupled in front of the train's locomotive and single-level consist from Washington and New York. Snow-covered locomotives at right are waiting for their next assignment. Bob Johnston



Passengers wait to board the westbound Southwest Chief at Albuquerque, N.M. on Oct. 4, 2018.

Amtrak terminated the eastbound Chief there last week, returning the equipment to Los Angeles rather than have the train face ice and snow in Kansas and Missouri. The cancellation was one of several disruptions to Amtrak's national network during the week. Bob Johnston

CHICAGO — Amtrak's "new normal" for handling anticipated severe weather — cancelling trains rather than operating them into a region where a storm is predicted — has proven to be a significant change from decades past when passenger rail earned an "all-weather" reputation. Fewer railroad resources in far-flung locations and Amtrak's stretched-thin equipment situation are partly responsible. But so is more accurate weather reporting, which predicted how heavy snowfall from winter storms Blair and Cora would trigger local do-not-travel edicts from the Midwest to the Northeast last week. Keeping trains out of harm's way prevented the 12- to 24-hour stranding events in remote locations that befell passengers in the past. Both the *Crescent* and *Auto Train* ran into well-publicized trouble in a Virginia snow-storm three years ago [see "[Amtrak struggles to recover ...](#)," *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 5, 2022].

Rolling cancellations

As previously reported, the *Texas Eagle*, *Southwest Chief*, *City of New Orleans*, *Missouri River Runner*, *Lincoln Service*, *Cardinal*, and finally *Acela* and *Northeast Regional* cancellations swept across the country's mid-section, preceding snow and ice storms [see "Amtrak announces more storm cancellations ...," *News Wire*, Jan. 8, 2025]. The company's effort to resume service as soon as possible was mostly successful in targeting when bad weather would subside. However, the *Southwest Chief* departing Los Angeles on Jan. 4 only made it as far as Albuquerque due to paralyzing problems across Kansas and Missouri. The westbound *Chief* departing Jan. 4 from Chicago had previously been cancelled. The eastbound's advisory on Jan. 5 said, "After the train is serviced (at Albuquerque) the train will return passengers to their points of origin between Albuquerque and Los Angeles." Though the equipment was to operate back to L.A. on what might approximate the cancelled westbound *Chief's* schedule, inventory for that train was not reinstated in Amtrak's ticketing system. Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari tells *News Wire* that passengers booked on the waylaid eastbound *Chief* beyond La Junta, Colo., had been advised before its Los Angeles departure that the train would terminate there, so those traveling as far as La Junta were provided alternate transportation. As for the "returning passengers to their point of origin" advisory that routinely appears whenever a midroute truncation occurs, Magliari says, "customers are always given the option not to return to the trains' point of origin."

Last week's long-distance annulments were staggered to match the path of severe weather, rather than having an opposing train's departure cancelled whenever its counterpart doesn't run. Because Amtrak lacks standby equipment, this also mitigated against trains serving unaffected regions, such as having the *Texas Eagle* make a Fort Worth-Austin-San Antonio round trip. As of today (Jan. 13, 2025), another set of weather cancellations has been announced for later this week: the *Empire Builder* will not operate in either direction between Spokane, Wash., and Chicago on Jan. 17, 18, and 19, according to [the Amtrak Alerts feed](#) on X.com.

Current forecasts for the weekend call for temperatures reaching minus-15 and minus-19 on Saturday and Sunday in Havre, Mont., with similar temperatures in Fargo, N.D. No alternate transportation will be provided. Amtrak subsequently extended those cancellations to include Jan. 20.

Mechanical delays persist

According to reports from various sources, trains that did operate still ran into weather-related obstacles, such as the northbound *Crescent's* 4-hour delay switching locomotives at Lynchburg, Va., on Jan. 6 after the lead Charger hit a tree. The train lost another hour waiting for a recrew at Charlottesville, Va.

Once the *Chiefs* were running again, the westbound train departing Chicago Jan. 7 hit debris in Illinois, suffered a fire in one of its Superliner sleeping cars, needed recrew in Kansas, and arrived nearly 13 hours late into Los Angeles on Jan. 9. Shop forces there were able to assemble enough equipment for an on-time eastbound departure even though the cars typically make a same-day turn. But harsh conditions were far from the only reason for delays. Emergency maintenance sidelined a Seattle-Portland, Ore., *Cascades* round trip on Jan. 7; that route is without one Talgo trainset because of damage when its cab car hit a downed tree [see "[Engineer injured, equipment sustains significant damage ...](#)," *News Wire*, Nov. 21, 2024]. In the Midwest, a number of departures were also eliminated [see "[Equipment issues lead to three Amtrak cancellations...](#)" *News Wire*, Jan. 6, 2025].

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Once the *Chiefs* were running again, the westbound train departing Chicago Jan. 7 hit debris in Illinois, suffered a fire in one of its Superliner sleeping cars, needed recreding in Kansas, and arrived nearly 13 hours late into Los Angeles on Jan. 9. Shop forces there were able to assemble enough equipment for an on-time eastbound departure even though the cars typically make a same-day turn. But harsh conditions were far from the only reason for delays. Emergency maintenance sidelined a Seattle-Portland, Ore., *Cascades* round trip on Jan. 7; that route is without one Talgo trainset because of damage when its cab car hit a downed tree [see [“Engineer injured, equipment sustains significant damage ...,”](#) News Wire, Nov. 21, 2024]. In the Midwest, a number of departures were also eliminated [see [“Equipment issues lead to three Amtrak cancellations...”](#) News Wire, Jan. 6, 2025]. Between Jan. 9 and today, the Amtrak Alerts feed lists seven Midwest regional trains cancelled into or out of Chicago for “equipment issues” or “equipment issues resulting from inclement weather.” The latest: today’s *Borealis* in both directions between Milwaukee and St. Paul.

The *Cardinal* suffered serious back-to-back setbacks. The westbound train’s lone P42 lost head end power at Cincinnati on Jan. 9, causing passengers to be bused the rest of the way in the wee hours. The equipment then froze as it deadheaded to Chicago and had to be thawed, resulting in the eastbound *Cardinal's* departure on Jan. 10 at 1:12 a.m., 7 hours, 17 minutes late.

Locomotive issues also struck the *Empire Builder* when all three of its units failed in Minnesota on Jan. 4. It arrived almost 10 hours late at St. Paul, where travelers boarded buses for the rest of the nocturnal trip to Chicago and intermediate stops. Eastbound *Borealis* passengers ended up on buses the next day because most of the toilets in the Horizon and Amfleet cars were frozen. “Technical issues with the train’s equipment,” according to an Amtrak advisory, was responsible for the northbound *Floridian's* delay on Jan. 3 that resulted in a five hour late Chicago arrival. It’s southbound counterpart of January 4 left Chicago three hours late, a delay that ballooned to more than 10 hours through the Carolinas.

Other tardy departures over the last week included:

- The *California Zephyr*, 2 hours late from Chicago, Jan. 5
- The *Cardinal*, 1:23 late from Chicago on Jan. 7 and Jan. 11
- *Acela* Nos. 2108 and 2162 each almost an hour late out of Washington D.C. Jan. 9.
- The *Silver Meteor* 2:55 late from New York on Jan. 11.

Of course, running a nationwide passenger rail network has numerous challenges exacerbated by weather extremes. The fact the majority of Amtrak trains depart their terminals on time is a credit to the employees that make that happen, but it’s up to the company to furnish necessary personnel and workplace resources to keep service dependable enough to generate repeat business.

House Legislation Seeks Amtrak Food Improvements

By David Lassen | January 12, 2025

Bills from Tennessee Congressman require reports on recommendations by food panel, dining-

WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.) has introduced legislation aimed at improving dining on Amtrak trains.

H.R. 265, the Train Furtherance of Outstanding Onboard Dining act (Train FOOD Act) would require the company to report annual on progress toward implementing recommendations from the Food and Beverage Working Group created under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. That group includes representatives from Amtrak, state partners, onboard workers, and passenger advocates. The bill would require Amtrak to justify decisions not to implement the group’s recommendations, including a cost estimate if appropriate. It would also require a Government Accountability Office report on implementation.

H.R. 264, the Train Establishment of Appetizing Table Service Act (Train EATS Act) would require that coach passengers be able to access traditional dining on long-distance trains on a space-available basis; an affordable food option, currently filled by the café/lounge car; and allow passengers to pre-order meals that meet their dietary requirements, as well as healthy meal options based on USDA guidelines.



The dining car on Amtrak’s Silver Star on Sept. 26, 2023. New legislation seeks to ensure dining-car access for coach passengers, as well as requiring Amtrak to report on recommendations from its Food & Beverage Working Group. Bob Johnston

“Many of us recall the civility and elegance of a meal in a train dining car,” Cohen said in [a press release](#). “For too long, those days have been a thing of the past. But attracting passengers back to passenger train travel requires more than on-time service and a sandwich in a plastic carton. My Train FOOD and Train EATS bills will restore the service the public once expected and still deserves.” Both bills were introduced and referred to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on Jan. 9, 2025. Text for the bills has not yet been recorded to the Congress website.

--- Preservation, Museum, Steam and Historical News ---

Reading & Northern Marks Record Excursion Ridership in 2024, Prepares for 2025 Schedule

By [Trains Staff](#) | January 8, 2025

Tickets for all-day excursions on sale Jan. 13; early-season Lehigh Gorge Scenic tickets now available



Reading & Northern No. 2102 is displayed at Jim Thorpe, Pa. The locomotive will again be part of the railroad's excursion schedule in 2025. Reading & Northern

PORT CLINTON, PA. — Almost 340,000 riders took part in Reading & Northern excursions in 2024, surpassing the previous mark of more than 322,000 in 2023 by 5%, the railroad has announced.

The year included the opening of the new Nesquehoning Regional Railroad Station on the railroad's Nesquehoning campus, which includes the railroad's new shops and other facilities. An Aug. 17 Iron Horse Ramble excursion with T-1 4-8-4 No. 2102 served as the grand opening for that facility. It was one of six Iron Horse Rambles during the year. Four such trips are scheduled this year, including the previously announced first-ever winter Ramble trip on Feb. 8 [see ["First winter trip highlights Reading & Northern ..."](#), *Trains News Wire*, Dec. 28, 2024].

The 2025 schedule for other all-day excursions will include themed trips from Reading and Pittston to Jim Thorpe, Pa., in February, with the regular excursion season beginning March 15. Tickets for the regular-season trips are set to go on sale Jan. 13 at 9 a.m. on [the railroad's passenger website](#) or by phone at 610-562-2102.

The railroad's Lehigh Gorge Scenic Railway, based in Jim Thorpe, Pa., accounted for the largest percentage of passenger ridership in 2024. That operation will operate on weekends in January and February, then begin daily season on March 15, 2025, a month earlier than in the past, reflecting more favorable weather in recent years and increased ticket demand. Tickets for trips through March 30 are now available at the railroad's passenger website.

— Updated at 8:05 p.m. CT to correct number of Iron Horse Rambles in 2024.

Western Maryland Scenic No. 1309 Nears Reassembly

By [Chase Gunnoe](#) | January 22, 2025

Maintenance work is preparing 2-6-6-2 for long-term operation



Western Maryland Scenic No. 1309 steams around Helmstetter's Curve on Feb. 26, 2022. The locomotive is nearing reassembly after extensive maintenance work. Jim Wrinn

CUMBERLAND, Md. — Chesapeake & Ohio 2-6-6-2 No. 1309 is poised for reassembly after spending the 2024 season sidelined for planned maintenance work, Western Maryland Scenic Railroad officials say. The Mallet has undergone a laundry list of in-house projects and subcontracted work aimed at positioning the locomotive for long-term operation. The tourist railroad tapped D&G Machine Products of Maine to manage the locomotive's piston work, while in-house at the railroad's Ridgeley, W.Va., shops, officials are adjusting the locomotive's running gear, boring the cylinders, and installing a new brick arch in the firebox.

"We are on the home stretch with the cylinder project," says shop foreman Dan Ferden. "The cylinders are bored out. We are just waiting for the last few parts and pieces to come back from Maine, and the new piston rings to arrive from New York. We have changed out several stay bolts in the boiler this year as well and we did an entirely new brick arch in the firebox."

Ferden says they've taken apart the crosshead guides on the rear locomotive, performed re-shimming and re-tramming work, and now they are moving toward a pre-assembly phase.

"There's been a tremendous amount of problem-solving and custom one-off, two-off parts, pieces and tools that have had to be made to get [No. 1309] to the point where it is now," says Ferden.

No. 1309's maintenance work has been on the railroad's periphery since it first entered revenue service in December 2021. Officials knew that the 2-6-6-2 would require further restorative efforts to sustain long-term reliable operation beyond the 2022-2023 seasons, but the timing was moved forward based on operations in December 2023 [see ["Western Maryland Scenic begins fundraising ..."](#), *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 9, 2024]. Work on the 2-6-6-2, which accompanied other maintenance projects involving the railroad's growing diesel locomotive and passenger fleet, has made notable progress since last summer.

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Ferden says once the locomotive is put back together, the railroad will perform easy break-in test runs, possibly as soon as this spring, but a firm date on when the locomotive will return to service was not disclosed. He also alluded to progress on former Lake Superior & Ishpeming 2-8-0 No. 34, more recently known as Western Maryland No. 734. The locomotive is in line for a full rebuild from the railhead to the smoke stack and Ferden says the railroad is beginning to look over the locomotive inside the shop, prefacing that its return to steam is still years away. Ferden likens the maintenance and rehabilitation work to the moving mountains metaphor, noting that these types of preservation projects are complex and require a great deal of teamwork. "Our trains move mountains," he says.

Nickel Plate No. 765 Set for Return to Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad

By Trains Staff | January 14, 2025

Tickets on sale in February for excursions in April, May; details to be announced



PENINSULA, Ohio — Nickel Plate Road 2-8-4 No. 765 will return to the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad for six days in April and May as part of the "Steam in the Valley" series of excursions, [the heritage railway has announced](#).

The Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society's 1944 Lima locomotive is set for excursions on April 25, 26, 27 and May 2, 3, 4. Complete details are still to come. Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad members will get early access to tickets on Feb. 3 at 9 a.m.; tickets will go on sale to the public on Feb. 5 at 9 a.m. Those interested in becoming members [can do so here](#). For more information as it becomes available, watch [the railroad's website](#).

Nickel Plate Road 2-8-4 No. 765 serves as the backdrop to the Veterans Memorial Monument's rededication ceremony in South Milford, Ind., on Aug. 19, 2023. The locomotive will return to Ohio's Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad for excursions in April and May. Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society

B&O Museum Begins Cosmetic Restoration of American Freedom Train Locomotive (updated)

By Trains Staff | January 23, 2025

Work on Reading 4-8-4 expected to be completed this year



The B&O Railroad Museum is beginning work on restoration of American Freedom Train No. 1, the former Reading 4-8-4. B&O Railroad Museum



The crew poses with No. 2101 in its American Freedom Train No. 1 paint scheme. Trains.com image archive

BALTIMORE — The B&O Railroad Museum is beginning its full cosmetic restoration of American Freedom Train No. 1, the former Reading Co. 4-8-4 that pulled the train celebrating America's Bicentennial, and expects to complete the work this year, in time to mark the nation's 250th birthday in 2026.

The museum had first announced plans for the restoration last fall when it moved the locomotive from its long-time display location in the museum's front parking lot to the facility's restoration shop [see ["B&O Railroad Museum schedules move ...," Trains News Wire, Oct. 19, 2024](#)].

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One of three steam locomotives that powered the Freedom Train on its tour of the nation in 1975 and 1976, No. 1 — originally Reading No. 2101 — is the only one of the engines that remains in its Freedom Train paint scheme. Damage in a 1979 roundhouse fire in Silver Grove, Ky., ended its operational career.

“The AFT No. 1 is a symbol of patriotism and unity and captured the hearts and minds of millions of Americans during its nationwide tour,” Kris Hoellen, the museum’s executive director, said in a press release. “We are proud to bring this icon of American history back to its former glory and to contribute to the [America 250 celebration](#).”

The restoration is supported by a Federal Save America’s Treasures grant, administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The locomotive was built by Baldwin in 1923 as a 2-8-0, but rebuilt to a Class T-1 4-8-4 in 1945 in Reading’s shops, in collaboration with engineers from Baldwin and General Steel Casings Corp. Sold for scrap in 1967, No. 2101 and sister locomotive 2100 sat in a scrapyard until they were purchased by Ross Rowland in 1975, with No. 2101 restored for the Freedom Train service it shared with Southern Pacific 4-8-4 No. 4449 and Texas & Pacific 2-10-4 No. 610.

The Freedom Train’s 21-month from April 1, 1975 to Dec. 31, 1976 included display stops in 138 cities in the 48 contiguous states, carrying historic artifacts ranging from George Washington’s copy of the Constitution to a NASA lunar rover. No. 2100 also survives and is currently being restored for operation as Freedom Train No. 250 by the [American Steam Railroad Preservation Association](#) in Cleveland.

— Updated Jan. 23 at 8:15 a.m. with correct information on the other American Freedom Train locomotives.

Naugatuck Railroad Acquires Former Santa Fe Hi-Level Cars

By Trains Staff | January 24, 2025

Two lounges, one coach will be used to expand first-class options on Connecticut excursions



The Hi-Level cars in Owosso, Mich. They will arrive at the Naugatuck Railroad and enter service later this year. Naugatuck Railroad



The Naugatuck Railroad has acquired three Hi-Level passenger cars, two of them former Pacific Parlour Car lounges. Naugatuck Railroad

THOMASTON, Conn. — The Naugatuck Railroad has purchased three former Santa Fe Hi-Level railcars for its excursion operations, the short line has announced.

The cars, two lounges and one coach, were acquired from the [Steam Railroading Institute](#) of Owosso, Mich., operator of Pere Marquette 2-8-4 No. 1225. The Institute acquired the cars in 2019 and restored them for excursion service, including glass replacement and new lighting.

“These cars are unique and will be the first of their kind operating in New England,” Orion Newall-Vuillemot, Naugatuck Railroad manager of passenger operations. “We’re committed to providing the best possible service for our passengers, and these new cars will be a tremendous upgrade for our excursion offerings. We’re grateful to the Steam Railroading Institute for the work they’ve done to maintain and preserve these cars, and for the opportunity to offer enjoyable new experiences for our visitors.”

The Naugatuck plans to use the three cars to expand first-class seating options on excursions on the 19.6-mile railroad, including possible dinner-train service. They will arrive in Thomaston and enter service later this year.

“The Naugatuck Railroad will be great custodians of these three historic cars and will be able to provide the resources to better display and operate them for the public to enjoy,” said Aaron Farmer, master mechanic, rolling stock of the Steam Railroading Institute. “The funds garnered from this auction will allow us to reinvest in our own fleet by improving our current cars.” The cars were built by the Budd Co. for Santa Fe’s *El Capitan*, with the lounges entering service in 1954 and the coach built in 1964. They were subsequently acquired by Amtrak, with the coach eventually turned into crew accommodations and retired in the 1990s, while the lounges were among the five refurbished for service as Pacific Parlour Cars on the *Coast Starlight* until their retirement in 2018.

Naugatuck excursions benefit the Railroad Museum of New England, a non-profit educational and historic organization devoted to telling the story of the region’s railroad heritage. Visit [the museum website](#) for more information

Kentucky Steam to Auction Off Nickel Plate 2-8-2

By Trains Staff | January 23, 2025

Sale of locomotive will address unpaid storage fees



Kentucky Steam Heritage Corp. is auctioning off Nickel Plate Road 2-8-2 No. 587, shown during its excursion career for the Indiana Transportation Museum. Kentucky Steam Heritage Corp.

IRVINE, Ky. — A former Nickel Plate Road steam locomotive is going to the auction block to settle a legal judgment.

The Kentucky Steam Heritage Corp. said today (Jan. 23) in a public notice that NKP No. 587, a Class H-60 2-8-2 built by Baldwin in 1918, will be the subject of a sealed-bid auction as part of a judgment against the owner for unpaid storage fees. The winner will be notified on March 3.

Bids must be accompanied by a check or letter of credit for \$5,000; checks will be returned to unsuccessful bidders. The winning bidder must remove the locomotive from Kentucky Steam's Irvine facility within 60 days; if the locomotive is not removed, the bidder will be charged \$100 a day for storage and could have the sale cancelled. A host of other legal disclaimers and conditions are available [in the public notice](#).

The locomotive has been at Kentucky Steam since 2018, when it was relocated — in partially dismantled condition — from the former Indiana Transportation Museum property in the Indianapolis suburb of Noblesville. In 2021, Kentucky Steam said [in a press release](#) that the locomotive had been sold to an individual who planned to continue the restoration efforts that were envisioned when the locomotive was moved to Kentucky.

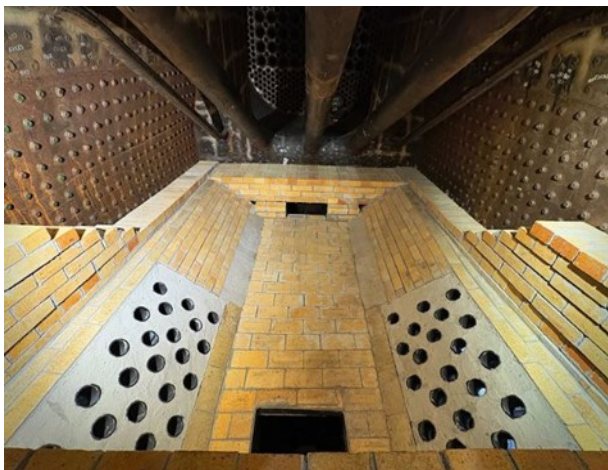
Those plans fell apart as a result of financial issues for the Indiana organization. At that time, Kentucky Steam said it was working with the new owner to develop a mechanical plan for the engine.

No. 587 was retired by the Nickel Plate in 1955 and placed on display in Broad Ripple Park in Indianapolis, where it remained until it was leased by the Indiana Transportation Museum in 1983. It was restored to operating condition and ran in excursion service from 1988 to 2003, when it became due for its Federal Railroad Administration 1,472-day inspection. The locomotive earned a place on the National Register of Historic places in 1984 but was delisted in 2021.

American Steam Preservation Group Aims for Test Firing of Reading No. 2100 Within 60 Days

By Trains Staff | January 18, 2025

Installation of firebrick, numerous smaller projects continue in restoration of 4-8-4



Firebrick has now been installed in the firebox of Reading No. 2100. American Steam Railroad Preservation Association

CLEVELAND — The American Steam Railroad Preservation Association is aiming for an initial test firing of Reading Co. 4-8-4 No. 2100 within 60 days, as it continues a number of smaller projects after completing installation of firebox firebrick.

The engine is being restored to operate as American Freedom Train No. 250. Forrest Nace, the organization's treasurer and a member of its restoration crew, says volunteers worked in shifts with professional bricklayers on weekdays during the holiday period to ensure the firebrick was installed by the end of the year. That allowed contractors to move forward with cab and burner pipework and bracket fabrication when they returned to work in early January.

While the locomotive had previously been set up to burn oil, the components have been reengineered to place the burner at the front of the firebox, below the throat sheet, as opposed to at the rear where the firebox door opening is located. "This necessitated an all new valve/pipe location and bracket setup to be engineered and fabricated," Nace says. "The stoker motor was also removed from under the cab and placed into storage to allow more room for inspections and maintenance of the oil-burning components now installed."

Among other projects in progress are installing new boiler bracket studs, making new steam dome and feedwater heater gaskets, and fabricating a new firebox door frame and door with peephole.

The organization is seeking donations, memberships, and merchandise sales to raise the \$145,000 needed for the project. "If we sell just 760 more of our AFT 250 memberships," Nace says, "we will have the funds on hand to complete the restoration this year, and cover the costs of performing the break-in running we will need to do."

The online store and a tax-deductible donation page can be found at [the organization's website](#). Donation checks can also be mailed to: American Steam Railroad Preservation Association, 2800 W. 3rd St, Cleveland, OH 44113.

Delaware & Hudson Historical Society Gains Non-profit Status, Acquires RS3

By Trains Staff | January 17, 2025

Group focuses on online operations; plans locomotive restoration at Saratoga, Corinth & Hudson



CORINTH, N.Y. — The Delaware & Hudson Railway Historical Society, newly formed as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the state of New York, has announced it has acquired for preservation former D&H Alco RS3 locomotive No. 4085.

The group acquired the locomotive —currently located at the Erie Turntable in Port Jervis, N.Y. — on Nov. 12, 2024. Built in September 1952, the 1,600-hp unit spent 28 years on the D&H before moving onto the Ontario Eastern Railroad, Genesee Valley Transportation, and New York & Greenwood Lake Railway. Stored in Port Jervis for 14 years, it was acquired by the City of Port Jervis in 2023 before its purchase by the historical society. The locomotive is scheduled for restoration, including its return to full D&H paint, at the Saratoga, Corinth & Hudson Railway, the heritage operation that operates a portion of the former

The Delaware & Hudson Railway Historical Society has acquired former D&H RS3 No. 4085. Rudy Garbely

The society will operate almost exclusively online, with membership options as low as \$1 per month via Patreon. It produces the digital Champlain Shield newsletter, hosts virtual events featuring interviews with D&H veterans and historians, and partners with other preservation organizations to maximize impact while maintaining low overhead costs. The organization has a large interactive online archive of D&H documents, drawings, maps, and photographs, available to new members immediately upon joining. “This Society is about more than just preserving artifacts,” D&HRHS President Brad Peterson said in a press release. “It’s about keeping the spirit of the Delaware & Hudson Railway alive for future generations, using 21st century tools to connect enthusiasts worldwide.”

Those interested in more information about the historical society, the preservation of RS3 No. 4085, becoming a member can visit [the society’s website](#).

PRR K4s 1361 Restoration Moves Past Halfway Point

By Dan Cupper | January 17, 2025

Drivers inspected, approved by Strasburg Rail Road Mechanical Services



In a view inside the Harry Bennett Memorial Roundhouse at the Railroaders Memorial Museum in Altoona, Pa., the six 80-inch-diameter driving wheels from Pennsylvania Railroad Class K4s 4-6-2 steam engine No. 1361 await shipment to Strasburg Rail Road Mechanical Services on April 4, 2024. The drivers have been found to be sound and within federal specifications. Dan Cupper



The firebox and boiler of PRR Class K4s 4-6-2 engine No. 1361 under restoration at Altoona, Pa., with the tender in the foreground. Fund-raising has tipped past the halfway point for the \$2.4 million project. Dan Cupper

ALTOONA, Pa. – With the inspection, cleaning and conditioning of the drivers of former Pennsylvania Railroad Class K4s 4-6-2 steam engine No. 1361 by Strasburg Rail Road’s mechanical department, the locomotive’s \$2.4 million restoration has moved symbolically past the halfway point, according to the engine’s owner, the [Railroaders Memorial Museum](#). The six 80-inch drivers made the 170-mile trip from Altoona to Strasburg, Pa., in December, according to Joseph DeFrancesco, museum executive director. Strasburg’s crew, he said, found that previous work on them was within both general mechanical specs and compliant with Federal Railroad Administration tolerances.

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They are expected to return to Altoona in February or March, at which time they'll be cocooned until the frame, boiler, firebox, and cab are ready for reassembly.

"They had sat for some 20 years," noted DeFrancesco, adding that Strasburg's inspection means that no turning or reprofiling will be needed. "They're good the way they are."

Brendan Zeigler, Strasburg's vice president and chief mechanical officer, said the **company** is proud to play a role in the work. "This project means a lot to many people and it's an honor assisting with its restoration," he said.

DeFrancesco noted that phasing the work was an important consideration. Hiring Strasburg to do the work now was crucial, he said, because within a few months, the shop will be occupied with a combination of the short line's own work and the restoration of Chesapeake & Ohio 4-8-4 engine No. 614 [see "**New group buys C&O 4-8-4 ...**," *Trains News Wire*, Nov. 8, 2024]. No. 1361, built in Altoona's PRR Juniata Shops in 1918, was retired in 1957 and placed on display in the trackside park at the nearby railroad landmark Horseshoe Curve. In 1985, Conrail moved it to the same shops for restoration, and it ran briefly in excursion service in 1987-88. After a series of management and mechanical issues sidelined the engine, several efforts to restart the work — including a stint at Steamtown National Historic Park's shop — went nowhere. The engine sat in pieces until 2021, when a reconstituted museum board, with industry leaders Wick Moorman and Bennett Levin in charge, announced a revival of the restoration [see "**PRR K4s engine No. 1361 to be restored ...**," *News Wire*, June 25, 2021].

Since then, **FMW Solutions**, widely known in the steam-locomotive restoration field, has served as prime contractor for the work, with the museum supplying skilled volunteers, many of them with training as employees at Norfolk Southern's Juniata Locomotive Shop in Altoona.

\$900,000 needed Between funds already raised and pledged over the next three years, DeFrancesco said the project has amassed \$1.5 million, with about \$900,000 still needed to put the engine under steam. For 2025, the museum hopes to raise \$500,000. Welding and riveting is done on No. 1361's outer firebox sheets, with fitting and drilling of the inner sheets scheduled next, DeFrancesco said, followed by installation of about 2,000 staybolts.

Once the firebox is completed and reattached to the boiler, the superstructure can be mated with the frame and running gear. The pace of work — and thus the museum's ability to forecast a completion date — depends on the speed of contributions, DeFrancesco said. "We're looking at the next \$300,000 for boiler work," he said. That will mean driving of the staybolts. The challenge, he said, is to "keep production at a rate to match donations."

"This is an exciting phase of the project because the goal line is within sight," he said. "We're past the 50-yard line in support. It can be done, it's attainable. We welcome folks who have watched the project and haven't [yet] donated, to support it. It's an American icon coming back to life, one piece at a time."

Retired NS execs helping

Donald D. Graab, retired NS vice president-mechanical at the railroad's Atlanta headquarters who now sits on the museum board and co-chairs the K4s restoration committee, told *News Wire*, "I think the firebox has always been a big hurdle to clear. Putting it back together is complex, and then we'll be moving on to other complex things, like the running gear. As the day approaches when we're putting in the flues, things could come together pretty nicely." The dozens upon dozens of already-purchased flues and superheater tubes are already on hand, in storage at the museum.

"The addition of Strasburg Mechanical Services is a very positive development," Graab said. "Bringing these resources together is more collaborative than otherwise possible." He noted that "The tender is done, from trucks to body work, stoker; it's even painted. I don't foresee the cab as being a big hurdle." One task lying ahead, he said, is "converting to [modern] 26L air brake [system]. Our lead volunteer, Mike Reindl, is a machinist who's acquainted with these things."

Other work includes frame, shoe, and wedge machining; spring rigging repair; trailing-truck equalization; and steam chest repairs. DeFrancesco added that the cab is currently at Curry Rail Services in nearby Hollidaysburg for reconditioning, work he said is being sponsored by another board member, Curry President Mark Ritchey.

Graab voiced the question everyone asks: "One unanswered question is, what's the prospects of running it on a Class 1? Are we going to find a way to install positive train control? That's more of a bridge that we cross when we get there, and we'd welcome that. There's chatter in the industry about ideally setting up a collaborative effort" to bring PTC technology within the financial reach of steam operators by spreading the costs among multiple engines.

In a related development to the fundraising announcement, the museum has named Ernie McClellan, retired general superintendent of the Juniata Locomotive Shop, as a part-time consultant to oversee the project. In his NS role, McClellan once reported to Graab.

"Ernie's a wealth of knowledge," said Graab. "Like me, he wasn't really a steam guy, but is a welding guy [and] that's important in the world of fireboxes and boilers. He's widely respected in Norfolk Southern."

DeFrancesco added that the appointment also means "a morale boost [for the] volunteers. These were his workers at the shops."

Donations for the 1361's restoration can be made at railroadcity.org/k4restoration.

Business Car Group Seeks to Save Former N&W Sleeping Car

By Trains Staff | December 10, 2024

Fundraising in progress to preserve, restore 12-4 sleeper 'Hollins College'



Sleeping car Hollins College during its days as part of the Norfolk & Western business train. N&W Business Car 300 Preservation Society

The car today, in storage on the Morristown & Erie. N&W Business Car 300 Preservation Society

CHESTERTON, Ind. — The group that has preserved a former Norfolk & Western business car is now seeking to save and restore the former N&W sleeping car *Hollins College*.

The N&W Business Car 300 Preservation Society says it is working with Norfolk Southern, the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum, and the Morristown & Erie Railway to preserve the car, the last surviving intact N&W 12-roomette, 4-double-bedroom sleeper. It was built by American Car & Foundry in 1950 for the Wabash as the *Western Sunset* and became part of the N&W fleet in 1964. It was assigned to business train service and renamed *Hollins College* in 1972, was sold by Norfolk Southern to Royal Rail in 1987 and sold again to Morristown & Erie in the early 2000s. It has suffered significant vandalism while stored at the M&E.

Society President Bryan Lalevee said in [a press release](#) that along with being the last car of its kind, “the fact that it was used in business train service with our Business Car 300 makes this rescue mission a perfect fit for our organization.”

The organization estimates it will take three to five years and \$250,000 to restore the car to operation; the Hoosier Valley museum has agreed to serve as the home base for the restoration project, and NS has donated \$10,000 toward the initial fundraising goal of \$47,000 to purchase and move the car.

“We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Norfolk Southern for this generous gift,” Lalevee said, “and for partnering with us as we set our sights on saving this unique piece of N&W history.”

More on the N&W Business Car 300 Preservation Society is available [at its website](#); for more information on Hollis College effort, or to donate, [visit this page](#).

Pullman Foundation Acquires First Railcar for Display at National Historical Park

By Trains Staff | December 14, 2024

Organization secures agreement for donation of 1899 parlor car



The Historic Pullman Foundation has secured an agreement for this parlor car from 1899 to be donated for display at the Pullman National Historical Site. Historic Pullman Foundation

CHICAGO — The Pullman National Historical Park and State Historic Site has secured its first Pullman railcar for display at the site of the factory that produced rolling stock for decades.

The Historic Pullman Foundation announced in November that it has completed a Letter of Intent to Donate with owner David Hoffman for a wooden parlor car built by Pullman in 1899 and placed in service on Rock Island in 1900.

Ownership of Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Parlor Car No. 699 will be transferred, and the car will be relocated to the north wing of the Pullman factory, once funding has been secured for environmental remediation at the site.

“We owe a debt of gratitude to Dave Hoffman for the generous offer of this rare gem,” Joseph C. Szabo, Pullman foundation board member and former head of the Federal Railroad Administration, said in [a press release](#). “While the interior will need a full restoration, the frame and body are in remarkable shape for a railcar that is 125 years old.”

Szabo is leading an effort to bring Pullman cars to the site for interpretive displays; Norfolk Southern made a \$250,000 donation to support that effort when it was announced last year [see [“Norfolk Southern funding will help bring railcars ...,”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Sept. 1, 2023]. “While we still have much work to do, securing the rights to this car is a key milestone in our efforts,” Szabo said.

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Hoffman said Pullman is “the perfect home for the CRI&P No. 699. I’m thrilled to know it’ll be preserved and appreciated as part of the Pullman story and its contributions to American history.”

The Pullman site was designed as a National Monument by President Barack Obama in 2015 and designated a National Park by Congress in 2022. More information on the National Historic Park [is here](#) and on the State Historic Site [is here](#). For more information on the Historic Pullman Foundation, the park’s support group, [visit its website](#).

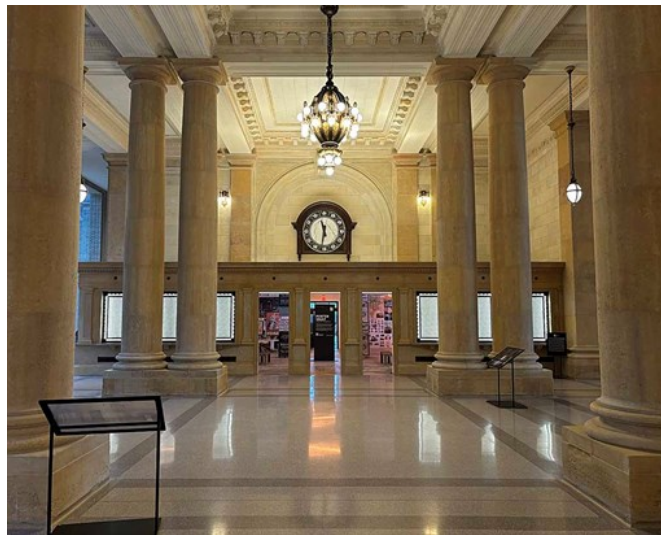
Preservation in 2024: Locomotive Projects — Steam and Diesel — Predominate

By Bob Lettenberger | December 19, 2024

Number of diesel projects continues to increase



NYC 4-8-2 No. 3001 at the National New York Central Railroad Museum, Elkhart, Ind., on April 28, 2017. A plan to restore the locomotive to operation was one of the year’s top preservation stories. Dan Cupper



Marble-faced clock in the ticket lobby was painstakingly replicated by Michigan Central Station artisans. The restored building opened in June. Kevin P. Keefe

Our [2023 rail preservation review](#) illustrated a focus on new and renovated museum facilities. In 2024, focus shifted to activities involving locomotives and rolling stock. Of the 79 preservation stories on *Trains News Wire* this year, 47 relate to locomotives or railcars. Still, buildings did play a role in preservation this year; one of the biggest stories involves a big historic building. The year’s highlights include:

Steam

New York Central No. 3001 — Yes, Union Pacific’s Big Boy completed two tours in 2024 and the CPKC Final Spike Steam Tour with 4-6-4 No. 2816 presented a lineside fascination, however, an Oct. 9, announcement in Elkhart, Ind., may be the next big steam focus. The Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society, owner-operator of Nickel Plate 2-8-4 No. 765, with the City of Elkhart and its National New York Central Railroad Museum announced plans for an operational restoration of NYC 4-8-2 Mohawk No. 3001, with an estimated cost of approximately \$4.3 million. Additionally the society-city-museum collaboration will develop a long-term strategic plan to revitalize the museum, located in downtown Elkhart.

Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge drops coal — The coal-fired era on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge concluded on March 23, 2024. An excursion from Durango to Cascade, Colo., with Baldwin K36 2-8-2 No. 481 was the final coal-powered trip. Facing forest fire concerns and a shift in operational practices, the D&SNG has been converting its steam locomotives to oil and using more diesel power along the historic Denver & Rio Grande route through the San Juan Mountains. The D&RG completed the line to Silverton in July 1882. Since that time, despite some diesel use by the D&SNG, power has mainly been coal-fired steam. Currently, however, obtaining coal has become problematic. Economically, the shift to oil-firing will be beneficial due to reduced maintenance costs.

Pennsylvania T1 No. 5550 nears 50% completion — In 2024, the T1 Trust, the group building a new Pennsylvania Railroad 4-4-4 T1, began fabricating the locomotive frame. Completion of the frame will move the project past the halfway point. The Trust also reports that seven of eight driving wheel centers have been cast. The Trust has raised \$2.4 million of the estimated \$6 million needed to build the locomotive, says Jason Johnson, Trust general manager. The next pieces to be worked on include: the cylinders, firebox sheets, the combustion chamber, and driving 3,000 staybolts.

Diesel

The year’s highlights include: **Flying Yankee sold** — Built for the Boston & Maine by the Budd Co., in 1935, the shovel-nosed, articulated passenger train is nearly identical to the Burlington’s *Pioneer Zephyr*. Owned by the State of New Hampshire and stored in Lincoln, N.H., since 2005, the state moved to sell the train in hopes of preservation and restoration. On July 24, 2024, Gov. Christopher Sununu announced the non-profit *Flying Yankee* Association as the train’s new owner. The Association plans to move the train to Conway, N.H., where it will construct a facility to house it and work on an operational restoration.

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Mid-Continent EMC Doodlebug restoration begins — Montana Western No. 31, built by Electro-Motive Corp. in 1925 for the Great Northern Railway, was the 13th motorcar built by the company. It is the oldest surviving EMC rolling stock and is part of the Mid-Continent Railway Museum collection in North Freedom, Wis. In 2024, the Museum began restoration with sights set on having it operational for its 2025 centennial. Work began by removing the Winton in-line six-cylinder engine-generator and sending it to FMW Solutions for overhaul. The project is expected to cost around \$300,000.

Buildings

Michigan Central Station reopens — Its massive 18-story facade is a Detroit skyline feature. Until June 6, 2024, the Michigan Central Station was also an urban ruin exhibiting acres of broken glass, a gallery of graffiti, and crumbling walls. In 2018, Ford Motor Co. purchased it for a reported \$90 million and began a lengthy restoration. On the evening of June 6, 15,000 music fans gathered in front of the building for a grand opening concert by hometown performers. Tens of thousands more toured the building over the next 10 days. Ford plans to use the facility as an innovation center.

Sioux City Railroad Museum flooded — It was a museum nightmare: up to 10 feet of muddy river water raging through historic buildings. This was the situation on the night of June 23-24, 2024 at the Sioux City (Iowa) Railroad Museum. The Big Sioux River crested on June 24, at 45 feet — 14 feet over flood stage and 8 feet higher than predicted — inundating the museum, which is housed in the former Milwaukee Road Sioux City Engine Terminal and Car Repair Shops. While the museum remains closed, special events have been staged during the cleanup. On July 5, only 11 days after the flood, the museum announced it would be working with the American Heartland Railroad Society to operationally restore Great Northern 4-6-2 No. 1355, part of the museum's collection.

Union Pacific Green River Station facing costly preservation — An iconic location along the Union Pacific, the Green River, Wyo., passenger station is in need of major restoration. The 20,000-square-foot station was built in 1910. The UP donated the building to the city in 2018, but still owns the land it sits on. It is estimated that restoration for public use could run up to \$20 million, with \$3 million needed immediately to stabilize the building.

Finally, after more than six decades of steam operation the Milwaukee County Zoo announced it was dropping its fires permanently in 2024. The 1.25-mile, 15-inch gauge railroad carries more than 400,000 passengers around the zoo annually. Since it began in 1956, steam power has ruled. In 1992, two diesel locomotives were added. The current steam engines — a 4-4-2 and a 4-6-2 — were sold to the Riverside & Great Northern Preservation Society, a non-profit Wisconsin Dells (Wis.) tourist railroad. The Zoo railroad will continue to operate, but with new Tier-4 compliant diesels, slated to be on line in 2025. Zoo officials cited emission concerns and sustainability policies as the reason for discontinuing steam.

Previous News Wire coverage:

[Mid-Continent museum launches restoration of oldest surviving Electro-Motive motor car](#), Dec. 14, 2024

[Western Maryland Scenic to expand through lease of short line](#), Jan. 15, 2024

[Minnesota museum restoring rare Fairbanks-Morse switcher](#), Jan. 18, 2024

[White Mountain Central returns Climax locomotive to operation](#), Jan. 22, 2024

[Restored Fairbanks Morse switcher debuts in Southern California](#), Jan. 24, 2024

[Milwaukee County Zoo railroad replacing steam engines](#), March 14, 2024

[News photos: Final coal-fired train at Durango & Silverton](#), March 25, 2024

[Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad to restore two locomotives to operation](#), April 10, 2024

[T1 Trust shows frame and drivers; K4s 1361 tender painted](#), May 13, 2024

[Michigan Central Station opens its doors](#), June 7, 2024

[Iowa railroad museum shut down by flood damage](#), June 24, 2024

[Sioux City museum announces joint effort to return Great Northern 4-6-2 to operation](#), July 5, 2024

[‘Flying Yankee’ changes hands, will be moved to Conway Scenic Railroad](#), July 24, 2024

[Genesee Valley Transportation sells two Alcos to heritage railway](#), Aug. 2, 2024

[Whitewater Valley Railroad debuts restored Lima switcher](#), Aug. 7, 2024

[Big Boy’s ‘Westward Bound’ recap](#), Aug. 28, 2024

[American Heritage Railways purchases Branson Scenic Railway](#), Aug. 31, 2024

[Heartland of America: The Big Boy cometh](#), Sept. 12, 2024

[G&W’s Ohio Central donates diesel to Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum](#), Oct. 8, 2024

[New York Central Mohawk No. 3001 joins Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society fleet for potential return to steam](#), Oct. 9, 2024

[RRHMA debuts repainted Santa Fe GE locomotive](#), Oct. 20, 2024

[One-of-a-kind Climax locomotive donated to Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad](#), Oct. 24, 2024

[VIA Historical Association unveils restored FP9A](#), Nov. 1, 2024

[New group buys C&O 4-8-4 No. 614, eyes full restoration](#), Nov. 8, 2024

[Landmark Green River, Wyo., station faces costly preservation effort](#), Dec. 2, 2024

[New preservation group buys Amtrak AEM7 No. 927](#), Dec. 4, 2024

UP water Tank on Sherman Hill Torn Down

[By David Lassen](#) | December 19, 2024

Tank at Harriman, Wyo., removed this week

HARRIMAN, Wyo. — Union Pacific has demolished an at least 70-year-old water tower on its Harriman Cutoff line over Sherman Hill, the news site [Cowboy State Daily reports](#), to the dismay of locals who say they would have mounted a preservation effort if given the opportunity

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Union Pacific distributed power unit AC4400CW No. 6631, on Columbus, Neb.-Famoso, Calif. grain train GS C4FO-06, passes the water tank at Harriman, Wyo., on Dec. 7, 2024. The steam-era landmark was torn down this week. Chip Sherman

On Wednesday, Dec. 17, UP spokesman Mike Jaixen told the news site the railroad was “in the process of demolishing an obsolete water tower from near Harriman, Wyo., this week.” The railroad did not offer additional comment.

Harriman resident Michael Geary told Cowboy State Daily that residents of the unincorporated community of about 135 people are “sad and angry” about the demolition: “It’s been a landmark forever, and many people have ventured here to see it. It’s very dismay-

Harriman, at 7,388 feet on the Harriman Cutoff line built in 1953, is located just north of the Colorado state line and about 8 miles south of Interstate 8. The 50-foot-tall steam-era remnant could hold about 300,000 gallons of water.



--- More AMTRAK News---

Amtrak Cancels 11 Northeast Corridor Trains

By Trains Staff | January 24, 2025

Latest cancellations for equipment issues or unavailability come after three days with four or more trains scrubbed



WASHINGTON — While Amtrak’s string of weather-related cancellations in the Midwest is officially over, the company continues to deal with a pattern of equipment issues on the Northeast Corridor.

Six Acela trains have been cancelled to begin today (Jan. 24, 2025) because of “equipment unavailability,” while a seventh has been scrubbed because of mechanical issues. Four Northeast Regional trains have also been cancelled because of equipment unavailability, according to posts on the [Amtrak NEC Alerts](#) feed on X.com.

The cancellations announced as of 6:50 a.m. ET include New York-Washington Acelas Nos. 2103, a 5:30 a.m. departure, 2107, a 6:30 a.m. departure, and 2121, a 2:15 p.m. train; Boston-Washington train 2155 (7:15 a.m.); Washington-New York trains 2108 (10:30 a.m.) and 2122 (5:30 p.m.); and 2172, a 4 p.m. Washington-Boston train. Northeast Regional cancellations are Nos. 111 (New York-Washington, 4:50 a.m.), 119 (New York-Washington, 11:13 a.m.), 130 (Washington-New York, 6:30 a.m.), and 182 (Washington-New York, 9:35 a.m.).

Today’s cancellations follow four on Thursday, Jan. 23, for “equipment issues” or “equipment unavailability,” and six on Wednesday Jan. 22, for the same reasons. Another five were cancelled for the same reasons on Tuesday, Jan. 21, in addition to one cancelled between Newark, N.J., and New York because of “ongoing delays resulting from mechanical issues.”

STB Says Sunset Limited On-time Performance Probe is Running on Schedule

By Bill Stephens | January 13, 2025

The agency expects to issue a decision in the case by early summer



WASHINGTON — The Surface Transportation Board says it is on schedule to issue a decision by early summer in the *Sunset Limited* on-time performance case, the first Amtrak has brought against a host railroad.

“As we begin 2025, we do so having achieved marked progress on the *Sunset Limited* on-time performance (OTP) investigation, a critically important matter,” STB Chairman Robert E. Primus said in a statement today.

Amtrak filed the case in December 2022, arguing that Union Pacific freight train interference caused the *Sunset Limited*’s on-time performance to fall well below minimum standards that were established in 2020. During the worst quarter in the complaint period, which runs from October 2021 through September 2022, some 90% of the *Sunset*’s passengers arrived late, Amtrak says.

UP acknowledges that its service was poor due to widespread crew shortages that congested the railroad in late 2021 and 2022.

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The eastbound Sunset Limited pauses at Tucson, Ariz., in 2015. Bob Johnston

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But it says Amtrak has failed to prove that *Sunset* delays were caused by violations of the passenger train right of preference. UP also notes that the *Sunset*'s schedule has not been certified to meet the Federal Railroad Administration's minimum performance standards. Amtrak filed its opening statement in the first phase of the case in October 2024. The host railroads issued their replies to the opening statement in December.

The STB notes that an on-time performance investigation is designed to determine whether and to what extent delays or failures to achieve minimum standards are due to causes that could reasonably be addressed by Amtrak or the host railroad.

As part of the *Sunset Limited* probe, the STB has investigated more than 1,000 individual delays to the *Sunset Limited* trains, which operate between New Orleans and Los Angeles. UP hosts the triweekly train for 1,770 miles of its 1,994-mile route.

"Last August the agency set forth a robust and ambitious procedural schedule with the hopes of rendering a final determination in this matter by early summer 2025," Primus said. "We are on track to achieve this goal and will continue to progress toward the mark."

Six Rail Routes Receive Federal Grants for Service Improvements

By Trains Staff | January 10, 2025

Four Amtrak routes, CTRail Hartford Line, Brightline in Florida awarded more than \$146 million



The ocean provides the backdrop for a San Diego-bound **Pacific Surfliner** crossing Peñasquitos Creek in the Torrey Pines area. Surfliner operations have received a grant to support the addition of three San Diego-LA round trips. David Lassen

WASHINGTON — Four state-supported Amtrak routes, Connecticut's CTRail, and Florida's Brightline will receive a total of more than \$146 million for service improvements from the Federal Railroad Administration, the agency announced today (Friday, Jan. 10).

The funding comes from [the Restoration and Enhancement Grant Program](#). It was announced at the same time as FRA funding for 123 grade-crossing improvement projects nationwide [see "[FRA awards more than \\$1.1 billion ...](#)," *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 10, 2025].

One of the grants for Amtrak operations, \$21.1 million for operating expenses for the still-to-come Gulf Coast service, was announced previously by U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker [see "[Amtrak Gulf Coast service to receive ...](#)" *News Wire*, Jan. 6, 2025]. Newly announced are:

— \$38.6 million for Amtrak's *Borealis* between Chicago and St. Paul, Minn. The funds will cover most of the second-year expenses as well as part of those in years three through six.

— \$33.8 million to Brightline to help cover extending train consists from five to seven cars in two increments during 2025, with a sixth car added early in the year and a seventh later.

— \$27.1 million to California's LOSSAN Rail Corridor to help expand *Pacific Surfliner* service by adding the 11th, 12th, and 13th round trips between Los Angeles and San Diego, restoring service to pre-COVID levels. The funding will support six years of service.

— \$14 million to North Carolina's *Piedmont* service to help fund the addition of café cars on the four daily roundtrips between Raleigh and Charlotte, N.C.

— \$11.6 million to expand service on CTRail's Hartford Line with a ninth daily round trip, as well as adding a weekday round trip between New Haven and Hartford; extending four New Haven-Hartford trains to Windsor Locks, Conn., and extending customer service hours at the Hartford station. The funding will support three years of service, beginning in year four.

More complete descriptions of each of the awards [is available here](#)



----BNSF News-----

BNSF's Southern Transcon Double-tracking Persistence Pays Off: Analysis

By Bill Stephens | January 16, 2025

Intermodal growth has proven the wisdom behind Rob Krebs' vision for the former Santa Fe Chicago-Los Angeles main line



BNSF Railway hot-shot Z-WSPSBD3-04 rolls west through the Rose Hill, Kan., crossovers on Dec. 5, 2024, at what used to be the west end of Rose Hill siding. Keel Middleton

Normally the addition of a 3.5-mile stretch of second main line isn't a cause for celebration. But when those 3.5 miles happen to be the final section of regular double track added to BNSF Railway's 2,200-mile Southern Transcon, well, then it's a major milestone.

BNSF cut over the new trackage between Rose Hill and Mulvane, Kan., on Nov. 18 as the capstone to a 51-mile double-tracking project. Fittingly enough, the first train to roll over the new

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BNSF Railway has completed double-tracking its Southern Transcon in Eastern Kansas. BNSF

trackage on the Emporia Subdivision was a Z-symbol hotshot. Intermodal is BNSF's bread and butter. It's also the primary reason that, back in 1992, Santa Fe CEO Rob Krebs committed to laying down a second main alongside the 512 miles of single track that then existed between Ellinor, Kan., and Belen, N.M.

Krebs saw those single-track gaps as a barrier to providing fast, frequent, and reliable domestic intermodal service for customers like UPS and J.B. Hunt. Krebs' vision: Create a super railroad with bidirectional centralized traffic control, two main tracks, and universal crossovers spaced 10 miles apart all the way from Chicago to L.A.

Adding second main track year after year and decade after decade is a case study in persistence – not to mention confidence that traffic growth would justify the expense.

It's also a tradition BNSF inherited from the Santa Fe. Krebs was standing on the shoulders of AT&SF leaders like Edward Ripley, Ernest Marsh, Fred Gurley, and John Reed, who pushed major improvement projects such as the Belen and Crookton cutoffs, as well as multiyear grade and curve reduction programs.

Double track was a focus early on for the Santa Fe. In 1910 Santa Fe began an effort to add a second main track from Dalies, N.M., to San Bernardino, Calif., just two years after completing the Belen Cutoff that freed the railroad's freight trains from the operational headache of Raton's 3.5% grades.

The rationale for the improvements, then and now, was to build a faster, more efficient, higher capacity railroad that could attract premium traffic to and from California.

Progress never moves in a straight line, though, so it's no surprise that BNSF took a double-tracking breather four times. After building 300.28 miles of second main between 1993 and 1999, BNSF hit the brakes. Wall Street took Krebs to task for what analysts considered lavish capital spending. Work resumed in 2003, and by the end of 2009 there were 196.15 additional miles of new second main in service, a figure that includes former sidings upgraded to main line standards. The Great Recession prompted a pause in 2010. The Bakken crude oil boom forced BNSF to focus all of its capacity expansion efforts on the Northern Transcon from 2012 through 2014. Just 19.65 miles of second main were added on the Southern Transcon in 2015-16. Then BNSF got going again with the Emporia Sub project in 2019.

Along the way, BNSF also added sections of triple and quadruple track at crew change points and grades, all to allow priority trains to overtake slower freights.

ime has proved Krebs right – and Wall Street skeptics wrong – as BNSF’s intermodal volume has surged. Last fall BNSF set several monthly intermodal volume records. It’s hard to imagine that growth without Krebs and successors Matt Rose, Carl Ice, and Katie Farmer chipping away at single-track bottlenecks.

Yes, the battle for on-time performance is typically won or lost in terminals. BNSF has continually expanded the anchor intermodal terminals served by the Southern Transcon or its Texas extensions. Logistics Park Chicago, Hobart in Los Angeles, and Alliance in Fort Worth, Texas, now all can handle more than a million lifts per year, putting them in a league of their own.

But what happens on the main line is important, too. And that's particularly the case when BNSF and intermodal partner J.B. Hunt are going after premium truckload traffic with the new Quantum service launched in 2023. They're guaranteeing 95% on-time performance for loads that have never touched rails before, and on schedules a day faster than traditional truckload intermodal. Which brings us back to the Emporia Sub. When intermodal volume peaks midweek, it's where the westbound and eastbound hot-shot fleets meet. BNSF had been using a sort of directional running system in the area: Westbound and priority traffic stuck to the Emporia Sub, while a couple dozen eastbounds per day ran via Newton, Kan., on the Arkansas City Sub, a route that's 90 minutes longer.

The double track has had an outsized operational impact because the Emporia Sub's short passing sidings limited where trains could meet. Now BNSF gets a productivity and service boost from eliminating meets and bringing eastbound traffic back to the faster Emporia Sub.

The Southern Transcon's remaining single track sections involve two big bridges. The first, 1.5 miles over the Missouri River at Sibley, Mo., is being taken care of, with a second span set to open in 2027. That leaves just 2.7 miles of single iron over the Salt Fork River at Alva, Okla., which at 45 trains per day is the lowest-density segment of the route. BNSF says traffic levels will determine when a second bridge goes up.

Nonetheless, it's hard to understate the significance of what BNSF has accomplished in a world focused on the next quarterly earnings report. The Southern Transcon double-tracking is proof that persistence pays off in an industry where success requires long-term thinking – and sticking to it.

You can reach Bill Stephens at bybillstephens@gmail.com and follow him on [LinkedIn](#) and X [@bybillstephens](#)

BNSF CEO's Talk Illustrates Value of Data in Improving Service

By David Lassen | January 15, 2025

Logistics facilities, track inspection, informing customers all hinge on harnessing, sharing information



BNSF CEO Katie Farmer speaks at the Midwest Association of Rail Shippers conference on Jan. 15, 2025. David Lassen

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — The power of data, or more accurately, of well-used data, may not have explicitly been the topic of BNSF Railway CEO Katie Farmer's presentation at the Midwest Association of Rail Shippers' Winter Meeting. But it was a recurring theme with several subjects she touched on as part of her morning keynote address today (Wednesday, Jan. 15) on the conference's first day.

Data played a part in Farmer's look ahead to BNSF's Barstow International Gateway intermodal and logistics project; in discussing the railroad's program of automated track inspection; and in efforts to improve information on arrival times for shippers. "I'm really excited about what we're doing in Barstow," Farmer said. "And not just because of the capacity ... What I'm really excited about is the conversations we're having with our customers, ocean carriers, drayage companies, the largest importers in the country ... What we're talking about is not only capacity, but how we're going to be interchanging data with each other. "To give you an example, if I'm a large importer and I have a box on a vessel, wouldn't it be cool if while we have a box on the vessel, we have all the information coming to us and we can make decisions, the customer can make the decision while that box is on the vessel about, do I want to go IPI [inland point intermodal]? Do I want to stay local? Do I want to transload it? We have that information, we [can] plan to work in our intermodal hub around that.

"That's the kind of conversations that we're having, and that's how we're going to continue to adapt and evolve the logistics park concept," she says.

Regarding track inspection, BNSF has been working to extend a Federal Railroad Administration waiver for its automated inspection program — an effort slowed by the FRA's desire to make those waivers more difficult to obtain [see ["FRA aims to tighten rules ...,"](#) *Trains News Wire*, Oct. 28, 2024]. But at the same time, Farmer said, it has been working to develop an inspection system mounting cameras and lasers on locomotives in revenue service.

"It allows us to look, real-time, at foot by foot by foot of track for any structural integrity issues ... It allows us to take that information, send it to Fort Worth, and quickly use machine vision and artificial intelligence to identify, more quickly than ever, if there's an issue with that piece of track. That allows us to take our track inspectors and move them from finders to fixers, and to be able to remediate that track issue and not take large windows of time that interrupt that service," Farmer says.

On another front, Farmer talked about the railroad's work to refine ETAs for shippers, noting it has been "a pain point" for customers.

"And so a couple of years ago we hired 20 data scientists and operations research folks — really bright folks — and they went to work on solving several problems," she says. "One of those is what we can do to improve the ETA's on our railroad."

The aspiration, she explained, is to achieve the sort of continuously evolving arrival information available from parcel shippers. As an example, she cited a recent online purchase.

"The minute I placed the order, UPS sent me a tracking number and said you can expect to see this on Jan. 14," Farmer says. "Over the next week that ETA kept getting refined, and the day before it came, I got a message that said you can expect your shipment between 3:15 and 5:15 on your doorstep.

"That's the concept we're trying to use here. Traditionally, the rails will give you a static ETA. What we're saying is take all the historical information, use the predictive tools that we have — our base transportation system; Movement Planner, which is what our dispatchers use; hub planner; throughput planner, which is what our folks use to plan work internals — take all of those predictive analytics, along with the historical information, and continue to give a predictive ETA.

"Because what we believe is that it's not so much where your shipment is, but the confidence level you have of when your shipment is going to get you. Because then you can plan your crews to unload; you can plan your inventory better."

A pilot program with a few carload and grain shippers, she said, had shown the railroad could, with 85% to 90% accuracy, provide an ETA within a window of plus or minus 4 hours.

"I'm incredibly encouraged with the progress we're making on this," she says. "We're not there yet, but we're going to broaden the pilot out."

BLM Approves Sale of Federal Land for BNSF Barstow Project

By David Lassen | January 14, 2025

Sale involves less than 30 acres of property for 4,500-acre project

BARSTOW, Calif. — The federal Bureau of Land Management has approved sale of almost 30 acres of public land to BNSF Railway for its planned Barstow International Gateway intermodal and logistics facility.

[The Victorville Daily Press reports](#) the land, valued at \$98,000, was ruled to be suitable for private sale. The property is isolated, surrounded by private property, and difficult for the agency to provide public access. The BLM had announced the potential sale and sought public comment last August [see "Government seeks comment ...," *Trains News Wire*, Aug. 30, 2024].

The planned \$1.5 billion, 4,500-acre Barstow International Gateway would include an intermodal facility and warehouses for transloading between domestic and international containers. It would process cargo going to and from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach [see ["BNSF to build \\$1.5 billion facility in Barstow ...,"](#) *News Wire*, Oct. 1, 2022].

BNSF Sets \$3.8 Billion Capex for 2025

Progressive Rail News: BNSF Railway January 2025



The largest component of the 2025 plan, \$2.84 billion, is devoted to maintenance projects such as replacing and upgrading rail, ballast and ties, and maintaining rolling stock. Photo – BNSF Railway Co.

[BNSF Railway Co.](#) yesterday announced a \$3.8 billion capital investment plan for 2025, down from \$3.92 billion budgeted in 2024.

The largest component of the 2025 plan, \$2.84 billion, is devoted to maintenance projects such as replacing and upgrading rail, ballast and ties, and maintaining rolling stock. Projects will consist of 11,400 miles of track surfacing and/or under-cutting work and the replacement of 2.5 million ties and 410 miles of rail, BNSF officials said in a press release.

In 2025, \$535 million of the capital plan is designated for expansion and efficiency projects, adding to the more than \$2.6 billion invested in expansion projects over the past five years. This year's expansion plans support BNSF customer growth by continuing to invest in facility and line expansion projects that will increase network capacity, company officials said.

Major facility projects include completing a multiyear intermodal facility expansion project at BNSF's Cicero intermodal facility in Chicago, continuing property acquisitions and development activities for the planned Barstow International Gateway project in California and starting development activities for a future intermodal facility in Phoenix.

Major line expansion projects include continuing a multiyear project to construct approximately 20 miles of a third mainline track near Needles, California, to increase capacity and improve service recoverability on BNSF's Southern Transcon route between Southern California and the Midwest; and increasing siding capacity on a mainline track near Phoenix.

"Our 2025 capital plan reflects BNSF's ongoing commitment to investing in our network to support our customers' growth and operating a safe, efficient and reliable railroad," said President and CEO Katie Farmer. "We are focused on ensuring our network is prepared to handle the demands of the future while continuing to provide the strong service our customers expect."

**---Union Pacific News---****Union Pacific Reports 7% Gain in Q4 Net Income**

Progressive Rail News: Union Pacific Railroad January 2025

[Union Pacific Corp.](#) today reported fourth-quarter 2024 net income of \$1.8 billion, or \$2.91 per diluted share, a 7% increase compared with fourth-quarter 2023 net income of \$1.7 billion, or \$2.71 per diluted share.

The Q4 net income results include \$40 million in labor expenses related to the ratification of a crew staffing agreement, UP officials said in a press release.

Reported income for full-year 2024 was \$6.7 billion, or \$11.09 per diluted share, compared to full-year 2023 net income of \$6.4 billion, or \$10.45 per diluted share. UP posted a Q4 operating ratio of 58.7% compared to 60.9% in the same period a year ago.

The Class I achieved Q4 operating revenue of \$6.1 billion, a 1% decrease driven by lower fuel surcharge revenue, unfavorable business mix and lower other revenue, partially offset by increased volume and core pricing gains. Operating income for the quarter was \$2.5 billion, a 5% year-over-year increase.

In terms of Q4 operating performance, UP reported the following:

- Freight car velocity improved 1% to 219 daily miles per car;
- Locomotive productivity declined 3% to 136 gross ton-miles (GTMs) per horsepower day;
- Workforce productivity increased 6% to 1,118 car miles per employee; and
- Fuel consumption rate improved 1% to 1.078, measured in gallons of fuel per thousand GTMs.

"Our strong fourth-quarter results represent a great capstone to a very successful year for Union Pacific," said CEO Jim Vena. "The team has fully embraced our strategy to lead the industry in safety, service, and operational excellence. That commitment has produced industry leading financial results in 2024, punctuated by our strong finish to the year. We will carry this momentum into 2025 as we seek to unlock the full potential of the UP franchise."

Looking ahead to 2025, UP officials said the company is on track with the targets announced during the 2024 Investor Day in September 2024: Volume will be impacted by mixed economic backdrop, coal demand and challenging year-over-year international intermodal comparisons; earnings per share growth consistent with attaining the three-year compound annual growth rate target of high-single to low-double digit; and "industry-leading" OR and return on invested capital.

UP expects no changes to its long-term capital allocation strategy and set a 2025 capital spending plan of \$3.4 billion. The Class I previously budgeted capex at \$3.4 billion in 2024 and \$3.7 billion in 2023. The 2025 budget includes \$1.9 billion for infrastructure replacement work; \$600 million for capacity expansion and commercial facilities; \$500 million for locomotives and freight cars; and \$400 million for technology and other expenses

Union Pacific Reports Stronger Profits as Volume Grows in Fourth Quarter (updated)

By Bill Stephens | January 23, 2025

The railroad's outlook for this year is mixed due to economic and political uncertainty



Union Pacific AC4400CW No. 6266 leads a unit train of tank cars through La Fox, Ill., on July 22, 2022. UP has reported strong fourth-quarter earnings results. David Lassen

OMAHA, Neb. – Union Pacific's profits rose in the fourth quarter as volume increased 5% and operating costs fell.

"Our strong fourth quarter results represent a great capstone to a very successful year for Union Pacific," CEO Jim Vena said in a statement. "The team has fully embraced our strategy to lead the industry in safety, service, and operational excellence. That commitment has produced industry leading financial results in 2024, punctuated by our strong finish to the year. We will carry this momentum into 2025 as we seek to unlock the full potential of the UP franchise."

For the quarter, UP's operating income increased 5%, to \$2.5 billion, as revenue declined 1%, to \$6.1 billion. Earnings per share rose 7%, to \$2.91. For the year, operating income was up 7%, to \$9.7 billion, as revenue grew 1%, to \$24.3 billion.

The railroad's fourth quarter operating ratio improved 2.2 points, to 58.7%, as operating expenses declined 4%. For the full year, the operating ratio improved 2.4 points, to 59.9%. UP's return on invested capital – which measures how efficiently a company uses its capital to generate profits – was up 0.3 points, to 15.8%.

Traffic volume was up 5% overall in the fourth quarter, driven by gains in intermodal, grain, and chemicals business. For the year, volume was up 3%.

UP's outlook for this year is mixed due to uncertainty surrounding the economy and potential tariffs on imports from Canada, Mexico, and China, the biggest trading partners of the U.S. "I'm hoping that it's a negotiating position by the president," Vena said of the proposed tariffs that could be implemented as soon as Feb. 1.

On the flip side, Trump's proposed corporate tax cuts and easing of regulations could be a plus for the railroad, Vena says.

UP expects year-over-year volume declines in coal, metals, and international intermodal volume, says Kenny Rocker, executive vice president of marketing and sales. Automotive traffic is expected to be flat for the year, while UP projects that its grain, chemicals, plastics, and domestic intermodal business will see growth.

Rocker says it's unclear how long international intermodal traffic will remain strong through West Coast ports. Importers shifted away from the East Coast last year as a hedge against a port strike. Meanwhile, some importers ordered goods earlier than usual to avoid potential tariffs, which also has fed the West Coast surge.

Overall, UP still expects its traffic volume to grow faster than the underlying economy. "The credo here for the management team is we're going to have volume outpace the markets and we expect the revenue to outpace volume," Rocker says.

UP's coal traffic slumped 21% in 2024 due to a combination of low natural gas prices and high coal stockpiles at power plants. The downward trend will continue this year, but a contract win should help offset the volume loss, Rocker says. UP this year will begin handling Powder River Basin coal from Wyoming to the Sam Seymour Power Plant in La Grange, Texas.

UP's key operational and service metrics mostly improved for the quarter.

Freight car velocity increased 1%, to 219 miles per day, thanks to lower terminal dwell. The manifest service performance index improved 5 points to 96%, but the intermodal service performance index dropped 7 points to 89% due to a 26% surge in international volume. The intermodal on-time performance improved as the quarter went on, however, and stood at 97% in December.

"Historically, fast surges in volume, such as those we witnessed in 2024, significantly disrupt rail operations," says Eric Gehringer, executive vice president of operations. "However, the team bucked that trend and was able to improve our service product while also driving growth and network efficiency."

It's proof, Gehringer says, that UP's focus on operational excellence is working.

UP posted record low terminal dwell in 2024, as well as record high workforce productivity. The fourth quarter, meanwhile, was UP's sixth in a row of record average train lengths.

The railroad said its derailment and personal injury rates improved significantly for the year, but did not provide specifics.

UP's capital program will total \$3.4 billion again this year, including \$1.9 billion for maintenance projects, \$600 million for capacity improvements, \$500 million for locomotive modernizations and new freight cars, and \$400 million for technology investments.

UP plans share repurchases of between \$4 billion and \$4.5 billion this year.

Note: Updated at 12:07 p.m. Central with details from UP's earnings call.

Ceremony to Honor UP Crewmen Killed in Pecos, Texas, Crash

By Trains Staff | January 10, 2025

Event set for Jan. 19 at West of the Pecos Museum

PECOS, Texas — A ceremony to honor the two Union Pacific crew members killed in the Dec. 18 grade-crossing accident and derailment will be held in Pecos on Sunday, Jan. 19.

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Engineer Clay Burt, 63, and conductor Phillip Araujo, 47, were killed when their train hit a truck with an oversized load at a grade crossing in downtown Pecos and derailed. Three other people suffered minor injuries [see [“Two crew members killed ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Dec. 19, 2024].

An announcement on [the Reeves County Facebook page](#) says the 4 p.m. Ceremony of Unity and Remembrance will be held on the steps of the West of the Pecos Museum. The museum, in the community’s former railroad station, recently reopened following damage sustained in the accident. Those attending are asked to wear Union Pacific’s colors of yellow and red as a gesture of respect and solidarity. The investigation into the incident is continuing.



---- CN News ----

CN Debuts its First Medium Horsepower Hybrid Diesel Electric Locomotive

By Trains Staff | January 16, 2025

The Q19-2.4GH will be tested in yard and local service



MONTREAL – Canadian National today unveiled its first new medium horsepower hybrid electric locomotive, a Q19-2.4GH developed in collaboration with Knoxville Locomotive Works.

The 3,200 horsepower unit, No. 7100, includes a modern control system and is powered by a 2.4MWh-700HP battery-diesel engine that is 100% biofuel ready. Former BNSF Railway Genset 3GS21B No. 1259 was used as the core for the hybrid unit.

The hybrid system targets up to approximately 50% reduction in fuel consumption compared to a typical locomotive used in yard and local switching service. CN expects this initiative will help drive the advancement of hybrid technology in locomotives and contribute to immediate emissions reductions. “This CN-led pilot represents another milestone in our sustainability journey and focus on emerging technologies.

Canadian National Q19-2.4GH No. 7100, developed with Knoxville Locomotive Works, is the railway’s first hybrid diesel electric locomotive. CN

We believe that this hybrid system, if successful, could substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our yard operations, while maintaining our commitment to customers and communities across our network,” Patrick Whitehead, executive vice president and chief network operating officer, said in a statement.

The hybrid locomotive will be deployed in phases over the next six months across several CN yards and branch lines, including locations in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

Testing will also eventually include operations in cold weather conditions in Western Canada.

This phased approach will enable CN to evaluate efficiency and operating protocols for the locomotive, the railway says. The project is part of CN’s program to meet the deep decarbonization required to achieve net-zero emissions, with the other previously announced locomotive pilots such as its order of a Wabtec FLXdrive battery-electric locomotive for use on the former Bessemer & Lake Erie in Pennsylvania.

Canadian Pacific Kansas City and CSX are piloting hydrogen fuel cell battery electric locomotives, primarily for yard and local service.

Union Pacific and ZTR are partnering on hybrid electric switchers. UP also has ordered 20 battery-electric locomotives from Wabtec and Progress Rail for testing in yard service; the railroad expects delivery of the locomotives in late 2025 or early 2026.

BNSF is working on a hydrogen fuel-cell locomotive with Chevron and Progress Rail.

Norfolk Southern is partnering with Alstom on two hybrid switching locomotives.

STB Greenlights Canadian National’s Acquisition of Iowa Northern

By Bill Stephens | January 14, 2025

The 3-1 decision, issued six months behind schedule, comes with several conditions designed to preserve competition and service

WASHINGTON — The Surface Transportation Board has approved Canadian National’s acquisition of 218-mile regional Iowa Northern Railway.

[The board’s decision](#) today (Jan. 15, 2025) also imposed several conditions to offset potential anticompetitive aspects of the \$230 million deal. Among them: The development of a scheduled local service plan, keeping gateways open on commercially reasonable terms, and maintaining competitive access to locations with voluntary reciprocal switching agreements.

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



The Iowa Northern connects with Canadian National at its midpoint and also interchanges with Union Pacific, Canadian Pacific, and the Cedar Rapids & Iowa City. Iowa Northern

The merger will become effective on Feb. 13. The board also approved a pair of related trackage-rights deals. CN gains trackage rights between Cedar Falls and Manly, Iowa; Iowa Northern gains rights from CN's Chicago, Central & Pacific on routes out of Waterloo, Iowa.

"We recognize and thank the STB for its commitment to a rigorous process that has yielded the right outcome," CN CEO Tracy Robinson said in a statement. "We look forward to welcoming the team at Iowa Northern Railway into our CN family of railroaders, and we are carefully preparing for a successful integration. We are excited to grow our network, offering customers, farmers and our supply chain partners with single-line access to new markets. This is an important step in our growth plan, reinforcing our commitment to providing customers with exceptional rail service and powering the economy."

Dan Sabin, chairman of the Iowa Northern, said the combination was a milestone in his 55-year railroading career. "I am proud of what Iowa Northern's employees and customers have built and their important role in Iowa's economy. I am also excited about the benefits of our combination for customers, employees, and the communities we serve," he said in a statement.

The 3-1 vote reflected a split on the board, which failed to meet its own July deadline to reach a decision in the case. Chairman Robert E. Primus cast the lone vote against the deal, while board members Patrick Fuchs, Karen Hedlund, and Michelle Schultz issued their own separate concurring statements.

The board members made it clear that in reaching the decision they wrestled with the statutory requirement to approve the deal unless its anticompetitive effects would be outweighed by the public interest.

"After considering the application and the full record in this proceeding, the Board finds that, without conditions, CNR and GTC's acquisition of Iowa Northern's rail lines would likely cause a substantial lessening of competition," the decision says.

CN has argued that its acquisition of Iowa Northern would boost rail competition, divert freight off the highway, and give Iowa shippers broader access to single-line service.

Primus did not see it that way.

"While I disagree with today's decision, as I believe this transaction will cause a substantial lessening of competition that is not outweighed by the transaction's modest public benefits, I recognize the views of the other Board members in favor of approving this transaction," Primus said in a statement. "As Chairman, I will not stand in the way of a majority and bringing a conclusion to a matter before the Board."

Hedlund said she fully supported the decision, "but not without certain misgivings. I remain concerned about whether the conditions imposed on Applicants will in fact preserve the 'dedicated service' to almost 20 small- and medium-sized grain elevators historically provided by Iowa Northern (IANR)."

Fuchs said the decision was an acceptable compromise. "Though some of the Decision's analysis and conditions do not reflect my first preferences, it includes justifiable competition-related protections for shippers while, in effect, increasing the IANR system's financial stability, offering modest operational benefits in some circumstances, and reducing uncertainty for parties," he wrote. "More broadly, considering recent proceedings in which the Board has missed statutory deadlines, I write separately to offer four interrelated suggestions for focusing, expediting, and improving the Board's review of non-major transactions to further the purpose of the governing statute."

Schultz wrote that, ideally, the approval would not have included every condition that the board imposed. She also agreed with Fuchs' suggestions to streamline the review process.

Primus's dissent explained his opposition to the merger

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“We all have heard the timeless adage: Never judge a book by its cover. Sage advice that, unheeded, can leave the reader disillusioned and disappointed. Such advice should be applied to the Proposed Transaction, for on the surface this appears to be a minor transaction with promises of greater access and growth for shippers along the freight rail network in east-central Iowa. And yet, just a few pages in, the small and medium-sized shippers who have come to rely on IANR for superior performance, rates, and customer service will discover that this transaction turns from a budding, feel-good romance into something resembling an Edgar Allan Poe novel,” he wrote.

“While I have great respect for CN and its recent network and service accomplishments, I regrettably believe this transaction will do very little to build upon the local success established and enjoyed by IANR,” Primus wrote. “Instead, it will foster a lessening of competition and create haves and have-nots based on carload amounts, ultimately reducing the number of small and medium-sized shippers accessing the network. And, because its potentially adverse impact upon the network is of regional or national transportation significance, I maintain that this transaction should have been classified as significant.”

The CN-IANR merger was reviewed as a minor transaction. A significant merger involves a more thorough review.

CN Activates 4-mile New Section of Double Track on Former EJ&E

By Bill Stephens | January 13, 2025

The second main line has boosted velocity through the area by 30% since it opened last month, CN says



Canadian National freights pass on a new 4-mile stretch of double track on the former Elgin, Joliet & Eastern in Illinois. CN



The Sutton-Spaulding, Ill., double-track project included expanding the bridge over Poplar Creek. CN

Canadian National has opened a new 4-mile stretch of double track on its former Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Chicago bypass route. The track, between Sutton and Spaulding, Ill., has increased velocity through the area by 30%, Patrick Whitehead, the railway’s executive vice president of network operations, said in a post on LinkedIn.

The 17% in capacity makes “travel smoother and more reliable for our customers and neighbors, especially during passenger rush hours,” Whitehead wrote. The new track was placed in service last month.

“Beyond proud of the incredible cross-functional collaboration of our teams to make this happen. Talk about starting 2025 on the right track,” Whitehead wrote.

The project involved grading, signal work, and a bridge expansion.

“Bonus fun fact: movie buffs may recognize the Poplar Creek bridge extension pictured here from the final scenes of 1993’s *Dennis the Menace*, a family favorite,” Whitehead wrote.

The former EJ&E forms a congestion free-route around Chicago and laces together CN’s former Wisconsin Central, Illinois Central, and Grand Trunk Western main lines that radiate out of Chicago to Western Canada, Eastern Canada, the Gulf Coast, and Iowa.



---- CPKC News ----

Unifor Members Authorize Strike Against CPKC

By Trains Staff | January 15, 2025

Without agreement, walkout could come as soon as Jan. 29

CALGARY — Members of Canadian union Unifor have voted to authorize a strike against Canadian Pacific Kansas City if the railroad and union do not reach a new deal by Jan. 29, 2025.

The union said the vote was 99% in favor of authorization by members of Local 101R, which represents more than 1,200 CPKC mechanical workers.

“Members are united in their demands for job security and work ownership, fair wages, and improved working conditions,” Unifor National President Lana Payne said in a [press release](#). “CPKC workers play a critical role in Canada’s transportation network. Our union will stand firm to ensure their contributions are respected through an approved collective agreement.”

The two sides are set to resume negotiations Jan. 24 in Calgary.

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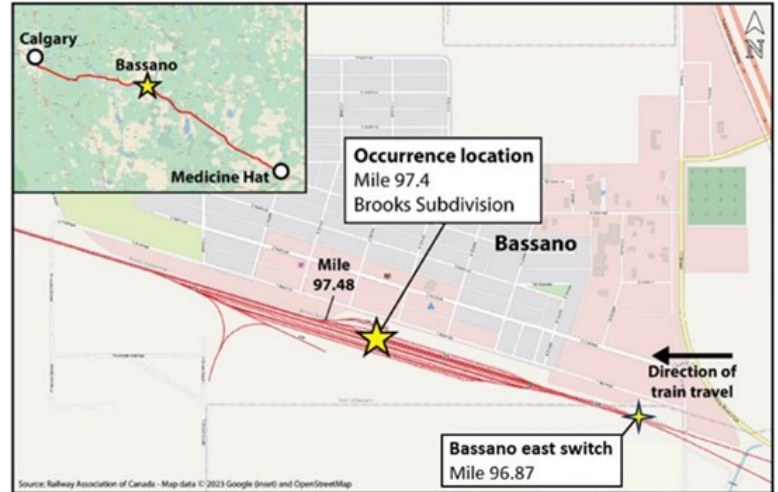
Track Buckling Led to 41-car CP Grain Train Derailment, TSB of Canada Determines

By Trains Staff | January 22, 2025

Report says 2022 incident in Alberta occurred in area of deteriorated track structure



A view looking east from the south side of the main line at Bassano, Alberta, shows debris after a grain-train derailment on July 13, 2022. Canadian Pacific via TSB



The location of the Bassano derailment on July 13, 2022. TSB

CALGARY, Alberta — Track that buckled in an area of deteriorated structure led to the derailment of 41 cars of a Canadian Pacific train near Bassano, Alb., on July 13, 2022, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada said in an investigation report released today (Jan. 22, 2025).

The 11,758-foot, 29,021-ton train had five locomotives — two at the head end, two midtrain, and one at the rear — and 203 loaded grain hoppers and was en route to Vancouver when it derailed at about 4:18 p.m. The train was traveling at 44 mph when an emergency brake application occurred, and the crew determined that the cars in positions 116-132 and 135-158 had derailed. No one was injured, and no fire resulted; grain was spilled from 39 of the 41 cars.

The TSB's investigation found that track in the vicinity showed signs of deterioration including contaminated and worn ballast; skewed, worn, and plate-cut ties; rail creep through anchors and spikes; lifted spikes; and missing or loose anchoring. Urgent defects had been detected in the area on July 7 by an autonomous track-inspection car, leading to a 10-mph slow order while repairs were made on July 8 and July 10, after which the slow order was raised to 25 mph on July 10, then cancelled July 11.

The derailment occurred on a day with a high temperature of 25.4 degrees Celsius (78 Fahrenheit) during a 10-day period when temperatures had ranged from 6.7 Celsius (44.1 Fahrenheit) to 31.6 Celsius (88.9 Fahrenheit). While video from the train's lead locomotive showed no signs of a track defect when the train passed the point of the derailment, video from the mid-train locomotive showed a noticeable side-to-side sway, which the TSB supports a determination that the track had buckled under the train. The condition of track structure in the vicinity made the track more susceptible to buckling, the TSB found, and the location had other risk factors known to increase the likelihood of buckling,

Elements associated to rapid deterioration of track structure — use by longer, heavier unit trains and increased traffic volume — were present both in this incident and other investigations, the TSB said, and called for more proactive risk management. In response to the incident, CP took measures including conducting a track renewal program; requiring engineering managers to ride a train to evaluate track condition once a month from August 2022 to the end of the year; changing training for supervisors of track inspection and issuing a safety bulletin with clearer instructions for when rail temperature exceeds the preferred measurement.

CPKC Train Derails in Eastern North Dakota

By Trains Staff | December 30, 2024

No injuries reported in incident near Valley City, N.D.

CUBA, N.D. — No injuries were reported when 17 cars of a Canadian Pacific Kansas City train derailed Monday (Dec. 30, 2024) near the town of Cuba.

The derailment occurred just before noon. Barnes County Emergency Manager Jessica Jenrich told KFGO Radio that the cars involved were either empty or carrying sand.

Cuba is about 60 miles west of Fargo, N.D. It is on CPKC's Carrington Subdivision, about 11 miles southeast of Valley City, N.D.

--- Other RR News ---

North American Rail Traffic has Yet to Rebound to Pre-Pandemic Levels

By Bill Stephens | January 5, 2025

Overall, volume in 2024 was 4.4% lower than 2019, according to Association of American Railroads data



A westbound CSX intermodal train crosses under a bridge for Metra's Rock Island District at Blue Island, Ill., on Aug. 21, 2024. David Lassen



An eastbound BNSF Railway intermodal train climbs toward Summit on Cajon Pass in California on Sept. 11, 2021. Bill Stephens



At Cassandra, Pa., Norfolk Southern helper locomotives shove a coal train upgrade on the former Pennsylvania Railroad main line in April 2022. Bill Stephens

The Big Four U.S. Class I railroads all showed year-over-year traffic growth in 2024, while Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Kansas City experienced volume declines.

Looking longer term, however, CSX is the only railroad whose 2024 volume rebounded to pre-pandemic levels of 2019. CSX's traffic was up 0.6% last year compared to 2019, due largely to gains in intermodal and chemicals business.

Traffic dropped precipitously at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Although there was initially a sharp rebound in volume, overall freight demand remained muted due to lingering supply chain disruptions and the shift of consumer spending to experiences rather than goods.

The other Class I systems have yet to return to pre-pandemic volumes, with Union Pacific down 2.7%; BNSF down 6.5%; Norfolk Southern down 7.1%; Canadian National down 9.5%; and Canadian Pacific Kansas City down 14.3% (compared to the combined pre-merger volumes for Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern).

Overall North American rail freight volume is down 4.4% since 2019, according to Association of American Railroads data. Carload traffic is down 7.8%; intermodal declined 0.92%; and coal sank 24%.

Absent coal – which remains the single largest carload segment – overall North American carload volume is down 2.6% since 2019. For 2024, BNSF led the pack with a year-over-year gain of 6% thanks to its industry leading 16% growth in intermodal volume. NS was the runner up, with 4% growth last year.

CSX and Union Pacific both notched 2% year-over-year gains, while CN and CPKC volume was dented by labor disruptions at the railroads and Canadian ports. CN volume was down 1%, while CPKC's was off by 4%.

It was another disappointing year for Powder River Basin coal traffic due to a combination of low natural gas prices, high coal stockpiles, and retirements of coal-fired power plants. UP's coal volume sank 21%, while BNSF's was down 18%.

Coal volume held up better in the East, where metallurgical coal shipments helped offset the decline of thermal coal. CSX's coal volume declined 3%, while Norfolk Southern's was up 0.4%. Coal volume dropped 11% on both CN and CPKC, which handle mostly metallurgical coal used in steelmaking.

Norfolk Southern Awards More Than \$6 Million in Community Grants

By Trains Staff | January 7, 2025

Safety First, Thriving Communities programs were launched in 2023

ATLANTA — Norfolk Southern has awarded more than \$6 million to 408 organizations during 2024 as part of two grant programs launched in 2023, the railroad has announced.

The Safety First grant program awarded \$2.2 million to 184 organizations in 19 states. These awards are to enhance emergency response capabilities and promote community safety.

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The Thriving Communities program awarded \$4.1 million to 224 organizations in 20 states for initiatives addressing sustainability, workforce development, and housing stabilities.

“At Norfolk Southern, we are committed to supporting organizations that create stronger communities across our network,” Kristin Wong, director, NS Foundation and community impact, said in [a press release](#). “We are honored to assist local organizations in promoting safe operations, developing their local work force, and building resilient communities in the areas where we live and work.” Applications for 2025 grants will be accepted from April to Sept. 1, 2025, and reviewed on a rolling basis. More information on the grant program [is available here](#)

FRA Awards More Than \$1.1 Billion for Grade Crossing Improvements

By David Lassen | January 10, 2025

Funding goes to 123 projects in 41 states



A Belt Railway of Chicago slug set pushes cars over the hump at Clearing Yard. Locations along the BRC, including the nearby Clearing West neighborhood, see [grade-crossing improvements through federal funding announced Jan. 10, 2025](#). David Lassen

WASHINGTON — The Federal Railroad Administration today announced more than \$1.1 billion in grants for projects to improve, eliminate, or study grade crossings, funding 123 projects that will address more than 1,000 crossings nationwide.

That announcement came at the same time the FRA announced more than \$146 million in funding to improve passenger service on six lines [see [“Six rail routes receive federal grants ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 10, 2025].

Projects in 41 states are receiving the crossing funds under the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program. They will fund underpasses and bridges to separate crossings as well as other enhancements.

“The Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program funding we’re announcing today,” Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said in a press release, “is a sweeping effort that directly supports cities, towns, and villages in every region of the country in their efforts to protect lives, prevent drivers being delayed by blocked crossings, and improve the overall quality of life for their citizens.”

The largest single program to be funded, \$204 million for the Assembly Street Separation Project in Columbia, S.C., was previously announced [see [“Columbia, S.C., receives federal funding ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 8, 2025]; some projects in California and Massachusetts have also been announced [see [“Twelve rail-related projects in California ...”](#) *News Wire*, Jan. 7, 2025, and [“Five Massachusetts projects ...”](#) *News Wire*, Jan. 10, 2025]

The 10 largest projects not previously reported include:

- \$89.6 million for the Le Grand, Calif., overcrossing project to improve crossings on the Union Pacific in Merced County, and lay the groundwork for future high-speed rail service. The California High Speed Rail Authority is providing a 20% match.
- \$73.4 million for separation of State Route 85 and Canadian National tracks in Trenton, Mich. Funds will support final design and construction. CN and the Michigan Department of Transportation will provide a match of at least 20%.
- \$73.1 million for grade crossing eliminations in Farwell, Texas, and Texico, N.M. The project will construct a new Texico bypass roadway, separating one crossing and closing two others. BNSF and departments of Transportation in Texas and New Mexico will provide the 20% matching funds.
- \$66.7 million for the Cornhusker Viaduct project in Lincoln, Neb. Funds will address final design, right-of-way acquisition and construction of a bridge to eliminate two grade crossings at North 3rd and Adams streets. BNSF, the city of Lincoln, and the Railroad Transportation Safety District will provide the 20% match.
- \$44.9 million for the Allison Road grade separation project in Gallup, N.M. A bridge will carry Allison Road over BNSF’s main line to connect with Florence Street. BNSF, the New Mexico DOT, and the city of Gallup will contribute the 20% match.
- \$43.1 million for CREATE project GS1 in the Chicago area. The funds will support final design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction along the Belt Railway of Chicago in the Clearing West neighborhood and the villages of Bedford Park and Summit. Belt Railway and the Illinois Department of Transportation will contribute a 20% match.
- \$32.3 million for the Reed Market Road separation project in Bend, Ore., which will replace an existing crossing. BNSF Railway and the city of Bend will provide a 30% match.
- \$29.8 million for grade separation on Alaska’s Park’s Highway in Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The Alaska Railroad Corp. and Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities will provide the 20% match.
- \$27.2 million for the Gougar Road separation project in New Lenox., Ill, to build a roadway overpass over Canadian National tracks. Will County and the Illinois Commerce Commission will provide the 20% match.
- \$26.3 million for the Race Road project in North Ridgeville, Ohio. The project will separate Race Road from Norfolk Southern tracks and close a grade crossing at Maddock Road, eliminating all crossings in a 3-mile stretch of the NS line. The Ohio Rail Development Commission, North Ridgeville, and NS will contribute the 20% match.

The complete list of projects to receive funding [is available here](#).

Reading & Northern Posts Record Freight, Passenger Revenue in 2024

Progressive Rail News: Short Lines & Regionals 1/22/2025



Anthracite coal exceeded 1 million tons shipped for the second time in the railroad's history.

Photo – Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern

[Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad](#) (RBMN) in Pennsylvania this week reported it achieved record freight and passenger revenue in 2024.

RBMN handled nearly 32,000 revenue carloads in 2024, which was 10% fewer carloads than in 2023. Despite the decline, the railroad earned the most freight revenue in its history due to a shift in traffic mix, company officials said in a press release.

The company did not report the dollar value of revenue earned last year.

RBMN officials reported a substantial decline in frac sand carloads last year due to a decline in drilling activity in the area, but the traffic loss was offset by other commodities. Anthracite coal exceeded 1 million tons shipped for the second time in the railroad's history; forest products, plastic resins, metals, food and ag commodities also drove revenue success.

RBMN leaders anticipate increased carloads and revenues in 2025.

On the passenger side of the business, RBMN recorded an all-time high ridership of 340,000 passengers in 2024. The railroad opened new departure facilities, spent \$6 million on new equipment and train cars, and hired 70 new employees last year.

STB Chair Remains Concerned Over Class I Railroads' Lack of Growth

By David Lassen | January 16, 2025

Primus' address to rail shippers outlines how industry needs to improve; statement also decries 'retaliation' by railroads



Surface Transportation Board chairman Robert Primus speaks to the Midwest Association of Rail Shippers on Jan. 16, 2025.

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Approaching the likely end of his tenure as chairman of the Surface Transportation Board, Robert Primus made it clear: the hearing the board held last fall on growth in the rail industry did not ease his concerns about Class I efforts to increase volume.

In a rare address today (Jan. 16, 2025) at the Midwest Association of Rail Shippers Winter Meeting — and on the same day he issued a statement concerning retaliation by railroads against those who bring matters to the board or participate in its proceedings — Primus expressed abundant frustration over railroads' continuing loss of market share.

"We are the largest, safest, most cost-efficient and energy-conscious freight rail system in the world,"

Primus said, "and yet we struggle to grow, even when growth opportunities exist. For the past year, we have continually lost market share to our chief competitor who has seen better days, while all six Class Is are enjoying a period of strong, if not record profits, and the ability to provide billions in stock buybacks to their respective shareholders. ... From 2003 to 2023, freight rail has experienced negative growth among most business segments."

Among the data he cited: intermodal tonnage hauled by truck was up by 35% between 2002 and 2023, while intermodal tonnage by rail declined by 16%.

"Why are we hemorrhaging market share to truck?" he asked. "Why can't we have sustained long-term growth at the Class I level?" The September growth hearings [see "[Hearing focuses on turning around ...](#)," *Trains News Wire*, Sept. 16, 2024, and

"[Regulators scrutinize trends ...](#)," *News Wire*, Sept. 17, 2024] illustrated reasons, he said, listing five:

— Shippers have left rail because of inconsistent and unreliable service.

— High rates are not commensurate with the level of service.

— Failure of the Class I railroads to provide accurate information on service and schedules, particularly when measured against what trucking provides.

— Inadequate employment levels for railroads to handle growth.

— Prioritizing short-term gains at the expense of expanding network capacity.

"This all adds up," Primus said. "What we have, in the words of former President Jimmy Carter, is a crisis of confidence. Far too many shippers have simply lost confidence in our freight rail network. It's why a 2020 Oliver Wyman survey found 100% of large shippers polled believed truck to be superior to rail on key attributes of the customer experience. It's why freight rail lines have declined by 28% over the last decade."

If Class I railroads want to address many of these issues, they have a model to look to that is close at hand.

"The network must have an adequate labor force and be better resilient, and we need to shift our focus from short-term profits to long-term sustainable growth," Primus said. "I know this sounds impossible, right? Well, what I just described is exactly what's happening within our nation's short lines, and they are seeing double-digit volume growth.

"It can be done because it is done."

And, he said, railroads have been hurt by slow adoption of the kind of tracking technology available from trucks, or from consumer enterprises such as Amazon. He did, however, offer some optimism on that score.

"I'm a huge supporter of [RailPulse](#)," he said, referring to the digital car-tracking enterprise, "and this is for two reasons. No. 1 is the first real collaborative between Class Is, short lines, shippers, car manufacturers, car lessors, and others to develop a universal telematics platform that can be used by the entire network. ...

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But he also he was “truly disappointed” that the board had not addressed what he called the “pervasiveness of retaliation and intimidation” among those — be they shippers, labor, or short lines — who have brought matters to the attention of the board.” This was also the subject of [the statement Primus issued](#) today, which among other details asks those who feel they have been the targets of such actions to contact the STB’s Rail Customer and Public Assistance program.

“While I do not believe the leadership under Class Is promote or even tolerate this behavior, it nonetheless continues to permeate through the ranks,” Primus said at MARS, “and its impact has directly affected the board’s ability to do its work,” he said. “Quite simply, it’s wrong and it must be addressed. ... Moving forward, I hope the board finds the courage to confront this troubling issue soon.”

STB Issues Decision on Tank Car Complaint Filed in 2015

[By Trains Staff](#) | January 15, 2025

The decision clarifies Union Pacific’s obligations regarding charges for moving empty tank cars to repair facilities



Shippers, in a complaint filed in 2015, challenged Union Pacific’s charges for moving empty cars to shops. David Lassen

WASHINGTON – The Surface Transportation Board today issued a decision partially granting complaints filed by the North America Freight Car Association and several other associations and individual shippers regarding Union Pacific’s charges for the movement of empty, privately owned tank cars to repair facilities.

[The decision](#) clarifies UP’s obligations regarding charges moving forward and directs UP not to charge for moving private tank cars to and from repair shops unless it can demonstrate that car providers are reimbursed for those expenses. The board’s decision denied all other aspects of the complaints, which were filed in 2015.

UP says it’s continuing to study the decision and its potential implications. “The STB correctly concluded that Union Pacific acted lawfully in charging for empty repair moves of tank cars and moving privately supplied tank cars under zero-mileage rates,” railroad spokeswoman Robynn Tysver said.

Historically, railroads have been required to furnish the rail cars necessary to provide their rail service. Tank cars, however, are almost entirely privately owned. On Jan. 1, 2015, UP adopted an empty repair move charge for privately owned tank cars.

On March 31, 2015, NAFCA filed a complaint with the board, alleging that UP had engaged in an unreasonable practice and violated its common carrier obligation by failing to pay them for UP’s use of their tank cars when providing rail service and by imposing the January 2015 charge for moving their tank cars when empty to repair facilities. Several associations and individual complainants later filed similar complaints that were embraced into the docket.

In its decision, the board concluded that there is no basis to hold that UP acted unlawfully in how it compensated the complainants for its use of their tank cars, and that the empty repair move charge adopted by UP in 2015 is not unlawful or an unreasonable practice. The decision further finds that the complainants are not entitled to reparations for the payment of past empty repair move charges, as they did not use the methods available to them to seek compensation for the empty repair move costs imposed by UP. The decision also finds that, in the future, the burden will be on UP to demonstrate that it is adequately compensating car providers if it chooses to continue to impose empty repair move charges.

“I am pleased to have brought closure to this proceeding that has been pending before the Board for almost a decade,” STB Chairman Robert E. Primus said in a statement. “Our stakeholders deserve timely adjudication and I regret the extraordinary amount of time it was with the Board. However, this was an extremely difficult and complex matter and I applaud the Board for bringing about a fair and reasonable solution that I believe provides administrative certainty moving forward.”

Board members Karen Hedlund and Michelle Schultz commented with separate expressions. Board member Patrick Fuchs concurred in part, and dissented in part, with a separate expression.

Trump Names Former Pan Am Railways President David Fink to be FRA Administrator

[By Trains Staff](#) | December 21, 2024



David A. Fink is President-elect Donald Trump’s choice for FRA Administrator

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump said he has selected David Fink to become administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration.

In a post today (Saturday, Dec. 21) [on Truth Social](#), Trump said Fink is a “fifth-generation railroader” who “will bring his 45+ years of transportation leadership and success, which will deliver the FRA into a new era of safety and technological innovation.”

David Armstrong Fink is a former president of Pan Am Railways and son of [the late David Andrew Fink](#), a career railroader who worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad and Penn Central before serving as president of Guilford Transportation, later rebranded as Pan Am Railways.

The younger Fink began his career with General Motors in the 1980s, and became Pan Am Railways president in 2006 after serving as executive vice president in 1998.

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He remained president through Pan Am's acquisition by CSX Transportation, a deal announced in 2020 and approved in April 2022 [see ["CSX to acquire New England regional ..."](#), *Trains News Wire*, Nov. 30, 2020]. He also helped start lumber products firm Aroostook & Bangor Resources. The FRA post requires confirmation by the Senate.

Government Delays Bidding Deadline for Construction of Canada's High Frequency Rail

By Trains Staff | January 13, 2025

Departure of prime minister could place project at risk



A map released by VIA Rail Canada in 2019 shows the proposed high-frequency corridor route.

OTTAWA, Ontario — The Canadian proposal for a high-frequency, passenger-only rail corridor between Toronto and Quebec City, already moving at a languid pace, is facing new delays — and those could increase with the planned resignation of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

[The Canadian Press reports](#) that late last year, the federal government requested an extension on the bidding process for construction of the high-frequency route. At one point, those bids were due in “summer 2024” [see [“Canada’s High Frequency Rail project begins ...”](#), *Trains News Wire*, Oct. 14, 2023], but that was pushed back as officials indicated last fall that the government was considering turning the project into a high-speed line [see [“Canada’s High Frequency Rail could become high-speed project,”](#) *News Wire*, Oct. 9, 2024].

The office of Transport Minister Anita Anand said extensions are “standard,” and that the prospect was included in the request for proposals. Anand said in an emailed statement to the Canadian Press that “no contract has been awarded ... I look forward to sharing more when the time comes.” But that time could be well in the distance. Trudeau’s planned departure once the Liberal Party selects a new leader could place the entire project at risk. His successor is likely to face a no-confidence vote that could trigger an election that, based on current polling, would likely place the Conservative Party in power. The Conservatives did not address a Canadian Press inquiry whether the party will support the project, saying only in a statement that “there is no high-frequency rail project to speak of.” Terry Johnson, president of advocacy group [Transport Action Canada](#), told the news service, “Any change of government will almost certainly lead to a process of reconsideration of everything the previous government has done before, either confirming it or changing it in some way,” Johnson said. He expressed concern the project could be scrapped altogether.

The high-frequency project was first proposed by VIA Rail Canada in 2015 and later taken over by the government, which announced in 2019 it would spend Ca\$71 million to study the project, then said in 2022 it would seek private-sector investment [see [“Transport Canada inches forward ...”](#), *News Wire*, March 10, 2022]. It selected three consortia to bid for construction in July 2023.



Volume 9* Issue 1 * January, 2025 www.rpca.com

Provided by John Goodman ...Excerpts

President's Message

We hear about operational problems from time to time that plague Amtrak, and I have experienced a couple of them so far. First, the connection on the Hiawatha from Milwaukee to Chicago was canceled due to “mechanical failure.” Amtrak arranged a very nice motor coach to take the passengers to Union Station. As this trip progressed, there would be another issue discovered this morning in La Junta, where we left 2 hours late after the addition of a BNSF freight unit to take up for Amtrak 22, A dead P42.

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I had planned to write about other subjects from here on, but alas, as it developed, my journey was plagued by more delays. In fact, the BNSF freight unit added at La Junta found Raton Pass too taxing and was declared dead at Raton! Fortunately for us, there was a MofW Ballast train meeting us at Raton, and another freight unit was swapped onto our train. After more delay there and at Las Vegas, NM, for “police activity,” train #3 departed the latter stop five hours late. Things got no better once we got onto the transcon after Albuquerque and were “out of our slot” between freight moves.

Dawn came at Kingman, AZ, 5 hours late, and we crossed the Colorado River and the Mojave Desert in daylight. After a tough time on the congested territory between Needles, CA, and San Bernardino, CA, we arrived at Fullerton, CA, nearly 12 hours late. As that great RPCA philosopher George Payne says, “late trains only get Later.”

So, how was my trip you ask, well actually, pretty good. I would have liked to spend an extra day with my co-workers in CA, but Amtrak did its best to mitigate my situation. I received regular text message updates, and every line employee I encountered was cheery and did their best to keep everyone happy. From the agents in Milwaukee who arranged for the bus to the dining car crew on Train #3, who served two unexpected meals just as if they were planned and didn’t run out of anything. They even had enough of the Vegan Chili that was served with Cheese and Bacon...no joke, that is what the menu says!

How does this relate to Private Cars? Well, if I had a car on this edition of the Southwest Chief, would I have carried enough provisions to handle the extra hours on the road and had the means to make alternative arrangements for connections for my customers? Amtrak’s first duty is to their regular passengers, in this case, and then to the car owner and his passengers to the extent that they can, considering it isn’t as simple as simply chartering a bus.

Some of the passengers on our train were connecting to the Coast Starlight in LA, but being long gone, Amtrak fell back to Bus from Barstow to Bakersfield and the San Joaquin Service to the Bay Area. A private car would have had to spend an additional day or possibly two in Los Angeles before continuing. So, my suggestion to members who operate trips is to consider what you will do to mitigate these sorts of occurrences. Last of all, to their credit, Amtrak provided a generous travel voucher for a future trip, making me an even happier customer. I think I’ll go to Los Angeles this way again, but I have to admit, I flew home because I had to be there without fail, and both planes were early. Best Wishes to you all for a Happy New Year and, hopefully, a very fulfilling and prosperous one. I hope to see many of you in Pueblo. Be safe in your travels and every day, Brad Black

2025 CONFERENCE held Jan 15 2025 to Jan 20 2025 Pueblo CO

Attended by chapter members Dan Meyer, Dawn Holmberg and John Goodman and reported an enjoyable time!
Exerpts of Activities were:

Wed Jan 15

1 pm to 4:30 pm MXV Rail Facility Tour. Participation form, long pants, & closed toed shoes required (No Photos allowed!)
6 pm to 10 pm RPCA Board of Directors meeting in Marriott

Friday Jan 16

9 am to 10 am Opening of the conference with general membership meeting
10 am to 4 pm Royal Gorge Railroad excursion with shop tour. Tour is full. There is a wait list.
10:15 am to 11:45 am “Safe Food Handling,” Pueblo County Health Department
10:15 am to 11:45 am “Use of an AED,” Pueblo Fire Department

Saturday, January 18

9 am to 10:15 am RPCNB (UMLER) Michael Voiland
10:30 am to Noon Federal updates, FRA, Amtrak presentations
10:30 am to 2pm Tour Pueblo Heritage Center and SDC Arts Center Extra cost item
Afternoon Seminars at Convention Center
1:30 pm to 3:00 pm “Marketing Techniques,” Greater Pueblo Chamber of Commerce
1:30 pm to 3:00 pm “Battle of the Toilets,” TBD
6 pm to 8 pm, Banquet with guest speaker, Brad Swartswelter,

Sunday, January 19

11:00 am to 12 noon “Tales of PV ownership and Life on the Road,” Kevin Moore
1:30 pm to 3:45 pm RPCA Safety Program
1:30 pm to 2:30 pm “Adlake Shade Rebuild,” Alex Nuzzo
2:45 pm to 3:45 pm “Money on the Siding: Airbnb Ideas for Car Owners,” Briana Nuzzo
2:45 pm to 3:45 pm “Heat It Up: Freeze Protection,” Ray Klauss

Monday, January 20

8:15 am to 4 pm Pikes Pike Cog Railway Tour is full. There is a wait list.

Updated Mailing Address:

RPCNB has a new mailing address. Please update your contact information accordingly: RPCNB PO BOX 12221 Roanoke, VA 24023

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RAILCAMP

Rail Camp is open to boys and girls entering grade nine to those graduating from twelfth grade. You do not need a sponsor or to belong to the NRHS. In the past, several Chapters and other organizations have sponsored campers. RPCA typically sponsors both male and female students, thanks to the generosity of our members and our insurance partner, United Shortline Insurance. We prefer to give priority to our members and members of Organizations belonging to RPCA. As you may imagine, camps fill up very quickly. Applications arrive quickly once the form is posted.

In 2024, we had a record number of applicants. This limited capacity for both camps. Full and partial scholarships were awarded to 18 campers. A camper's ability to pay the tuition is not considered in reviewing candidates.

The young people attending RailCamp are anxious to learn about all aspects of railroading. Many want to be engineers and run trains. They soon learn that there is so much more to the rail industry. Employment opportunities are part of the program. When visiting our partners, past campers, and now employees, give talks and demonstrate how they have found careers in railroading. RailCamp operates completely with volunteers. Directors, counselors, and support staff give their time and knowledge to make this opportunity available. It is one of the most successful programs offered by the NRHS. If you would like to be part of this experience, please get in touch with us at railcampnrhs@yahoo.com. Roy Wullich

Amtrak/Freight/Federal Agencies



Amtrak has released the first passenger car to wear the new Phase VII livery. The Viewliner I sleeping car was painted at its Beech Grove, Ind., shop and has since been moved to Chicago where it will soon enter service. The Iroquois River features the dark blue and red of the Phase VII livery separated by white arcs. It also debuts Amtrak's new class of service accent colors to aid customers in wayfinding along platforms; red for first class, light blue for business class, and green for coach class. Amtrak officials hope to eventually have all of its national service equipment in the new scheme.

Amtrak's executive leadership reported during the annual public meeting of Amtrak's Board of Directors in Seattle new records for ridership and revenues in Fiscal 2024. Management pointed to progress in fielding new trainsets, launching new and expanded services, and new infrastruc-

Amtrak said 32.8 million passengers traveled on Amtrak in Fiscal 2024, beating the previous year by 15 percent. Ticket revenue reached \$2.5 billion, a high-water mark for the railroad and nine percent higher than a year earlier.

Amtrak is now targeting this Spring for the long-delayed new Acela trainsets to enter service on the Northeast Corridor. The Cascades service in the Pacific Northwest will get the first of 83 originally ordered Siemens Airo trainsets in 2026, kicking off a five-year rollout period. Interior "refresh" modifications should be finished on the entire remaining fleet of Superliners by next December.

Amtrak will also be moving away from what has been characterized as 'flex dining.' In favor of a traditional dining menu for all passengers regardless of class. President-elect Donald Trump has selected David Fink to become administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration. Trump said Fink is a "fifth-generation railroader" who "will bring his 45+ years of transportation leadership and success, which will deliver the FRA into a new era of safety and technological innovation." Fink began his career with General Motors in the 1980s, and became Pan Am Railways president in 2006 after serving as executive vice president in 1998. He remained president through Pan Am's acquisition by CSX Transportation. Chuck Baker, president of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association, said in a statement that his organization is "excited to support" Fink's nomination. The U.S. Senate has confirmed four nominees for the Amtrak board of directors, the first time the legislative body has confirmed a majority of the 10-member board in almost a decade. David Capozzi, Elaine Clegg, Ronald Batory, and Lanhee Chen were confirmed by voice vote. Batory, a former Federal Railroad Administration administrator, and Clegg, CEO of the Boise, Idaho, area's Valley Regional Transit, were nominated by President Joe Biden in May. Capozzi, a retired federal executive, was renominated in January 2023. Chen, nominated in September, is a fellow in American Public Policy Studies at the Hoover Institution and Director of Domestic Public Policy Studies at Stanford University. Two members of the 2022 group — incumbent board chair Anthony Coscia and Normal, Ill., Mayor Christopher Koos — were confirmed earlier this year, along with Joel Szabat, a former Department of Transportation official who had served on the board. The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a bill requiring Amtrak to report annually to Congress on its progress in improving stations to stations with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The bill, previously passed by the Senate, now goes to President Joe Biden for his signature.



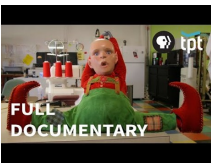
NS Heritage Unit

The glossy blue unit, AC44C6M No. 4851, made its debut in an NS video. The Tennessee, Alabama & Georgia traces its roots to 1891, when the Chattanooga Southern Railway completed its line from its namesake city in Tennessee to Gadsden, Ala. The railroad entered receivership in 1892 and was reorganized as the Chattanooga Southern Railway. The TAG emerged from the Chattanooga Southern's 1911 receivership. NS predecessor Southern Railway acquired the 87-mile TAG in 1971.

Norfolk Southern has unveiled its Tennessee, Alabama & Georgia Railway heritage locomotive.

Remember the Magic -Provided by Rick Krenski Tuesday, December 17, 2024 at 09:45:36 PM CST

It's now on YouTube: [Remember the Magic](#) | [Minnesota's Iconic Holiday Show](#) | [Full Documentary](#) ([youtube.com](#)) (Thank-You Santa Claus.)



Members Note: *If you have any photos for consideration for the 2026 Calendar, Please contact one of the Calendar Committee members as noted on Page 2!*

Railfan Events -Thanks to Perry's Hobbies

Northstar Chapter NRHS Monthly Meeting	Saturday February 8th 2025 6:15 pm - 8:45pm	Roseville Lutheran Church 1215 Roselawn Ave W Roseville MN 55113	FREE -Guests are Welcome
Granite City Train Show	Saturday, March 8 2025 9 am - 3 pm	River's Edge Convention Center 10 4th Ave. South St. Cloud, MN 56301	\$6 Adults, Kids 10 and under FREE
Three Rivers RR Club 42nd Annual Model Railroad & Miniature Show	Saturday, March 15 & Sunday, March 16 2025 Saturday 9 am - 5 pm Sunday 10 am - 3 pm	The Omni Center 255 Riders Club Rd., Onalaska, WI	\$8.00 for Adults(\$7.50 with Donation of a Non-Perishable Food Item.) Kids 11 & Under are Free (When accompanied by an Adult.)
Greater Upper Midwest Train Show & Sale	Saturday, March 29 2025 9 am - 2 pm	Century College West Campus Gymnasium 3401 Century Ave. N. White Bear Lake, MN 55110	\$7 Adults Kids 12 and under FREE
North Metro Model RR Club Flea Market	Saturday, April 12 , 2025 9am - 2 pm	VFW Club Coon Rapids 1919 Coon Rapids Blvd. Coon Rapids, MN 55433	Adults \$5, Kids 12 and under FREE
Newport Train Club Train Show	Saturday, April 26, 2025 9 am - 2 pm	Woodbury High School 2665 Woodlane Drive, Woodbury, MN 55125	\$6 or \$7 ???
Spring TCMRM Hobby Show and Sale	May 1, 2025 @ 9:00 am - 2:00 pm	MN State Fairgrounds – Education Building 372 Cosgrove Street Falcon Heights, MN 55108 United States	\$7

Northstar News
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Fridley MN 55432
Address Correction Requested

