



NRHS

Northstar News

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

Next Meeting Saturday March 8th 2025 Roseville Lutheran Church



*L: and R:
Amtrak Borealis at
SPUD –winter cold!
February 2025
-Brent Williams
Photos*



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Meeting Notice:

Saturday March 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: Roger Libra Video -Riding the NKP #765 in NE Indiana! A stunning fall foliage trip to Michigan!

An informal Dinner at Keys Restaurant -Lexington and Larpenteur Avenues at 4:15 pm March 8th 2025. Please join us in-person at Roseville Lutheran Church, Saturday March 8th 2025 at 6 pm. Meeting 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 March 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>

Here is the infor for the next Northstar Chapter meeting:

Meeting ID: 867 1091 0917 and

Passcode: 120832

Dial-in, audio only 507 473 4847

Northstar Chapter Officers and Staff

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Calendar Committee	Dawn Holmberg Jack Barbier Dan Meyer	dawn@dholmberg.com Jsbb1b@msn.com dan@meyer-family.net	763-784-8835 763-784-8835
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Newsletter Editor	Richard Tubbesing, Dan Meyer Dawn Holmberg	Tubbesing32a@yahoo.com Dawn@dholmberg.com	763-757-1304 763-784-8835

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 April 1st 2025.

Future programs in the works.

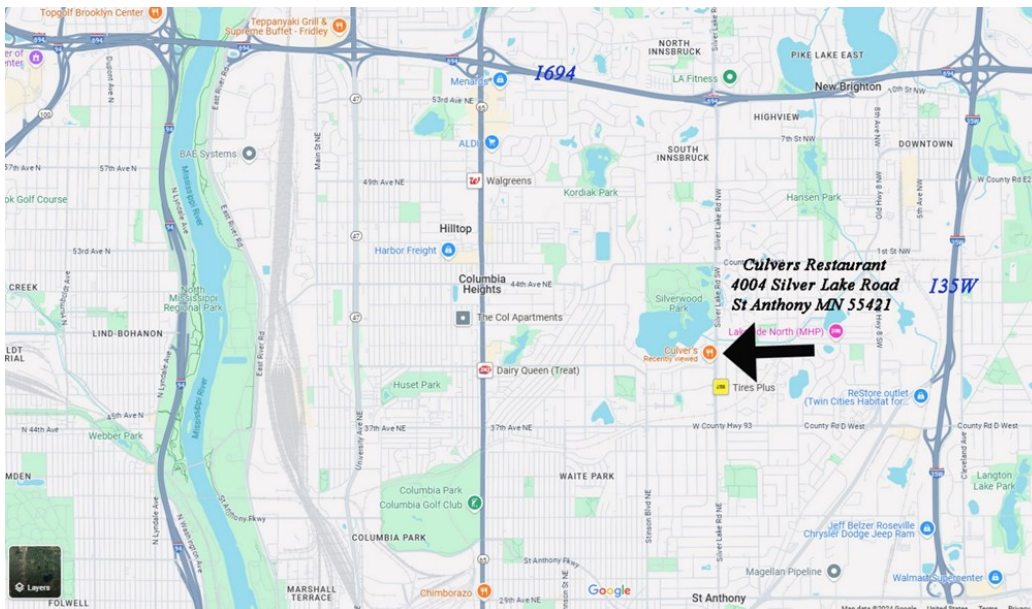
Kate Kratville Wrinn wife of Jim Wrinn and officer of Union Pacific -historical society photo show

-John Cartwright Historical RR and depot Slide Presentation

-Greg Smith Photos of the MN&S

-Joe Frischman M&NS Photo show

If you have a photo/video presentation of a trip you have took or a collection of photos you would like to show, Please contact John Goodman for scheduling. (see above officer list for contact info.)



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 March 26th,2025

Meeting Minutes February 8th 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 February 2025 Newsletter from the January 2025 meeting was floored. Dan asked if the meeting minutes were read in the newsletter by any of the attendees. There was no response. The motion was carried.

Trip Director Report.

The Trip report was given by John Goodman.

Dick Tubbesing stated that the Chinese steam engine was being tested last Fall. John replied that doesn't necessarily mean the engine will run for the 2025 season at the Boone and Scenic RR. It will be a very expensive trip to Boone Iowa if a bus was rented. Frank Willke suggested we rent a van for transportation. It was determined that due to insurance costs all the passengers would fall on the Drivers Insurance and the normal required liability Insurance would not be enough to cover all the passengers. John mentioned that the chapter needs a BOD meeting to further discuss this option.

John mentioned trip on Northstar. Dan stated we did that last year and had a decent turnout. We would have to do this trip during the work week. The Northstar does not run on weekends. Dan suggested we do a light Rail, Northstar trip after our monthly lunch gatherings at Culvers, the in this case we would meet for lunch in Bloomington and park at Bloomington Park and Ride then ride the light rail Target field and then ride the Northstar. The north-bound train in the afternoon leaves Minneapolis at 3:30 pm. John stated he will investigate this trip for June 2025. John stated we need to decide on the July and August activities. It has been mentioned we will have our picnic in Red Wing. An option for that is one can ride the Borealis to Red Wing and Return during the day. John stated we need to further discuss the Picnic site and the August trip and the BOD has to decide what we do for those events. Dan stated that the picnic would be the second Saturday in July. For the August Trip to rent a bus is over \$2000 to Boone and Scenic which makes it too expensive. A trip to Duluth where we ride share up to Duluth is a possibility. Dan Suggested we could go to one of the local Museums (MTM, Streetcar Museum, Gopher State Museum in Prior Lake MN) We have to discuss this a BOD meeting soon.

Treasurer's Report. The Treasurer report was given by John Chute. The Current membership renewals is now at 39 members. 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. 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 since the last meeting. Dan asked if there were any questions about the storage locker. Dan stated that the rent continues to go up. Now it is above \$200 a month. Richard Tubbesing stated that there are some VHS tapes in storage donated by Roger Libra that we can make DVD's of VHS tapes and eventually sell them at flea markets. Dan stated that the computers in storage need to be updated, and Dan will bring those home to get their software up to date. Russ Isbrandt asked if anything has come about of our service to use our projectors in storage to view movies for other people. Dan Stated that we will do that if anybody is interested. Dan stated we should put a notice in the newsletter more frequently. Dan asked what flea markets we would participate in. From the audience it was stated we only do the Fair Grounds and the Canterbury shows. Richard Tubbesing stated that the last Fair Grounds show was a failure with only on item sold, and a few calendars. We would do the Canterbury show as we have always done very well in sales in the past years. Greg Smith reported on future shows in the area. Dan stated that we don't see a need to do any of these shows but will talk about it at the next BOD meeting.

Calendar Report. Dawn Holmberg gave the Calendar report. Calendar Sales have been very good. Dawn says she has a few orders to process. Dawn stated that we are almost sold out of Calendars. The sales tax was paid to the state last Thursday. Money in the Paypal account was transferred to the Calendar bank account. Dan stated that in our next BOD meeting we will decide if we will do a 2026 calendar. Richard Tubbesing asked how many calendars have been sold. (of 425) Dawn she has to do some counting. Dan stated selling 400 to 450 per year we make four or five dollars per calendar. Dawn stated we occasionally get an additional donation on Calendar orders. Dan stated if there are any submissions of photos for consideration for the calendar to contact him, Dawn, or John Goodman about their submission.

Newsletter Report. The newsletter report was given by Richard Tubbesing. The cost for printing for the year 2024 totaled about \$850. Compared to 2023, the cost has jumped close to 28%. 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 April 1st. We now charge an extra \$7.50 for membership if members want the Black and White copy. Richard Tubbesing stated that the color newsletter has more content and in color. He also stated if a member has an address change you must contact any BOD member to have the newsletter address updated, and that includes Email Addresses. 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. Dawn just finished recording the next Conference at Johnson City Tennessee in May. The conference activities and Schedule are on the NRHS web site. The NRHS News for February will be coming out shortly. The Winchester Chapter Changed their name to the Northern Shenandoa chapter. Dawn stated that she has updated to make to the NRHS website. Dawn stated she has not heard when and where the NRHS convention is.

WEB Report. Dan Meyer gave the web report. Jim Shepard asked Dan what the program was, and Dan had not updated the newsletter to our web site. Dan then updated the newsletter to the web site. Updates of chapter meetings and news have been posted on Facebook. Northstar News updated on the chapter website.

Cheer Committee. John Goodman is feeling much better. Glen Holmberg gave a report on Dave Norman. Glen also reported on when the Celebration of life for Bob Clarkson will be held. John stated that Bob Clarkson joined the Chapter when the Chapter was first forming. Bob had worked for the CB&Q in St Louis before moving to the Twin Cities. Glen Holmberg stated that he talked to Dave Norman's attorney and his attorney stated that he had been moved a facility in Stillwater. John Goodman stated that Ed Johnson called him and has a health problem.

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Old Business to report. Dan stated we have endorsed the grant request for the Finlayson Depot and are waiting for an answer. We are planning to meet on the 4th Wednesday of the month at Culvers in St Anthony, the next lunch will be at 1pm on Wednesday February 26th as posted in the February newsletter.

New Business Report.

Dan stated we will have a BOD meeting at 12:30 Thursday Feb 13.

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

Programs: Ross Hammond did the program and was a history of RR lines in the Twin Cities, (It was very well received!) and Roger Libra will present a video of a trip to NE Indiana and riding behind the NKP #765 at the March 2025 Meeting. John Cartwright will present a slide show from his collection at the April Meeting. John Goodman stated that he is hoping to have a show by Mrs Jim Wrinn in May. Greg Smith and Joe Frischman are possibilities for programs in future.

Frank Willke stated that the Los Angeles fires are all put out.

Editors Note: We have been informed by John Goodman that the Lake Superior RR Museum Engine #332 needs work and depending on getting FRA approval, a schedule for operation will be out around May 2025 this year.

Respectfully Submitted by Secretary Richard Tubbesing

Chair Koznick Advances Bill to Terminate Northstar Commuter Rail Operations

Northstar Rail To Be Terminated?

Metro News - **From:** Frederick Krenske <rick@usjet.net> Monday, February 24, 2025 at 09:57:36 AM CST

Sunday, February 23, 2025

ST. PAUL, MN – House Transportation Finance and Policy Chair Jon Koznick (R-Lakeville) is leading the charge to discontinue NorthStar Commuter Rail operations after 18 years of huge financial losses and now near zero ridership. At Monday's committee hearing, his bill which formally requests federal approval to shut down the NorthStar line, will be sent to the General Register. "NorthStar has been an over \$320 million failed experiment in commuter transit," said Chair Koznick. "Taxpayers have been forced to subsidize a rail line that continues to underperform year after year, and it's time to stop wasting \$11 million annually on a project that simply doesn't work to reduce congestion or move people."

Under the bill, the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) would be required to request approval from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to terminate NorthStar operations. Additionally, the legislation stipulates that Minnesota will not repay the federal government for past NorthStar investments, removing a key financial obstacle to ending the line.

While ridership has never met expectations, it plummeted from 767,000 in 2019 to just 275 daily riders in 2022. Chair Koznick reiterated that transit funding should be directed toward more cost-effective and practical transportation solutions.

"This bill puts an end to 18 years of wasteful spending and forces the Met Council to do what's right for taxpayers," said Koznick. "Instead of continuing to pour money into a failing system, we need to focus on solutions that actually serve commuters efficiently and affordably."

If the FTA grants the request, MnDOT and the Met Council will be required to submit a detailed plan to wind down NorthStar operations within 90 days.

The bill is expected to be passed out of the Transportation Finance and Policy Committee on Monday and move to the general register for consideration on the House floor.

State Legislator Seeks to Kill Twin Cities' Northstar Commuter Rail, Which Could be Eliminated Regardless (updated)

By Trains Staff | February 24, 2025

State, local agencies say they're considering switch to bus service



ST. PAUL, Minn. — The chair of the transportation committee in Minnesota's House of Representatives is leading a legislative effort to kill the Northstar commuter rail service — which could be destined for replacement with bus service anyway.

HF 269, introduced by Rep. Jon Koznick (R-Lakeville, Minn.) — chair of the Transportation Finance and Policy Committee — seeks permission from the Federal Transit Administration to discontinue the service without repaying the \$85 million in federal funds used to build the service. It would require the state transportation commissioner and Metropolitan Council — the Twin Cities-area governmental body that oversees Metro Transit, the Northstar operator — to submit a plan for that discontinuation within 90 days of receiving FTA permission.

Koznick, in a Sunday, Feb. 23, [press release](#), called it "an over \$320 million failed experiment in commuter transit. ... it's time to stop wasting \$11 million annually on a project that simply doesn't work to reduce congestion or move people."

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A Northstar commuter train heads northwest from Minneapolis, Minn., in August 2020. A state legislator seeks to kill the service. David Lassen

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But today (Feb. 24), the Metropolitan Council and state Department of Transportation announced they're studying replacing the 40-mile commuter rail line with bus service. [Minnesota Public Radio reports](#) the agencies said in a joint statement that [a recent study](#) "makes it clear we can provide more cost-effective transit service in the corridor currently being served by Northstar Commuter Rail. ... We must be willing to be flexible and innovative to offer better service while saving dollars. We have jointly started the process to explore transitioning to bus service in this corridor."

The council and state DOT say they'll work with the federal government as well as BNSF Railway, contract operator of Northstar, as they explore the potential switch.

"In the coming months, we will have more information, including timeline information and projected future savings," their statement said. "For Minnesotans who currently utilize this service, we are committed to working with you to ensure you have access to high-quality transportation in this corridor."

Koznick — whose district is south of the Twin Cities, while the Northstar line runs to the northwest — previously sought to shut down the service in 2021. The state Senate proposed a similar bill in 2022.

He has also introduced a bill, [HF749](#), that would require the service to be killed if it carries less than 450,000 people in any six-month period. In its best single ridership year, 2019, Northstar carried about 767,000 riders.

Following the pandemic, daily ridership fell from 2,455 daily riders in 2019 to 275 in 2022, prompting the study to consider service options. Ridership rebounded somewhat in 2023, to about 600 riders per day.

Northstar currently operates four weekday round trips on a 40-mile, seven-station route between Minneapolis and Big Lake, Minn. The operation was initially intended to serve St. Cloud, another 27 miles northwest of Big Lake, but was cut back because of a lack of funding.

— Updated at 8:25 p.m. CT with announcement of possible switch to bus service.

Replacement of the Robert Street Railroad Bridge in St Paul February 2025



**Union Pacific Notice of Replacement
of the St Paul Robert Street Lift Bridge.
Jan 8th 2025 Provided by Leigh Neprude
photo-Bob Ball**



Legal Notices

NOTICE OF PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING PROPOSED REPLACEMENT OF THE UPRR ROBERT STREET RAILROAD LIFT BRIDGE AT MILE POST 820 OVER THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER:

The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) has proposed replacing the Robert Street Railroad Lift Bridge that spans the Mississippi River between the Robert Street North bridge and the Wabasha Street South bridge on the south side of downtown St. Paul, Minnesota. The rail bridge was historically known as the Chicago Great Western Lift Bridge. The removal and replacement of the Robert Street Railroad Lift Bridge qualifies as an undertaking under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA) (54 U.S.C. Section 300101 et seq.) because it requires federal permits and approval. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), as the lead federal agency for Section 106, has determined the bridge eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Because the rail bridge is a historic property, the USCG has found that replacing it would be an adverse effect under the NHPA. The USCG is continuing consultation with interested parties under Section 106. However, the USCG acknowledges that the views of the public are essential to informed Federal decision-making. In compliance with 36 Code of Federal Regulations 800.6, the USCG is providing this opportunity for members of the public to express their views on resolving adverse effects of the undertaking. Public comments or requests for further information, including requests for copies of the draft Memorandum of Agreement and technical reports produced for the undertaking, can be sent to: Commander, Eighth Coast Guard District, Bridge Office, 1222 Spruce Street, Suite 2.102D, St. Louis, Missouri, 63103-2832; or via email to Peter Sambor at Peter.J.Sambor@uscg.mil. Comments are due no later than close of business on Thursday, February 6, 2025.



Weather Leads Amtrak to Cancel Empire Builder, Borealis, Adirondack

By Trains Staff | February 17, 2025

Builder has been cancelled three consecutive days; VIA dealing with corridor delays



Amtrak's eastbound Borealis, operating with Superliner equipment, makes its way through Brookfield, Wis., at dusk on Feb. 12, 2025. The train has been cancelled in both directions on Feb. 17, 2025. David Lassen

CHICAGO — Amtrak has cancelled *Empire Builder* departures for a third straight day, the company announced early today (Monday, Feb. 17). Also cancelled: both directions of the *Borealis* between Chicago and St. Paul and both directions of the *Adirondack* between Montreal and Albany Rensselaer, N.Y. "Impending severe weather conditions" are cited for all three trains, according to [the Amtrak Alerts feed](#) on social media.

Buses will be substituted for the *Borealis* in both directions between St. Paul and Milwaukee. The Minneapolis-St. Paul area is under [a cold weather advisory](#) for wind chills as low as minus-38, with an extreme cold warning for wind chills as low as minus-42 tonight, according to the National Weather Service. As of 7:30 a.m. today, the actual temperature was minus-13 with a forecast high of minus-2, [according to AccuWeather](#). Montreal is dealing with the final stages of a storm that has brought 15 inches of snow, CTV News reports. It led to Sunday evening cancellations of VIA Rail Canada trains between Montreal and Quebec City trains, as well as "significant delays elsewhere." Delays will continue today, VIA says, with [CTV reporting](#) early trains in the Toronto-Quebec corridor were operating up to 2 hours late. Environment Canada has issued [a blowing snow advisory](#) that says visibility could be reduced to near zero in places, with winds up to 70 kilometers an hour (43 mph).

Save the Date! From: Railroading Heritage of Midwest America <info@rrhma.com>
Saturday, February 8, 2025 at 09:16:36 AM CST



Exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the restoration of Challenger #3985 & #5511! Explore the intricate process up close, and have all your questions answered by our knowledgeable staff.



SILVIS TRAIN DAYS & CLASSIC CARS

PRESENTED BY

FRIDAY APRIL 25

- Open House
- Dinner - With the steam crew!
- Night time photo shoot - Featuring ATSF #537 & UPRR #6936!

SATURDAY APRIL 26

- Steam & Diesel Train Rides
- RR Speeder Rides
- Classic Car Show
- Model Trains
- Food Trucks ...and more!

TICKETS ON SALE SOON!

WWW.RRHMA.COM

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Join Railroading Heritage of Midwest America (RRHMA) for an unforgettable Train Day & Classic Car Show on the evening of April 25 and all day on April 26, 2025! This family-friendly event is packed with excitement, delicious food, and unique experiences celebrating the rich history of railroading and classic automobiles.

Attendees will have the unique opportunity to enjoy train rides behind a historic steam locomotive, food trucks, face painters, and a variety of vendors.

For model train enthusiasts, there will be an impressive model train layout on display. Additionally, guests can take guided tours of the RRHMA shop, where the iconic and are currently being rebuilt, among other great pieces of railroad history.

For more information copy this URL to your Browser: <https://rrhma.com/silvis-train-day/>



FRIENDS OF THE 261

From: Friends of the 261 <store@261.com>

Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 09:38:51 AM CST

Subject: Help Us Keep the Super Dome Rolling!

Help Us Keep the Super Dome Rolling!



As we wrapped up 2024, we're excited about the future of our fleet—especially the much-loved **Super Dome #53**. This winter, we're undertaking critical upgrades to modernize and improve this historic railcar, ensuring it remains a comfortable and enjoyable experience for years to come. But we can't do it without your support!

Our ambitious plans include:

- ✓ **New refrigeration** in the upstairs bar
- ✓ **Kitchen upgrades**, including a new commercial convection oven
- ✓ **Multipurpose enhancements** to the lower lounge
- ✓ **A major HVAC system upgrade** for better climate control

The biggest challenge? Replacing the aging **HVA/C system**—a costly but necessary investment to keep the Super Dome running smoothly. We're working with industry experts to ensure it meets the highest standards of efficiency and comfort. But that's not all. To stay compliant with **Amtrak standards**, we also need to perform a **PC2A inspection**, which means **lifting the car off its trucks**, having them thoroughly inspected and serviced, and ensuring everything is in top shape for private charters.

These critical upgrades come at a significant cost, and **we need your help!** Every donation—big or small—goes directly toward keeping this historic railcar on the tracks.

Join us in preserving the legacy of the **Super Dome**. **Donate today** and be a part of this exciting journey!

Metro News - Mid-Continent Museum News Thursday, February 6, 2025 -Rick Krenski

Mid-Continent Museum Seeks Funds for Return of C&NW No. 1385.

[By Trains Staff](#) | February 6, 2025 provided by Rick Krenski

Restoration of Alco 4-6-0, long away from North Freedom site, aims for operation in 2026.

NORTH FREEDOM, Wis. — The Mid-Continent Railway Museum has launched a fundraising effort to return its celebrated steam locomotive, Chicago & North Western 4-6-0 No. 1385, to the museum to continue the effort to restore the 1907 Alco to operation. The locomotive, out of service for more than a quarter-century and away from the museum since 2013, is currently at a contract repair facility without rail access. Plans call for it to be lifted by two cranes onto a heavy-haul semi-trailer for a 6-mile move to a siding where it will be placed on a flatcar and transported by the Wisconsin & Southern back to the museum. Cranes will then place it back on museum rails.

An update on the museum website says the move is estimated to cost about \$80,000. Once returned to North Freedom, final assembly and testing can begin, with the goal of returning the locomotive to operation in 2026. The exact timeframe for the move is currently being determined but is projected to be in mid to late spring.

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No. 1385 is near Port Washington, Wis., on a Milwaukee-Green Bay ferry move, June 28, 1984. The Mid-Continent Railway Museum is raising funds to return the locomotive to the museum and complete its restoration to operating condition. J. David Ingles

“While we appreciate the public’s enthusiasm to see 1385’s progress,” says project manager Mike Wahl, “the contractor shop where the 1385 work is taking place is a private business, not a museum. It is not open for public tours.” People who just show up hoping to see the 1385 will be turned away, he says. “If you wish to partake in future 1385 volunteer work sessions, consider joining Mid-Continent as a member.” Work still to be completed once the locomotive is returned to the museum, Wahl says, includes hydro and steam tests for the boiler; installing pistons and valves; jacketing; connecting the locomotive and tender; and numerous small details.

No. 1385 is one of 325 class R-1 locomotives built for the C&NW for fast freight and secondary passenger service. Retired by the railroad in 1956, it was purchased by the museum for \$2,600 in 1961. Listed on both the state and National Register of Historic Places, the locomotive is one of only eight preserved C&NW steam engines. It extensively toured the Midwest in the two decades before it went out of service in 1998.

To donate to the 1385 project, or for more information, [visit the museum website](#).



Help is Needed to Bring the C&NW #1385 Home Again! From John Goodman



We are now up to \$18,935 on our *Bring the #1385 Home Fund*! We still need around \$61,064 to reach our goal of \$80,000 in order to transport the steam locomotive back to Mid-Continent.

As most of you know, the locomotive has been out of service for a little over 26 years and away from the museum since 2013. Finally, in 2025, we plan on bringing #1385 back to Mid-Continent.

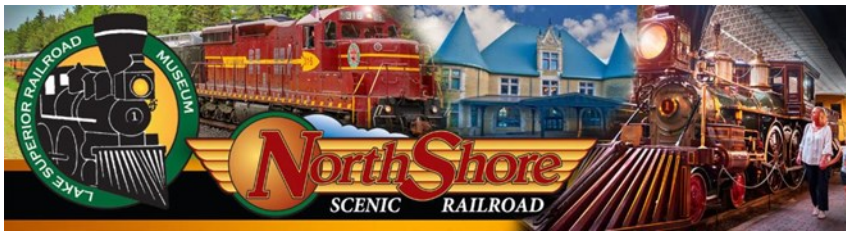
The plan is to move the engine by truck and load it onto a flat car. From there, the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad will bring the engine back by rail. This move will include three crane lifts, transportation and securing. With the information we have now our latest estimate, including all required work, is around \$80,000. Once it's back home, final assembly and testing can begin. Our goal is to have #1385 ready for operation in 2026. Please help support the Bring the #1385 Home Fund.

If you would like to donate online, please click the button below. Donations can also be made by phone or mail. (If donating with a check, please write 'Bring the #1385 Home Fund' in the memo line.) For assistance, contact our office staff at 608-522-4261.

Sincerely,
Andy Spinelli
President
Mid-Continent Railway Museum

Donate Here!

Donate to
Mid-Continent Railway Historical Society, Inc. ToolTip
Your donation will help offset the cost of shipping C&NW 1385 from the restoration shop to Mid-Continent Railway Museum in 2025 [One-Time](#)/[Weekly](#)/[Monthly](#) \$ 25USD \$ 50USD \$ 100USD or Other, [Donate with PayPal](#)
[Or Donate with Debit or Credit Card](#)



NEWS February 2025 | #121

This is news about events and other happenings at the Lake Superior Railroad Museum and North Shore Scenic Railroad in Duluth, Minnesota



Jazz at the Depot Every Saturday

Take the A-Train, every Saturday at the [Lake Superior Railroad Museum](#) with Jazz at the Depot. Our own Depot band plays music in the museum from 3-6pm every Saturday all winter. Enjoy a full bar, hot dogs, popcorn, and other refreshments while you listen to the classic tunes.



Lets Move, at the Depot

This Saturday, April 15th, enjoy discounted admission to the railroad museum, and the return of a free, great event for kids and families upstairs in the Great Hall. "Let's Move at the Depot" is a partnership between the Young Athletes Foundation and The [St. Louis County Depot](#)

Trains & Toddlers: March 10

A monthly event in the Lake Superior Railroad Museum on select Mondays, special for the little ones. With special programming, discounted admission, and free for members.

Membership at an all time high!

Become a member of the Museum . The Lake Superior Railroad Museum currently has more members than we ever have. This is thanks to the hard work of many volunteers and staff who have built the museum into the widely recognized and respected organization it is. If you're not a member yet, please consider joining.

Metro News - St Paul LRT Central Station Thursday, February 13, 2025 -Rick Krenske

ST PAUL: From Katie Galioto via *Star Tribune*, **VERBATIM:** “An Indianapolis-based developer wants to transform downtown St. Paul’s Central Station, with ambitions to build 300 apartments, 10,000 square feet of retail space and public plazas on the site of the notorious light rail stop. The St. Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), and the Metropolitan Council are poised to grant **Flaherty & Collins** tentative developer status for the 1.66-acre site, bisected by the Green Line. City boosters have pegged redeveloping the property — which spans most of a block between E. Fourth and Fifth streets and Cedar and Minnesota streets — as key to the success of downtown revitalization efforts.”

Metro News - Latest SWLRT News -Rick Krenski Monday, February 10, 2025

SWLRT: via *Star Tribune*, **VERBATIM:** “The fifth and final report from a state watchdog agency detailing cost overruns and delays related to construction of the \$2.9 billion Southwest light-rail line will likely be released this spring, an effort taking far longer than expected. The report will include a financial audit of the controversial project by the state’s Office of the Legislative Auditor, which launched its probe in the summer of 2021. More than 80% of the line between Minneapolis and Eden Prairie has been built, with passenger service expected to begin in 2027.”

Metro News - February 19 in Railroad History: Milwaukee Road –Provided by Rick Krenske

February 19 in Railroad History: Milwaukee Road

From: [Joseph Lechner](#) Date: Wed, 19 Feb 2025 03:14:31 PST

After the 1970 merger that created **Burlington Northern** from the GN, NP, CB&Q and SP&S, the **Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad** struggled like little David competing against Goliath. In the mid 1970s, the CMStP&P courted several prospective merger partners (including Union Pacific), without success. Forty years ago today, Milwaukee Road was sold to the Soo Line. The Milwaukee Road inspired at least five coveted toy train classics. First came its five legendary class EP-2 electrics, the "Bi-Polars", which hauled passengers through the Cascades beginning in 1919. Numerous tinplate Bi-Polar replicas were made in both 0 gauge and Standard gauge.



0 gauge #254 (circa 1926) Lone Star Trains



Standard gauge #381E invaluable.com

Next came four A-class streamlined Atlantics in 1935. Both Lionel and American Flyer made 0 gauge **Hiawatha** passenger sets in the 1930s. Lionel created a full 0 scale version in 2006.



Lionel #6-38094 (2006)



Milwaukee Road (#2338) was one of three road names that Lionel offered on its GP7 model when it was introduced in 1955. The upper half of the body was painted black, and the lower half was unpainted orange plastic. On the earliest models, lower half of the cab was left orange, but the rubber-stamped logo did not adhere well to unpainted plastic. Subsequent models had an all-black cab, which solved the logo issue and probably also saved an extra masking step. Black-cab #2338s are common. #2338s with orange striped cab are rare and command four-figure prices.



two photos: Cornucopia of Toy Trains, courtesy of Craig Chidester

One of the most coveted postwar Lionel F3s was #2378, which was decorated in gray / orange Milwaukee Road colors. #2378 was cataloged only in 1956, and it came in only one set, #2273W, which listed for \$85 but can command up to \$7000 in like-new condition today. Greenberg considers it one of the top ten most valuable postwar outfits. This diesel's paint scheme was supposed to include a yellow pinstripe along the roof line. Some #2378s have it and some do not, creating a collectible variation

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Cornucopia of Toy Trains, courtesy of Craig Chidester

In 1957, Lionel offered an electric locomotive decorated for The Milwaukee Road. Its body shell was that of a New Haven EP-5, but #2351 did superficially resemble the twelve "Little Joe" electrics which Milwaukee Road acquired in 1949-1950. Prototype photo of the bi-polar (*above*) shows that Milwaukee Road electrics did



Dakota Paul

"If it's orange, buy it" used to be an adage among toy train collectors, possibly originating with Louis Hertz. Prewar tinsplate came painted in a variety of colors, and orange was usually among the more desirable and valuable ones. Could this explain why the official TCA logo is orange?

A common feature of the five Milwaukee engines discussed above is that orange was one of their dominant colors. If the "buy orange" slogan prompted you to collect any of these models, it was probably good advice. Joseph Lechner



Metro News - February 15 in Railroad History: Northern Pacific Railroad

Saturday, February 15, 2025 at 09:54:20 AM CST



Construction began in July 1870. The first spike that was driven in 1870 would be pulled up thirteen years later. Former President Ulysses S. Grant drove it in a final-spike ceremony at Gold Creek, Montana Territory in September 1883.



February 1870 Minnesota Digital Library

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The **Northern Pacific Railroad** was chartered by an act of Congress on July 2, 1864 to construct a railroad from the Great Lakes to Puget Sound. Ground-breaking took place at Carlton, Minnesota (21 miles west of Duluth) 155 years ago today.



Sample Stock Certificate -Labarrie Galleries



Henry Villard -Wikipedia

This Northern Pacific stock certificate (issued 1881) was signed by **Anthony J. Thomas** (1826–1903). Thomas managed railroad portfolios in the banking firm of Drexel, Morgan & Company. He was elected vice-president of the Northern Pacific in 1881. **Henry Villard** was NP president at that time.

NP bought the **Superior and St. Croix Railroad** in July 1896 and reorganized it as the **Northern Pacific Railway**. The NP Railway then acquired the NP Railroad on September 1 of that year.



NP crossed the Sheyenne River on this 3800' steel trestle near Valley City ND. Linn Westcott Trains

Class L-5 0-6-0 (Rogers Locomotive Company, 1899) began its career as #74 on the Saint Paul and Duluth Railroad, then became #924 on the Northern Pacific Railway. The switcher was retired from Inland Empire Paper Company (Spokane WA) in 1969 and donated to the Puget Sound Railway Historical Association. PSRHA became the **Northwest Railway Museum** in 1999. NRM restored #924 in the early 2000s. It is reputedly the only operational Northern Pacific steam locomotive.

NRM operates 2-hour excursions on a 5.5—mile right-of-way donated by Burlington Northern. Round trips depart from either Snoqualmie or North Bend WA. Fares are \$28 (adult) or \$14 (children 2–12). Most runs are diesel-powered. #924 operates 4–5 times per year. Museum's web site does not specify when the train will be steam-powered. <https://trainmuseum.org/> -Joseph Lechner

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

Bidding Process Begins for Roundhouse at Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania

By Trains Staff | February 22, 2025 | Last updated on February 24, 2025

Construction set to begin this year on structure to house six PRR steam locomotives



The bidding process has begun for construction of this roundhouse at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania in Strasburg. Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

STRASBURG, Pa. — A bid process has begun for the building of a six-stall, 16,000-square-foot roundhouse at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania to house six Pennsylvania Railroad steam locomotives. The Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission announced the beginning of the process on Friday, Feb. 21, 2025. Construction will be funded through Pennsylvania capital project funds and will be managed by the commonwealth’s Department of General Services. Construction is expected to begin this year with completion targeted for 2026.

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[A press release](#) says “a major source of inspiration” for the project was a Reading Co. roundhouse that once stood in Cressona, Pa., and that the classic fan-shaped design proved to be the best solution to the museum’s space constraints. When completed, the structure will house PRR class M1b No. 6755, a 4-8-2 built at PRR’s Juniata Shops in 1930; K4s Pacific No. 3750, a 4-6-2 built at Juniata Shops in 1920; L1s No. 520, a Baldwin 2-8-2 built in 1916; E6s No. 460, a 4-4-2 built at Juniata Shops in 1914; H10s No. 7688, a Lima 2-8-0 built in 1915; and B6sb No. 1670, an 0-6-0 switcher built by PRR in 1916. All but No. 450 are currently displayed outdoors. More detailed information on the locomotives is available [at the museum website](#). More information on the bidding process [is available here](#).

Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum to Debut Bessemer & Lake Erie 2-10-4

By [Trains Staff](#) | February 20, 2025

First public showing for 1944 Baldwin product set for Member Day in March



SUGARCREEK, Ohio — The Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum is preparing for the first public viewing of the newest locomotive on display in its collection, Bessemer & Lake Erie 2-10-4 No. 643.

That viewing will come March 29 as part of the museum’s Member Day, to be held from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. A membership, needed to attend, is available at [this page on the museum website](#). The locomotive, built by Baldwin in 1944, was purchased by Age of Steam in 2019. It took more than four years to be moved from its prior home at McKees Rocks, Pa., where it had at one time been restored to operating condition, but never ran — in part because of operating limits created by its length and 308-ton weight — and eventually ended up in a location without a rail connection.

The Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum will have the first public showing of Bessemer & Lake Erie 2-10-4 No. 643 in March. Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum

After the purchase by Age of Steam, the locomotive was disassembled into hundreds of smaller parts to ease its move, with the three largest parts — the tender, boiler, and frame with driving wheels — moved by truck or train to Sugarcreek.

Delivery of all parts was completed on Feb. 16, 2024; reassembly and cosmetic restoration was completed in November 2024, with the locomotive placed in stall No. 5 of the roundhouse. It joins 22 other steam locomotives in the museum collection. More information on the Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum is available [at its website](#) and on its [Facebook page](#).

Reading & Northern Sets Schedule for 2025 Pottsville Excursions

By [Trains Staff](#) | February 20, 2025

Five trips planned to community featuring nation’s oldest brewery



A Reading & Northern awaits departure from Pottsville, Pa., during a 2024 excursion. The trains arrive next to the community’s Outdoor Market. Reading & Northern

PORT CLINTON, Pa. — The Reading & Northern Railroad has announced its 2025 schedule for excursions to Pottsville, Pa., with one such trip a month planned, beginning in May.

The Pottsville trips, from Reading Outer Station, feature the Pottsville Outdoor Market, featuring fresh produce, specialty food and beverages, and local arts and crafts; the Yuengling Brewery, America’s oldest; Jerry’s Classic Car Museum; and the Schuylkill County Historical Society Museum. The brewery and museums offer admission discounts to excursion passengers.

Trips will operate on Saturdays: May 17, June 14, July 12, Aug. 16, and Sept. 20. Trains depart Reading Outer Station at 10 a.m. and take about an hour to reach Pottsville, with return trips departing at 4 p.m. Tickets, priced at \$39, are now available at the Reading & Northern passenger website (under “Special event tickets”) or by phone at (610) 562-2102.

New Non-profit Paves Way for Railroading and Preservation's Future

By Lucas Iverson | February 18, 2025

Next Generation Railroaders is dedicated to mentoring and inspiring the next generation of railroad enthusiasts and professionals



Next Generation Railroaders is dedicated to mentoring and inspiring the next generation of railroad enthusiasts and professionals, such as student fireman Austin Goodwin at the Strasburg Rail Road. Oren B. Helbok



Conductor Max Harris works at the Everett Railroad in Hollidaysburg, Pa., on Oct. 28, 2023. Oren B. Helbok

Railroad-related non-profit organizations are typically dedicated to preservation and educating others about the past. One such non-profit, however, is focused on the future of railroading and rail preservation: Next Generation Railroaders (NGR).

Bridging the Gap, Passing the Torch

The future of both industries depends on the next generation, but transferring knowledge and passion isn't always straightforward.

"When someone either leaves the industry, passes away or has a change in career, all that knowledge base has always been going with them," said Next Generation Railroaders Vice President and Treasurer Hanna Brooks. "There's a pretty big disparity between folks who are 18 to 45, and folks who lie above that age range. But we also see similar disparities regarding gender, race, and ability.

These concerns brought together industry professionals a couple of years ago to discuss the future of the workforce and volunteer base. These discussions coincided with specific episodes of [The Roundhouse](#) podcast, which covers a wide range of railroad-related topics, such as sexism and succession planning in rail preservation. Podcast creator and host [Nick Ozorak](#) was also part of the talks and serves as NGR's president.

Through these conversations, the group wondered: How can railroading knowledge and interest be effectively passed down to the next generation? The answer, they believe, lies in creating a welcoming space where young individuals can learn, network, and pursue their own path in railroading and rail preservation with an enthusiastic mindset.

NGR was incorporated as a Pennsylvania-based non-profit on Sept. 13, 2023.

The organization made its public debut during the January 2024 Amherst Hobby Show, using its soft launch to build relationships with other individuals and organizations. Now, a year later, NGR is ready to roll.

The First Steps

NGR's initial programs will begin in early March. Monthly webinars, called Virtual Mentor Deep Dives, will be available at no cost when [signing up on the NGR website](#). These 45-minute sessions will be recorded and later archived in the organization's educational database for future reference.

"We'll be taking a topic that can be daunting in some regards, such as OSHA safety violations, and bring them down to a place where we can have a moderated conversation [by NGR members] in which a mentee starts 'downloading' that part of the mentor's brain," said Brooks.

The webinars also emphasize relationship-building. A diverse group of mentors will share expertise, and offer attendees networking opportunities and guidance. "People new to the industry will be getting exposure to influential members of the industry, allowing mentees to begin forming their own network," said Brooks. "Critically, it provides context for who to contact about a question or opportunity. As we start having these webinars and exploring topics, now you'll have point people you can go and contact."

NGR officials have been blown away by the support and excitement from those in the industries so far. "We get emails all the time saying, 'Hey, I had this really awesome internship and so badly want to distribute it to a broader audience of people who are interested,'" said Brooks. "We've been really impressed by the drive and passion that we've seen from people. Then there's respecting and making sure that what we give back to them is worthwhile and that there is good within it."

Next Steps for Next Generation Railroaders

Looking ahead to 2025, NGR has a three-event lineup of programs planned. In addition to the Virtual Mentor Deep Dives, NGR plans to host virtual "coffee hour" networking sessions and small-group mentoring with one mentor to five mentees.

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Board members of Next Generation Railroaders meet at the 2025 Amherst Hobby Show. From left to right: Alden Burns, Hanna Brooks (Vice President & Treasurer), Rick Kfoury, Casey Palumbo, Nick Ozorak (President), Mark "Hyce" Huber

"We envision [the third program] like a database where we chat about those shared spaces that we're interested in and push the learning on a more 1:1 level," Brooks explained. "Kind of what's been traditionally done in the rail yard by passing along that information and connectivity." These programs aim to pave the way for future live events featuring hands-on activities at selected facilities. With a focus on the future, NGR will be seeking input from both the previous and next generations of railroaders. "We want people to tell us what they want," she said. "We want to be serving both mentors and mentees. We're only seven people [on the board of directors], we can't possibly know all of the ways that would benefit the industries for us to exist and teach. More perspectives are always good."

Visit [Next Generation Railroaders website](#) for more information and how to take part as a mentor or mentee.

Vicksburg, Mich., Station Added to National Register of Historic Places

By Trains Staff | February 19, 2025

Structure was built in 1904 to serve PRR, Grand Trunk predecessors



The Vicksburg, Mich., Union Depot has been added to the National Register of Historic Places. Michigan Economic Development Corp.

VICKSBURG, Mich. — Vicksburg's Union Depot, a brick and stone structure dating to 1904 and built to serve predecessors to the Pennsylvania and Grand Trunk railroads, is among 11 state locations added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2024, according to [the Michigan Economic Development Corp.](#)

The station in Kalamazoo County, which last saw passenger service in 1971, was purchased by the village of Vicksburg in 1983, and opened as a museum in 1990. It is now part of the Vicksburg Historic Village.

"The National Register recognition of the Vicksburg Union Depot is a remarkable achievement for our small community," Leah Milowe, museum administrator and curator at the Vicksburg Historical Society and Historic Village, said in a press release. "Beyond the unique architecture and historical significance of the Vicksburg Union Depot, I see this designation as a testament to the dedicated volunteers who preserved the building and transformed it into a community museum and cornerstone of Vicksburg history."

The station interior has been restored to showcase the area's railroad history, and displays outside include a former Grand Trunk caboose. The village currently sees about 60 freight trains a day, according to the Vicksburg Historical Society. More information is available at [the Society website](#).

News Photo: Diesel from Durango & Silverton Arrives at East Broad Top

By David Lassen | February 13, 2025

80-ton H.K. Porter locomotive will back up steam power, help expansion efforts



A 1946 H.K. Porter diesel arrives at the East Broad Top Railroad on Feb. 13, 2025, following its acquisition from the Durango & Silverton. East Broad Top

ROCKHILL FURNACE, Pa. — A H.K. Porter diesel acquired from the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad has arrived at the East Broad Top Railroad to provide backup power for EBT operations and support expansion efforts. The 80-ton, 3-foot-gauge engine was built in 1946 and operated on US Gypsum's railroad in Plaster City, Calif., until 1979, then worked for a number of tourist railroads before arriving at the Durango & Silverton in 2015. Follow Trains News Wire for a more complete report on EBT's new acquisition.

Private Car ‘Sugarcreek’ Donated to Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum

By Trains Staff | February 12, 2025

Former Missouri Pacific business car had belonged to museum founder Jacobson



The private car Sugarcreek has been donated to the Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum. The former Missouri Pacific business car is shown at Pittsburgh Union Station. Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum

SUGARCREEK, Ohio — The Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum has added former Missouri Pacific business car No. 11, now known as Ohio Central No. 800003, *Sugarcreek*, to its collection, the museum has announced.

The car has been donated by the family of the late Jerry Joe Jacobson, founder of the Age of Steam Roundhouse and operator of the Ohio Central Railroad from its founding in 1988 until it was sold to Genesee & Wyoming in 2008. The Jacobson family used the car for travel on Amtrak for more than 20 years.

“Although we will no longer see the ‘Sugarcreek’ at the rear of Amtrak trains,” the museum said in [a press release](#), “it is comforting to know that it will still be preserved and in use for the future.”

The car is currently en route from Pittsburgh Union Station to the museum via Norfolk Southern and the Ohio Central.

More on the museum is available [at its website](#).



---AMTRAK News---

Acela Trip Cancellations Continue

By Trains Staff | February 26, 2025

Two Michigan trains also scrubbed



An Amtrak Acela trainset snakes its way through State Street station in New Haven, Conn. Some Acela trips between Washington and Boston have been cancelled for a third straight day. David Lassen

Equipment issues have led to the cancellation of one Acela round trip between Boston and Washington today (Feb. 26), after two round trips were cancelled on Tuesday.

Also, two Michigan Service trains have been cancelled today.

On the Northeast Corridor, Acela train No. 2153, a 6 a.m. departure from Boston, has been cancelled, as well as train No. 2170, a 3 p.m. departure from Washington. This follows Tuesday’s cancellations of Washington-Boston trains Nos. 2154 (a 7 a.m. departure) and 2172 (a 4 p.m. departure), as well as Boston-Washington trains Nos. 2155 (a 7:15 a.m. Departure) and 2173 (a 4:15 p.m. departure). Trains 2155 and 2172 were also cancelled on Monday.

Amtrak lists “equipment unavailability” as the cause of all cancellations. With the continuing delays in launching service with the next generation of Acelas, use of the current trainsets has been extended beyond their intended lifespan. More than a year ago, four of the 20 trains were reported to have been parked and were being cannibalized for parts, since parts are no longer being manufactured [see [“News report says new Acela delays ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Nov. 9, 2023]. The new Acelas — ordered in 2016 and originally projected to be in operation in 2021 — are currently expected to enter service this spring [see [“Amtrak public board meeting ...”](#) *News Wire*, Dec. 4, 2024].

Meanwhile, in the Midwest, *Wolverine* No. 351 — the 5:43 a.m. departure from Pontiac, Mich., for Chicago — and train No. 365, the Port Huron-Chicago *Blue Water*, have been cancelled because of “equipment unavailability issues,” according to Amtrak Alerts. Bus service will be provided. The Chicago-Port Huron *Blue Water* was cancelled on Tuesday, while No. 351 was cancelled for the fourth time since Feb. 19.

Amtrak Extends Current Empire Service Schedule Through April 27

By Trains Staff | February 21, 2025

NEW YORK — Amtrak has extended its current level of Empire Service between New York City and upstate New York through April 27, the company has announced. The current schedule, [available at the Rail Passengers Association website](#), was put in place Dec. 2, 2024, and had been slated to last through March 2.

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Passengers wait to board New York City-bound Empire Service train No. 238 at Hudson, N.Y., on Aug. 21, 2022. The train is one of two that will be suspended when a new schedule is introduced April 28, 2025. Bob Johnston

The schedule responded to requests by New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and members of the state's congressional delegation to address cuts that had been made in preparation for work to rehabilitate two tubes of the East River Tunnel damaged by 2012's Hurricane Sandy [see ["Amtrak restores most Empire Service ..."](#) *Trains News Wire*, Nov. 22, 2024].

Amtrak now says a revised schedule will begin April 28, with 10 daily trains in each direction between New York and Albany. It will see suspension of train No. 238, an 11:40 a.m. departure from Albany, and train No. 235, a 3:15 p.m. departure from New York; an additional railcar added to 28 trains per week; combining of the Adirondack and Maple Leaf between New York and Albany; and schedule adjustments of up to 30 minutes.

"Amtrak is committed to providing the best possible service to our *Empire Service* customers while we begin our critical work on the East River Tunnel used in this service," Amtrak President Roger Harris said in a press release. "These significant upgrades will modernize critical infrastructure and ensure long-term improvements to the *Empire Service* and other Amtrak and commuter services for a better customer experience and more reliable trip."

Amtrak Independence at Stake, Status of Approved FRA Infrastructure Grants Uncertain: Analysis

By Bob Johnston | February 14, 2025

Passenger operator's political support to be tested



An Amtrak test train for New Orleans-Mobila, Ala., Gulf Coast service prepares for a trip from Mobile on Feb. 23, 2023. Work on a Mobile station platform is in progress, but many other projects that have received federal grants are in limbo. Norm Schultze



A crew works on a 61.6-mile upgrade of the Dakota Southern Railroad, a former Milwaukee Road line, in May 2016. The project was financed by a federal TIGER grant. Many such grants that have been awarded but have not yet received their funding are in limbo as the FRA reviews projects for compliance with a memo from Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy. Chip Sherman

WASHINGTON — Historically, passenger rail funding has had legislative champions from each party in the House and Senate that successfully counteracted executive branch funding cuts. When President Donald Trump called for deep reductions aimed at Amtrak's long-distance network during his first term, those budget proposals were eventually rebuffed in bipartisan transportation spending deals. But this year, U.S. Senate confirmation of Trump's most controversial cabinet appointees, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and Tulsi Gabbard, behind near-unanimous Republican support — as well as lawmaker acquiescence to sweeping federal workforce cuts — make it uncertain whether guardrails Amtrak has relied upon in the past will protect the national network from starvation. FRA grant-review logjam. Observers tell *Trains News Wire* that the case for rail passenger service preservation and expansion hasn't been helped by a torturous Federal Railroad Administration approval process of grant applications for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act money. "If the goal is to actually expand and improve passenger rail during a timeline elected officials can support, then you have to streamline the process so that the funds are promptly distributed to the people who do the work," says former Amtrak board chairman and current Transportation for America Chairman John Robert Smith.

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U.S. Sen Roger Wicker prepares to cut the ribbon for the new Amtrak station at Marks, Miss., on May 4, 2018. The Republican Senator has been instrumental in ensuring continued support for passenger rail. Bob Johnston



Amtrak president W. Graham Clayton, Jr., in his Washington, D.C. office on Jan. 24, 1991. He shepherded Amtrak through more than a decade of proposed cuts by President Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, but had help from Congress. Bob Johnston

Some projects are finally moving ahead, such as the construction of a pocket track and platform in Mobile, Ala., that CSX and Amtrak agree is required before two daily round trips to New Orleans can commence. Service there is now expected to begin in June at the earliest. But funds from most of the FRA's 69 Corridor Identification grants, providing \$500,000 for planning work, have not been distributed. This is also true for Interstate Rail Compact, Consolidated Rail and Safety Improvement (CRISI), and Restoration and Enhancement grants (where federal money helps states begin operations).

Once a recipient is notified that its application has been accepted, a back-and-forth negotiation between the grantee or its consultant and the FRA takes place; separate obligation and formal grant agreement stages spell out work the agency will reimburse. However, the FRA has also recently demanded an additional step: development of a "project performance plan" before money can be accessed.

While ensuring compliance, these sequential negotiations significantly lengthen the process. Thus, very little money has been made available for reimbursement.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration's vow to withhold funds from projects already awarded "that are in conflict with administration priorities" has resulted in widespread apprehension among grant recipients and their contractors.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy's memo calling for "reliance upon sound economic analysis" in DOT policies, programs, and activities adds fuel to the fire.

That memo has drawn attention for calling for funding preference for communities with marriage and birth rates higher than the national average [see **"Trump administration shakes up funding formulas ...,"** News Wire, Feb. 4, 2025]. But it also says each agency can "unilaterally amend the general terms and conditions as necessary to ensure compliance with federal law and consistency with this Order, and provide corresponding notice of such to recipients." It sets Tuesday, Feb. 18, as the date by which all existing grant and loan agreements are to be reviewed by the FRA and other DOT departments.

The memo suggests grants "used to further local political objectives or for projects and goals that are purely local in nature and unrelated to a proper Federal interest" should be withdrawn.

Amtrak's independence

How these policies may affect existing passenger service funding and oversight remain unclear.

Republicans Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush all attempted to "zero out" Amtrak money in many of the annual budgets they sent to Congress. The Democratic administrations of Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton inflicted spending slashes responsible for 1979, 1995, and 1997 long-distance route rescissions, but the rest of the system stayed intact.

In late December, a bipartisan coalition of rural and urban U.S. Senators led the effort to confirm a geographically and politically diverse slate of Amtrak Board of Directors members committed to preserving a national system and exercising more management oversight. One board vacancy remains available to be filled by President Trump. Additionally, Republicans such as U.S. Sens. Jerry Moran of Kansas and Roger Wicker of Mississippi have been vocal about improving and preserving passenger service through their states.

In the House, a contingent of Republican lawmakers from rural districts — both with and without Amtrak long-distance service — judges Amtrak by whether the quasi-public company is "profitable."

The incoming Transportation and Infrastructure Rail Subcommittee chairman, Daniel Webster (R-Fla.) reinforced that view at his initial hearing [see **"Rail industry outlines legislative priorities ...,"** News Wire, Jan. 23, 2025]. "For Amtrak," **Webster said in his opening remarks**, "we must look at improving and maintaining its existing network, weaning it off government support, and providing competitive, reliable, and safe service to attract riders." Webster represents a district northwest of Orlando now only served by a Jacksonville-Lakeland, Fla., Amtrak Thruway bus connecting with the *Floridian*. He also said, "Passenger rail works best where demand is high, competition and private sector involvement are ample, and a dependence of government support is low," but it should only "serve as an appealing option for travel, not as a replacement for vehicles and airplanes, which remain the overwhelming preference for Americans."

On the other hand, Speaker of the House Mike Johnson represents northwest Louisiana. He and other Louisiana and Mississippi legislators have expressed support of the Southern Rail Commission's efforts to bring an extension of the *Crescent* through their districts from Meridian, Miss., to Fort Worth, Tex. The long-sought project, among those awarded a Corridor ID planning grant, dates from the time John Robert Smith was Chairman of the Amtrak Board.

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Smith and Vice Chairman Michael Dukakis brought in David Gunn to run Amtrak in early 2002 when it was teetering on the brink of bankruptcy.

Reached by phone at his Nova Scotia home, Gunn tells News Wire he was able to restore efficiency to the company despite threats of a shutdown from Norman Mineta, the Bush administration's transportation secretary. "I cleaned up a lot of confusion about who was doing what," he recalls.

Amtrak presidents such as Gunn and W. Graham Claytor, Jr., who took on the Reagan Administration's cost-cutting budget hawk David Stockman, had powerful lawmakers at their backs to help weather past storms. Given a so-far subservient relationship of congressional Republican majorities to the President, it remains to be seen who might step up should blanket cuts be proposed. In the current environment, forceful engagement by Amtrak's newly-installed board — the product of bipartisan compromise — could play a decisive role.

Cancellations Ease for VIA, Amtrak

By Trains Staff | February 20, 2025

VIA corridor operations returning to normal



Quebec City-bound VIA train No. 22 prepares to stop at Dorval, Quebec, on Oct. 1, 2024. VIA corridor operations are returning to normal after three days of significant disruptions. Bob Johnston

After several days of significant cancellations, operations appear to be returning to normal for both VIA Rail Canada and Amtrak.

Currently, VIA's website and social media feed lists no cancellations today (Feb. 20) on the Windsor-Quebec corridor. VIA cancelled 19 trains on the corridor on Wednesday, Feb. 19, following 16 cancellations on Monday and 14 on Tuesday, following heavy snow in the corridor region and a Canadian National derailment near Montreal [see ["VIA corridor cancellation list grows,"](#) Trains News Wire, Feb. 19, 2025].

Amtrak had previously announced one full cancellation and three partial cancellations in the northeast because of expected heavy snows in Virginia [see ["Amtrak cancels trains ...,"](#) News Wire, Feb. 19, 2025]. As of 8 a.m. today, there are three cancellations to report in the Midwest: Wolverines Nos. 351 (a 5:43 departure from Pontiac, Mich.) and 353 (an 8:50 a.m. departure from Pontiac), along with Blue Water No. 365 from Port Huron, Mich., to Chicago. The cancellations of Nos. 353 and 365 are attributed to engine issues, while No. 351 was cancelled because of "weather-related equipment issues."

Amtrak cancelled at least three long-distance and four regional trains out of Chicago on Thursday, along with at least five full cancellations and three partial cancellations in the northeast. (The "at least" qualifier is necessary because the company is inconsistent in reporting cancellations on its Amtrak Alerts feeds.)

Amtrak Again Makes Forbes List of Best Large Employers

By Trains Staff | February 12, 2025

CSX is only freight railroad listed, while five transit agencies are recognized



A southbound Amtrak Hiawatha rolls through Deerfield, Ill., on Oct. 31, 2024. Amtrak has once again been named one of the nation's top large employers by Forbes. David Lassen

As it has been for all 10 years the list has existed, Amtrak is among companies named as one of America's best large employers by Forbes magazine. The list of 701 companies with more than 5,000 employees, along with an accompanying list of the 498 best midsize employers — those with 1,000 to 5,000 workers — was released today by the New Jersey-based magazine.

CSX Transportation is the only freight railroad to make the large employers list. NJ Transit and Caltrans, the California Department of Transportation, were also part of that list, while three other transit agencies with a rail component — Portland's TriMet, Colorado's Regional Transportation District, and Bay Area Rapid Transit — made the list of the best midsize employers.

The results developed by Forbes and market research firm Statistica are based on surveys of more than 217,000 employees at companies with 1,000 or more workers. They were asked if they would recommend their employer, and to rate it on criteria such as salary, work environment, training programs, and opportunities to advance.

This year's survey results considered along with data from the last three years to assess companies that consistently rank well, Forbes says. Amtrak, ranked No. 390 this year, is among 77 companies that have been on all 10 of the best employers list. The company, with 21,800 employees, ranked No. 120 in 2024, when it also ranked No. 389 on the list of Forbes best employees for diversity, and was No. 29 in 2023 [see ["Amtrak named to Forbes list ...,"](#) Trains News Wire, Feb. 17, 2023].

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Caltrans, which has the nation's largest fleet of state-owned intercity passenger trains — running on the Pacific Surfliner, Capitol Corridor, and San Joaquins services — ranked No. 204. The state agency, which ranked No. 363 a year ago, employs some 21,322 people. CSX, with approximately 23,000 employees, ranks No. 574. No freight railroad made the list a year ago. CSX was also the highest-ranked railroad on the recent *Wall Street Journal* list of best-managed companies of 2024, placing No. 283 [see [“Railroads shut out of 250 best-managed companies list,”](#) News Wire, Feb. 11, 2025].

NJ Transit ranked No. 591. The agency, with some 11,000 employees, ranked No. 178 a year ago. The top-ranked company in the transportation and logistics category of the list is Delta Airlines, which is placed No. 9. Overall, Notre Dame University ranked No. 1, while grocery retailer Trader Joe's was No. 2 and nonprofit healthcare provider Houston Methodist was No. 3. The full large employers list [is available here](#).

In the midsize employers group, TriMet ranked No. 228, while Colorado's RTD was No. 363 and BART ranked No. 497. Trucking company TMC Transportation of Des Moines, Iowa, was the top transportation and logistics firm on the midsize list at No. 153. That list, [available here](#), was led overall by the Shriners Hospitals for Children network; the Federal Communications Commission ranked No. 2 and Western Carolina University was No. 3.

Amtrak to Pay \$505 Million to Settle Control of Washington Union Station

By Trains Staff | February 11, 2025

Agreement allows company to oversee commercial space as well as operating areas



The interior of Washington Union Station. Amtrak will pay \$505 million to settle a dispute over control of the building's commercial space. Virginia Railway Express)

WASHINGTON — Amtrak has agreed to pay \$505 million to gain control of Washington Union Station, [the Washington Post reports](#).

The agreement, reached last week and subject to approval by a federal judge, will settle a lengthy battle over the passenger operator's efforts to control the commercial space at the station. Amtrak had gained control through use of eminent domain last year, saying a private developer had not attended to the property during the pandemic. But real estate company Rexmark, which gained the property from New York developer Ben Ashkenazy in a 2022 foreclosure, charged Amtrak had illegally gained control after an unsuccessful purchase attempt.

The station is federally owned, but the commercial space has long been leased to private developers. A non-profit organization, the Union Station Redevelopment Corp., manages the property and is leading [a \\$10 billion expansion effort](#); it said in a statement to the *Post* that it was pleased by the settlement, which would enable it to focus on “the going transformation of Union Station into a modern, world-class facility.” Amtrak had said last July when it took over management of the station that it planned safety, security, and maintenance improvements, as well as additional seating for passengers and improved boarding procedures.

On Monday, [Amtrak posted images](#) of three newly opened businesses and said a waiting area for ticketed passengers is now open. The boarding procedures, which often require passengers to wait in long lines, made news last December when a large number of passengers for the last New York-bound train on Dec. 26 were left behind because no one opened the gate to let them board [see [“Amtrak boarding error ...,”](#) Trains News Wire, Dec. 28, 2024].

Amtrak to End Diversity Programs

By David Lassen | February 9, 2025

Company, named among best employers for diversity in 2023, also sets new back-to-office policy



WASHINGTON — Amtrak, which was recognized as one of the best employers for diversity in 2023, will no longer devote resources to diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, a company spokesman has confirmed.

[Bloomberg first reported the move](#), saying the company had informed employees of that policy in a Feb. 6 email. That email also informed workers they would be required to work in-office four days a week beginning March 3.

Amtrak's change follows a Jan. 29 memo by newly confirmed Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy ordering Department of Transportation agencies to “identify and eliminate” any activities that relate “in any way to climate change, ‘greenhouse gas’ emissions, racial equity, gender identity, ‘diversity, equity, and inclusion’ goals, environmental justice, or the justice 40 initiative.” [See [“Trump administration shakes up funding formulas for rail projects,”](#) Trains News Wire, Feb. 4, 2025]

Amtrak maintenance workers wash windows of the California Zephyr at Denver on June 5, 2016. Amtrak is ending its diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. Bob Johnston

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The law creating Amtrak says it “will not be an agency or establishment of the United States Government,” structuring it as a for-profit organization created by Congress, but the DOT is the company’s “preferred stockholder.” The law provides for DOT to select two members of Amtrak’s board, while the Secretary of Transportation is an ex officio board member.

Duffy’s memo followed **an executive order** signed by President Donald Trump on Jan. 23 that called for an end to all diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, policies, and activities within the federal government.

At least some diversity-related material appears to have been stricken from Amtrak’s website. A page with the web address www.amtrak.com/diversity remains in place as of 9 a.m. today (Feb. 9, 2025) but is also at the address <https://www.amtrak.com/employee-experience-culture>. It features a message from CEO Stephen Gardner saying the company is “cultivating a workplace culture that welcomes everyone.” The site also includes **2023** and **2024 press releases** on the company’s annual diversity reports remain available, links are dead to all four diversity reports themselves, released beginning with the 2020 fiscal year.

The 2024 press release cites statistics including a 55% promotion rate for diverse talent in fiscal 2023 and a 60% growth in membership in Employee Resource Groups, “which offer camaraderie, personal, and professional development opportunities.” It quotes Robert Grasty, chief human resources officer, as saying, “Each of us brings a different life experience. We are stronger when those voices are heard.”

Also still available on the Amtrak website is **an April 25, 2023, press release** on the company’s recognition on the *Forbes* Best Employers for Diversity list that year. Qiana Spain, then chief human resource officer, said in that release, “Amtrak is building a new era of passenger rail that will change how America moves. This includes a comprehensive diversity and inclusion strategy that supports recruiting, developing and retaining our people. Being recognized as *Forbes* Best Employers for Diversity validates our efforts as we work to deliver more trains to more people.” [See **“Forbes names Amtrak as a top employer for diversity,”** *Trains News Wire*, April 26, 2023].

The back-to-office order appears to reflect **another Trump executive order**, signed on his first day back in office, that requires all executive-branch employees “to return to work in-person at their respective duty stations on a full-time basis, provided that the department and agency heads shall make exemptions they deem necessary.”

Amtrak did not respond to a question regarding the current office work policy, or other questions regarding the diversity policy.

Amtrak Mechanical Challenges Still Causing Extraordinary Long-distance Delays

By Bob Johnston | February 6, 2025

Cardinal, Floridian latest to experience significant issues



A Metra BNSF train leads the Floridian — almost seven hours late — into Chicago Union Station on Dec. 28, 2024.
Bob Johnston



The westbound Empire Builder passes a slow-moving CPKC freight train with a Union Pacific locomotive in Brookfield, Wis., on Oct. 6, 2024. The Builder is among the trains to experience recent major equipment-related delays. David Lassen

CHICAGO — Despite icy conditions across the country’s mid-section and into the Northeast Corridor over the last few days, Amtrak has kept most service running, avoiding widespread weather-related cancellations that occurred throughout January. But substantial initial terminal or en route delays to long-distance trains continue. Many can be traced to mechanical breakdowns.

Recent incidents include:

— The **Cardinal** terminated at Cincinnati today (Thursday, Feb. 6, 2025). The lone locomotive of westbound train No. 51 became disabled between South Portsmouth and Maysville, Ky., after on-time operation from the engine change at Washington, D.C. The train arrived more than 3 hours late at Maysville and waited there for a CSX relief engine to tow it to Cincinnati Union Terminal. After the train arrived there nearly 11 hours late, passengers were bused to Chicago and intermediate stops, while the cars and locomotives were deadheaded to Indianapolis. Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari tells News Wire the equipment is being serviced at the Beech Grove heavy maintenance facility for departure from Indianapolis as the eastbound **Cardinal** early Friday morning. Buses will handle passengers already booked to depart from Chicago on that train today.

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— The **Floridian** arrived in Chicago at 3:31 p.m. today, six hours, 46 minutes late. The train suffered more than four hours of delay in Florida on Tri-Rail and north of Orlando, and was 5½ hours late at Southern Pines, N.C. The **Floridian** arriving 3½ late into Chicago a day earlier had been delayed four hours leaving Camden, S.C., on CSX's S-Line for unexplained reasons. Meanwhile, the Miami-bound **Floridian** departed Chicago at 8:58 p.m. on Feb. 4, two hours, 18 minutes late, even though its westbound counterpart arrived 37 minutes early that morning. Winter Haven, Fla., is nearly four hours late today.

— Locomotives on the westbound **California Zephyr** leaving Chicago on Feb. 4 developed mechanical problems en route to Galesburg, Ill., leaving there 3½ hours late with a borrowed BNSF Railway freight engine. Encountering slow running as a result along with other delays, the train departed Winnemucca, Nev., more than 7 hours late today.

— The westbound **Empire Builder** departing Chicago on Wednesday, Feb. 5, “experienced a delay west of Stanley, N.D., due to an engine change, which was incurred from ongoing mechanical issues with the current engine,” according to an Amtrak status report. The train was spotted rolling through Rugby, N.D., this morning with a BNSF locomotive leading two P42s, so it isn't clear which locomotive failed. It departed Williston, N.D., four hours and 44 minutes late today.

In addition to these trains, two southbound **Coast Starlights** en route Thursday have been badly delayed, with Wednesday's Seattle departure more than 5 hours late out of Oakland, Calif., and today's train leaving Seattle three hours, 55 minutes late when its northbound counterpart arrived at 6 a.m., 10 hours late, after it helped tow a disabled **Capitol Corridor** train to Sacramento, according to published reports.

These delays are more evidence that Amtrak's long-distance fleet continues to be stretched thin and needs additional standby equipment. News Wire will continue to monitor developments.



-----BNSF News-----

BNSF Train Derails in Montana (updated)

By Trains Staff | February 25, 2025 | Last updated on February 26, 2025

Incident near Miles City involves 25 to 27 cars



MILES CITY, Mont. — Approximately 25 to 27 cars of a BNSF train derailed Monday night (Feb. 24, 2025) west of Miles City, Custer County Fire Chief Cory Cheguis said in [a press release](#).

The derailment occurred about 11 p.m. No injuries were reported; county emergency officials and BNSF were working to address the situation, Cheguis said, with initial assessments to be conducted once daylight arrived.

A BNSF customer advisory on Tuesday estimates that the route will be reopened about 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 26.

Miles City is on BNSF's Forsyth Subdivision, about 79 miles southwest of Glendive, Mont.

— Updated Feb. 26 at 7 a.m. with photo, estimate for reopening of line, and correction on location of Miles City.

The scene of Monday night's derailment of a BNSF train near Miles City, Mont. Custer County Fire Department

BNSF Profits and Revenue Lag Railway's Overall Traffic Growth (updated)

By Bill Stephens | February 24, 2025 | Last updated on February 25, 2025

Berkshire Hathaway Chairman Warren Buffett said little about railroad in letter to shareholders

OMAHA, Neb. — BNSF Railway's pre-tax profits increased slightly in 2024 as traffic-mix changes — more intermodal, less coal — and lower fuel-surge revenue offset an overall 6.5% increase in freight volume.

For the year, BNSF's pre-tax earnings increased 0.5%, to \$6.64 billion, while revenue declined 0.5%, to \$23.35 billion, the railway's corporate parent, Berkshire Hathaway, reported on Saturday.

BNSF's net income declined 1.1%, to \$5.03 billion. The railway's operating ratio was 68%, an improvement of 0.4 points.

For the fourth quarter, BNSF's operating income increased 12%, to \$2.16 billion, adjusted for the impact of a \$290 million agreement with the SMART-TD union that allows the railway to redeploy brake persons to conductor and engineer roles. The profit increase came despite a 1% decline in quarterly revenue. The fourth quarter operating ratio, adjusted for the SMART-TD agreement, improved 4.1 points to 64.6%.

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A BNSF stack train of J.B. Hunt containers heads west through Western Springs, Ill., on Jan. 2, 2021. David Lassen

“Fourth quarter earnings benefited from higher volumes, improved productivity, and cost controls,” BNSF said. Overall quarterly volume was up 7% thanks to increases in intermodal, industrial products, and agricultural shipments. The full-year revenue decline, Berkshire said, was primarily due to a 6.6% drop in average revenue per carload, which was attributed to lower fuel surcharge revenue and changes in business mix. Operating revenues from consumer products — which include intermodal and automotive shipments — increased 7.1%, reflecting a volume increase of 16.2% and lower average revenue per car/unit. The volume increase was primarily due to higher intermodal shipments from west coast imports and volumes from a new customer. Industrial products revenue declined 1.2%, reflecting slight declines in volume and average revenue per car. “The volume decline was primarily due to lower aggregates, taconite, minerals and waste shipments, substantially offset by higher plastics and petroleum products volumes,” Berkshire said. Agricultural products revenue increased 4.5% as volume rose 7.4% due to higher grain, renewable fuels, and fertilizer shipments.

Coal revenue fell 22.5%. “The decrease was attributable to a volume decrease of 17.9% and lower average revenue per car/unit. The volume decline was primarily due to lower natural gas prices,” Berkshire said.

Berkshire Hathaway Chairman Warren Buffett didn’t have much to say about BNSF in his widely read annual letter to shareholders. “Berkshire’s railroad and utility operations, our two largest businesses outside of insurance, improved their aggregate earnings. Both, however, have much left to accomplish,” he wrote.

	2024	2023	2022	Percentage Change	
				2024 vs 2023	2023 vs 2022
Railroad operating revenues	\$ 23,355	\$ 23,474	\$ 25,203	(0.5)%	(6.9)%
Railroad operating expenses	15,886	16,059	16,600	(1.1)	(3.3)
Railroad operating earnings	7,469	7,415	8,603	0.7	(13.8)
Other revenues (expenses), net	257	247	130	4.0	90.0
Interest expense	(1,078)	(1,048)	(1,025)	2.9	2.2
Pre-tax earnings	6,648	6,614	7,708	0.5	(14.2)
Income taxes	1,617	1,527	1,762	5.9	(13.3)
Net earnings	\$ 5,031	\$ 5,087	\$ 5,946	(1.1)	(14.4)
Effective income tax rate	24.3%	23.1%	22.9%		

A summary of BNSF’s railroad freight volumes by business group follows (cars/units in thousands).

	Cars/Units			Percentage Change	
	2024	2023	2022	2024 vs 2023	2023 vs 2022
Consumer products	5,537	4,765	5,202	16.2%	(8.4)%
Industrial products	1,596	1,605	1,618	(0.6)	(0.8)
Agricultural products	1,251	1,165	1,200	7.4	(2.9)
Coal	1,205	1,468	1,529	(17.9)	(4.0)
	9,589	9,003	9,549	6.5	(5.7)

Berkshire Hathaway reported its annual earnings on Saturday, including that of its railroad, BNSF. Berkshire Hathaway

Note: Updated at 8:15 a.m. Feb. 25 with additional detail about BNSF’s fourth quarter earnings.

Arctic Blast Hinders Operations on BNSF’s Northern Transcon

By Bill Stephens | February 12, 2025

The railroad has imposed train length restrictions, activated its winter plans, and told customers to expect delays

FORT WORTH, Texas — Extreme cold has hobbled BNSF Railway’s operations on its Northern Transcon in North Dakota and Montana. “The extreme cold affecting the Northern Transcon route through Montana and North Dakota, with temperatures plunging over 20 degrees below zero in some areas overnight, has hindered normal train operations,” BNSF said in a customer advisory on Tuesday (Feb. 11). “We have also experienced reduced productivity at terminals in the region due to multiple switch and air flow issues across rail yards.”

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BNSF Railway has activated winter operating plans as extreme cold grips Montana and North Dakota. BNSF

BNSF noted that additional locomotives are required to produce proper air flow for trains' brake systems.

"Train length restrictions have been implemented to support train braking performance in the impacted areas and will remain in effect until conditions improve. Some trains have been re-routed on a more southerly route to help minimize this disruption as much as possible," BNSF said.

Amtrak cancelled the *Empire Builder's* departures from Chicago and Seattle/Portland on Tuesday, and in an updated advisory says that today's eastbound train has been cancelled as well.

Temperatures are expected to rise in the next few days, but BNSF said that "challenging operating conditions will persist for the next 72 hours and customers should anticipate some delays for shipments destined to move through the region."

BNSF Plan to Address Montana Grizzly Bear Deaths is Approved

By [Trains Staff](#) | February 14, 2025

Railroad will provide \$2.9 million in mitigation funding over seven years



A grizzly bear in Montana. A BNSF plan to address grizzly bear deaths along its line near Glacier National Park has received government approval. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

HELENA, Mont. — BNSF Railway has completed a plan to address grizzly bear deaths along its rail line near Glacier National Park in Montana that includes \$2.9 million in mitigation efforts. Approval of the long-awaited document by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has led to the railroad receiving an "incidental take" permit that addresses such deaths.

The 73-page [habitat conservation plan](#) was developed with Amtrak; a lengthy list of state and federal agencies, including Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and U.S. Fish and Wildlife; Glacier National Park; the Blackfeet Nation; conservation groups; local utilities; and others. Its funding would be used over seven years. Elements include salaries and related costs for three new state grizzly bear technicians to address human-bear conflicts, as well as programs to address areas and items that attract bears.

These would include bear-resistant garbage cans, electric fencing, efforts to reduce bear-livestock conflict, remote cameras, and radio tracking collars. Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation will oversee distribution of the mitigation funds. "We are working to implement solutions that support both wildlife and communities,"

"Mitch King, the foundation's director, said in [a press release](#). "This funding will help expand conflict prevention programs and support the work of localized bear specialists."

BNSF is grateful for the insight provided by stakeholders in this process," John Lovenburg, BNSF vice president of environment and sustainability, said in the release. "We look forward to working with federal, tribal, and state government partners and Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation to ensure the effective implementation of the measures set out in the HCP, as well as the permit issued by USFWS."

U.S. Fish and Wildlife is allowed to issue permits for "incidental takes" if they occur "incidental to ... the carrying out of an otherwise lawful activity." [The BNSF permit](#) allows for the taking of 19 bears, including nine females, over its seven years. Conservation groups said in [a press release](#) that they are "cautiously optimistic" about the plan and permit.

"We are encouraged BNSF seeks to prevent its trains from killing more grizzlies," said Pete Frost, attorney at the Western Environmental Law Center. Erik Molvar of the Western Watershed Project said the group is "hopeful risks to grizzlies will be lessened. We are disappointed, however, that speed reductions aren't part of BNSF's conservation package. The railroad slows down for human safety, and ought to do that for grizzly safety as well.

BNSF was sued in late 2023 by conservation groups who argued the railroad was violating the Endangered Species Act by not having a plan and permit in place while killing 63 bears between 2008 and 2023 [see ["BNSF sued over grizzly bear deaths ..."](#) *Trains News Wire*, Dec. 15, 2023]. There was no immediate word on the status of that lawsuit in light of approval of the plan and permit.

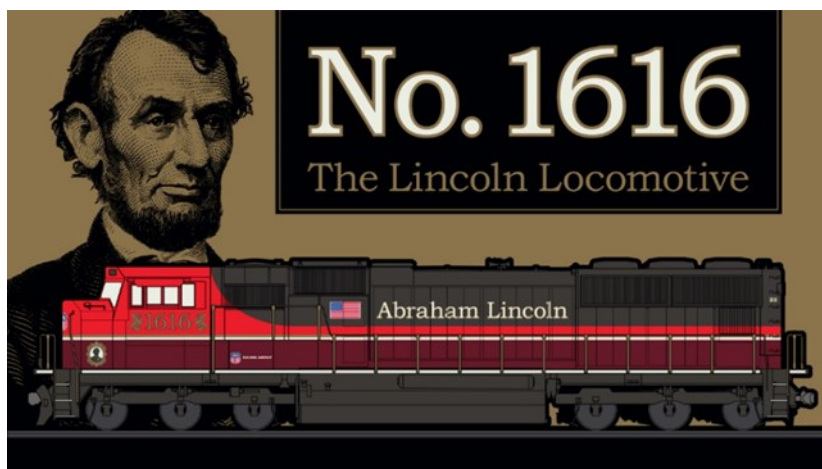


---Union Pacific News---

UP Announces Locomotive Honoring Abraham Lincoln

By Trains Staff | February 17, 2025

Specially painted diesel will be unveiled in spring



Union Pacific is painting a locomotive to honor Abraham Lincoln, the railroad has announced. Union Pacific

OMAHA, Neb. — Union Pacific has marked Presidents Day by announcing plans for a locomotive to honor the nation's 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, who signed the legislation authorizing construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, leading to UP's creation.

The paint scheme of locomotive No. 1616 will feature "the unique colors of Lincoln's era," UP said in [a press release](#). It also honor steam locomotive No. 119, one of the two engines participating in the Golden Spike ceremony at Promontory Summit, Utah, in 1869. The locomotive will be unveiled this spring.

"President Lincoln wanted to unite the nation, and through his actions, railroads were a catalyst for national growth, representing major advances in innovation and technology," CEO Jim Vena said. "We're proud to be part of an industry that is still a major part of the central nervous system of the North American economy and continues to provide innovative solutions that unleash economic innovation."

The Lincoln locomotive will be the second honoring a president, joining No. 4141, honoring President George H.W. Bush. That locomotive was part of the Bush funeral train in 2018 and is now on permanent display at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station, Texas.

UP Train Derails on Tehachapi Pass

By Trains Staff | February 18, 2025

Approximately 15 cars involved in derailment at Caliente



A Union Pacific train derailed on Tehachapi Pass near Caliente, Calif., on Feb. 18, 2025. Kern County Fire Department

CALIENTE, Calif. — About 15 cars of a Union Pacific train derailed on Tehachapi Pass today (Tuesday, Feb. 18), blocking traffic on the busy route shared by UP and BNSF Railway.

[KBAK-TV reports](#) the Kern County Fire Department was called to the derailment about 9:29 a.m. on Caliente-Bodfish Road, 2 miles north of State Route 58 in Caliente. No injuries were reported and no leaks were involved; the fire department said it was told by the railroad the tank cars involved had been empty for some time.

BNSF Railway says in [a customer advisory](#) that it and UP both responded to the incident, and that the estimated time to reopen the line is about midnight PT tonight.

Caliente, on UP's Mojave Subdivision, is about 25 miles from Bakersfield and 25 miles from Tehachapi.

Union Pacific to Lease 1.25 miles of Kansas City Trackage to New Short Line Railroad

By Bill Stephens | February 20, 2025

Jaguar Transport's Kansas City West Bottoms Railroad will serve local industries

WASHINGTON — Union Pacific will lease 1.25 miles of trackage in Kansas City, Mo., to a new [Jaguar Transport](#) short line next month.

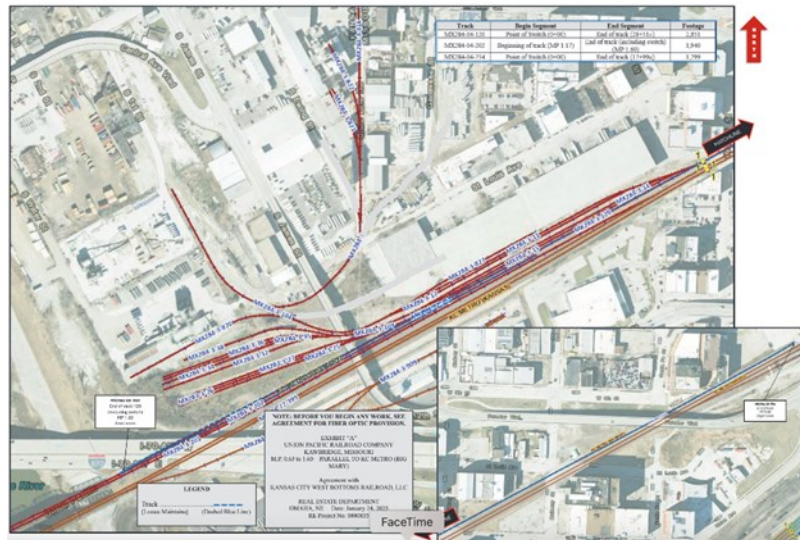
The Kansas City West Bottoms Railroad will serve a cluster of customers located off UP's KC Metro Big Mary Subdivision between milepost 0.63 and milepost 1.60 in Kansas City, [according to a regulatory filing](#). KCWB also will lease and operate the adjacent State Line Yard trackage.

"Union Pacific and Jaguar Transport are excited about the growth potential of the ... short line railroad and the positive impact that the operation will have on local industries," UP spokeswoman Robynn Tysver says.

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KANSAS CITY WEST BOTTOMS RAILROAD, LLC



The deal – the second transfer this year of UP local switching operations to a short line – is scheduled to take effect on or after March 2.

UP is handing off local and yard operations in Eugene, Ore., to Genesee & Wyoming short line Central Oregon & Pacific [see “Central Oregon & Pacific will operate ...,” *Trains News Wire*, Dec. 11, 2024]

Jaguar representatives did not respond to an email requesting additional information about the Kansas City transaction. Jaguar currently operates 15 short lines, including industrial switching agreements.

The Kansas City West Bottoms Railroad will operate trackage leased from Union Pacific. Jaguar Transport via STB



---- CPKC News ----

CPKC Ceremony Opens Ottensmeyer Bridge

By Trains Staff | February 6, 2025

Ribbon-cutting marks official opening of Rio Grande span completed in December



A CPKC train crosses the Patrick J. Ottensmeyer International Railway Bridge on Feb. 6, 2025. CPKC



The platform of two business cars mid-bridge served as the site of the Ottensmeyer Bridge ribbon-cutting on Feb. 6, 2025. CPKC

LAREDO, Texas — Canadian Pacific Kansas City today (Feb. 6, 2025) held the official opening ceremonies for the new Patrick J. Ottensmeyer International Railway Bridge, the second span crossing the Rio Grande at the busiest rail gateway between the U.S. and Mexico.

“The name Patrick J. Ottensmeyer will forever be a part of the proud history of Kansas City Southern and the legacy of CPKC,” CPKC CEO Keith Creel said in [a press release](#) marking the ribbon-cutting event. “Pat believed strongly in the work our railroaders do every day enabling trade amongst great nations. His leadership and vision led to the development and completion of the second span of the international bridge between the United States and Mexico at North America’s largest inland gateway. Having it bear his name is a fitting tribute to a remarkable leader and person.”

Ottensmeyer, who served as Kansas City Southern’s final CEO between 2015 and April 2023, died in July 2024 at age 67 [see [“Former Kansas City Southern CEO Ottensmeyer dies,”](#) *Trains News Wire*, July 29, 2024]. The bridge was completed in December, allowing CPKC to eliminate the four-hour directional-running windows that created a border bottleneck [see [“CPKC completes second span ...,”](#) *News Wire*, Dec. 17, 2024]. The \$100 million, 1,170-foot-long bridge, built 35 feet downstream from the cross-border bridge that opened in 1920, is a ballasted deck plate girder bridge with six reinforced concrete piers. Its enhanced border security features include a new X-ray railcar inspection system and surveillance cameras.

CPKC Climate Report Highlights Hydrogen Locomotive, Biofuel Programs

By Trains Staff | February 22, 2025

Railroad expects to add seven more hydrogen units in 2025



CPKC's first line-haul hydrogen locomotive, with its fuel tender, began testing in September 2024. CPKC

CALGARY, Alberta — CPKC this week published its 2025 Climate Milestones report, highlighting efforts such as the railroad's hydrogen locomotive initiative and a biofuel testing program.

"Shipping by rail is the most fuel-efficient way to move goods over land and our Climate Mileposts report outlines the steps we are taking to further advance the potential for future decarbonization of the CPKC locomotive fleet," CEO Keith Creel said in a press release. "We are committed to working towards continuously improving our locomotive operating efficiency and advancing real-world testing of hydrogen locomotives."

The railroad's first hydrogen locomotives underwent more than 6,000 miles of testing in 2024. Three more of the hydrogen units, as well as a tender car, are expected to join the railroad fleet in the early part of 2025, with another four planned later in the year.

CPKC says it also "conducted more than 1,100 fueling events" using B20 biofuel — in which biodiesel provides 20% of the fuel blend — in British Columbia during 2024. This is part of an effort across the industry to assess the use of biofuels. It also points to the expected delivery this year of 100 new Tier 4 locomotives, which will reduce pollution and enhance fuel economy. The full 16-page report [is available here](#).

Beaver Dam Caused 2023 CPKC Derailment in Maine

By Trains Staff | February 13, 2025

State agency is told incident, which led to environmental citations for railroad, has been resolved



This April 2023 derailment of a CPKC train in rural Maine was caused by the flow from a beaver dam, a state agency has been told. Jackman-Moose River Fire & Rescue Department

AUGUSTA, Maine — The April 2023 derailment of a CPKC train in rural Maine, which led to injuries to three crew members and a fire, was caused by a washout resulting from a beaver dam, a state agency has been told.

The April 15, 2023, incident occurred when the train was traveling at about 35 mph and derailed three locomotives and nine cars [see ["Fire chief calls it 'a miracle' ..."](#), *Trains News Wire*, April 17, 2023]. The derailed cars were carrying lumber and wire but the trains consist included some hazardous materials. The railroad was eventually cited by state agencies for violation of anti-pollution rules because of damage to streams during the derailment cleanup, as well as a spill of 500 gallons of fuel [see ["Maine agencies inform CPKC ..."](#), *News Wire*, May 1, 2023].

[The Bangor Daily News reports](#) that the Maine Land Use Planning Commission was told during a meeting on Feb. 12, 2025, that part of a beaver dam had let go. That sent a "vast amount of water" through culverts under the rail line, leading to a washout, according to Audie Arbo, the commission's permitting and compliance manager.

Arbo said new culverts were installed, the Moose River stream bed was restored, and the culverts were graded to allow fish to travel through. All roads and waterways met state standards during a review in November, and the state informed CPKC the incident had been resolved in [a Dec. 23, 2024, letter](#)

Maintenance-of-way Union Ratifies Contract with CPKC

By Trains Staff | February 15, 2025

Division of Teamsters Canada Rail Conference approves four-year deal



CALGARY, Alberta — The union representing CPKC engineering service workers in Canada has ratified a new four-year contract, the railroad has announced. The Teamsters Canada Rail Conference Maintenance of Way Employees Division (TRCR-MWED) represents about 2,300 workers.

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CPKC CEO Keith Creel said the ratification, announced Friday, Feb. 14, provides improved wages and benefits, but details were not released. “This agreement, reached at the bargaining table and ratified with strong support among the membership,” Creel said in [a press release](#), “brings long-term labor stability for our engineering employees allowing us to continue our work safely and efficiently serving our customers and delivering for the Canadian economy.”

The tentative agreement between the railroad and union had been announced in January [see [“CPKC and Teamsters Canada ...”](#) Trains News Wire, Jan. 28, 2025].

CPKC Intermodal Train Derails in Saskatchewan

By Trains Staff | February 25, 2025

No injuries reported from 18-car incident near Moose Jaw

CARON, Saskatchewan — Eighteen cars of a CPKC intermodal train derailed early today (Feb. 25, 2025) in rural Saskatchewan, the CBC reports.

CPKC said in a statement to the broadcaster that the derailment occurred shortly after midnight near Caron, about 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) west of Moose Jaw, Sask. No injuries were reported.

One of the containers involved contained batteries, but no other hazardous materials were involved. There were no leaks and no threat to public safety, the railroad said.



---- CN News ----

Signal and Communications Workers Ratify Deal with CN in Canada

By Trains Staff | February 18, 2025

IBEW agreement covers about 750 workers

MONTREAL — The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers has ratified a new four-year contract with Canadian National Railway, CN has announced.

The union represents approximately 750 signals and communications workers in Canada. The deal includes annual 3% wage increases.

“The ratification of this agreement by our employees with the IBEW union represents a mutually beneficial outcome,” Patrick Whitehead, CN chief network operating officer, said in [a press release](#). “This is what we strive for in the collective bargaining process, allowing us to continue delivering safe, efficient, and reliable service to our customers and the communities where we operate.” A tentative agreement between CN and the IBEW was announced Jan. 28, averting a strike that had been scheduled to begin that day [see [“CN, electrical workers reach ...”](#) Trains News Wire, Jan. 28, 2025].

--- Other RR News ---

Wilmington & Western Railway Operations Indefinitely Paused

By Chase Gunnoe | February 24, 2025

Email to volunteers says board of directors will determine status of 2025 operations



Wilmington and Alco 4-4-0 No. 98 and former Baltimore & Ohio SW1 No. 8408 are readied for a dinner train concluding the railroad's 50th anniversary celebration on Sept. 17, 2016. Michael S. Murray

WILMINGTON, Del. — Volunteers on the Wilmington & Western Railway say railroad staff have notified them that operations on the long-time heritage railway are paused indefinitely.

Volunteers seeking information about the railway's March schedule were notified of the decision in an email earlier this month. The railway depends on its all-volunteer crew to staff trains.

The Feb. 12 email from the W&W volunteer programs manager tells volunteers all operations are to be paused for an indefinite period, including the release of train schedules and the marketing of trains, until permitted by the board of directors. No other information was included in the email.

As of today (Feb. 24, 2025) [the calendar on the railway's website](#) currently shows no scheduled trips beyond a series of “Art Festival Express” excursions held Feb. 22-23. The website says it is “still finalizing” its schedule.

Trains News Wire has sent multiple requests for comment to the Wilmington & Western Railway staff, as well as the chairman of the board of Historic Red Clay Valley Inc., the railroad's non-profit parent organization. It has not received a response.

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The railway was still advertising a full-time locomotive mechanic's position on its website as of Feb. 24, but it is unclear if the railway intends on filling the role.

The Wilmington & Western operation dates to 1966 weekend excursions on the Baltimore & Ohio's 10.2-mile Landenberg Branch. HRCV purchased the line in 1982 after the Chessie System filed for abandonment. The railroad oversees [a collection](#) of vintage steam and diesel locomotives, a Pennsylvania Railroad doodlebug, and passenger equipment. Its active locomotives include an 0-6-0 No. 58, built in 1907 for the Atlanta, Birmingham & Atlantic Railroad, an EMD SW1 No. 114 built in 1940 for the Lehigh Valley Railroad, and EMD SW1 No. 8408 built in 1940 for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

News Wire will update this story as more information is available.

News photos: Latest Metro-North Heritage Unit Honors New Haven (updated)

By Trains Staff | February 21, 2025

Newly wrapped locomotive is sixth in anniversary series



MTA Metro-North P32AC-DM No. 222 shows its New Haven heritage scheme at the railroad's North White Plains, N.Y., shop. MTA Metro-North Railroad



A side view of the locomotive. MTA Metro-North Railroad

NORTH WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. — The Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Metro-North Railroad has completed the sixth in its series of locomotives honoring Metro-North's 40th anniversary, this time honoring the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad. Dual-mode locomotive No. 222, a P32Ac-DM, sports the green-and-yellow design used on New Haven electric and diesel cab units until 1955. The engine joins previous wrapped units honoring New York Central, Penn Central, Conrail, as well as Metro-North employees. When the series began, Metro North said there would be up to five heritage locomotives [see ["News photos: Metro-North introduces ..."](#) *Trains* News Wire, May 16, 2023].

A Metro-North [post on Facebook](#) says the railroad decided to give the locomotive a new identity during refurbishing, and that test runs for the locomotive will begin shortly.

— Updated at 4:15 p.m. CT with additional photos and information.

NPR Story on Train Hopping Raises Safety Concerns, Industry Officials Say

By Bill Stephens | February 20, 2025

The story highlights a pastime that has attracted more attention thanks to social media



A boy hops a freight train in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1940. Library of Congress

WASHINGTON — Railroad industry officials have raised concerns about a recent National Public Radio story that they say glorifies train hopping, a practice that is both dangerous and illegal.

The Feb. 17 story, ["Train hoppers ride the rails across America — and you can tag along,"](#) stunned officials from the Federal Railroad Administration, the Association of American Railroads, and Operation Lifesaver.

The story by NPR reporter Manuela López Restrepo does point out that train hopping is an illegal pastime that has claimed lives.

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But the bulk of the story romanticizes the modern hobo lifestyle, which in the social media era has attracted people who post YouTube videos of their exploits. Some of the videos have been viewed hundreds of thousands of times.

None of this sits well with rail safety advocates.

“Massive 400,000-pound locomotives pull heavy railcars at high speeds, creating a deadly environment for trespassers. More than 95% of rail-related injuries and fatalities involve trespassing and grade crossings,” an AAR spokesperson says. “Every year, people are severely injured or killed underestimating the force of moving trains. Beyond the risk, train hopping is a crime with legal consequences. NPR listeners must know that no thrill is worth the danger—stay off the tracks and stay safe.”

Operation Lifesaver said it had “grave concerns” with the NPR story. Jennifer DeAngelis, a spokeswoman for Operation Lifesaver, said in an email to the reporter that the story “glorifies unsafe and illegal behaviors around tracks and trains with only a brief mention of safety concerns.”

DeAngelis says she fears the NPR story will encourage people to give train hopping a try.

“The reality is stark: a person or vehicle is hit by a train every three hours in the U.S., and more than 1,000 Americans are killed or injured trespassing on railroad tracks each year,” DeAngelis says. “Train tracks and freight cars are private property and being on them without permission is both dangerous and illegal.”

NPR did not respond to a request for comment today.

Improperly Lined Switch, Railroad Procedures Cited in 2024 CSX Head-on Collision in Georgia

By Trains Staff | February 19, 2025

Collision of intermodal, rock trains led to three injuries



An improperly lined switch led to this 2024 collision between CSX trains in Folkston, Ga., the NTSB has determined. Charlton County Sheriff Robert Phillips

WASHINGTON — An improperly lined switch, and a conductor’s failure to verify the switch’s position, led to the head-on collision of two CSX trains near Folkston, Ga., in April 2024, according to a National Transportation Safety Board investigation report.

[The final report](#) into the April 15, 2024, incident was issued today (Feb. 19, 2025). The incident occurred about 1:20 p.m. when an intermodal train struck a parked rock train, derailling two locomotives and two cars on each train. Three crew members suffered non-life-threatening injuries [see [“Three injured as CSX trains collide ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, April 15, 2024]. Damage was estimated at \$720,000.

The collision occurred while signals on a section of the railroad’s Jesup Subdivision were suspended for maintenance, with the area operating as track warrant territory. A conductor was assigned to manually throw four dual-controlled, power-operated switches; he later told NTSB investigators he had difficulty throwing the switches, an indication locking mechanisms had been disengaged.

The intermodal train had been intended to remain on main track 1 to pass the rock train, stopped on main track two, but as the intermodal train approached at 39 mph, it recognized a misaligned switch and began braking, but hit the parked train at 28 mph. At the time, CSX did not require trains operating through areas of signal suspension to operate at a restricted speed

The NTSB determined that the conductor threw the lever for the switch in question once, but the dual-mode switch can require cycling the lever back and forth to be lined. In an interview, the conductor said he did not remember ever training on or operating a dual-controlled, power switch in manual mode. As a result, the report considers contributing factors to the incident to include insufficient training by CSX, as well as failure to implement operational procedures such as a restricted speed requirement or a requirement for secondary verification of switch position.

CSX subsequently issued a safety alert requiring restricted-speed operation in such areas, as well as protocols including a secondary verification requirement.

Rail Executives Say Impacts and Timing of Tariff Rollout are Highly Uncertain

By Bill Stephens | February 19, 2025

Officials don’t expect North American trade to suffer as the U.S. imposes tariffs on Mexico and Canada

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. — Class I railroad chief executives told an investor conference today that their crystal ball is as cloudy as anyone’s regarding the potential impact of the tariffs that President Donald Trump has threatened to impose on Mexico and Canada. The 25% tariffs initially were due to begin this month, but Trump subsequently delayed them until March after an initial round of talks with government leaders in Mexico City and Ottawa. The president also has proposed imposing 10% tariffs on goods imported from China, and has warned that the European Union eventually will be targeted, too.

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A Canadian National merchandise train, which originated in Canada, heads south on the former Elgin, Joliet & Eastern past JB Tower at the junction with the Union Pacific main line in West Chicago, Ill. Bill Stephens

"I don't know what's going to happen and how it's going to play out. I would guess that none of us do," Canadian National CEO Tracy Robinson says.

"There's a whole lot of uncertainty," says Canadian Pacific Kansas City CEO Keith Creel.

"We have prepared ourselves to deal with whatever happens good or bad with the tariffs," says Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena, whose railroad is the dominant player in cross-border rail volume to and from Mexico.

"It is going to take a while for things to play out," Norfolk Southern CEO Mark George says.

CSX CEO Joe Hinrichs says the 25% tariffs levied on aluminum and steel imports may present an opportunity. "There are some new aluminum and steel investments being made on our network, and if tariffs continue as they've just been announced, perhaps those manufacturers will be motivated to try and launch faster," he says. "That could be something to watch for."

The rail executives did not expect tariffs to have a major impact on their cross-border traffic or their international intermodal business.

"We have modeled that there will be some impact from tariffs without a doubt, but not so much as to drive Canada into a recession and the U.S. into a high inflationary mode," Robinson says.

During his first term, Trump imposed 25% tariffs on Canadian steel and 10% on Canadian aluminum. They were in effect for a year before the USMCA trade agreement replaced NAFTA. "We didn't see a significant impact from that," Robinson says.

Likewise, there wasn't much impact on Canadian lumber imports after Trump imposed tariffs during his first term, says Kenny Rocker, UP's executive vice president of marketing and sales.

Steel and aluminum represent about 2% of CN's southbound cross-border revenue, Robinson says. Cross-border traffic accounts for 30% of CN's overall volume, with 20% moving southbound and 10% northbound. Much of the southbound traffic is petroleum products and minerals, "which so far seem to be attracting a little bit less interest from a tariff perspective," Robinson says.

Creel, who heads the only railroad with operations in Canada, the U.S., and Mexico, says the economies of the three North American trading partners are inextricably linked. "These three nations have never been more interconnected, never needed each other more, especially since the pandemic. Nearshoring has increased the connectivity," Creel says.

While some manufacturing may move back to the U.S., it's impossible for all manufacturing to return to the U.S. from Mexico and Canada. "There's no way to bring all that manufacturing back to the United States and not drive just outrageous wage inflation," Creel says. "There's just not enough workers."

Creel believes renegotiation of the USMCA agreement, currently scheduled for 2026, likely will be moved up to this year. "Why would we not? I think getting to a point of certainty for everyone is in our best interest," he says. "It's in the best interest of Canada, the U.S., as well as Mexico."

Once there's a stable North American trade environment, it will benefit all three economies in general and CPKC's cross-border network in particular. Canadian Pacific made a \$31 billion bet on North American trade when it acquired Kansas City Southern in 2023. "When it's all said and done, we're going to uniquely benefit and enable the countries to drive together in an increased trade partnership," Creel says.

Manufacturers won't make any supply chain decisions until the tariff situation is ironed out, says Ed Elkins, Norfolk Southern's chief marketing officer.

"There's probably some reticence on the part of some of our customers to make any supply chain move right now until they figure out exactly what's going to happen or not happen with regard to those tariffs," Elkins says.

Even then changes will not happen overnight. George, who joined NS as chief financial officer in 2019 after a three-decade career at manufacturing companies, says it will take several calendar quarters for manufacturers to make any decisions about shifting production. "When I think about economic development and where customers will want to relocate or locate their businesses or expand them, it's probably going to be in the U.S.," Elkins says. "It's probably going to be in the East, it's probably going to be in the Southeast and the Midwest. And we're really well positioned in both of those regions."

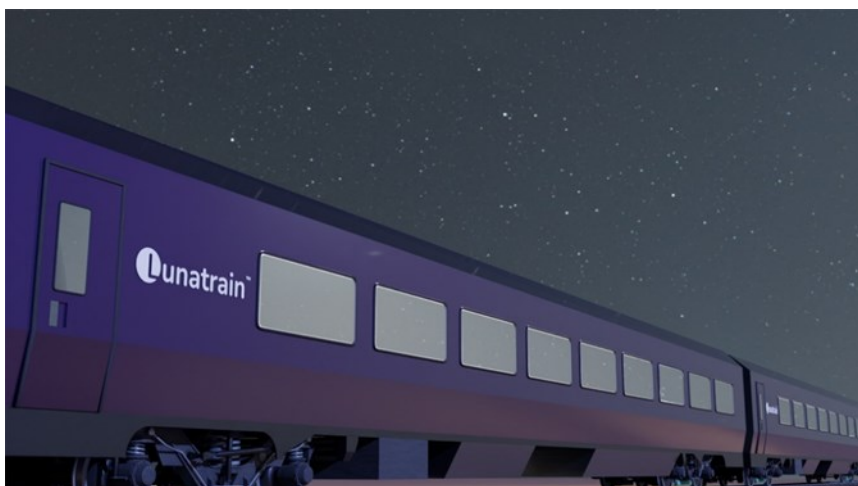
Rocker says UP's intermodal volume — which is up 9% so far this year — has benefited as some importers have accelerated orders to beat potential tariff deadlines. But CSX and NS executives say they have not seen any pull forward activity.

The rail executives spoke at the 42nd Annual Barclays Industrial Select Conference.

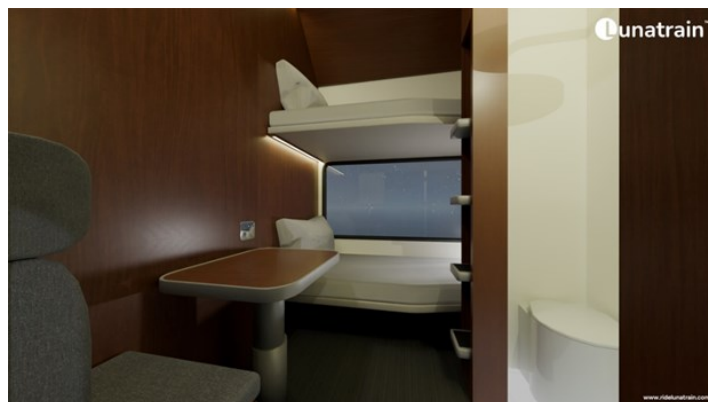
Start-up Lunatrain Plans Private Night Trains in East, Midwest

By Trains Staff | February 19, 2025

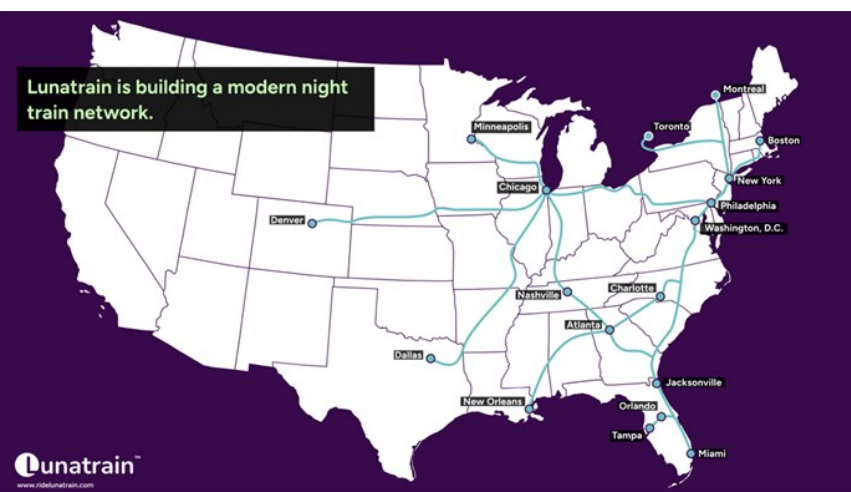
Company says it will offer express overnight service at costs competitive with flying



A rendering of equipment for Lunatrain, a new company planning private U.S. night trains. Lunatrain



A conceptual rendering of a Lunatrain two-person accommodation. Lunatrain



Lunatrain says it will develop a network of private, express overnight trains in the Midwest and East. Lunatrain

The company plans to focus on single-night journeys. It aims to offer accommodations for single travelers, couples and families that it says will be “a significant improvement over existing sleeping train options in the United States.” Trains will feature full-service and in-room dining options, WiFi, lounge space, and showers. It says it will not be a “luxury” operation and will be “cost competitive” with flights on the same routes.

Lunatrain says there is no timeline for when full-scale commercial service will begin.

The company’s founder and CEO, Mike Avena, comes from the biotech industry. He previously was head of information technology at Ori Biotech, which launched a cell therapy manufacturing platform, and before that was at Tmunity Therapeutics, a cell therapy developer focused on curing solid tumors.

Lunatrain says it “completed a feasibility analysis for the project in the first half of 2024 and has since developed robust financial projections for North American night trains.”

It becomes the second U.S. private night-train company currently seeking to begin operations. Dreamstar Lines announced plans for a luxury Los Angeles-San Francisco overnight train last spring, saying then that it aimed to begin operations in 2025 [see [“Plans for private San Francisco-Los Angeles ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, March 25, 2024].

Flood Recovery Efforts Continue for NS, CSX

By Trains Staff | February 18, 2025

NS main line through West Virginia remains closed; CSX reports widespread areas with disruptions

Norfolk Southern and CSX Transportation are continuing to deal with the impacts of severe flooding in the southeastern U.S. that occurred earlier this week

An NS customer alert posted today (Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2025) says the railroad is working to restore both tracks of its mainline west of Williamson, W.Va., on the which are out of service after an additional washout earlier today. No estimate of a full restoration of service is yet available. The railroad had said previously that its route between Portsmouth, Ohio, and Bluefield, W.Va., was impassable following weekend flooding [see [“Major storm hits NS operations ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Feb. 16, 2025].

An embargo on new shipments that was issued on Sunday, Feb. 15, remains in effect, the railroad said, but does not impact intermodal, automotive, or coal/coke shipments.

CSX, meanwhile, on Monday [informed customers](#) that widespread areas “have experienced disruptions due to downed power lines, affected switches, and other storm-related issues.

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They include:

- Northeast Region: Baltimore; Buffalo; Cumberland, Md.; Selkirk, N.Y.; Syracuse, N.Y.; and Russell to Hinton, Ky.
- Midwest Region: Avon, Ind.; Chicago; Cincinnati; and Louisville, Ky.
- Southwest Region: Bruceton, Tenn.; Memphis, Tenn.; Montgomery, Ala.; and Nashville, Tenn.

CSX also said Waycross, Ga., is handling higher than normal traffic as a result of the issues elsewhere, which could cause some delays.

Canadian National is also dealing with flooding in Tennessee — the small town of Rives, Tenn., on its Fulton Subdivision, has sustained major damage following a levee break on Sunday — but the railroad has not responded to a News Wire request for information. That flooding has resulted in cancellation Monday and today of Amtrak's City of New Orleans between Memphis, Tenn., and Carbondale, Ill.

FRA Study Recommends Developing and Testing Prototype Dual-mode Freight Locomotives

By Bill Stephens | February 18, 2025

Converting existing diesel-electric locomotives, intermittent catenary could significantly cut electrification costs

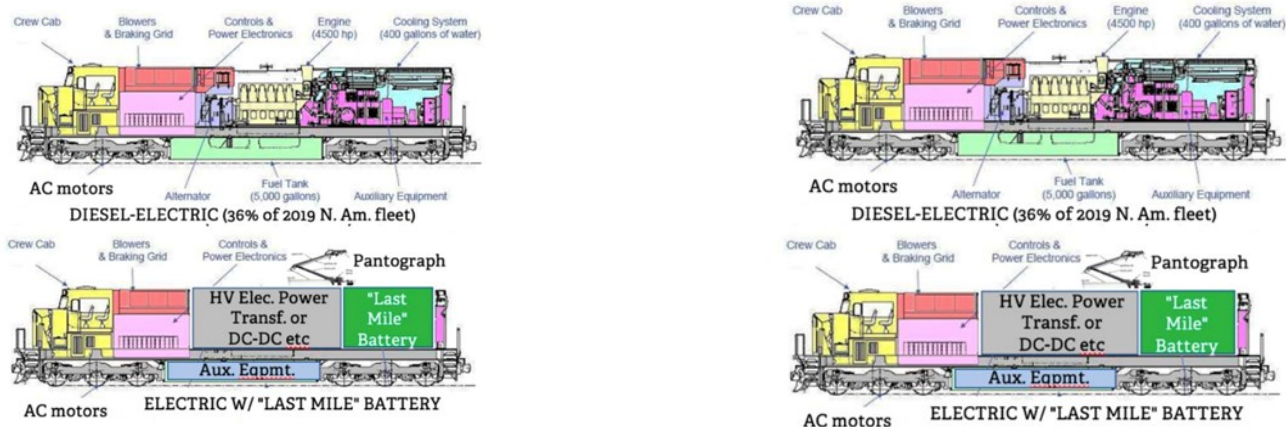


Figure 18. Conceptual Conversion of Existing AC Traction Diesel-Electric Locomotive to Electric Operation Via OCS

Figure 18. Conceptual Conversion of Existing AC Traction Diesel-Electric Locomotive to Electric Operation Via OCS

AC traction diesel-electric locomotives could be converted into straight electric locomotives. Federal Railroad Administration

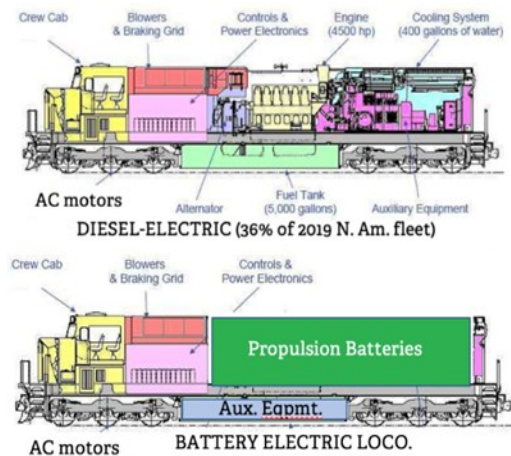


Figure 19. Conceptual Conversion of Existing AC Traction Diesel-Electric Locomotive to BEL

Conventional AC traction diesel electric locomotives could be converted to battery electrics. FRA

The FRA study, released last month, notes that locomotive technology has changed considerably since the completion of the last known Class I railroad electrification study in 1980. Chief among those changes are the shift to AC traction and rapid improvements in batteries.

“Dual-mode or rapidly improving battery electric locomotive technologies could potentially navigate gaps in electrification and eliminate the large expense of raising clearances under bridges or through tunnels,” the report says. “Unlike the DC traction locomotive models considered during earlier electrification studies, modern high horsepower AC traction locomotives could be readily adapted into electric locomotives during an interim operating phase, changing the locomotive replacement costs and potentially delivering earlier benefits.”

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Among the locomotive options the report considers:

Converting existing AC-traction, diesel-electric locomotives to full electric instead of purchasing new electric locomotives.

Pairing AC-traction, diesel-electric locomotives with tenders that either house batteries or use a pantograph and transformer to tap catenary when available, but run on diesel when overhead power is not available.

The development of dual-mode freight locomotives that can operate at full power either as diesel-electrics or straight electrics.

“A research program to convert an existing AC traction locomotive to a dual-mode electric platform, develop an electric power tender, and investigate their combined performance and efficiency on an electrified test track could substantially reduce uncertainty in the cost of implementing intermittent electrification and its associated risk,” the report says.

Candidates for conversion would include Wabtec/GE AC4400, ES44AC, and ET44AH models as well as the Progress Rail SD70MAC and SD70ACe, the study said. Representatives of locomotive manufacturers Wabtec and Progress Rail did not respond to requests for comment on the study.

As for catenary, the report identified three important ways of bringing down initial costs of electrification.

First, intermittent electrification — or leaving gaps between catenary — would shave installation costs.

Second, railroads could partner with electric utilities to share risks and benefits of electrification projects. Railroad rights-of way could host electric transmission lines — giving utilities a far easier way to build new power lines from generating stations to metropolitan areas — that also could power catenary.

And, finally, railroads could seek public funding to aid in their decarbonization efforts.

The Association of American Railroads says stringing wire over freight main lines is a no-go. “Our position remains that overhead catenary is an unviable option for the nation’s freight rail network for a variety of reasons — including exorbitant costs,” spokeswoman Jessica Kahanek says.

The authors of the FRA study say more research is necessary.

“Dual-mode locomotives for freight service and intermittent electrification are two important approaches to improve project economics, but both require further research to prove their technical feasibility and determine more specific costs. Implementation strategies that include utility lease agreements for co-locating transmission lines in railroad right-of-way (ROW), or government partnerships or grant programs to capture the value of public health and climate benefits, offer the most promising pathways for improving freight rail electrification economics,” the report said. “Transferring some of the initial capital cost and risk of freight rail electrification from freight railroads to utilities and public agencies is critical to achieving freight rail decarbonization. Overall, several promising technologies and implementation strategies, taken together, offer a modern approach to railway electrification that is potentially more feasible than traditional electrification.”

The report also created a new economic formula that can be used to perform a cost-benefit analysis of proposed electrification projects.

It also notes that some technical and operational challenges must be overcome for electrification to become practical. Existing track circuits, for example, are DC and would need to be converted to AC. It’s also unclear how PTC systems would interact with overhead current. The common use of midtrain distributed power, meanwhile, would greatly complicate engine-changes at the end of electrified territories.

The FRA study, “Cost and Benefit Risk Framework for Modern Railway Electrification Options,” was authored by C. Tyler Dick and Rydell D. Walthall of the University

Railroads Shut Out of 250 Best-managed Companies List

By Bill Stephens | February 11, 2025

Only five transportation companies made the cut in the Wall Street Journal’s annual ranking



CSX empty train E789 passes through a snowy Mountain Lake Park, Md., on its way to Grafton, W.Va., from Baltimore’s Chesapeake Bay Pier, in January 2024. Chase Gunnoe

[The annual Management Top 250 list](#) measures corporate effectiveness by considering performance in five areas, including customer satisfaction, employee engagement, innovation, social responsibility, and financial strength. The ranking, developed and compiled by the [Drucker Institute](#), is based on data provided by 16 third-party sources.

Apple claimed the highest ranking in a top 10 list dominated by tech companies. The top railroad was CSX, at No. 283, followed by Union Pacific at 290, and Norfolk Southern at 354.

The annual survey is limited to publicly traded companies based in the U.S., qualifications that eliminate the two Class I systems based in Canada as well as BNSF Railway, which is owned by Berkshire Hathaway.

Among the three Class I railroads in the survey, CSX earned the top marks for customer satisfaction and employee engagement. Notably, CSX and UP saw their 2024 customer satisfaction scores rise and their employee engagement sink compared to 2017, which measured the period before they adopted the low-cost Precision Scheduled Railroading operating model.

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CSX's 2024 customer satisfaction score of 61.3 was in the same neighborhood as UPS (62.1) and Apple (64.7). UP wasn't far behind at 56.5, while NS – which was still recovering from congestion in its merchandise and bulk networks for much of last year – scored 45.8.

In 2017, CSX's customer satisfaction score was 43.7; UP's was 44.3; and NS's was 45.8. Their 2024 employee engagement scores – which ranged from 39.9 at UP to 55.2 at CSX – tumbled compared to 2017, with CSX standing at 34.6 in 2024, UP at 26.8, and NS at 26.2.

The CSX of 2017 made the top 250 list with a ranking of 224.

Peter Swan, associate professor emeritus of logistics and operations management at Penn State Harrisburg, said the results of the latest survey were not particularly surprising.

“The industry has been focused like a laser beam on operating ratio and return on assets. Some railroads have stumbled in chasing improved financial performance, but generally the industry is having its best results ever,” he says. “While this has been great for stockholders, it has not been so great for other stakeholders: labor, customers, and the general public.”

Although Apple's relatively low customer satisfaction rate was a puzzler, the railroads' customer satisfaction ranking was not, Swan says.

“The low railroad scores are not a mystery,” he says. “We have seen contentious Surface Transportation Board hearings on demurrage and customer service as well as the recent warnings from the STB on retaliation by railroads for shipper engagement with the STB. The recent Transportation Research Board report on long trains and testimony from many parties showed that railroads have not been proactive in avoiding societal costs associated with blocked crossings and Amtrak delays.”

Likewise, the low scores for employee engagement were a predictable outcome of contentious labor negotiations and trends toward automation, Swan says.

But Swan says the relatively low marks the railroads received for innovation did not properly reflect efficiency improvements.

“Railroads' basic product has not changed in decades and is unlikely to change much in the future,” he says. “This is not to say that railroads are not innovative, because they are constantly innovating.”

Swan says the railroads scored well on corporate social responsibility because they are the greenest form of land transportation and are developing battery, hybrid, and hydrogen fuel cell locomotives.

The railroads had plenty of company outside the top 250 in the latest survey. Only five transportation and logistics firms made the list: Uber (65), UPS (95), FedEx (141), Delta Air Lines (170), and Southwest Airlines (217).

Sierra Northern Acquires Locomotive Builder RailPower

By Trains Staff | February 7, 2025

Deal brings together builder of hybrid, genset units with hydrogen locomotive project



A rendering of Sierra Northern's planned hydrogen-powered switcher. The company has acquired RailPower, known for its hybrid and genset locomotives. Sierra Northern Railway

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Sierra Northern Railway has acquired the assets of locomotive builder RailPower LLC as part of its efforts to develop hydrogen and other low- or zero-emission motive power.

RailPower has produced approximately 190 locomotives, including 55 hybrid switchers and 116 genset locomotives, while Sierra Northern is currently involved in development of at least four hydrogen-powered locomotives [see [“Sierra Northern receives funding ...”](#), *Trains News Wire*, July 6, 2023].

Sierra Northern said [in a press release](#) that it is “poised to integrate RailPower's hybrid innovations with its hydrogen expertise.” It plans to build its hydrogen locomotives using RailPower's platform in an effort initially targeting the 260 locomotives used by shortline railroads in California.

[RailPower](#) currently offers a series of four- or six-axle, single or multiple-engine locomotives ranging from 600 to 2,800 hp.

Sierra Northern's hydrogen project has been supported by the California Energy Commission and the California State Transportation Agency. In addition to operating short lines in three locations and providing switching at locations in Concord and Sacramento, Sierra Northern is also principle owner of the Sierra Energy Corp., which has developed a waste-to-clean-hydrogen gasification technology. More on the company is available [at its website](#).

Trump Administration Shakes Up Funding Formulas for Rail Projects

By Bill Stephens | February 4, 2025

Prioritizing communities with high marriage and birth rates grabbed headlines, but a DOT memo also could upend funding for Amtrak, short lines, and grade crossings



A rendering of the Sawtooth Bridges shows the three structures that are part of the Northeast Corridor project. Amtrak

WASHINGTON — If you thought Federal Railroad Administration grant programs for things like passenger service, shortline track maintenance, and grade crossing elimination projects would be the least likely place to become a front in the culture wars, think again.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy on [Jan. 29 issued a memo](#) ordering Department of Transportation agencies to “identify and eliminate all orders, directives, rules, regulations, notices, guidance documents, funding agreements, programs, and policy statements” that the Biden Administration issued and relate “in any way to climate change, ‘greenhouse gas’ emissions, racial equity, gender identity, ‘diversity, equity, and inclusion’ goals, environmental justice, or the Justice 40 Initiative.”

Duffy subsequently issued an order “[ensuring reliance upon sound economic analysis in Department of Transportation policies, programs, and activities](#).” Despite the dry title, the order has caught the attention of major media

Why? A portion of the memo says preference should be given to funding projects that are located in “communities with marriage and birth rates higher than the national average.”

Wrote the Daily News in a typical New York City tabloid headline: “Trump to New York: Want money for trains, tunnels, and bridges? Get married and make babies.”

The order also prohibits recipients of DOT funding “from imposing vaccine and mask mandates” and requires “local compliance or cooperation with Federal immigration enforcement.”

But the order also contains provisions that would seem to threaten FRA funding for Amtrak, CRISI grants, and grade-crossing elimination projects. Specifically, the order says funding shouldn’t go to projects that:

Would depend on continuous or future DOT support or assistance for improvements and ongoing maintenance.

Are “purely local in nature and unrelated to a proper Federal interest.”

Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor receives [ongoing federal funding for maintenance and replacement projects](#), such as the Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Tunnel in Baltimore and the Gateway Program in New York and New Jersey.

CRISI grants support local short line railroad infrastructure programs, including bridge projects and track work. Chuck Baker, president of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association, is not worried about the new funding criteria. “It’s an interconnected freight rail system and there is an inherent federal interest in the whole thing working well, most certainly including short lines,” Baker says. “I think short line projects will be very competitive under these criteria.” The benefits from eliminating grade crossings, meanwhile, flow primarily to local communities. What will the impact of the orders be on various FRA programs? That’s not clear. Former Pan Am Railways President David Fink, President Donald Trump’s nominee to lead the FRA, has not yet been confirmed by the Senate. The FRA referred to questions to the Department of Transportation, which did not respond.

An Amtrak representative said the railroad was working on a response to questions from *Trains News Wire*. *Trains* also sought comment from the Association of American Railroads.

Note: Updated at 7:20 p.m. Central with comment from ASLRRA President Chuck Baker.

Two Bills Addressing Hazardous-material Rail Movements Reintroduced in House

By Trains Staff | February 6, 2025

Legislation would broaden definition of high-hazard trains, create fund to reimburse first responders



Material is released from a tank car damaged in the 2023 East Palestine, Ohio, derailment. New legislation would redefine hazardous-material trains and create a fund to reimburse emergency agencies that respond to hazardous-material derailments. Screenshot from NTSB

WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Chris Deluzio (D-Pa.) has reintroduced two bills stemming from the East Palestine derailment of 2023 — one broadening the definition of a “high-hazard flammable train” and setting reporting requirements for railroads for derailments involving hazardous materials, and another requiring railroads to reimburse first responders for costs resulting from derailments.

Deluzio (D-Pa.), U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) and [14 other Democratic cosponsors](#) are supporters of the Decreasing Emergency Railroad Accident Instances Locally, or DERAİL, Act. It would define high-hazard trains to include a train with one or more loaded tank cars carrying a Class 3 flammable liquid such as gasoline or ethanol, or one with one or more cars of a Class 2 flammable gas, such as compressed hydrogen, ethylene, or butylene.

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It would also require a railroad to report, within 24 hours, any derailment involving a train “carrying material toxic by inhalation” to the National Response Center, as well as state and local officials. Full text of the bill [is available here](#).

Said Deluzio in [a press release](#), “The DERAIl Act that I’m re-introducing with Rep. Khanna today is an important step to finally strengthen our rail regulations and improve rail safety in Western Pennsylvania, East Palestine, and across the country.” Khanna said the bill “will expand our safety regulations and help prevent future tragedies. Leaders from all parties must speak out loudly for better safety regulations.”

A version of the bill introduced in February 2023 [died in committee](#).

Deluzio and U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.) are sponsors of the Assistance for Local Heroes During Train Crises Act, which would create a new Hazardous Train Event Emergency Reimbursement Fund. It would require railroads and shippers to contribute no less than \$10 million annually to the fund through fees determined by the Secretary of Transportation. Emergency response entities would receive reimbursements of not less than \$250,000 and up to \$3 million following response to a hazardous-materials rail emergency to replace equipment, cover overtime pay, or address other expenses from such an emergency. The full text of the bill [is available here](#).

“It is time to make the railroads pay for the messes they cause in our communities,” Deluzio said in [a press release](#). “... This bill will help communities across the country better prepare for future derailments with improved information-sharing and will cover the cost of damaged equipment, overtime pay, and more—all paid for by the companies that ship and carry these materials.” Fitzgerald said the bill will “ensure real accountability and give first responders the support they deserve. When crisis strikes, first responders step up—we must do the same for them.”

The earlier version of the bill, introduced in April 2023, [failed to advance](#) beyond the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials.

Proposal for Iowa City Commuter Rail Service Stalls

By Trains Staff | February 5, 2025

Short line says it will not lease tracks for 8.2-mile operation



The Pop Up Metro train makes a demonstration run on the Rockhill Trolley Museum line in Pennsylvania in 2021. The latest proposal to use the Pop Up Metro system has stalled. Dan Zukowski

IOWA CITY, Iowa — A proposal to launch battery-electric commuter train service between Iowa City and North Liberty, Iowa, appears to be dead after the railroad involved said it would not allow use of its trackage.

[The Cedar Rapids Gazette reports](#) that the Cedar Rapids & Iowa City Railway, or CRANDIC, told those involved with the proposal that “leasing the line is not a viable option, particularly with many parts of the ultimate vision yet to be determined,” according to an email from Jeff Woods, the railroad’s director of business development and marketing. Liability and regulatory concerns, as well as impact on shippers, were factors, Woods wrote.

Johnson County was considering a three-year pilot program leasing the Pop Up Metro transit system — a package of remanufactured British multiple-unit cars, station platforms, and related equipment and services — for the proposed 8.2-mile operation, at a cost of about \$2 million. [see [“Iowa county looks at Pop Up Metro ...,”](#) *Trains News Wire*, July 17, 2024]. A low-cost trial is one of the tenets of the Pop Up Metro concept, which has seen interest from a number of entities but is still seeking its first chance to operate the package [see [“Pop Up Metro aims to provide ...,”](#) *News Wire*, Oct. 1, 2021].

County Supervisor Rod Sullivan [told the Kalona News](#) that all rail options “are pretty much on hold for now ... just because they seem to have changed their minds. That’s disappointing to hear, but we’ll just have to move on from there.”

Metro News - Metro Transit Expansion Rick Krenski Friday, January 31, 2025 **METRO TRANSIT:** via *Star Tribune*,

VERBATIM: “Metropolitan Council Chair **Charlie Zelle** brought a message of optimism for Metro Transit’s continued expansion to the annual State of the Region address. ... This year, the Met Council will open a record number of new transit lines, all bus rapid transit. The Gold Line, which will run from downtown St. Paul’s Union Depot to Woodbury, is slated to open March 22. It will eventually be extended to Minneapolis in 2027. The B Line, from downtown St. Paul to Lake Street and France Avenue in Minneapolis, is expected to open June 14. The E Line, from the Westgate area in St. Paul to Southdale in Edina, is expected to open sometime in 2025. Metro Transit has several other projects in the works.

Railfan Events Thanks to Rick Kresnske, Perry’s Hobbies

Northstar Chapter NRHS Monthly Meeting	Saturday March 8th 2025 6:15 pm - 8:45pm	Roseville Lutheran Church 1215 Roselawn Ave W Roseville MN 55113	FREE -Guests are
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

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