



NRHS

Northstar News

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

Next Meeting Saturday May 10th 2025 Roseville Lutheran Church



C&NW #1385 Climbing hill from Lakeland -Special heads to St Paul -Bob Ball



C&NW 1034 and 1105 Switching in Short Line yard (cow-Calf) -Bob Ball

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Meeting Notice:

Our next membership meeting will be held Saturday May 10th beginning at 6:15 pm at Roseville Lutheran Church. Note: in 2025 meetings will held on the 2nd Saturday of the month. Program: Greg Smith and 40-50 year old RR photos of passenger cars and trains from the Warren Kreckelberg Collection. Don't miss it!

You are encouraged to join us for supper before the meeting. Several members get together before each meeting for an informal Dinner at Keys Restaurant at Lexington and Larpenteur Avenues at around 4:15 pm. Please join us in-person at Roseville Lutheran Church, Saturday May 10th 2025 at 6 pm. Doors open at 5:50pm. Our business meeting begins at 6:15 pm followed by the program. If you are unable to join us in person, please join us via the free Zoom meeting application. If you are unable to join us in person, the Zoom Meeting log-in information are here: NRHS May 10th, 2025 Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89272832451?pwd=w0WyfKNpIdjb5BCATWghBOPdJQnza.1>

<https://tinyurl.com/2phd2krc>

Meeting ID: 892 7283 2451
Passcode: 120832

Dial-in, audio only 507 473 4847

Northstar Chapter Officers and Staff

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



From the Editor: Next issue will be out around **July 1st 2025**. Look for our **August RR trip Brochure** and sign-up Promptly! Chapter Picnic is at Red Wing MN riverfront on the CP on **Saturday July 12th 2025 from 10:am to ??** Catch the Amtrak Borealis here!

Chapter *Monthly Lunch* "Our monthly lunch has been changed to a lunch and ride event thru at least May. We will meet at Culver's at 7801 Nicollet Ave in Bloomington at 1 pm, and head over to the 30th street park-and-ride around 2:20. We will ride the Blue Line to Target Field and transfer to the Northstar commuter train departing for Big Lake at 3:38. Arrival at Big Lake will be around 4:30 with a 15 minute lay-over; you don't even need to get off the n before departing for Target Field at 4:30. Arriving Target Field around 5:30 we will transfer to the Blue Line and arrive back at 30th Ave Park and Ride around 6:30. **Next Lunch Wednesday May 28th 2025.** -Dan Meyer



Directions to Culvers:
1494 (From East or West) to Nicollet Ave S on Nicollet Ave to Culvers.
Meet at Culvers 1-2:30pm for lunch.
Drive to 28th Ave Park and Ride Station
E on American Blvd to 28th Ave South
To Parking Ramp. (Free)

Schedule: Blue Line light Rail and Northstar
-Leave 28th St Station on Blue Line 2:44pm
-Arrive Target Field Mpls 3:20 PM
-Depart on Northstar to Big Lake 3:38pm (Same train on return)
-Return to Target Field on Northstar 5:37pm
-Depart Target Field Blue Line 5:50pm
-Arrive 28th St Station Bloomington 6:23pm

Meeting Minutes April 12th 2025, Roseville Lutheran Church

The meeting was called to order at about 6:20 pm by President Dan Meyer. There were about 15 members and Guests present. A quorum was determined. (3 of 4 directors and 20% of membership) A motion to members by President Dan Meyer to approve the meeting minutes from April 2025 Newsletter from the March 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 to approve the minutes was carried. Dan Meyer then had attendees introduce themselves.

Treasurer's Report. John Chute gave the Treasurer's report. John reported our current chapter account balance. It was slightly less than at this time last year. John reported that we currently have 45 regular members and 9 subscribers that have renewed their membership. The Church has been paid for our meeting room fee. John stated we will be at his office until April 25, when he departs on a trip to Silvis IL

Library /Storage/ Flea Market Report. Dan Meyer reported on the Storage Locker. He asked if anyone present had anything to add. Dan Meyer stated he went to get the slide projector and table for tonight's slide presentation. John Goodman stated he has been looking at office space for the possibility of renting a space for our storage contents and to again have weekly meetings in some location like what we had before the last office move. John stated he is waiting on a call back from the same Building that the Twin City Model Railroad Museum is located. John then reported on the details of this location. John will report next month the results of the call back. John misses not having a place to meet weekly with members at a place where we have access to our storage locker contents. John was asked if most of the contents of much of our old storage contents were a permanent donation to the eventual location of the Charles City IA depot. Dan Meyer stated he thinks that the contents donated is permanent (Now in a storage location in Mason City IA) but we still have access. John Cartwright asked what it would cost to transport the contents back to the Twin Cities. Dan Meyer stated that it would be a costly move. John Goodman also announced that the annual Open House at Bob Moen's Charles city Passenger Car Museum is the first weekend in May from Friday to Sunday. It is open to anyone from our chapter. Russ Isbrandt asked if we could donate a news film about the creation of the Streetcar Museum that we have. Dan Meyer stated that we could donate it to the Streetcar Museum. Richard Tubbesing stated we have several film projectors, and from watching a recent TV program that he saw that old film projectors have some value. Wayne Torseth stated that the MTM has material from the GN and NP Historical societies. Dan Meyer stated this would be prohibited for us due to the massive volume of documents. Dawn Holmberg asked that we should note what films we have in storage and is anyone would be willing to look at our inventory to help document what we have. Richard Tubbesing stated he would help. Richard Tubbesing also stated we have two 1950's films by the state of Minnesota narrated by local TV station reporters of Minnesota Railroads that we have videoed and could be a future program.

Trip Director Report. The Trip report was given by John Goodman. We have a problem with renting a bus because of the high cost. John contacted the Richfield Bus company and a quote for a 40 seat bus was less than the Voight Bus service going to Duluth. They also have a 23 seat bus and John stated he is waiting for a quote to Duluth on that bus and assumes that the 23 bus has a bathroom on board. John will report on the Richfield bus quotes at the May 2026 meeting. John also contacted Prestige Bus Company, but they only do service within a radius of the Twin Cities. John contacted Ken Buehler at the Lake Superior Railroad Museum in Duluth and we wont know the schedule with the DM&IR Steam engine until May. Ken stated that if the steam engine is ready, if we have a fixed date to ride one of the Duluth trains, he will put the steam engine on for us on that date. After some discussion, it was suggested that we should carpool to Duluth for our August 2025 trip. Dan Meyer stated that the Jefferson Commercial bus fare to Duluth was about \$73 but its schedule does not match the train schedule. John Goodman stated we had 18 people on the bus for our Trego trip and the chapter contributed \$1000 for the train tickets. He doesn't think we could get 20 people on a bus trip to Duluth, which makes it very costly to determine the individual cost the approach is to carpool. As for other trips, John stated recently we had a good turnout for a Light rail and Northstar trip to Big Lake from Bloomington and return. Dan Meyer stated we plan to do the same lunch at Culvers and trip to Big Lake on the 4th Wednesday in April. Mark Quam stated (for the trip to Duluth) there is an airport shuttle to Duluth, and they do group rates, and it might be an option. We need to know the schedule. John Goodman stated there are no restrooms on these shuttle buses. As for the Northstar train ride in June, we do not know if and when Northstar Service will end but can still do a trip like we have been doing on a Friday in June. We will have our Picnic in Red Wing the 2nd Saturday in July. We can at least watch the Borealis go by. Dan Meyer asked in there were any questions. It was decided that the details for the June and August trips will be determined at the May 2025 meeting. John then stated that he has the Calendar Account balance and reported it was very healthy.

Calendar Report. Dawn Holmberg gave the Calendar report. The calendar committee has been meeting at Richard Tubbesing's apartment building great room to begin viewing possible photographs for the 2026 calendar. We have made a first pass of photos to review and started to get into the 2nd pass of photos. We are still looking for anyone to submit photographs for consideration. Dawn state we will continue to meet and hope to have selections made my Mid-May which then we will start to write captions.

National Representative Report. The National (NRHS) report was given by Dawn Holmberg. There is a BOD and Advisory Council meeting in May at Johnson City Tennessee. The NRHS is still working on the Convention which will be held in June at Lansing Michigan. The Convention Notice has been posted on the NRHS website with no details yet. Dawn stated that she assumes that convention details will be posted by the May BOD meeting. Dawn stated that the Newsletter should be out soon with Info on NRHS Grants that have been approved. Rail Camp registrations are closed and both the east and west Rail Camps are full.

Newsletter Report. The newsletter report was given by Richard Tubbesing. The cost for printing the April Issue of the newsletter is \$74. He noted 28 copies were printed and the cost keeps increasing for the 10 page black and white newsletter. The monthly cost is about \$80 and includes stamps, stickers and mailing labels. Richard Tubbesing says we need to watch for the July picnic and August train ride info and brochure in the July Newsletter!). There will be no newsletter in June and August.

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WEB Report. Dan Meyer gave the web report Updates of chapter meetings and news have been posted on Facebook. Northstar News updated on the chapter website which has a long history of Chapter Newsletters. Dan Meyer stated that anyone can post railroad info on the Chapters Facebook page. Dan Meyer stated that anything posted on Facebook is offensive, he will remove it from the Facebook Group. Dan Meyer stated we also have a Calendar Facebook page which we advertise the sale of our calendar.

Cheer Committee. Glen Holmberg gave a report on Dave Norman. Dave is permanently in an assisted care facility near Stillwater as noted from contact with Dave Normans Lawyer or personal advisor. Dawn Holmberg stated that she, Dan Meyer and John Goodman attended Warren Kreckelberg's funeral. John Goodman stated that he has known Warren as a good friend for a nearly 60 years and was interested in passenger cars and private cars that the NP and GN built. John stated that he knows Warren's wife and volunteered to help her go through Warrens railroad collection (many HO Gauge items) when the time is right.

Future Programs. John Goodman stated that Greg Smith scanned many of Warren Krickelberg slides which Greg will show about 200 of the 1100 slides in Warren's collection at the May Meeting. John stated that the H Martin Swan collection is still his wife and have not heard anything about Mike Mackners or Swan's collection. In Mackner's case we need to contact the estate lawyer which we don't know who it is. Programs for the Fall could be Kate Kranville Wrin presenting a zoom slide show from Jim Wrin's collection. We also need to know if we are going to show a program on the MTM history to MTM that (as Richard Tubbesing stated) we have completed a power point presentation from our slide collection. Wayne Torseth stated that the MTM does programs on Saturday Afternoon, but you have to be invited.

And since leadership has changed at the MTM, they might not be aware of the program we put together. Bob Ball stated that we would like to see the Power Point show. Dan also thanked Bob Ball for two timetables, one for the Bass Lake spur.

Old Business to report. Dan Meyer stated we will have our monthly Lunch at Culvers in St Anthony on April 23rd at 1pm at the Bloomington Culvers and Northstar train ride.

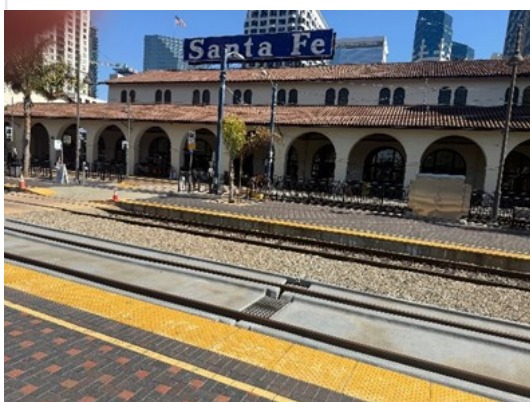
New Business Report. Dan Meyer stated that the Nominating committee needs to be formed for the election of officers this November. Solicitation of any volunteers for the committee and officer candidates was made by President Meyer. Present Meyer stated his term as President ends at the end of this year. Motion to adjourn at about 7:03pm was made by President Meyer. Motion was carried.

Announcements:

Mark Quam Reported on passenger rail issues. Mark attended the Rail Passenger Association Spring Conference in Washinton DC. Meetings were held during the week for various Rail Passenger Association regional groups. Mark visited the Wisconsin congressional offices concerning the funding of Amtrak going forward and the future. There is concern of lost funding for Amtrak. Mark stated that the Wisconsin Association and Minnesota Association of Rail passenger groups are starting a collaborative effort to lobby for passenger rail for route and funding issues. Mark attended a meeting of the Wisconsin Rail Passenger Association in Green Bay where Amtrak's Marc Magliari (Amtrak Public Relations Manager) reported on Amtrak's equipment and winter cancellations problem. Another issue is the status of the Borealis and the replacement of some rusty Horizon cars, which now have been replaced by Superliners. The Superliner cars have been borrowed from other Amtrak trains and probably will return to trains they were borrowed from for the summer season. So cars for the Borealis are in question. It was mentioned of the disposition of the new Venture passenger cars. Delivery is behind schedule and those cars are not owned by Amtrak but are owned by regional rail authorities (like the Michigan, Wisconsin, Missouri and Illinois Authorities, which essentially are state DOT's) that use the Venture cars and are destined to be used as the pool cars for trains in these regional areas. Dan Meyer asked about the Ski Train passenger cars. Some of the cars used in the Colorado Ski Train service and superliner cars are now being used in the Hiawatha Service. The Horizon Cars are being removed and put out of service. Mark also noted that the One year anniversary of the Borealis is coming up on May 21st and 22nd and that a small celebration is planned.

Program: John Cartwright presented a slide show from his collection at the meeting. A great round of applause was garnered from showing his collection of mostly Railroad Depots and Structures in the upper Midwest. Greg Smith will present a slide show of Warren Krickelberg slides at the May meeting.

Railroad Stations: Frank Willkie's trip from San Diego to the Twin Cities April 2025



San Diego Santa Fe Station CA

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Rail Runner Commuter Santa Fe NM



L: Albuquerque NM Station



Rail Runner train -Wikipedia



R: Sioux Falls SD Station



State Republicans Want to Nix Funds for Train between Duluth and St. Paul

But supporters say the Northern Lights Express could be “transformative.” -Provided by Rick Krenske
By Janet Moore The Minnesota Star Tribune MARCH 31, 2025 AT 8:40PM



Boosters of Northern Lights Express train service between the Twin Cities and Duluth point to the success of Amtrak's new Borealis service between St. Paul and Chicago. (Richard Tsong-Taatarii/ The Minnesota Star Tribune)

Nearly \$200 million in state money set aside for Northern Lights Express passenger train service between the Twin Cities and Duluth could be in peril if Republicans at the Capitol have their way. [House](#) and [Senate](#) versions of a bill introduced at the Legislature target \$194 million that was funded by state lawmakers in 2023 to cover the state's portion to build the 152-mile line. Instead, the funds would be diverted to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to maintain state highways.

“We need to be realistic folks, we need to face reality and take care of what we have,” said Rep. Patti Anderson, R-Dellwood, author of the House bill, during a committee hearing in March. Plans call for the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to cover 80% of the \$719 million cost to build the project, but Anderson and others question whether the Trump administration will support it. “I highly suspect the [grant] will end up on the chopping block,” she said. A hearing before the House Transportation Finance and Policy Committee drew a loose-knit coalition of NLX supporters ranging from students, people with disabilities, union members, veterans, and officials from St. Louis County and the Duluth Port Authority. “How important is this to me?” asked Keith Nelson, a St. Louis County commissioner, chair of the Northern Lights Express Alliance and a small beef

Nelson said the project would be “transformative” for northern Minnesota — “a once-in-a-generation opportunity we cannot afford to let pass us by.”

Amtrak service between the Twin Cities and Duluth was discontinued 40 years ago, but since then efforts have gained steam to re-store it.

Supporters say those efforts have been bolstered by the recent success of Amtrak's new Borealis service between St. Paul in Chicago, which has [surpassed ridership](#) projections.

NLX trains are expected to travel up to 90 mph and take 2.5 hours to reach downtown Duluth from Target Field in Minneapolis, with stops in Coon Rapids, Cambridge, Hinckley, and Superior, Wis. A one-way ticket is estimated to cost between \$30 and \$35.

The project is currently included in the FRA's Corridor Identification and Development Program, a [pipeline](#) for new and expanded passenger rail service across the country, according to MnDOT.

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It's unclear how the Trump administration will land on funding passenger rail service in general. It wasn't a focus during Trump's first term, but that changed during the Biden administration.

Late last year, Trump nominated former railroad executive David Fink to lead the FRA, a move Amtrak supported. (Amtrak could be the operator of NLX.)

What opponents and boosters seem to agree on is that federal funding is critical to NLX — FRA money could make or break the project. A decision on federal funding could come this spring.

"A fiscal reckoning has arrived," Anderson predicted.

But Jill Brown, a spokesperson for the Northern Lights Express Alliance, called the bills in St. Paul "premature," and said the group's contacts in Washington, D.C., have indicated no changes in the federal planning process for projects like NLX.

"We need to let the process continue," she said.

MnDOT received [federal grants](#) to update preliminary work on the project that dates back to 2017. In addition, the department will work with BNSF Railway, which owns the freight track that would be shared with NLX trains, to help craft an updated project cost. Either way, Anderson is not a fan: "Given our experience with other rail projects [the estimate] is likely below the actual cost," she said.

The House bill was sent to Ways and Means while the Senate version has been referred to its Transportation Committee.

Republicans have also introduced bills this session to delay work on the [Blue Line light-rail extension](#) between Minneapolis and Brooklyn Park, and [shut down Northstar Commuter Rail](#) service linking Target Field to Big Lake.

Report on the Iron Range Wednesday, March 26, 2025, 11:09 AM, from Rick Krenske

It's time for a Range Report and other observation report.

Went up the Range today. Kelly Lake area was first.

I missed the Keetac train so went to Kelly Lake to catch the Kelly Lake Local.

Photographed the Kelly Lake Local arriving from Keetac. It had the usual Bentonite cars (3bay covered hoppers) and gondolas (used to haul grinding balls).

The sidings east of the main line was empty which is unusual. Normally the loaded bentonite cars are stored on the tracks on the east side of the main line. near the Depot. I have observed on my trips up the Range that the Superior/Kelly Lake arrives at Kelly Lake (usually early Tuesday morning or Monday night) Then a little later on Tuesday, the Kelly Lake crew starts its work week. Tuesday they typically switch the oil distributor (tank cars) at Kelly Lake. Then it is off to Keetac with loaded bentonite cars and loaded gondolas (grinding balls). After dropping off the loads at the plant they gather up the empties and bring them back to Kelly Lake and put the empties in the north part of the yard. That generally is the Tuesday routine.

The reason there are no bentonite loads for up the Range to Minorca is because it is shut down. I had observed no bentonite loads on the receiving tracks for up the Range. On my way up Highway 169, I observed no steam coming out of Minorca Plant located just north of Virginia. Also with Hibbing Taconite cutting back on production, there will be less bentonite going to Hibbtac. So that accounts for no bentonite loads on the arrival tracks.

CN Territory was next via Highway 37 to Iron Jct. and south on Highway 7 to Forbes.

Just caught the T-bird tail end as it was crossing Highway 7 going into Fairlaine.

Heard several other trains but was not in position to photograph them.

Drove up to Sheldon Jct. I did not observe a T-Bird at the crude ore load out. I also did not observe the T-bird head end at Fairlaine of the 2nd crude ore train. That puzzled me. Normally I would be able to observe both T-birds someplace either at T-Bird North, Fairlaine, Keenan or places in between. I did not observe a crude ore train in the yard at Keenan. So where the second T-Bird was located shall remain a mystery.

It was getting late so headed back towards Grand Rapids/Cohasset about 7 pm.

Observations on the Range:

From earlier news articles and other sources, Hibbing Taconite was running only two of its three pellet lines (furnaces). So with Hibbtac cutting back production further, that means they will be operating only one pellet furnace. If my calculations are right that means that Hibbing taconite will be receiving a train every other day instead of every day. Hibbing taconite was rated at about 7.5 million tons with three pellet machines (Dravo Straight Grate Pellet Machines) running at full production so they would get one train every day and some days they would get two. When running two pellet machines (production would be about 5.0 million tons per year) they were getting one train per day. With one pellet machine running (production would be at a 2.5 million ton per year) they should be scheduling a train about every other day.

This cut back in production at Hibbing Taconite is a mixed blessing. They are currently scrounging for crude ore to keep the plant running. They have been mining in four areas. On the west end (next to Keetac) west of the tunnels they are currently mining in the Lamberton area. Shovel number 52 was observed in that area last week. There has not been as heavy haulage truck traffic from that area, as observed by me on my trips up to Kelly Lake. They are also mining in the area just west of old north Hibbing. The third area is in front of the Hull Rust Mine View (new location) I have not been up to the mine view since the middle of November but they had a Bucyrus Erie Shovel and loader mining that area. The Fourth area that they are mining is just between Kitzville (north east of Hibbing) and just west of Minn Discovery Center along Highway 169.

The last time I observed that area they had two shovels working and were stripping surface material with a loader on the North rim of the pit. In reading articles in the various papers Cliffs was awarded the State leases that Mesabi Metallics had in May of 2023. Now it appears that Mesabi Metallics has won some legal procedures that have limited Cliffs access to the former Butler Taconite ore bodies.

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It has been observed that the Cleveland Cliffs signs that were at the access road leading to the Butler leases were removed late summer or early fall. It will be interesting to see how this battle between Cliffs and Mesabi Metallics shakes out. In November Mesabi Metallics hosted a informaton meeting in Nashwauk and had bust tours to their plant site. It was stated that they would complete the construction and taconite production would start about the first quarter of 2026. It was also stated that they have enough ore leases to operate for at least 7 years. I have observed from a spot on Highway 169 between Calumet and Pengilly that the crusher building, ore storage and consentrator building have been progressing. There are at least three construction cranes around the buildings and most of the buildings are getting enclosed.

Prior to me leaving for up the Range today (March 25, 2025) I observed a loaded coal train going into Boswell Energy Center at about 10:15 AM. When I arrived back to Cohasset it was observed that the emptied coal train was going west at 22:59 (about 9PM) That is not normal operations. That leads me to think that there is a problem some place east of Grand Rapids. The Rapids Turn also had not arrived at Grand Rapids at its normal evening arrival time.

Here is the observations of what cars are in storage along the sidings over the last month or so on the Lakes

Ebro (West of Bagley) siding: box cars (March 12, 2025)

Wilton (West of Bemidji) have not observed that siding this year.

Bemidji: no cars on any sidings (March 12, 2025)

Rosby: Boxcars (March 12, 2025) Cars have been in storage for at least the last couple of years.

Cass Lake: Track 1 - Bulk head flat cars and covered coil cars. (March 8 and 12th, 2025)

Track 2- West end - flat cars East end covered coil cars

Track 3 - Covered coil cars

Track 4 - empty

Shley: 3 bay steel coal hoppers (March 12, 2025) these have been there for several years.

Deer River: 3 bay steel coal hoppers (March 12, 2025) these have been in storage for several years.

Cohasset: 3 bay steel coal hoppers (March 25, 2025) these have been in storage for several years.

Seyton: (Between Cohasset and Grand Rapids) Track 1- 3 bay steel hoppers (March 25, 2025)

Track 2- 3 bay steel hoppers (March 25, 2025)

Grand Rapids: No known cars in storage- All tracks are used for switching, arrivals and departure

Gunn: Track 1- 100 ton (10 panel) taconite cars. (Just arrived last week March 16th -23rd)

Track 2- flat cars (have been in storage for a couple of years)

Track 3 empty

Casco main line (north of Gunn) 3 bay steel hopper cars and 100 ton taconite cars (8 panel) have been stored here for the past 3 years.

Philbin: Tri-level auto carriers Arrived sometime early March or late Feb 2025

Swan River: no cars in storage March 2025

Island: 100 ton (8 panel) taconite cars. Have been in storage for several years.

Floodwood: 3 bay steel coal cars have been in storage for several years.

Baden on Casco Main is just north of Alborn. Have not observed that siding.

Chuck Corwin Cohasset, Minn



Trackside Monthly Newsletter

April 2025 | #123 *This is news about events and other happenings at the Lake Superior Railroad Museum and North Shore Scenic Railroad in Duluth, Minnesota*



We want your train story!

National Train Day is coming up Saturday May 10th. Join us as we celebrate the 156th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad.

This year, we want to share your train stories. What made you fall in love with trains? Do you have a memorable train experience you'd like to share? What about the Lake Superior Railroad Museum is special to you?

We want to hear it!

Please send your train stories to ali@duluthtrains.com for a chance for your story to be featured during National Train Day in the museum or on our Facebook Page

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Turning the Steamer

A couple weeks ago, photographer David Schauer caught this photo of our crews "turning" the Soo Line #2719 for an upcoming inspection. In order to reverse the direction of the engine, both it and Soo Line #320 went down to the BNSF's Rice's Point yard, where there is a wye (like a 3 point turn) to turn around.

Although the diesel and the steam locomotive look somewhat from a different era, they were built only 16 years apart. Soo #320 was built in 1939, and #2719 in 1923.

Soo Line #2719 was the railroad's operating steam locomotive up until 2013 when it went "down" for its 15 year required inspection on the boiler. It has been on display since. The plan is to take the first step, which is to inspect the engine to assess its ability for re-built to potential running condition again in the near future



All Aboard for Summer Fun on the Rails

Train Tickets on the North Shore Scenic Railroad On-Sale Now
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.
North Shore Scenic Railroad | 506 West Michigan Street | Duluth, MN 55802 US

Return of C&NW No. 1385 to Mid-Century Railway Museum is Set (updated)

By Trains Staff | April 10, 2025 | Last updated on April 11, 2025

Public invited to view May 9 unloading of locomotive, returning to North Freedom, Wis., after 12 years



Chicago & North Western No. 1385 is near Port Washington, Wis., on a Milwaukee-Green Bay ferry move, June 28, 1984. The locomotive is set for a return to the Mid-Century Railway Museum in May. J. David Ingles

NORTH FREEDOM, Wis. — Dates in May have been set for the move returning Chicago & North Western 4-6-0 No. 1385 to the Mid-Century Railway Museum.

The locomotive, out of service for more than a quarter-century and away from the museum since 2013, is slated to be moved by truck from its current location in Middleton, Wis., on May 5, then loaded onto a flatcar for its move to Mid-Century by the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad. Those aspects of the move are off-limits at the request of the businesses involved, but the public is invited to watch the locomotive's unloading on May 9 from a designated viewing area at the museum.

The locomotive, built by Alco in March 1907, was purchased by museum members for \$2,600 in 1961 and traveled widely throughout the Midwest until it was taken out of service for an overhaul in 1998. That overhaul is nearing completion; the museum has a goal of returning the locomotive to operation in 2026 [see "[Mid-Century museum seeks funds ...](#)," *Trains News Wire*, Feb. 6, 2025].

While the move is scheduled, the museum is still soliciting donations to cover the costs, still needing more than half of its \$80,000 fundraising goal. More information is available in [this Facebook post](#) or at [the museum website](#). Donations can also [be made here](#). — Updated April 11, 2025, with correct information on locomotive number.



Amtrak Announces More Storm-related Cancellations

By Trains Staff | April 7, 2025

City of New Orleans, Texas Eagle continue to be affected



Amtrak's southbound Texas Eagle passes through Lemont, Ill., on Oct. 5, 2024. The train will again be cancelled between St. Louis and Fort Worth,

CHICAGO — Storm-related cancellations will continue today (Monday, April 7) for Amtrak's Texas Eagle and City of New Orleans, the fourth such day for such disruptions. In posts on the [Amtrak Alerts social media feed](#) late Sunday night, the company said today's departures of the *City of New Orleans* from Chicago and New Orleans would be cancelled in their entirety.

The *Texas Eagle* will be cancelled in both directions today between Fort Worth and St. Louis. Rail lines in across a broad area have experienced flooding disruptions because of widespread heavy rains and other severe weather in the Midwest and South [see "[Storms impact CSX, Norfolk Southern service](#)," *Trains* News Wire, April 6, 2025]. [Weather.com reports](#) 19 deaths have been attributed to the storms, with some areas reporting [more than 15 inches of rain](#). The National Weather Service [is forecasting](#) moderate to heavy rain and strong to severe thunderstorms today from southeast Virginia to the central Gulf Coast.

Elsewhere, Amtrak today [cancelled the Palmetto](#) between New York and Savannah, Ga., citing equipment unavailability. The northbound train was cancelled on Sunday for the same reason

Messaging on Amfleet Arrivals to Seattle Replacing b/o Horizon Fleet

April 2nd 2025 from John Goodman Washington State DOT (WSDOT) update: 3/31/25

Amtrak is moving several Amfleet I train cars to Seattle to replace the Horizon trainsets unexpectedly taken out of service on March 26 due to corrosion issues. Some train cars have already arrived, while others are on their way to the Pacific Northwest. They are being transported as part of the Empire Builder from Chicago, IL.

The first Amtrak Cascades trains that will be back in service are #516 and #519 between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia. These trains are expected to resume on Tuesday, April 1. The next set of trains arriving in Seattle will be in service later this week, including trains #517, #506, and #505 between Seattle and Portland and train #518 between Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, BC. As additional train cars arrive over the next week, they will quickly be entered into service, with trains replacing the buses that are currently running. The goal is to quickly restore all trips, but with a limited number of cars on each train. Therefore, most trains will have fewer seats available, providing just two coach cars, 17 business class seats and a café car. In some cases, this could result in the availability of just half the number of coach seats as normal. It is uncertain how long this limited seating will remain in place. For future travel plans, book your travel in advance due to limited seating options until our routes are fully operational.

SERVICE ALERT: Bus service only on most routes, but train service to resume soon

On March 26, Amtrak determined its fleet of Horizon trainsets will immediately be taken out of service, due to identified safety concerns with this aging equipment. A total of 70 passenger cars across the country were affected, including 26 cars on the Amtrak Cascades route.

Amtrak is moving several Amfleet I train cars to Seattle to replace the Horizon trainsets. Some replacement train cars have already arrived, while others are on their way.

Trains #503 and #508 traveling daily between Seattle and Eugene continue to operate with a Talgo trainset. Trains #516 and #519 between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia are expected to resume on Tuesday, April 1. The next set of trains arriving in Seattle will be in service later this week, including trains #517, #506, and #505 between Seattle and Portland and train #518 between Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, BC.

As additional train cars arrive over the next week, they will quickly be entered into service, with trains replacing the buses that are currently running. The goal is to quickly restore all trips, but with a limited number of cars on each train. In some cases, this could result in the availability of just half the number of coach seats as normal. It is uncertain how long this limited seating will remain in place. For future travel plans, book your travel in advance due to limited seating options until our routes are fully operational.

Janet Matkin Communications Manager WSDOT Rail, Freight and Ports 253-350-9516

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

N&W No. 1218 Gains State, National Historic Recognition

By Trains Staff | April 3, 2025

2-6-6-4 designated a Virginia Historic Landmark, will be added to National Register of Historic Places



Norfolk & Western 2-6-6-4 Class A steam locomotive No. 1218 pulls an excursion train in 1988. Jim Wrinn

ROANOKE, Va. — Norfolk & Western Class A Locomotive No. 1218, the 2-6-6-4 built by the railroad's East End Shops in Roanoke in 1943, will be added to the National Register of Historic Places and has been designated as a Virginia Historic Landmark.

The locomotive, retired in 1959 and restored for excursion service between 1987 and 1991, is displayed at the Virginia Museum of Transportation, which is also the home of similarly recognized Class J 4-8-4 No. 611.

"We are thrilled to see the N&W 1218 recognized for its historical significance," Mendy Flynn, the museum's executive director, said in a press release. "This designation acknowledges the role that the Norfolk & Western Railway played in shaping the economic and industrial landscape of Virginia and the United States. The 1218's inclusion on the National Register ensures that future generations will continue to learn about and appreciate this extraordinary piece of American history."

Said Zac McGinnis, the museum's railroad exhibit historian, "The Norfolk & Western Class A locomotives are often regarded as one of the finest steam locomotive designs ever built, blending raw power, precision engineering, and unparalleled efficiency, becoming icons of American railroading history. The Virginia Museum of Transportation is incredibly thankful and blessed to have two iconic locomotives like the 1218 and 611 in its collection, preserving a vital piece of railroad history and sharing these magnificent locomotives with the world for future generations to admire and experience."

More on No. 1218 and the Virginia Museum of Transportation is available at [the museum website](#).

Groundbreaking Marks Start of Construction of New East Broad Top Station at Saltillo (updated)

By David Lassen | April 5, 2025 | Last updated on April 7, 2025

Structure will be nearly identical to 1892 station torn down in 2004



The Friends of the East Broad Top and the EBT Foundation on Saturday marked the start of work on a new Saltillo station with a groundbreaking ceremony. Taking part, from left, are Huntingdon County Commissioner Jeff Thomas, Friends of the EBT President Andy Van Scyoc, East Broad Top General Manager Brad Esposito, and East Broad Top Corridor Committee Member Allen Miller. Friends of the EBT/Matthew Malkiewicz



With Combine No. 14 on the rear, a train of coal loads pauses at the Saltillo station on its way to the cleaning plant in Mount Union in the early 1950s. EBT Archives & Special Collections

The Friends group "is excited to complete the circle from documentation of the original station to building a faithful replica that will prove beneficial to the railroad and community alike," Friends President Andy Van Scyoc said in a press release. The major change from the original building, which had a freight room with a raised floor, is that the new structure will have a single interior level, permitting a variety of uses. and grading.

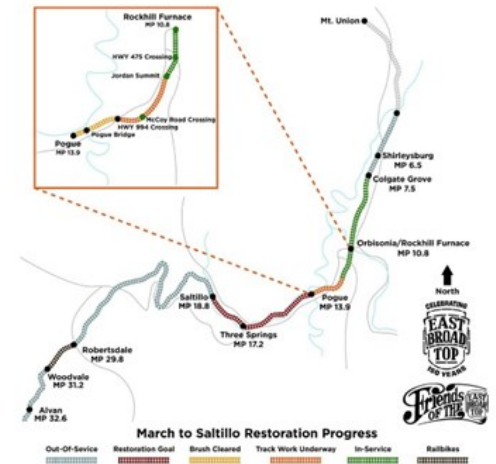
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L: A drawing of the new East Broad Top Saltillo station, prepared by architect and Friends of the EBT member John Bowie. Friends of the East Broad Top

R: The status of restoration of the East Broad Top main line as of October 2024. EBT



Jeff Swope of J.L. Swope Construction is the contractor for the construction. His crew will complete the exterior and make the building watertight, while Friends volunteers will complete the interior.

The Friends group plans to contribute \$50,000 toward the station recreation, and set a goal of \$75,000 for restoration of the main line as part of its 2025 fundraising [see [“Friends of EBT opens art exhibit ...”](#) News Wire, Oct. 17, 2024]. Overall, the current fundraising campaign has already passed \$300,000 — \$30,000 beyond its goal — with six months remaining.

— Updated at 6:35 p.m. CT with photo from event, historical image

American Steam Group Conducts Successful Steam Tests on T-1 No. 2100

By Trains Staff | April 7, 2025

Locomotive could see break-in runs before the end of 2025



American Steam Railroad Preservation Association T-1 No. 2100, wearing the number plate for its planned debut as American Freedom Train No. 250, had two days of successful steam tests on April 3-4, 2025. American Steam

CLEVELAND — The American Steam Railroad Preservation Association’s restoration of Reading Co. T-1 No. 2100 has reached a major milestone with successful steam tests of the locomotive. The tests of the boiler, piping, and water delivery systems took place April 3-4, with contractors on hand. They were made possible when the organization was able to close a \$4,500 funding gap in a matter of a few weeks in March. The money went toward labor and other elements needed for testing, including the professional steam contractors to perform the testing, and 2,000 gallons of recycled oil from a Cleveland-based vendor. “After nearly 10 years of dedicated volunteer and professional labor totaling more than \$1.6 million and countless unexpected obstacles, we’ve done it,” American Steam President Rob Gardner said in a press release. “Ten years ago, none of us expected that it would take this long to get here, but we have stayed the course the entire way, being sure that no corners were cut and every detail addressed appropriately.”

The 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization has been working to convert the locomotive from coal to oil firing, with the firepan and burner professionally engineered for maximum power, performance, efficiency, and operational sustainability. The group will next modify or replace the blast nozzle and petticoat based on engineering performed by consultant FMW Solutions.

Plans are to debut the locomotive as American Freedom Train No. 250, honoring the role of sister locomotive No. 2101 as one of the primary locomotives for the bicentennial *American Freedom Train*, as well as the nation’s coming 250th birthday.

American Steam Treasurer Forrest Nace said the test firings have had “a positive impact” on the group’s volunteers, “and proves to our donors that they can give with confidence that their generosity is going to a restoration done with some of the best and most experienced contractors in the industry ... The other benefit of achieving this historic fire-up milestone is that now we can begin to focus more on the running gear, final assembly and painting. The estimated cost to complete the project is \$139,050; Nace said if that amount is raised in the next six months, break-in test runs could come before the end of the year.

A members-only open house scheduled for April 5 was cancelled because of severe thunderstorms in the area. A fire-up for ASR members will be scheduled in the near future.

Tax-deductible donations for the locomotive’s restoration can be made at [the American Steam website](#), or can be mailed to: American Steam Railroad Preservation Association

Western Maryland Scenic No. 1309 Set to Return to Operation in May

By Trains Staff | April 9, 2025



Western Maryland Scenic 2-6-6-2 No. 1309 steams around famous Helmstetter's Curve on Feb. 27, 2022, in a Trains Magazine photo charter. The heritage railway has announced the 2025 excursion schedule for the locomotive. Jim Wrinn

CUMBERLAND, Md. — Western Maryland Scenic Railroad 2-6-6-2 No. 1309 is slated to return to operation beginning May 3, powering “Frostburg Flyer” excursions on Saturday and Sundays, the railroad said in an email to customers on Tuesday (April 8, 2025).

Plans also call for the locomotive, built by Baldwin in 1949 for the Chesapeake & Ohio, to operate on Friday evening “Sunset on the Mountain” trips.

Information and tickets for the Frostburg Flyer [are available here](#), and for Sunset on the Mountain [are available here](#).

No. 1309 was sidelined for the 2024 season for work that had been anticipated since it first was restored to service in 2021 but was moved up based on operations in December 2023. The railroad had said in an update earlier this year that it was nearing completion of the work on pistons and running gear, among other items [see [“Western Maryland Scenic No. 1309 nears reassembly,”](#) Trains News Wire, Jan. 22, 2025].

Reading & Northern No. 2102 Set for September Excursion

By Trains Staff | April 9, 2025

Local Rotary Club sponsors trip through Lehigh Gorge



Reading & Northern No. 2102, shown during a 2022 test run, is set for a September 13, 2025, excursion. Scott A. Hartley

PORT CLINTON, Pa. — Reading & Northern T-1 4-8-4 No. 2102 will power a Sept. 13, 2025, steam excursion through Lehigh Gorge sponsored by the Rotary Club of Mountain Top, the railroad has announced. Tickets for the excursion from the R&N's Penobscot (Mountain Top) station to Jim Thorpe, Pa., and return will go on sale Wednesday, April 16, at 9 a.m. Tickets, priced at \$70, can be purchased through the Rotary Club, or on line at [the Reading & Northern passenger website](#).

Prior editions of this excursion have featured the railroad's 4-6-2 locomotive, No. 425. “We are pleased to offer this trip with an even bigger steam locomotive, for the same reasonable price as before,” said Tim Wright, Lehigh Division director of passenger service.

The trips will depart Mountain Top at 9:30 a.m., arriving in Jim Thorpe at 11:15 a.m. and departing at 4 p.m., returning to Mountain Top about 5:30 p.m. The trip, through the length of Lehigh Gorge State Park, will feature No. 2102 working on an uphill grade throughout the return trip.

The excursion is one of four currently scheduled for No. 2102; The others are Iron Horse Rambles excursions; one was held in February and others are set for May and June [see [“First winter trip ...,”](#) Trains News Wire, Dec. 28, 2024]. Additional trips with the locomotive will be part of the Reading & Northern Fall Foliage excursions to be announced later this year.

Eighteen Projects to Receive Emery Rail Heritage Trust Grants

By Trains Staff | April 9, 2025 | Last updated on April 10, 2025

Awards totalling \$250,000 selected from 39 applicants



The John Emery Rail Heritage Trust has selected 18 projects for its annual rail preservation grants, awards totaling \$250,000. The Trust is the largest in the U.S. that makes 100% of its awards solely for rail restoration purposes. It was established by John Emery, a long-time Chicago resident and rail enthusiast who wanted to help preserve equipment and infrastructure that would share in what he experienced during what Emery considered to be the Golden Age of rail travel, 1920 to 1960. In its 10 years of operations, the Trust has awarded grants totaling \$2,807,310.

The grants were selected from 39 applications seeking a total of \$942,005, following extensive research and serious consideration by advisors of the Trust.

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Receiving grants are:

- [Bellefonte Historical Railroad Society](#): \$13,100 to continue refurbishment work on its two Budd RDCs, [No. 9153](#) and [No. 9167](#).
- [Black River Railroad Historical Trust](#): \$11,000 for wheel, truck, and brake work for [1914 Lackawanna Pullman coach No. 605](#).
- [Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust](#): \$15,000 for HVAC work on its [heavyweight Pullman car Beaver](#).
- [Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society](#): \$15,000 for interior updates, upgrades, and modifications to [Pullman car Kitchi Gammi Club](#).
- [Fox River Trolley Association](#): \$10,000 to rebuild seats on 1913 [Chicago, Aurora & Elgin interurban car No. 316](#).
- [Iron Horse Society at Steamtown](#): \$15,000 towards restoration of [ex-Delaware, Lackawanna & Western coach No. 335](#).
- [St. Louis Iron Mountain Railway](#): \$2,600 for replacement windows for ex-New York Central coach No. 3
- [Nickel Plate Heritage Railroad](#): \$15,000 for reupholstery work for its [ex-Santa Fe El Capitan Hi-Level coaches](#).
- [Northwest Railway Museum](#): \$7,500 for upgrades to Northern Pacific Railway [Pullman parlor car No. 1049](#).
- [Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation](#): \$27,000 for restoration of four of the six driver boxes for [Oregon Railway & Navigation steam locomotive No. 197](#).
- [Railroading Heritage of Midwest America](#): \$10,000 for new windows for [coaches Wenonah and Nokomas](#).
- [Railway Restoration Project 113](#): \$25,000 to help with new tubes and flues for [Central Railroad of New Jersey 0-6-0 No. 113](#).
- [San Bernardino Railroad Historical Society](#): \$10,000 for work on ex-Santa Fe sleep [Pine Lodge](#), now [sleeper/dormitory car No. 2506](#).
- [Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum](#): \$20,000 for restoration work on [Pullman heavyweight sleeper Maitland](#).
- [Tri-State Railway Historical Society](#): \$15,000 for mechanical work on [Delaware, Lackawanna & Western F3A No. 663](#).
- [United Railroad Historical Society of New Jersey](#): \$15,000 for operational restoration of [NYC tavern-lounge car No. 37](#).
- [National Railway Historical Society, Washington, D.C., Chapter](#): \$8,800 for rebuilding and reupholstering the cushioned seats of the banquet tables in [Pullman heavyweight Dover Harbor](#).
- [Western Maryland Scenic Railroad Development Corp.](#): \$15,000.00 for restoration work on [ex-NYC grill-diner No. 456](#).

First Option Bank, Trustee of the Emery Rail Heritage Trust, continues to provide support during the application/selection process. Because of its investment management, the Advisory Committee is able to continually increase the effect the Trust has on the preservation of rail passenger travel. For information on setting up a foundation or to donate to the Emery Rail Heritage Trust, contact the bank at 913-294-9222.

Applications for the next round of grants are due by Feb. 1, 2026. Visit [the Emery Rail Heritage Trust website](#) for more information.

SP Steam Engine, Long Displayed in Fresno, Calif., to be Relocated

By Trains Staff | April 19, 2025

Baldwin 0-6-0 will be displayed at historic Kingsburg, Calif., station



Southern Pacific 0-6-0 No. 1238, on display in Fresno, Calif., since 1956, is shown in 1948. The locomotive is about to be moved to a new home. Kingsburg Depot



The restored Kingsburg, Calif., SP station will be the new home of 0-6-0 No. 1238. Kingsburg Depot

FRESNO, Calif. — A Southern Pacific steam locomotive on display in a Fresno park for almost 70 years is about to receive a new home.

SP No. 1238, a class S-10 Baldwin 0-6-0 built in 1918, is slated to be moved from Fresno's Roeding Park to the city of Kingsburg, about 24 miles to the southeast, [KSEE-TV reports](#).

There, it will be displayed at the [Historic Kingsburg Depot](#), an SP station built in 1875 and restored to its original appearance in 2016. The station now serves as home of the Leon S. Peters Learning Center and as an event venue.

The locomotive has been in Roeding Park since its donation to Fresno by the SP in 1956 but was acquired by support organization Friends of the Kingsburg Depot in 2022.

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The depot website says the locomotive will be preserved “in a historically accurate context” for educational programs and will be accessible to the public. It is protected by a fence in its current location. More information on the locomotive [is available here](#). The move is scheduled for May, although an exact date has not set. The Friends hand-laid 300 feet of track earlier this year in preparation for the locomotive’s arrival, according to [the Depot’s Facebook page](#).

The Friends group is soliciting tax deductible donations for the project to relocate the locomotive. Donations can be made [here](#).

Rocky Mountain Railroad Club to Merge Into Colorado Railroad Museum

By Trains Staff | April 18, 2025

Club assets, archives to be transferred to Golden, Colo., organization



Rio Grande Southern No. 20, preserved through the efforts of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, was among the rolling stock donated by the club to the Colorado Railroad Museum. The club is merging into the museum, assuring preservation of its assets and archives. Trains collection

GOLDEN, Colo. — The Rocky Mountain Railroad Club will merge with the Colorado Railroad Museum, the two organizations have announced, allowing the efforts of the club to continue even as it disbands after 87 years.

“This merger will formally end the work of the Rocky Club, but our goal is to nurture the continuation of its spirit,” Colorado Railroad Museum Executive Director Paul Hammond said in a [press release](#). “We intend to continue this Colorado railroading institution’s extraordinary work and celebrate its legacy well into the future.”

The club’s invaluable contributions toward preserving Colorado’s rail history will endure through the Museum’s ongoing preservation, publication, live rail excursion and public engagement efforts, ensuring that future generations can continue to learn from and appreciate the rich rail heritage of the Rocky Mountain region.”

The transition to place over the next several months will include the transfer of club assets, historical archives, and selected financial resources to the museum. The club and museum have had a close relationship since the museum relocated to Golden in 1959.

“The merger will also provide RMRRC’s cherished collections with the resources necessary for future preservation, while continuing to engage and inspire rail enthusiasts, young and old,” Hammond said. “Current club members will become museum members, providing them with regular e-newsletters, print magazines, and access to extensive in-person and online programming.”

The club, founded in 1938, was well known for its special excursions, including many on now-vanished railroads including the Rio Grande Southern. Its pioneering preservation efforts helped save RGS steam locomotive No. 20, a 4-6-0 built in 1899, and business car *Rico*, as well as Denver & Rio Grande Western short caboose No. 0578. All three are now displayed at the museum after their donation in 2006. No. 20, after a 14-year restoration costing more than \$2 million, was returned to operation in 2020. The club has also been awarded more than \$52,000 to preservation efforts elsewhere in the country.

The club’s contributions, as well as those of other rail enthusiast organizations, during its “Colorado Crossings” event May 17-18. The event will feature operation No. 20, as well as a recreation of a 1940’s Rocky Mountain Railroad Club excursion, tours of the *Rico* and Chicago, Burlington & Quincy business car No. 96, preserved by the Intermountain Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. The event will also feature a parade of all three of the museum’s Galloping Geese. For more information on the museum, and the Colorado Crossings event, [visit the museum website](#)

---- More Amtrak News ----

Restoration of Amtrak Cascades Service to Begin Tuesday, April 1

By Trains Staff | March 31, 2025 | Last updated on April 2, 2025

Seattle-Vancouver round trip will be first to be restored; additional trains to return later this week

SEATTLE — Amtrak is scheduled to begin restoring Cascades service on Tuesday, April 1, as repositioned Amfleet equipment replaced the sidelined Horizon railcars, the Washington State Department of Transportation said in a statement today (March 31, 2025).

Since Amtrak removed 70 Horizon cars — including 26 in Cascades service — from service last week because of corrosion issues — six of seven Cascades trains have been replaced by buses [see [“Amtrak sidelines Horizon car fleet”](#) *Trains News Wire*, March 26, 2025]. The lone train still operating has been a Seattle-Eugene, Ore., round trip using an Oregon-owned Talgo trainset.

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Amtrak's westbound Empire Builder, with seven Amfleet cars bound for Amtrak Cascades service, rolls through Brookfield, Wis., on a rainy March 30, 2025. With cars now arriving in Seattle, restoration of canceled Cascades trains is scheduled to begin on Tuesday, April 1. David Lassen

With substitute Amfleet cars arriving as they are ferried on the Empire Builder, the first trains scheduled to be restored on Tuesday are a Seattle-Vancouver, British Columbia round trip: No. 516, a 12:30 p.m. departure from Seattle, and No. 519, a 4:45 p.m. departure from Vancouver. That will mean at least one train is operating over all of the Vancouver-Eugene corridor.

Trains slated to be restored later this week are Seattle-Portland train Nos. 505 (an 8:55 a.m. departure); Portland-Seattle train No. 506 (a 9:20 p.m. departure); Vancouver-Portland train No. 517, which initially operated only between Seattle and Portland; and Portland-Vancouver train No. 518. Additional service will be restored as more cars arrive.

WSDOT says its goal is to "quickly restore all trips, but with a limited number of cars on each train. Therefore, most trains will have fewer seats available, providing just two coach cars, 17 business class seats and a café car. In some cases, this could result in the availability of just half the number of coach seats as normal.

It is uncertain how long this limited seating will remain in place." Advance booking is recommended until service is fully restored. Check [the Cascades website](#) for updates and additional information.

Amtrak Considering Staff Cuts, Other Cost-saving Moves

By [Trains Staff](#) | March 28, 2025

Company says it is being 'proactive' in addressing outside pressures

WASHINGTON — In the wake of the departure of its CEO and discussions of the company's potential privatization, Amtrak is considering cuts to management and other cost-cutting moves, the company has confirmed.

"Given the current environment, the Executive Leadership Team and the Board have determined that we must act now," Amtrak said in a statement today (March 28, 2025). "We will do this by examining our costs, including the size of our management staff, in a proactive and controlled way. In addition, we will be more selective in starting new projects and will look harder for efficiencies and innovative ways to address the problems and opportunities we face."

Amtrak President Roger Harris reportedly informed employees of possible staff reductions in an email earlier this week. Harris is the company's top official since the resignation of CEO Stephen Gardner, reportedly at the request of the White House [see "[Amtrak CEO Gardner resigns](#)," [Trains News Wire](#), March 19, 2025].

A source told [Trains News Wire](#) that discussions of corporate restructuring had been underway for at least a month, which would precede both the departure of Gardner and a call from presidential advisor Elon Musk for the privatization of Amtrak, the U.S. Postal service, and other functions of the federal government.

The environment Amtrak refers to is a reflection of such factors as efforts by the first Trump administration [to cut the company's funding](#), as well as uncertainty over funds that have already been allocated but not disbursed, and concerns that operations will not receive the same sort of support in Congress that has prevented previous deep cuts [see "[Amtrak's independence at stake](#) ...," [Trains News Wire](#), Feb. 14, 2025].

Amtrak's staff has grown in recent years, in part as it bulked up areas needed to manage the major infrastructure projects funded under the Biden Administration. Amtrak's Inspector General specifically highlighted staffing issues in a report on potential risks involved with construction of the Frederick Douglass Tunnel in Baltimore [see "[Amtrak Inspector General sees risks](#) ...," [News Wire](#), Oct. 2, 2024].

Examination of Horizon Corrosion issues Continue: Analysis

By [Bob Johnston](#) | April 3, 2025

Amtrak provides some information about discovery of problem; Cascades round trips restored with Amfleet arrivals



L: Southbound Lincoln Service train no. 303, including Horizon equipment (two cars nearest the camera), ambles down 3rd Street in Springfield, Ill., on Nov. 16, 2016. The cars have spent most of their active life in the Upper Midwest ex-

KANONA, N.Y. — Whether any of Amtrak's 70-car Horizon fleet can ever return to active duty is still to be determined following extensive examination of ten vehicles at car builder Alstom's 130,000-square-foot inspection and overhaul facility at Kanona in upstate New York.

Meanwhile, the rapid deployment of Northeast Corridor Amfleet equipment to the Pacific Northwest means almost all Amtrak Cascades departures are set to be restored by Sunday, April 6.

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The cars were suddenly pulled from service a week ago, with Amtrak citing corrosion issues [see “Amtrak sidelines Horizon car fleet ...,” *Trains News Wire*, March 26, 2025]. In response to a set of detailed News Wire questions, Amtrak would only confirm that the cars were sent to the shop after “some corrosion” was detected during a periodic inspection. Once the 1989-vintage cars arrived, however, additional corrosion was discovered by Amtrak inspectors “in areas normally not visible.” The company said it had determined “corrosive effects on structural steel accelerated due to the amount of water, ice, and de-icing treatments that have accumulated over the lifecycle of Horizon passenger cars. That result was verified and confirmed by Alstom, the successor to Bombardier Transportation, the original manufacturer.”

Other sources have told News Wire that the cars were sent to Alstom for the purpose of repairing visible corrosion around vestibules and traps. However, when that process began, cars were removed from their trucks, floors or ceilings reportedly buckled or collapsed. Neither Amtrak nor Alstom would confirm this; Amtrak would only say it is “working with Alstom to examine the fleet and address the findings,” though few movements of Horizon cars have been detected since they were sidelined following the initial inspections.

Much of the original 104-car order, constructed of steel and aluminum, has operated for decades in the upper Midwest where extensive use of salt on icy platforms and metal steps, as well as highway road salt pummeling underframes at crossings took its toll. Horizons generally received periodic maintenance at Amtrak’s Brighton Park facility on Chicago’s southwest side, while overhauls were done at the company’s Beech Grove Heavy Maintenance Facility near Indianapolis.

In the past, News Wire has observed the Brighton Park operation, which involved extensive exterior washing and deep cleaning of interiors. Asked whether that regimen continues, Amtrak would only say, “our cars routinely receive maintenance, preventive and otherwise.”

Amfleet deployed; Hiawatha to receive Superliners

Amtrak has filled the equipment void in the Pacific Northwest, where 26 Horizon cars were sidelined, by ferrying stainless steel Northeast Corridor Amfleet coaches and cafes for use on Amtrak Cascades service between Eugene, Ore., and Vancouver, B.C. [see “Restoration of Amtrak Cascades service ...,” *News Wire*, March 31, 2025]. Buses have substituted for trains until the substitutes arrived. Plans as of today (Thursday, April 3) call for all train service to be restored by Sunday, April 6, except for train no. 502, the 8:30 a.m. departure from Portland, Ore., to Seattle. That service will begin on Monday, April 7. Trains are generally assigned with only two coaches and one cafe/Business Class car, except for the single available Talgo trainset, which now will rotate through all departures.

Beginning on Friday April 4, bus substitutions will end on all Chicago-Milwaukee Hiawatha departures when Superliners will be deployed. The move coincides with the end of Colorado’s Winter Park Express, which had its final runs last weekend. The coaches were originally set to lengthen the consists of long-distance trains.

— Updated at 3:20 p.m. CT with Hiawatha information.

Amtrak, BNSF Settle Suit with Family of Truck Driver in Fatal Southwest Chief Derailment

By Trains Staff | April 7, 2025 | Last updated on April 9, 2025

June 2022 grade crossing collision killed driver, three train passengers



An image from the Southwest Chief’s forward-facing camera shows the dump truck the train hit in the fatal June 2022 collision in Mendon, Mo. Amtrak and BNSF have settled a suit with the family of the truck driver killed in the collision. Amtrak via NTSB

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Amtrak and BNSF Railway have settled a lawsuit with survivors of the truck driver whose dump truck was struck by the *Southwest Chief* in June 2022, derailing the train and killing the driver and three passengers.

WDAF-TV reports Erin Barton, widow of driver Billy Dean Barton II, and the couple’s five children will receive an unspecified amount as a result of the settlement.

The Barton family had filed suit in Chariton County, Mo., Circuit Court the day before Amtrak and BNSF sued MS Contracting, Billy Barton’s employer, in federal court [see “[Amtrak and BNSF, widow of truck driver file suits ...](#),” *Trains News Wire*, July 1, 2022].

The *Chief* was traveling at 87 mph when it struck the dump truck and derailed in the June 27, 2022, derailment in Mendon, Mo., killing Barton and three passengers on the train, and sending 146 passengers and crew members to hospitals for treatment.

The NTSB determined that the nature of the crossing, protected only by crossbucks and a stop sign, was a factor in the accident because it made it difficult for a driver to see an approaching train [see “[Design of crossing contributed ...](#),” *News Wire*, Aug. 2, 2023].

Amtrak's Floridians Cancelled by Plane Crash

By Bob Johnston | April 13, 2025

Three other routes see delays of eight hours more; City of New Orleans set to resume regular operation



Authorities continue examining the site of a plane crash on TriRail tracks used by Amtrak in Boca Raton, Fla., on Saturday, April 12, in a screen capture from [WFOR-TV video](#)

BOCA RATON, Fla. — Many events can affect Amtrak service, but a Florida tragedy illustrates that some are far from the passenger operator's control.

A fatal private plane crash Friday, April 11, on tracks used by Tri-Rail and Amtrak trains caused cancellation of the day's northbound *Floridian* and its counterpart east from Chicago today (Sunday, April 13). Three members of a South Florida family were killed in the crash of the six-seat Cessna aircraft, [the Palm Beach Post reports](#). The driver of a vehicle on an adjacent street was injured. [The NTSB is investigating](#).

In addition, the eastbound *Sunset Limited*, *Texas Eagle*, and *Empire Builder* sustained long delays on their cross-country routes over the weekend, adding to other national network disruptions.

Florida challenges:

The plane crash occurred between the Boca Raton and Deerfield Beach Tri-Rail stations about 10:30 a.m. Friday. The northbound *Silver Meteor* had already passed, so that day's train was unaffected.

The plane crash occurred between the Boca Raton and Deerfield Beach Tri-Rail stations about 10:30 a.m. Friday. The northbound *Silver Meteor* had already passed, so that day's train was unaffected. Tri-Rail instituted a bus bridge between the two stations until right-of-way cleanup and track repairs were completed; commuter rail service resumed Saturday evening.

Meanwhile, the southbound *Meteor* was held at Orlando and the Miami-bound *Floridian* terminated at Tampa. Bus transportation to South Florida destinations was arranged for passengers aboard those trains.

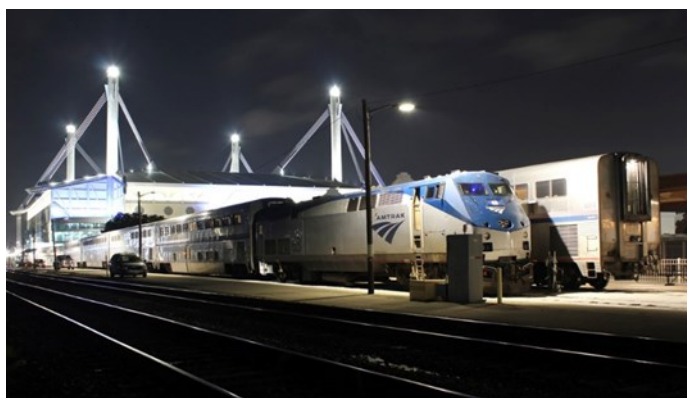
Unfortunately, there was no easy way to bypass the blockage. The Florida East Coast tracks can only be accessed through a slow-speed, circuitous industrial connection north of downtown West Palm Beach. Rejoining the Tri-Rail route south of Amtrak's Hialeah station (used by Tri-Rail express trains to and from Brightline's Miami Central terminal) is also problematic; qualified host railroad pilots would have been necessary to facilitate such complicated moves.

The need for equipment servicing after a two-night trip, normally done overnight at Hialeah, was likely why Friday's southbound *Floridian* didn't assume the day's northbound schedule. Trains arriving in Tampa must wye east of the stub-end station so they can be backed in.

Thus, although the southbound *Floridian* arrived at 1:06 p.m. on April 11 and the northbound was scheduled out at 4:45 p.m., Friday's Chicago-bound train was cancelled. Without equipment, passengers were notified that Sunday's eastbound *Floridian* was also cancelled over its entire route. Both the *Silver Meteor* and *Floridian* originated at Jacksonville, Fla., northbound through Sunday, April 13, but the day's southbound arrivals went all the way to Miami.

It was the second major disruption for *Floridian* service in a week. On April 4, the Chicago-bound *Floridian* incurred a seven-hour delay after it struck a vehicle between Lakeland, Fla., and Tampa. Running 13 hours late after departing Washington, D.C. at 5:36 a.m. on April 6, the westbound was terminated at Toledo, Ohio. Passengers were bused to Chicago from Toledo and back from the Windy City to the eastbound *Floridian* as a result.

Texas chain reaction



The inbound *Texas Eagle* and westbound *Sunset Limited* prepare to exchange a coach and sleeping car at San Antonio on June 9, 2021. On days when this exchange takes place, delays to one of the trains can mean problems for both. Bob Johnston

Another series of events impacted the *Texas Eagle* and *Sunset Limited*, whose on-time performance is joined at the hip. The reason for the westbound *Eagle*'s nine-hour delay on Union Pacific tracks east of Mineola, Tex., on Wednesday, April 9, has not been reported, but it lost another three hours at Dallas, perhaps waiting for a recrew. Because this was one of the three weekly trains that passes a coach and sleeping car to the *Sunset Limited* at San Antonio, passengers aboard the Los Angeles-bound train from New Orleans waited more than 12 hours, from midnight Wednesday to 12:17 p.m. Thursday, for the connection from Chicago.

The saga didn't end there. After the train arrived in Los Angeles on Friday at 6:59 p.m. instead of 4:39 a.m., equipment servicing delayed the eastbound *Sunset*'s departure that evening by more than an hour and a half. The train lost another four hours between Sanderson and Del Rio, Tex. So the *Sunset* and eastbound *Texas Eagle* both departed San Antonio more than five hours late, severely inconveniencing passengers waiting on both routes

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These were not the only setbacks during the past week. It also included an eight-hour eastbound *Empire Builder* pause west of Williston, N.D., on Saturday, April 12, and the cancellation of the northbound *Palmetto* out of Savannah, Ga., on April 6, reportedly because of a Charger locomotive failure. The reasons for the other delays were not immediately available, but they all required Amtrak to compensate impacted travelers and could discourage future business.

The freak Florida incident illustrates how some events may be hard to overcome. The person who pays for railroad congestion and mechanical breakdowns remains an issue being hashed out by Amtrak, host railroads, and the Surface Transportation Board. is an part of the puzzle host railroads, Amtrak, and the Surface Transportation Board. [See “Passenger interference,” May 2025 *Trains Magazine*, and [“STB asks CN, Amtrak for more information ...,”](#) News Wire, April 10, 2025].

The good news: with flooding in western Tennessee subsiding, the *City of New Orleans* is set to resume its full route in both directions south of Carbondale, Ill., on Tuesday, April 15, after being sidelined for more than a week.

News photo: Amtrak “Hippos” Near Return as Cab Cars

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

Company runs extras to prepare crews for operation on Northeast Corridor



An Amtrak crew-familiarization extra featuring HHP8C cab cars, converted from retired electric locomotives and sporting the company's Phase VII paint scheme, passes through Metuchen, N.J., on April 8, 2025. Adam Reich

Amtrak's retired HHP8 electric locomotives — nicknamed “Hippos” during their relatively short operating life — are nearing their return to service as cab cars. The company operated crew-familiarization specials between New York and Wilmington, Del., on April 7-8, and will reportedly operate more this week. On April 8, cab cars Nos. 9751 and 9750 sandwiched an extra powered by ACS64 No. 623.

Fifteen of the Bombardier-Alstom locomotives were delivered in 2001 and retired by 2015 after a career marked by reliability issues. Amtrak began testing the depowered locomotives in a cab-car role in 2023

[see [“News photo: Amtrak HHP8 tests ...,”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Dec. 3, 2023]. The converted locomotives will allow Amtrak to retire or bolster its fleet of ex-Metroliner cab cars for the increased use of push-pull service on the corridor [see [“Fixed forward and backward seating ...,”](#) News Wire, Feb. 28, 2024].

Texas Funding for Heartland Flyer on Hold: Analysis

By [Bob Johnston](#) | April 16, 2025

Ridership and revenue up, but rising expenses not covered by static annual state appropriations



L: The southbound Heartland Flyer arrives at Norman, Okla., on June 13, 2015. Texas funding for the train is at risk. Bob Johnston



R: The southbound Heartland Flyer prepares to leave Oklahoma City for Fort Worth, Texas, on July 20, 2023. Bob Johnston

AUSTIN, Texas — Continuing operation of the Oklahoma City-Fort Worth, Tex., *Heartland Flyer* past June 30, 2025, could depend on whether the Texas legislature renews financial support it has contributed annually since 2006. But the train is also at risk because a yearly stipend from Oklahoma hasn't changed since 2003, while Amtrak charges have risen sharply since the Covid-19 pandemic. As first [reported by Texas Rail Advocates](#), the Texas budget currently excludes a \$3.53 million legislative appropriation sought by the Texas Department of Transportation. Historically, the state's yearly support for the *Heartland Flyer* has ranged from \$2.1 million to \$2.81 million, a supplement to Oklahoma funding that has sustained operations from the daily round trip's inception in June 1999. How Texas funds the *Flyer*

Texas' legislature meets only once every two years; the current session is expected to conclude at the end of May.

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Funding for the train at previous levels is not yet included in the state's budget. Neither is a supplemental \$962,658 "exceptional item" the state DOT proposed in its appropriation request "to cover Texas' share of the capital cost" — 43.25%; Oklahoma's share is 56.75% — "for rail passenger service equipment, which includes diesel locomotive replacement."

TexDOT spokesman Adam Hammons tells *Trains News Wire* that the annual appropriation "comes from non-dedicated state funds in the General Appropriations Act. The Texas Legislature appropriated money to TexDOT specifically for this purpose." The request was \$2.46 million in fiscal 2024 and \$2.81 million for the current year.

Meanwhile, TexDOT's [highway spending "ask" for fiscal 2026-27](#) is \$35.8 billion, 89% of the \$40.4 billion total request.

In all, according to the news site [Fort Worth Report](#), the \$337 billion, two-year state budget approved by the Texas House of Representatives decreases funding for rail transportation by \$47 million. While the state Senate has passed a similar budget, the fate of about \$40 billion in general revenue is still to be determined by the House-Senate conference committee.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments, a planning organization representing cities throughout a region that includes Fort Worth and Gainesville, Tex., on the *Flyer's* route, is monitoring the situation. It has a history of acting proactively to maintain the service. In November 2024, officials learned a potential \$72,000 funding shortfall might develop for the current fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, so the group directed the area's Regional Transportation Council to divert up to \$100,000 in toll road revenue to maintain uninterrupted *Heartland Flyer* service should the need arise. The organization previously approved a \$700,000 North Central Texas request to fund a possible 2023 shortfall, but it wasn't needed when TexDOT found money to bridge the gap.

Oklahoma: flat appropriations

Pauls Valley, Okla. (pop. 5,993) on July 20, 2023. The once-daily round trip provides the only public transportation to serve small towns like these. Bob Johnston

Funding for *Heartland Flyer* in Oklahoma doesn't come from the transportation budget either. Instead, the state's legislature since 2003 has contributed a statutorily fixed \$2.85 million annually from the Tourism and Passenger Rail Revolving Fund.

Early on, "that was enough money to cover our cost," says Jared Schwennesen, the state's Multi-modal and Planning Division engineer in charge of overseeing *Flyer* operations and the Amtrak contract. After Texas began contributing a few years later, "our expense went down but the revolving fund kept accumulating those dollars. We've been able to use that backlog to meet the needs of the *Heartland Flyer* today," he tells *News Wire*. "But annual costs have really jumped up over the \$2.85 million since Covid." Amtrak's annual reports show annual operating expenses for the train, including allocated costs, rose from \$6.5 million in fiscal 2019 to \$9.6 million in 2024.

Schwennesen says the rising Amtrak costs include maintenance of increasingly aging Superliner equipment, host railroad payments, and crew salaries. For 2026, Amtrak preliminary expense estimates call for a \$5 million tab for Oklahoma. "We are dwindling the surplus down and by the end of 2026 we might be out of funding to actually cover the shortfall. The expectation is also that Texas will fulfill their requirement," he says. "Next year we plan on laying the groundwork in asking for more funds in 2027 to keep the *Heartland Flyer* running."

Between fiscal 2019 and 2024, ridership is up 15% (from 68,700 to 80,400) and ticket revenue rose 22% (from \$1.8 million to \$2.2 million). Schwennesen attributes the gains to increased advertising coupled with a switch from flat-rate fares to dynamic ticket pricing beginning in September 2023. Lower fares to entice travelers when demand is low; they increase as trains get crowded.

Funding lacks stability

Hand-to-mouth funding faced by the *Heartland Flyer* is a byproduct of two states ideologically opposed to funding passenger rail from the budgetary source where it belongs: transportation.

Compare Texas and Oklahoma with Virginia, which has established a dedicated source of funding to provide mobility investments and operating support regardless of whether it involves steel rails or pavement. It's why Virginia is implementing a multi-modal solution to attack Interstate 95 congestion between Washington, D.C., and Richmond, Va. Oklahomans and Texans, meanwhile, remain doomed to excruciating delays along the Interstate 35 corridor (Oklahoma City-Fort Worth-Austin-San Antonio). And high speed rail appears unlikely to take pressure off of Interstate 45 between Dallas and Houston [see ["FRA rescinds grant ..."](#) *News Wire*, April 14, 2025].

The *Heartland Flyer's* tenuous funding situation amply illustrates the current danger for most state-supported trains, and Amtrak's national network. Separating passenger rail from the reliable transportation funding spigot crafted and protected by the highway industrial complex of road builders, automakers, and the oil lobby means states and the federal government must provide annual appropriations that compete with other needs. Those funds may be increasingly difficult to obtain in the current political environment.

Fight Over Freight Delays Could Hit Amtrak's Wallet: Analysis

By Bill Stephens | April 17, 2025

Canadian National wants compensation for giving Amtrak passenger trains preference

Ride Amtrak outside of the Northeast Corridor and there's a good chance you'll arrive late because freight traffic delayed your train — despite the law that gives passenger trains preference. Amtrak is challenging host railroads Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern with a pair of high-profile on-time performance cases that aim to put teeth into the 1973 preference law.

But what about delays that Amtrak's right of preference inflicts on freight trains?

This question puts the shoe on the other foot for Amtrak. Canadian National, in its long-running operating agreement dispute with Amtrak, argues that it should be reimbursed for costs that arise when its freights have to wait for meets with passenger trains. And now federal regulators have asked CN to tally its 2024 Amtrak-related freight delay costs.

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A Chicago-bound Saluki kicks up dust as it passes a stopped Canadian National freight train and the site of Metra Electric District maintenance-of-way work at Matteson, Ill., in September 2017. David Lassen

The request, made this month, signals that the Surface Transportation Board is considering a dramatic expansion of what Amtrak is required to pay host railroads. The case could have wide-ranging implications for Amtrak's existing service, its plans for new routes, and its goal of reaching operational profitability.

Since its creation in 1971, Amtrak has been on the hook for so-called incremental costs – defined as expenses the railroad could avoid if Amtrak wasn't running. Traditionally this has meant paying host railroads a per-mile fee to cover Amtrak's share of track maintenance. But CN contends that there's a cost to the right of preference, too, because it has to keep its freights out of Amtrak's way. And so CN wants compensation for those delays.

This is not exactly the news: The dispute has dragged on for an astonishing 12 years. So you can be forgiven for not following or remembering the twists and turns in a case that has moved at a glacial pace. After CN and Amtrak were at loggerheads over a new operating agreement, Amtrak in July 2013 asked the STB to set terms and compensation for its use of CN lines. Six years later, STB decided that incremental costs could include those related to freight train delays.

These include extra crew, fuel, and locomotive and car-hire expenses, so long as CN can pinpoint them with data that can be quantified and verified.

The 2019 STB decision didn't endorse CN's proposed freight delay cost formula. But it did open the door to alternatives, like a higher per-mile charge. Either way, if the STB ultimately adds freight delay costs to the new operating agreement, the impact could be significant.

CN says Amtrak delayed its freights 680.48 hours in December 2019. The cost? A total of \$219,691 in extra labor, fuel, and locomotive and car expenses. If that's a typical month, Amtrak's tab would be \$2.6 million annually for its direct impact on CN's freight operations.

The other Class I railroads are watching closely. If the STB allows CN to recoup delay costs, they all would want the same treatment. Last year Amtrak paid host railroads \$248 million. CN ranks fifth among Amtrak hosts with 1.4 million annual passenger-train miles, putting it way behind leader BNSF Railway (6.7 million passenger train miles), UP (6 million), CSX (5.5 million), and NS (2.8 million) – all of which handle Amtrak trains on far busier routes than CN's. And that means a greater potential for Amtrak-related freight delays on the big four U.S. systems.

You don't have to be a math whiz to realize this could blow a hole in Amtrak's plan to erase its annual operating deficit, which last year was \$705 million. It also would put Amtrak's long-distance trains further into the red and make state-supported routes more expensive. Would states reduce service or absorb the higher cost?

Naturally, Amtrak favors the status quo. Its lawyers argue that Congress never intended incremental costs to include those associated with providing Amtrak trains with preference. Amtrak also points out that CN alone controls factors affecting the performance of its freight trains, including the growth in freight traffic, the single-tracking of the Illinois Central main line, and the operation of long trains that don't adhere to their schedules. In other words, if CN tolerates delays of its own making, why force Amtrak to pay?

With government efficiency czar Elon Musk calling for the privatization of Amtrak, and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said to support the concept, the prospect of having to pay for freight train delays is the least of Amtrak's worries. But the CN case, which may be decided this year, bears watching.

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

Two Reports Suggest Actions to Address Risks of Trains Striking Vehicles and Pedestrians

By Bob Johnston | April 17, 2025

Studies from Amtrak Inspector General and Government Accountability Office outline ways to reduce death, injury

WASHINGTON— Amtrak's independent Office of Inspector General and the U.S. Government Accountability Office have issued separate reports within the last week that address courses of action Amtrak, state agencies, and the Federal Highway Administration might take to reduce injuries and deaths associated with train strikes of vehicles and pedestrians.

The Amtrak Inspector General's [28-page report](#), "Safety and Security: Company is Taking Steps to Address its Risk of Train Strikes but Does Not Have a Comprehensive Risk Management Process," covered fiscal years 2020 through 2023. During that period, Amtrak trains were involved in approximately 800 train strikes of vehicles or pedestrians, leading to 594 deaths and 279 injuries. Most of the fatalities involved highway crossing collisions with vehicles and trespassers. The majority of injuries occurred on one day, June 27, 2022, when 146 passengers and crew aboard the eastbound *Southwest Chief* were injured after the train struck a dump truck and derailed at a rural crossing near Mendon, Mo. [See ["Design of crossing contributed..."](#) *Trains News Wire*, Aug. 2, 2023.] While acknowledging that most passenger train strikes occur on tracks of host railroads, which are responsible for safety assessment and implementation, the Inspector General found Amtrak could better identify and manage the risk of incidents and more broadly adopt key practices to improve risk management.

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Pedestrians wait steps away from an inbound Hiawatha crossing their Canal Street sidewalk north of Chicago Union Station on Sept. 24, 2019. An Amtrak Inspector General report released this week reveals that the company has developed a “hazard index” to categorize crossings. Bob Johnston



The Southwest Chief's lead locomotive after the Mendon, Mo., grade-crossing collision and derailment. That incident accounted for most of the injuries in an Amtrak Inspector General study. National Transportation Safety Board

The company often partners with Operation Lifesaver's national outreach effort, and its representatives visit communities when service is poised to increase. Such proactive efforts preceded the start of the Chicago-St. Paul, Minn., *Borealis*, and test runs for the yet-to-launch Gulf Coast service between New Orleans and Mobile, Ala.

During the four-year audit, Amtrak launched a highway crossing “hazard index” which uses factors such as the type of warning device installation, traffic volume, and train speeds to categorize crossings based on the likelihood of train strikes. It also developed a grade-crossing safety manual and is exploring artificial intelligence tools and a near-miss reporting system to help better identify trespassing hot spots.

Even so, the report concluded that the company needed to implement a process that would systematically document, assess, and prioritize dealing with risks.

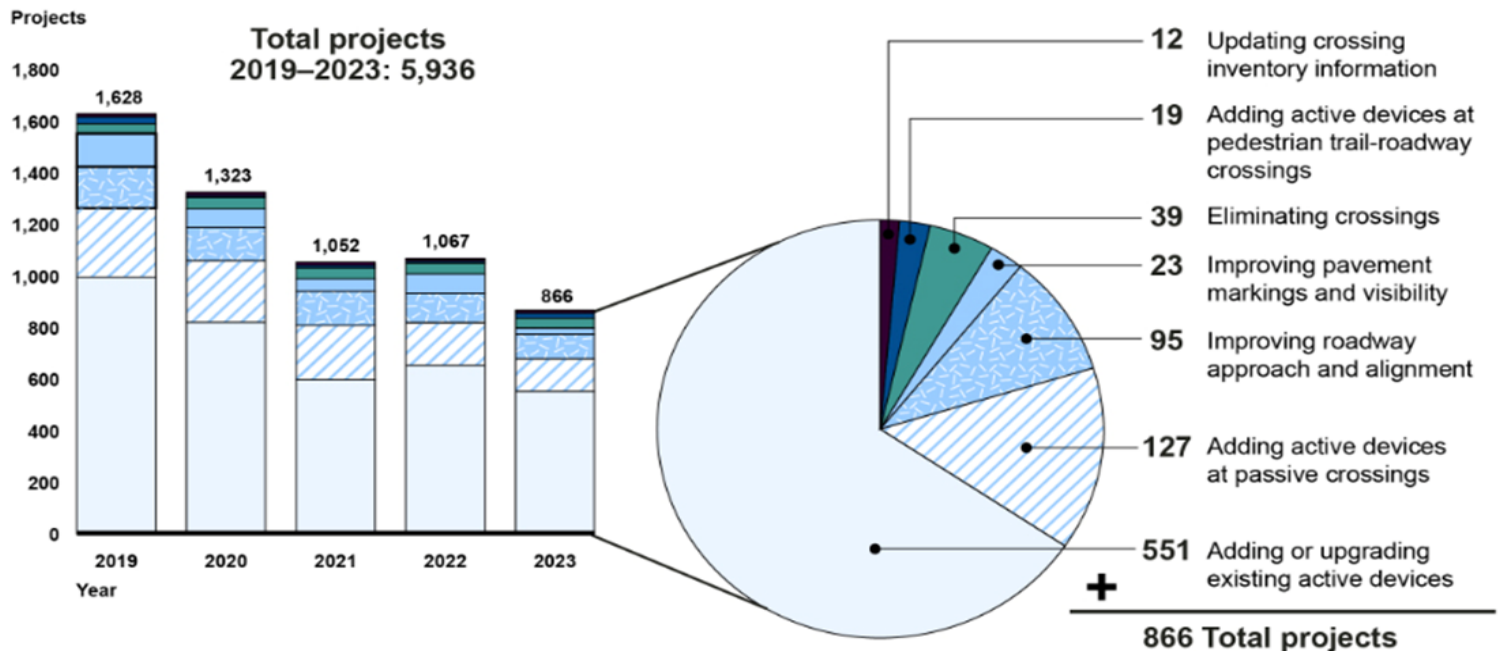
The Government Accountability Office study, “Improvements Needed to Federal Technical Assistance About Pedestrian Projects Related to Trespassing,” tracked grade-crossing enhancement programs from 2019 through 2023. With 1,900 incidents nationwide in 2023 alone, it found that increased funding and use by states of the Federal Highway Administration's Railway-Highway Crossings Program primarily helped finance warning device upgrades and address overall safety risks, but the overall number of projects utilizing the program steadily declined from 1,626 to 866 during the four-year period. While acknowledging that most passenger train strikes occur on tracks of host railroads, which are responsible for safety assessment and implementation, the Inspector General found Amtrak could better identify and manage the risk of incidents and more broadly adopt key practices to improve risk management. The company often partners with Operation Lifesaver's national outreach effort, and its representatives visit communities when service is poised to increase. Such proactive efforts preceded the start of the Chicago-St. Paul, Minn., *Borealis*, and test runs for the yet-to-launch Gulf Coast service between New Orleans and Mobile, Ala. During the four-year audit, Amtrak launched a highway crossing “hazard index” which uses factors such as the type of warning device installation, traffic volume, and train speeds to categorize crossings based on the likelihood of train strikes. It also developed a grade-crossing safety manual and is exploring artificial intelligence tools and a near-miss reporting system to help better identify trespassing hot spots. Even so, the report concluded that the company needed to implement a process that would systematically document, assess, and prioritize dealing with risks.

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Figure 3: Number of Railway-Highway Crossings Program Projects That States Annually Reported, by Project Type, 2019 Through 2023



Source: GAO analysis of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) data. | GAO-25-107115

Notes: The total counts exclude 128 records where states did not fill in the project types or crossing types in their reported data. Passive crossings include signs or pavement markings to denote the presence of a crossing. Active crossings have warning systems, which include signs and active devices, such as bells, flashing lights, or gates that are activated by the presence of a train.

Government Accountability Office

But the GAO found the Federal Highway Administration needed to provide more technical assistance materials and update them to add information about the types of pedestrian projects related to trespassing that might be eligible for funding. This could include providing examples of noteworthy projects related to trespassing that would better position states to address rising pedestrian fatalities at grade crossings.

However, neither report attempted to specifically address suicide prevention efforts, an increasing focus at many commuter rail and transit agencies, as Federal Railroad Administration data confirming such events has recently become more definitive.

FRA, Amtrak to Take Over Penn Station Remodeling, Transportation Secretary Says

By [Trains Staff](#) | April 17, 2025 | Last updated on April 18, 2025

Grants for project cut by \$120 million as MTA removed from lead role



A 2023 rendering shows the train hall proposed as part of the remodeling of Penn Station. The FRA and Amtrak will take over the lead role in the remodeling project from New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Office of New York Gov. Kathy Hochul

WASHINGTON — The Federal Railroad Administration and Amtrak will take over the long-discussed remodeling of New York's Penn Station, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy announced today (April 17, 2025), saying the move came at the direction of President Donald Trump. The action removes the Metropolitan Transportation Authority from its lead role in the project. It was accompanied by the slashing of some \$120 million in federal funding awarded last November to the MTA and Amtrak, the latest move by the Trump administration to claw back funds awarded under the Biden administration.

A Department of Transportation [press release](#) says the administration has determined that the FRA and Amtrak can deliver a "world-class" Penn Station, and that since the building is owned by Amtrak, there is no reason to delegate leadership of the project.

"New York City deserves a Penn Station that reflects America's greatness and is safe and clean," Duffy said. "The MTA's history of inefficiency, waste, and mismanagement also meant that a new approach is needed."

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The MTA had received a \$72 million grant for the station project under the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail program. [A letter from FRA Chief Counsel Kyle Fields](#) to MTA CEO Janno Lieber indicates that grant has been withdrawn, and that planning will be conducted under a grant to Amtrak.

At the same time, the Amtrak grant under the Federal-State Partnership has been cut, according to [a letter from Fields to Amtrak President Roger Harris](#), “to reflect the focus on planning and construction for Penn Station.” Amtrak had received two grants, one for \$72.5 million and another for \$71.9 million, for different aspects of the Penn Station project [see [“FRA awards \\$1.5 billion ...”](#) Trains News Wire, Nov. 15, 2025].

Lieber responded this evening with [a statement](#) saying that New York Gov. Kathy Hochul “has prioritized the reconstruction of Penn Station for years, and we’re glad the federal government is focusing on it now. The MTA’s 33rd Street Concourse project was the first major improvement to Penn Station in decades – and we finished it on time and under budget. ... As the major leaseholder in the station, we expect to participate in the administration’s and Amtrak’s efforts to ensure future plans meet the needs of everyone who uses it.”

Hochul, in a statement, said she had requested federal funding for the Penn Station project in multiple meetings with Trump. “Clearly that effort has been successful,” Hochul said [in the statement](#), “and I want to thank the President and Secretary Duffy for taking on the sole responsibility to deliver the beautiful new \$7 billion station that New Yorkers deserve. This is a major victory for New Yorkers, and the use of federal funds will save New York taxpayers \$1.3 billion dollars that would have otherwise been necessary for this project.”

Duffy’s criticism of the MTA is the latest salvo in the administration’s ongoing dispute with the agency. The U.S. DOT has moved to rescind its approval for the MTA’s congestion pricing program in Manhattan, which the MTA is fighting in court [see [“Federal government pushes back deadline ...”](#) News Wire, March 20, 2025]. Duffy has also threatened to withhold funding from the MTA over concerns about transit-system crime, although statistics show that crime is down [see [“Citing crime concerns ...”](#) News Wire, March 19, 2025].

[The New York Times reports](#) that administration officials have indicated they would prefer Amtrak partner with private investors on the project. The newspaper also notes it is unknown whether the administration has a preference for any of the existing, competing proposals for the station renovation [see [“New plan unveiled ...”](#) News Wire, March 12, 2025].



----BNSF News-----

BNSF and NS Team Up With Pacific Northwest Ports for Faster Intermodal Service

By Bill Stephens | April 3, 2025

The new service cuts three days from prior transit times to Chicago and destinations on NS



A BNSF intermodal train heads west through Nelson, Wis., on Sept. 27, 2020. David Lassen

BNSF Railway, Norfolk Southern, and the Northwest Seaport Alliance have teamed up to offer faster international intermodal service to inland points from the ports in Seattle and Tacoma.

The new service, they announced yesterday, will cut three days from existing transit times for traffic from the Pacific Northwest destined to and through Chicago. Port terminals will build trains in less than two days of on-dock dwell, with enough density to allow the trains to serve Chicago and destinations on Norfolk Southern in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

BNSF and NS will deliver all interchange traffic to one Chicago location, NS-Ashland, and make a single crew swap.

“This service product collaboration was an outcome of listening to our joint customers, who emphasized the desire to use more rail, but would need to also reduce inventory carrying and total landed transportation costs out of their networks in 2025,” Jon Gabriel, BNSF’s group vice president of consumer products, said [in a statement](#). “We are proud to deliver a solution that accomplishes these goals.”

The Seattle/Tacoma port complex reported the lowest rail dwell in the country thus far this year as a result of operational changes emphasizing rail loading.

The port has been regaining market share that it has lost to Vancouver and Prince Rupert, British Columbia, over the past two decades. The Canadian West Coast ports have become gateways to Chicago via Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Kansas City but lost some of their luster amid labor unrest at ports and both railways over the past two years.

Shippers diverted their container traffic back to U.S. West Coast ports, with Seattle/Tacoma being a major beneficiary of the shift. Last year the port complex handled 12.3% more TEUs, or twenty-foot equivalents, the standard measure of international containers. “The Northwest Seaport Alliance is excited to partner with BNSF and NS to offer this industry-leading service for shippers utilizing our gateway,” NWSA CEO John Wolfe said in a statement. “This is an example of how through partnership and innovative efforts we can respond to the needs of shippers and deliver best-in-class service for our customers.”

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With reduced on-dock dwell time and faster transit time, the total time from ship to Chicago is six days, a three-day reduction that makes the service the fastest from any Pacific Northwest gateway in North America, the railroads and port said. “At Norfolk Southern, we’re focused on delivering smart, customer-centric solutions — and this enhanced service from the Pacific Northwest to the Midwest is exactly that,” said Shawn Tureman, vice president intermodal automotive. “By collaborating with BNSF and the Northwest Seaport Alliance, we’re offering a faster, more reliable rail option that helps shippers reduce transit time, cut costs, and streamline supply chains heading into 2025 and beyond.”

BNSF Pressing Ahead with Trade-related Intermodal Projects in California and Arizona

By Bill Stephens | April 7, 2025

Railway is not re-evaluating massive projects in wake of Trump administration tariff announcements



An eastbound BNSF Railway international intermodal train that originated at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach climbs Cajon Pass in California in September 2019. Bill Stephens

FORT WORTH, Texas — BNSF Railway is not hitting the pause button on a pair of trade-dependent intermodal projects in California and Arizona despite the broad tariffs that the Trump administration unveiled on April 2. BNSF is planning to build a \$1.5 billion terminal and transload center in Barstow, Calif., to handle international containers. The 4,500-acre Barstow International Gateway project aims to speed imported freight to inland markets by reducing the amount of time containers dwell on the docks at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach as well as by streamlining the transloading process into domestic containers.

In Arizona, BNSF is planning to build a 4,321-acre project near Phoenix that would include an intermodal terminal, a logistics park to handle the warehousing and distribution of consumer goods, and a logistics center to handle carload traffic in support of local industries.

Both projects still have a green light. “We’re not re-evaluating at this time,” BNSF spokesman Zak Andersen says. BNSF last year set a record for the number of on-dock containers it handled at the ports of L.A. and Long Beach as retailers pulled forward their import orders in order to beat anticipated tariffs.

Measured by container volume, the Port of Los Angeles had its second-busiest year on record in 2024, while the Port of Long Beach set an annual container volume record last year. Combined, the ports handle about a third of the cargo imported into the U.S. Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Gene Seroka said last week that he expects container volume to fall by at least 10% in the second half of this year due to a combination of inventory pull forward and the impact of tariffs on consumer spending. Intermodal analyst Larry Gross said last week that it’s unclear how tariffs will ultimately affect global trade.

“What we’ve seen here is that when there is a deal it’s never quite a done deal, but just a starting point for further negotiation,” Gross says about proposed tariffs. The administration, he notes, has typically modified its tariff plans based on concerns raised by various industries.

“So where things land and how long they stay that way is a big question mark,” Gross says. “And that is an important point because what that does is create continued uncertainty.”



--- Union Pacific News---

Union Pacific to Serve New Hyundai Steel Mill in Louisiana

By Bill Stephens | March 24, 2025

The South Korean automaker announced plans for the \$5.8 billion facility today during a ceremony at the White House



CSRS
L: Union Pacific will serve the RiverPlex MegaPark in Ascension Parish, La. Ascension Economic Development Corp.

WASHINGTON – Union Pacific will serve the \$5.8 billion steel mill that Hyundai Motor Group will build in Louisiana.

The electric arc furnace facility, announced today during a White House ceremony, will supply steel coils for U.S. Hyundai and Kia plants as well as U.S. automakers, Hyundai said. The mill will be built at the RiverPlex MegaPark on the west bank of the Mississippi River in Ascension Parish, La., which is about 25 miles southeast of Baton Rouge.

UP’s Livonia Subdivision runs through the undeveloped industrial park. Plans call for a loop track and support yard on the site. .

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The plant will send steel shipments to Hyundai assembly plants in Alabama and Georgia, which are served by CSX and Genesee & Wyoming short line Georgia Central, respectively. The mill also will ship by truck, the automaker said.

“Hyundai Steel’s investment in an electric arc furnace based integrated steel mill in the U.S. is anticipated to stimulate local economic growth, including the creation of new job opportunities,” Hyundai Steel Co. President and CEO Gang Hyun Seo said. “We plan to supply automotive steel plates not only for Hyundai Motor and Kia’s strategic models but also to expand sales to U.S. automakers in the future.”

The plant, which is expected to employ 1,300 people, will produce 2.7 million metric tons of steel annually. The facility also will import 3.6 million tons of iron ore by ship.

President Donald Trump, standing beside executives from the South Korean automaker, praised Hyundai’s decision to bring additional production to the U.S. “Get ready. This investment is a clear demonstration that tariffs very strongly work,” Trump said. “They’ll be making their cars here in America.”

The steel plant is part of \$21 billion in investments Hyundai will make to expand production in the U.S. through 2028.

Union Pacific CEO ‘very comfortable’ Working Through Tariffs

By Stuart Chirls | April 8, 2025

Vena says trade uncertainty a business challenge, like COVID



Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena addresses the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association conference in Denver on April 7, 2025. FreightWaves/Stuart Chirls

DENVER — Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena says his company will work through tariff shocks gripping the economy the same way it worked through the pandemic.

“I can’t control what governments do,” Vena said Monday (April 7) as keynote speaker at the annual conference of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. “It’s noisy, it’s a son of a gun. But we can get through this the same way we got through the tech bubble and COVID.”

“I’m very comfortable going through all this,” Vena said that pursuant to tariffs, the United States needs to have the capacity to make the products that are needed for national defense. But he emphasized that the fundamentals of running a railroad haven’t changed. “We need to be efficient and watch the money. We need to go after products that are now in trucks and move them in different ways,” a feisty Vena declared. “If you don’t like me, I don’t give a s—.” Vena, a disciple of precision scheduled railroading who came out of retirement in 2023 to succeed Lance Fritz, has UP leading Class I railroads in most financial and performance categories. He said his company’s strategy is built around safety, service, asset utilization, cost control and people. He was quick to note that the railroad in 2024 saw a 22% reduction in injuries and 26% decline in accidents. Vena said technology has helped UP reduce total walking by yard crews from about 6-7 miles a day several years ago to the current 2 miles per day.

Union Pacific works with more than 180 shortline and regional railroads, and Vena told the conference that the objective is the same: Customers want high levels of service. Up to one-quarter or more of UP’s traffic lanes are touched by a carrier other than UP. “We get 2 million cars from short lines or ports each year,” he said.

The top markets for UP via short lines are grain products, construction materials, and forest products, while industrial products are almost half of short lines’ business mix. Volume grew 4% over the previous year, with total carloads accounting for 25% of total volume among the Class I railroads.

UP has made two notable deals with short lines in the last five months. In December, it leased 28 miles of track in the Eugene, Ore., area to Genesee & Wyoming’s Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad [see [“Central Oregon & Pacific will operate ...”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Dec. 11, 2024]. In March, UP leased land and track in Kansas City, Mo., to Jaguar Transport Holdings, which will operate the new Kansas City West Bottoms Railroad [see [“Union Pacific to lease 1.25 miles ...”](#) *News Wire*, Feb. 20, 2025].

“That’s just the start,” said Vena. “I think we can grow our business by partnering with companies that can help us grow the biz, remove inefficiencies, and drive value to customers. When it comes to short lines, the baseline has to be that you do a better job than a Class I. The short line has to be much more efficient, cost wise, than a Class I. But short lines can have a better relationship with a customer because they work in a community at the local level, and grow the business that way.”

While he was sanguine about tariffs and trade, Vena, who started railroading in Canada and is now a U.S. citizen, had sharp words for the Trump administration’s rhetoric where that country is concerned.

“You want to p— off a country? Tell them they’re the 51st state. Or call the prime minister a ‘governor.’ It just doesn’t go good. I still have a little place on a lake in British Columbia. It’s a great country. They’ll get over it. But it’s not good when you miss the point and call them something you shouldn’t call them.”

— *This article originally appeared [at FreightWaves.com](#).*

Central Oregon & Pacific to Take Over Union Pacific Operations in Eugene, Ore., This Weekend

By Bill Stephens | April 8, 2025

Surface Transportation Board denies union requests to reject UP’s lease of nearly 28 miles of trackage to Genesee & Wyoming short line

WASHINGTON — Genesee & Wyoming short line Central Oregon & Pacific can take over local operations from Union Pacific in Eugene, Ore., as soon as Saturday, federal regulators have ruled. [In a unanimous decision today](#), the Surface Transportation Board denied the SMART-TD union’s request to scrutinize and reject the lease deal.

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Genesee & Wyoming short line Central Oregon & Pacific will take over local switching operations for Union Pacific in Eugene, Ore. G&W



Genesee & Wyoming short line Central Oregon & Pacific will lease 27.58 miles of Union Pacific trackage in the Eugene, Ore., area under a lease arrangement. CORP via STB



STB member Robert Primus. STB

The decision also denied CORP's request that the board partially waive labor notification requirements. G&W will take a phased approach to beginning operations on 27.58 miles of leased trackage, plus UP's Eugene Yard and "certain related excepted track."

"We're expected to start switching this coming weekend and then fully take over operations of the yard in early May," G&W spokesman Tom Ciuba says.

UP and CORP announced the deal late last year [see ["Central Oregon & Pacific will operate ..."](#) *Trains News Wire*, Dec. 11, 2024]. The G&W short line will serve 22 customers on the leased trackage, including those shipping or receiving forest products and paper, grain, propane, and scrap metal. UP and G&W executives have said the transaction will improve first- and last-mile service, reduce transit times, and lead to volume growth.

But the SMART-TD union was critical of the transaction, saying it would degrade service, pose safety issues, and result in the loss of higher-paying union jobs.

The STB said those assertions were not supported by the evidence and were insufficient to support a rejection of the notice of exemption. The transfer of Class I trackage to a short line is generally exempt from board review.

CORP had failed to include the unions representing signal and electrical workers in its initial labor notifications about CORP's pending takeover. The railroad subsequently asked the board to allow the deal to proceed on its original timeline, rather than incur a delay stemming from the 60-day notification requirement.

The STB said there was no reason to partially waive the labor notification requirements, which pushed the effective date of the transaction to April 12.

Board member Robert Primus, in a concurring expression, said he was conflicted about voting for the decision allowing the transfer of operations to occur.

"On the one hand, I see this as a big win for the Central Oregon and Pacific Railway (CORP) and the more than twenty shippers in the Eugene and Springfield areas served by Union Pacific," he wrote, noting that CORP has a reputation for providing consistent and reliable service.

"As I have publicly stated, our nation's short lines truly are the growth engines of our freight rail network. Their white glove service has enabled many short lines to experience double digit growth, even as growth among Class Is has been relatively flat," Primus wrote.

But he also expressed concerns about the impact on UP workers and wondered whether shifting local operations to short line railroads was part of cost-cutting rather than a focus on carload growth.

"On the other hand, while there are clear winners within this transaction, there is also a clear loser, and I am especially concerned about the negative consequences confronting affected members of the various rail labor unions who, in all likelihood, will either lose their union jobs or see a decreased workload as a result of this transaction," Primus wrote. "Profit over people, time and again, has proven to be a disastrous formula for the network. I find myself wondering if this is truly an effort on behalf of UP to provide its customers with better service or yet another cost cutting measure seeking to lower its operating ratio to further satisfy the appetite of short-term investors. Judging by UP's zeal to reduce labor costs over the past couple of years, I'm willing to put my money on the latter having factored into UP's final decision."

Yet Primus encouraged UP to forge closer ties with short lines to unleash their growth potential.

"UP should allow its short lines partners the ability to sell capacity, chase spot opportunities and ultimately become an additional sales channel for UP, with pricing authority and the ability to cooperate in capital expenditure sharing to make it easier for shippers to make long-term commitments," he wrote.

"A collaborative effort structured in this way will not only strengthen the relationship between UP and its short line partners but establish a strong model for sustainable growth. If UP can do this, then it might really be onto something special," Primus wrote.

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UP CEO Jim Vena has insisted that handing off local operations makes sense because short lines can provide better service than a Class I. The CORP deal, he says, could be a model for improving carload service and turbocharging growth elsewhere on the UP system.

“We think that it’s a win for the customers, it’s a win for Union Pacific, and it’s a win for G&W. It really is,” Vena told *Trains* in January.

In a similar if smaller deal, UP in February said it would allow Jaguar Transport Holdings short line The Kansas City West Bottoms Railroad to serve a cluster of customers in Kansas City, Mo.

“That’s just the start,” Vena told the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association conference yesterday. “I think we can grow our business by partnering with companies that can help us grow the biz, remove inefficiencies, and drive value to customers. When it comes to short lines, the baseline has to be that you do a better job than a Class I. The short line has to be much more efficient, cost wise, than a Class I. But short lines can have a better relationship with a customer because they work in a community at the local level, and grow the business that way.”

Illinois Men Sentenced for Derailing UP Locomotive

By David Lassen | April 9, 2025 | Last updated on April 15, 2025

Duo avoids jail time in plea agreement

PEORIA, Ill. — Two Bartonville, Ill., men have avoided jail time through a plea bargain regarding charges they derailed a Union Pacific locomotive late last year. Jimmy Johnson, 20, and Caleb Finley, 18, pleaded guilty last week to charges of damage to railroad property, a Class 4 felony, [WCBU radio reports](#). They were sentenced in Peoria County Circuit Court to 30 months of probation, must perform 100 hours of community service within the next year, and paid \$1,075 in fees. They had faced up to three years in prison, but entered into plea agreements a week before their trial was set to begin, [WEEK-TV reports](#). The two men were arrested Nov. 18, 2024, after allegedly moving a derailling device and derailling a UP locomotive just outside of Bartonville, causing some \$80,000 in damage. [See [“Two arrested in derailment ...”](#) *Trains* News Wire, Nov. 19, 2024].

Utah Mine Shutdown Halts Union Pacific Export Iron Ore Unit Trains

By Bill Stephens | April 11, 2025

The mine, in Cedar City, suspended operations on Wednesday, ending shipments to the Port of Long Beach via UP



Bound for the Port of Long Beach, a Union Pacific iron ore train that originated in Cedar City, Utah, begins its descent of Cajon Pass in September 2021. Bill Stephens



With two distributed power locomotives on the rear, a Union Pacific unit train of iron ore produced in Utah winds its way down Cajon Pass in California on its way to the Port of Long Beach in September 2021. Bill Stephens

The trade war between the U.S. and China has prompted a Utah iron ore mine to shut down, a move that at least temporarily ends Union Pacific unit train operations between Cedar City, Utah, and the Port of Long Beach, Calif.

Utah Iron LLC announced on Wednesday that it would close the Cedar City mine amid rising Chinese tariffs on imports from the U.S. The mine had been supplying Chinese steelmakers with iron ore.

“We are navigating uncharted waters with unfamiliar and seemingly insurmountable risks. While it pains us to suspend our mining operations, it is a necessary step while we regroup and adjust to current market pressures,” the mining company said in a news release.

UP began handling export ore from the mine to the Port of Long Beach in October 2020. The service began with 90-car ore trains. UP eventually shifted to operation of 154-car, 21,500-ton ore trains that were more than 8,100 feet long and powered by up to eight locomotives in 3x3x2 distributed power configuration.

The traffic was the top carload commodity for Pacific Harbor Line, the neutral switching carrier that serves the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach



CN Train Derails in Manitoba

By Trains Staff | April 1, 2025

Fifteen cars involved in incident in Brandon

BRANDON, Manitoba — No injuries resulted when 15 cars of a Canadian National train derailed Monday evening in downtown Brandon, disrupting rush-hour traffic.

[CTV News reports](#) the derailment occurred about 5 p.m., blocking 6th Street between McTavish and Van Horne avenues. The railroad said the derailed cars included one carrying fertilizer, three with potash, and 11 empty cars; there were no spills or leaks.

“CN crews and local first responders are attending to the scene,” CN said in a statement. “CN would like to apologize for the inconveniences caused by this incident.”

Brandon, where CN’s Carberry and Cromer subdivisions meet, is 145 miles west of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Arbitrator Awards 3% Raises for CN Employees Represented by TCRC

By Trains Staff | April 7, 2025 | Last updated on April 8, 2025

Railway and union urged to settle their dispute over changes to work rules



After bringing a Vancouver-bound stack train into Boston Bar, British Columbia, a Canadian National train crew member heads for the nearby bunk house in September 2023. Bill Stephens

TORONTO — Canadian National train service employees represented by the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference will get a 3% annual raise under an arbitrator’s contract decision.

Arbitrator William Kaplan [released his decision today](#) on the three-year contract, which runs from Jan. 1, 2024 through Dec. 31, 2026.

When CN and the TCRC were unable to reach a negotiated settlement during their contract talks, the Canada Industrial Relations Board sent the matter to binding arbitration in August after a brief lockout.

[see [“Canada’s labor minister order arbitration”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Aug. 22, 2024].

Kaplan urged the railway and union to iron out their differences regarding changes to work rules. “Both parties proposed detailed changes to work rules. And both parties described the proposals they sought as justified by demonstrated need, and the ones advanced by the other party as breakthroughs that would never be accepted in free collective bargaining,” Kaplan wrote.

“This is what led to the bargaining impasse (and inability to bridge the divide in the mediation phase). Between now and the expiry of the collective agreement settled by this award the parties, obviously, need to turn their attention to both employee rest and employee availability; both extremely important issues for the TCRC and CN.

Doing so is in their evident shared interest requiring their focused attention. These issues are, in my view, best resolved in free collective bargaining with its associated gives and takes. Experience in this matter indicates that they will not be resolved absent appropriate reciprocity.”

Union leaders told the rank and file that binding arbitration was never their goal when seeking a new contract with CN.

“While this is not the preferred outcome for the TCRC, it must be understood that the award does not contain any of the significant concessions sought by the company,” the union’s six general chairmen wrote in [a letter to members](#).

“Unfortunately, CN’s demands were (and remain) completely unacceptable throughout the entire bargaining process,” the union said. “The Company would not relent on what it considered necessary operational changes, primarily resulting from reforms in government regulation. The TCRC could never agree to these concessionary demands that encroached on the rights of you, the TCRC members at CN.”

CN expressed disappointment, as well.

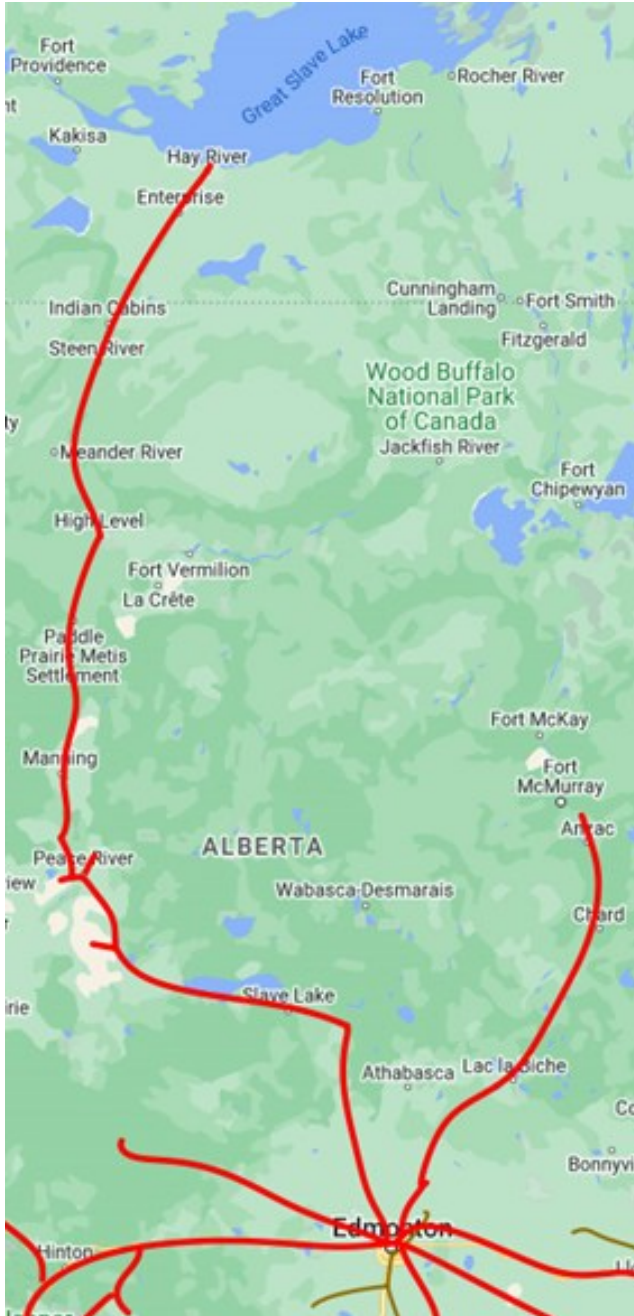
“Although CN remains disappointed that a negotiated agreement was not reached at the bargaining table, the Company is pleased to be moving forward,” the railway said [in a statement](#). “CN also remains committed to modernizing the collective agreement for the benefit of employees, customers, and the North American economy.”

Canadian Pacific Kansas City’s contract with the TCRC also was sent to arbitration. A decision on that contract has not yet been announced.

Northwest Territories Seek Federal Action to Restore CN Service to Hay River

By Trains News Wire | April 8, 2025

Community had been northernmost location on North American rail network until 2023



A portion of the CN system map shows the location of Hay River, Northwest Territories, well north of Edmonton, Alberta. Google

HAY RIVER, Northwest Territories — The Government of the Northwest Territories has asked Canadian federal regulators to examine Canadian National Railway's decision not to repair its damaged rail line to Hay River, which had been the northernmost point on the North American rail network. Vince McKay, infrastructure minister for the Northwest Territories, said on Monday (April 7) that the territorial government has applied for adjudication with the Canadian Transportation Agency.

"This adjudication process is akin to a legal hearing, where the GNWT's claim that CN Rail has failed to fulfill its obligations under the Canada Transportation Act will be thoroughly examined," McKay said [in a statement](#). "As a common carrier, CN Rail has a legal duty to maintain this rail line and ensure the continued flow of goods to the NWT's most vulnerable communities. ... It remains the position of the Government of the Northwest Territories that repairing this stretch of rail line is CN Rail's responsibility." CN stopped operating the 25 miles between Enterprise, NWT, and Hay River after that segment of the railroad's Meander River Subdivision was damaged by wildfires in 2023. CN filed last year to discontinue service between the two communities, saying the costs to repair the line "were not proportional to the volume commitments of customers in the region." [See "[Northernmost point ... to lose service](#)," *Trains News Wire*, Aug. 11, 2024.]

Traffic that had traveled by rail to Hay River, where it was barged to other communities on the Great Slave Lake water system, is now transloaded at Enterprise and moved by truck [see "[Cando Rail acquires terminal ...](#)," *News Wire*, Nov. 21, 2024].

McKay's lengthy statement said CN's decisions meant communities "will be forced to rely on expensive and inefficient alternatives, such as trucking fuel across long distances. This is not just a minor inconvenience — this decision puts the well-being of our residents at risk and places unnecessary strain on our economy."

The town of Hay River will work to support the GNWT, [Cabin Radio reports](#), having already provided a statement that was part of the territorial government's complaint. Glenn Smith, Hay River's town manager, said the loss of rail service "puts a fair amount of financial, logistical and environmental stress on what is really an essential transportation network, especially providing fuel up the river system to communities."

Smith said the town will also contact the Northwest Territories Association of Communities and the [Community Rail Advocacy Alliance](#) about the issue. [CN told Cabin Radio](#) it would not comment because the issue is before the Canadian Transportation Agency.

Hay River, [population 3,169 as of 2021](#), is closer to the Arctic Circle (approximately 400 miles) than it is to the nearest major city, Edmonton, Alberta (about 510 miles).

Cleanup Continues as CN Train Derails in Saskatchewan

By Trains Staff | March 19, 2025

No injuries reported in 13-car derailment

DALMENY, Saskatchewan — Cleanup continues after 13 cars of a Canadian National Railway train derailed Monday night between Dalmeny and Langham, Sask., CJWW Radio reports.

No hazardous materials were involved, the Dalmeny Police Service reported. CN said in a statement to the station there were no injuries, and no cargo leaks or fires occurred. Rail traffic was expected to be restored Tuesday night.

Dalmeny, population 1,766 as of the 2021 census, is at the midpoint of CN's Aberdeen Subdivision, 74 miles west of Humboldt, Sask., and 73 miles east of North Battleford. It is about 15 miles north of Saskatoon.



---- CPKC News ----

CPKC Container Dwell Still an Issue at Canada's Largest Port

By Stuart Chirls | March 28, 2025

Canadian National shows greater gains at Vancouver's Deltaport



Vancouver's Deltaport container terminal. Global Container Terminals

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Container dwell times at the Port of Vancouver, Canada's busiest intermodal hub, continue to be a significant issue since the start of the year.

Canadian Pacific Kansas City has been particularly affected, with over 89,000 feet of containers sitting at Deltaport for more than seven days, according to port data. This is an improvement from the peak of nearly 160,000 feet in mid-March but still presents a substantial challenge. In contrast, Canadian National has managed to decrease on-dock footage across all Vancouver terminals in recent weeks.

CN has responded to increased container volume through Vancouver with notable success, analyst RailState told FreightWaves. By adding more trains and expanding average train size, CN has achieved a 25% increase in daily movement of 20-foot equivalent units, or TEUs, and movement of 52,388 feet of containers at Deltaport. This strategy has led to a consistent decline in on-dock footage and dwell times throughout March.

CPKC's performance presents a more challenging picture. Despite a modest 7.6% increase in train volume from February, there has been no significant change in train size. This has proved insufficient to manage the recent influx of containers to Vancouver.

Year-over-year comparisons show CPKC moving in less volume:

- TEUs per day: down 9.5% from March 2024, but up 8.5% from February.
- TEUs per train: a significant decrease of 15% from March 2024, up 0.9% from February.
- Trains per day: up 6.4% from March 2024, and 7.6% from February.

The Port of Prince Rupert has seen dramatic increases in inland traffic. With substantially larger trains (529 TEUs per train in March, up from 425 in February) and increased frequency, daily volume has surged by 71.6% since February through the British Columbia port.

- TEUs per day: up 7.4% from March 2024.
- TEUs per train: increased by 8.3% from March 2024, and 24.5% from February.
- Trains per day: a slight decrease of 0.8% from March 2024, and 37.9% from February.

Halifax continues to show steady growth in container volume. Daily TEUs moving inland is at its highest point in over a year, 32.3% above last year's volumes. This growth is primarily driven by increased train volume rather than longer trains.

Year-ago and current year comparisons:

- TEUs per day: up 32.3% from March 2024, and 7.9% from February.
- TEUs per train: increased by 6.7% from March 2024, and 2.5% from February.
- Trains per day: a substantial increase of 24% from March 2024, and 5.2% from February.

The Port of St. John has seen increased train volume and sizes, resulting in a nearly 50% jump in daily TEU volume moving inland compared to February 2025. However, year-over-year comparisons are unavailable as RailState data collection began in April 2024.

— This article originally appeared [at FreightWaves.com](https://www.freightwaves.com)

--- Other Railroad News ---

Montana Bill Would Provide Funding for Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority

By Trains Staff | March 28, 2025

Money for agency would come from tax on railcars

HELENA, Mont. — Montana's legislature is considering a bill that would use a tax on railroad cars to help provide funding for the organization seeking to revive passenger service on the former route of the *North Coast Hiawatha*.

[House Bill 848](#), introduced by state Rep. Denise Baum (D-Billings) earlier this month, initially sought to direct 25% of the funds from a tax on rental vehicles to a "Big Sky Rail Account" for use by regional rail agencies in the state. It was [subsequently amended](#) to substitute [the state's railroad car tax](#) for the rental-car tax.

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Currently, the state has just one such rail agency: [the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority](#), which is working to restore service on the route last used by the North Coast Hiawatha in 1979. The Authority could use the funds for administration, providing matching funds for federal grants, and other purposes, [the Terry Tribune reports](#). The bill is currently being considered by the House Transportation Committee, which held a hearing on the legislation on March 26 but did not immediately take action.

News Photo: A Rocky Mountaineer Preview

By [Trains Staff](#) | March 30, 2025

Test trip for 2026 expansion of operations travels new Utah mileage



GP40-3s Nos. 8020 and 8021 bring a Rocky Mountaineer test train out of the Kyune Tunnels on the way to Soldier Summit on Friday, March 28, 2025. Chip Sherman

KYUNE, Utah — The test train for next year's expansion of Rocky Mountaineer service to Salt Lake City is well into its six-day round trip from Denver. Rocky Mountaineer's parent company, now known as Armstrong Collective, announced earlier this month that in 2026, it would add three-day trips between Denver and Salt Lake City to the current overnight trips between Denver and Moab, Utah., with a one-night stay in Glenwood Springs, Colo. The U.S. operation will be renamed Canyon Spirit [see ["Rocky Mountaineer U.S. operations ..."](#) [Trains News Wire](#), March 18, 2025]. The company had reported it would run a training trip for the new service this year, prior to the start of its 2025 season of the two-day "Rockies to Red Rocks" excursions [see ["Rocky Mountaineer 'Rockies to Red Rocks' trips ..."](#) [News Wire](#), March 19, 2025]. On Friday, the train traveled the new portion of the three-day route, arriving in Salt Lake City after its Moab stop. The return trip began Saturday and will spend tonight (March 30) in Glenwood Springs before arriving in Denver on Monday, March 31.

Intermodal Likely to Face Volume Headwinds Due to Economic Uncertainty, Analyst Says

By [Bill Stephens](#) | April 1, 2025

With an international intermodal surge winding down, Gross pins his hopes on domestic intermodal share gains



A westbound Union Pacific stack train overtakes a stopped Amtrak **Sunset Limited** in Niland, Calif., on



Intermodal analyst Larry Gross

The only thing that's certain these days, intermodal analyst Larry Gross says, is uncertainty. And that makes it difficult to whip up an accurate short-term intermodal forecast, he told an Intermodal Association of North America webcast today. But Gross says that gathering economic storm clouds — new tariffs, the end of an import surge, diminishing hopes for tighter trucking capacity, sagging consumer and business confidence, and the potential for stagflation — will not help intermodal volumes this year. "I see a lot more downside risk than upside," he says.

Even with President Donald Trump set to announce broad tariff plans on April 2, Gross says "What we've seen here is that when there is a deal it's never quite a done deal, but just a starting point for further negotiation," Gross says about proposed tariffs. The administration, he notes, has typically modified its tariff plans based on concerns raised by various industries.

"So where things land and how long they stay that way is a big question mark," Gross says. "And that is an important point because what that does is create continued uncertainty."

Manufacturers, for example, are unlikely to make investments in new or expanded plants when there's no certainty that tariffs will remain in place or last beyond the current administration, Gross says.

"It's very hard to plan when you don't know what the future reality is going to look like. So, what that means in the near term for all of us is that there's going to be very limited effects on the overall flows of international trade," Gross says.

Supply chains won't be able to change quickly, he says, and they won't change until there's clarity.

Roughly half of intermodal volume is international containers, while a substantial share of domestic intermodal depends on imported consumer goods that have been transloaded into 53-foot containers.

Yet concerns over potential tariffs prompted companies in the U.S. to pull forward their imports, which helped propel a surge of cargo landing at West Coast ports that boosted BNSF and Union Pacific international intermodal volume, as well as their domestic transload container volume.

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BNSF's intermodal volume is up 10% for the year to date, while UP's volume is up an outsized 16%. The rising tide of imports is one factor behind the 8.2% year over year growth in intermodal volume through the first 12 weeks of 2025, according to Association of American Railroads data.

"The surge is over, but the end of a surge doesn't necessarily mean that we're at the beginning of a huge decline," Gross says. The tariff pull-forward has changed the traditional seasonal traffic patterns. Typically, February would be a low point and import volume would begin growing in March. "I am not really too optimistic that we're going to see that this year," Gross says, noting that warehouse inventory is high and must be worked down before imports rise again.

Another wildcard, Gross says, is the U.S. Trade Representative's proposed fees on Chinese-built or operated ships calling at American ports. Vessels operated by Chinese companies would face a \$1 million port call fee. Ships built in China would have to pay a \$1.5 million fee per port call. And any shipping line that has placed more than 50% of its new vessel orders with Chinese shipyards would incur a \$1 million port entry fee.

The White House says the fees would be used to subsidize the U.S. shipbuilding industry, which no longer produces commercial vessels in meaningful numbers. The administration says the plan also would reduce the global dominance of China's shipyards. The proposal was roundly criticized during public hearings last week. Gross says the pushback is likely to at least produce revisions to the plan.

"If it's implemented as has been proposed, it has major implications in terms of rerouting trade flows," Gross says. "And that could happen in a real hurry."

Ships with ties to China would likely limit their U.S. arrivals to major ports at the expense of smaller ones, Gross says. Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Charleston, S.C., would be victims, Gross says, while winners on the East Coast would include New York/New Jersey and Savannah, Ga.

The proposal also might prompt importers to shift their U.S.-bound freight to Canadian and Mexican ports to avoid the fees, Gross says. That would boost the fortunes of Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Kansas City as overall Canadian cross-border intermodal volume has slumped due to labor unrest last year at the railways and ports.

The other wrinkle in international intermodal is the gradual shift of traffic back to East Coast ports. West Coast ports — particularly Los Angeles and Long Beach, Calif. — gained market share last year amid concerns of a potential dockworkers' strike at East Coast ports.

With a new contract in place, shippers are now sending their imports back to East Coast ports.

"From a West Coast standpoint, we're going to have a double whammy of the lower imports in general, plus lower share," Gross says. And that will be an intermodal headwind because containers that arrive at East Coast ports are less likely to move inland by rail due to shorter lengths of haul.

Domestic intermodal has more growth potential in the short-term, Gross says. Domestic intermodal has been slowly regaining market share from trucks for the past six months as truck capacity has tightened somewhat.

If there's an economic downturn later this year, Gross says it may be an advantage for domestic intermodal. "History would say that in difficult economic conditions, particularly when people are not in a hurry, intermodal is able to gain share," Gross says. And that could boost intermodal's fortunes. "I'm a little bit optimistic with regard to the share gain," Gross says. "If we continue to gain share, that will more than offset any declines that we see in an overall volume."

Railroad intermodal service should not be a barrier to domestic growth. By most measures, the Class I railroad intermodal networks remain fluid despite operating a tad slower than the average over the past few years, Gross says.

there will still be uncertainty surrounding global trade.

New U.S. tariffs Pummel Railroad Stocks (updated)

By Bill Stephens | April 3, 2025

Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Kansas City fare better than U.S. railroads



A Union Pacific international intermodal train departs the Port of Los Angeles. David Lassen

Railroad stocks tumbled today in response to the Trump administration's Wednesday announcement of widespread tariffs on U.S. trading partners.

It was an indication that investors believe the tariffs will raise prices and have a negative impact on consumer spending, which in turn will reduce demand for the raw materials and finished products that railroads carry.

At the close of trading on Thursday, the S&P 500 was down 4.8%. The U.S. publicly traded railroads under-performed the broader market: CSX was down 5.8% for the day; Union Pacific declined 6%; and Norfolk Southern slumped 7.4%.

The Canadian railways fared better, perhaps because Canada and Mexico — which were early tariff targets — were exempt from the reciprocal tariffs announced at the White House yesterday.

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Canadian National stock declined by 2%, while Canadian Pacific Kansas City was down 2.7%.

“There is a sense of relief that Canada and Mexico were spared from additional tariffs. As the market starts to worry about the impact of tariffs on economic growth, it may also become relevant that, for Canadian investors, CN and CPKC are viewed as two of a limited number of ‘blue chip’ Canadian industrial stocks,” says Cherylyn Radbourne, a Toronto-based analyst for TD Securities. For the U.S. railroads, the reciprocal tariffs on China, the European Union, Japan, and other Asian nations were higher than anticipated.

“Ultimately, Trump’s tariff announcements were less onerous than feared for North American trade partners Canada and Mexico and worse than feared for China and other U.S. trade partners in Asia,” says Bascome Majors, an analyst at Susquehanna Financial Group. “This dynamic is playing out today in rail stocks with Canadian rails CP and CN outperforming and in broader transportation stocks with international trade levered businesses like Expeditors, FedEx, and UPS underperforming.”

Given the often fluid nature of President Donald Trump’s tariff plans this year, independent rail analyst Anthony B. Hatch wondered how the situation might change in the coming weeks and months.

“It appears that Canada and Mexico were spared,” Hatch says. “But spared for how long?”

The USMCA trade deal that was signed during the first Trump administration comes up for renegotiation next year, Hatch notes.

And the 25% tariffs imposed on imports of steel and aluminum from Canada and Mexico remain in force.

Yet Hatch says that the steep reciprocal tariffs on imports from other countries — like the 24% levy on Japanese products — may help make Canadian and Mexican products more competitive in the U.S.

Stellantis, however, announced today that due to tariffs it would temporarily suspend production of Chrysler minivans at its assembly plant in Windsor, Ontario, and the Jeep Compass at its plant in Toluca, Mexico. It also was laying off employees at plants that make parts for the minivans and Jeep SUV.

Hatch contends that more than half of rail traffic is trade-related in one way or another. It won’t be clear what the tariff impact on rail traffic might be until railroad shippers have time to analyze how tariffs might affect their businesses, Hatch says.

Under the plans outlined yesterday, the U.S. will impose a 10% tariff on all imports and significantly higher rates for some nations that are deemed bad trade actors. Trump called the plan “Liberation Day” and said the tariffs would reduce trade imbalances and promote U.S. manufacturing.

“Jobs and factories will come roaring back into our country, and you see it happening already,” Trump said. Companies seeking to avoid tariffs, he adds, should build their products in the U.S.

Note: This story was updated at 3:25 p.m. Central with closing stock market prices.

News photo: NS Train Reaches Asheville, N.C.

By Trains Staff | April 9, 2025

Work continues to restore line closed by Hurricane Helene

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — The continuing work to restore service on Norfolk Southern’s line into Asheville reached a milestone on Tuesday (April 8) as an NS ballast train became the first train to reach Asheville since it was closed Sept. 27, 2024, by Hurricane Helene.

More than 21,500 feet of track was washed out, and another 65,000 feet was damaged by scour, fill failure, or slides, on the former Southern Railway AS Line between Salisbury, N.C., and Morristown, Tenn. [see “Norfolk Southern line into Asheville, N.C., to be closed ...,” *Trains News Wire*, Oct. 10, 2024].

The railroad had originally hoped service could be restored by January, but most recently had estimated it could reopen last month [see “[Norfolk Southern line ... to be closed until March 2025](#),” *News Wire*, Dec. 17, 2024]. *News Wire* has asked NS for an update on the reconstruction process.

A Norfolk Southern ballast train crosses the French Broad River into Asheville, N.C., on April 8, 2025, becoming the first train into the city since the area was devastated by Hurricane Helene in September 2024.
David Pressley

Sierra Northern Holds First Test for Hydrogen-fuel Switcher (with video)

By Trains Staff | April 8, 2025

Locomotive is the first of four to be developed by company



Sierra Northern Railway conducted a successful first test of its hydrogen-powered switcher on March 27, as shown in a screen shot from a Sierra Northern video.

DENVER — Sierra Northern Railway conducted a successful initial test of its first hydrogen locomotive, a four-axle switcher, in late March, the company announced today (April 8) at the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association conference. The initial testing took place March 27 in West Sacramento, Calif. “This accomplishment marks another major milestone in Sierra’s mission to bring hydrogen-powered, zero-emission switcher locomotives within commercial reach for the shortline industry, both in California and around the world,” Sierra Northern President Kennan H. Beard III said in [a press release](#).

“Sierra’s successful test proves that short lines can retire pre-Tier 0 to Tier 4 diesel locomotives and replace them ... using our advanced hydrogen powered units.”

The pilot project was funded through a \$4 million grant for design, integration, and demonstration of the locomotive from the California Energy Commission (and administered through GTI Energy). The company says the locomotive will facilitate improvement of air quality, and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, noise, and odors.

A diesel switcher uses an average of approximately 50,000 gallons of fuel per year, creating the potential for reduction of more than 12 million gallons of diesel per year in California — the approximate equivalent of the fuel used by 20,000 light-duty vehicles. Also funding the project are the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality District, SoCalGas, and the Low Carbon Resource Initiative. Other partners include GTI Energy, Velocity Strategies, Railpower Tech, WHA International, OptiFuel Systems, Ballard Power Systems, UC Riverside, and Valley Vision.

The Sierra Northern has already begun work on four additional hydrogen-fueled locomotives, an approximately \$19.5 million project receiving funding from the State of California, California State Transportation Agency, and Caltrans’ Port and Freight Infrastructure Project, through a public-private partnership with the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District. The testing will be conducted at Sierra’s West Sacramento yard and is to be completed by the end of 2027.

Report: FRA Should Promote Technology and Safety Innovation

By Bill Stephens | April 10, 2025

A think tank is critical of the Federal Railroad Administration's safety waiver review process, which has been politicized and stymies improvements in track and train inspections



This car is part of Canadian National's Autonomous Track Inspection Program. Craig Walker

WASHINGTON— The Federal Railroad Administration should promote track and equipment inspection technology innovation by overhauling its safety waiver review process, according to a think tank that focuses on infrastructure issues.

The Alliance for Innovation and Infrastructure says the FRA’s safety waiver process has been bogged down by outdated rules and political interference. The group examined the waiver review process [in a report released today](#). “We need a regulatory system that matches the speed of innovation,” said Benjamin Dierker, executive director of the Alliance for Innovation and Infrastructure and lead author of the report. “The FRA’s current waiver process too often delays or denies safety-enhancing technologies without clear justification. Reform is not just overdue — it’s essential.” [As Trains News Wire has reported](#), the FRA during the Biden administration stymied Class I railroad efforts to combine automated track and equipment inspections with traditional visual inspections in ways that weed out the highest number of defects that can cause derailments.

In many cases, the FRA ignored its own regulatory deadlines and failed to act on safety waiver requests.

Railroads permit unlimited use of automated track inspection systems that rely on lasers, machine vision, and other technology to find track geometry defects. But without a waiver from the FRA, railroads cannot simultaneously scale back the required frequency of visual inspections of main lines where the automated systems are deployed.

Many of the regulations guiding railroad operations today were drafted more than half a century ago and fail to incorporate modern inspection technologies. According to the report, the waiver process that allows railroads to bypass outdated rules has become increasingly politicized, opaque, and inconsistent — a formula for undermining safety, innovation, and long-term investment. The report makes five recommendations.

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- Increase the transparency of the Railroad Safety Board's decision-making process.
- Limit political influence by allowing career safety professionals to lead waiver evaluations.
- Recognize proven technology by granting long-term waivers for successful safety innovations.
- Prevent bureaucratic delays through automatic provisional approvals when the FRA misses its own statutory deadlines.
- Trigger regulatory review when multiple waivers are granted for the same FRA rule.

Adopting the recommendations would move the FRA toward a data-driven approach and a regulatory model based on performance. AII's report includes a case study on automated track inspection systems, which have been shown to significantly improve defect detection and inspection efficiency. Over the past four years the FRA denied or delayed multiple automated track inspection waivers, forcing railroads into protracted legal battles culminating in a ruling by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals holding the FRA's waiver denials to be "arbitrary and capricious."

"We cannot allow political cycles to dictate safety decisions," Dierker said. "Our rail network — and the communities it serves — deserve consistent, transparent, and data-based policies."

An FRA spokesman did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment this morning.

Legislation Would Coordinate Law Enforcement Response to Cargo Theft

By Bill Stephens | April 11, 2025 | Last updated on April 20, 2025

Railroads saw a 40% spike in cargo theft last year, the Association of American Railroads says



Containers carrying consumer goods have become a target of organized crime rings. Cargo theft on railroads was up 40% in 2024. Bill Stephens

WASHINGTON — Railroads and retailers are praising a bipartisan bill in Congress that aims to reduce cargo theft.

The Combating Organized Retail Crime Act, [which was introduced yesterday](#), would create a coordinated federal response to a rising wave of sophisticated cargo thefts, many of which target consumer goods in containers carried on double-stack trains.

"Organized criminal operations continue to evolve and escalate their targeted attacks against our nation's supply chain and retailers," Association of American Railroads CEO Ian Jefferies said in a statement on Thursday. "This alarming trend affects every industry — including the nation's largest railroads, which experienced a 40% spike in cargo theft last year."

The AAR says the bill would provide the framework necessary to disrupt criminal networks and safeguard supply chains.

Specifically, it would enhance federal law enforcement tools and establish a centralized coordination center that would bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement as well as railroad police to counter organized theft operations.

Both the frequency and tactics of cargo theft attempts have rapidly evolved and escalated from what once was a crime of opportunity to one that cost the industry more than \$100 million last year, the AAR says. Today, rail cargo thefts are calculated, coordinated and executed by sophisticated perpetrators often with links to domestic and transnational organized crime groups.

Because thieves often bring trains to a stop by disconnecting brake system air hoses, the thefts pose operational hazards, the AAR says.

The rail industry estimates suggest that over 65,000 thefts occurred against the Class I railroads in 2024. [Nike shoes have been a frequent target.](#)

"Whether stealing mass quantities of products from retail stores or hijacking consumer goods throughout the supply chain, these gangs are wreaking havoc. And these criminal rings use the profits from retail theft to support larger illicit activities such as human trafficking, gun smuggling, narcotics, and terrorism," said Michael Hanson, senior executive vice president, public affairs at the Retail Industry Leaders Association. "In order to expose and prosecute these sophisticated criminal rings, we need federal, state and local law enforcement to be coordinated, which is exactly what CORCA will do."

Autonomous Intermodal Cars to Begin Testing this Month

By Trains Staff | April 15, 2025

Parallel Systems to begin FRA-approved testing in Georgia, announces additional \$38 million in funding



L: Parallel Systems' autonomous freight cars will have the ability to assemble themselves into platoons. An FRA-approved testing program will begin this month in Georgia. Parallel Systems

LOS ANGELES — Parallel Systems, the company developing battery-electric railcars that operate autonomously, will launch testing this month on two Georgia railroads, Parallel said on Monday (April 14, 2025).

The company also announced it had raised an additional \$38 million in funding, bringing its total to date to about \$100 million.

"Federal Railroad Administration approval and closing our Series B funding round are two critical milestones for Parallel Systems," Matt Soule, Parallel founder and CEO, said in [a press release](#).

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. “Together with our strategic partnerships within the rail industry, Parallel Systems is now poised to fully commercialize our battery-electric rail system, starting with the FRA-approved project in Georgia.”

In January, the Federal Railroad Administration approved a request from Parallel, Georgia Central, and Heart of Georgia Railroad to test its self-propelled intermodal flatcars, but the company had not previously identified when testing would begin. [See [“FRA approves first autonomous rail car test program,”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 20, 2025].

The seven-phase testing program on the two Genesee & Wyoming short lines will begin with testing on 2 miles of track on the Heart of Georgia that will be disconnected from the rest of the railroad. It will gradually progress to platoon operation of the cars with loaded containers over a 160-mile segment of the two railroads.

The company said the latest funding will be used to “propel commercialization” of its project with railroad partners in the U.S. and Australia, where it has also demonstrated its product [see [“Parallel Systems demonstrates ...,”](#) *News Wire*, Dec. 7, 2023].

Parallel said it already had a backlog of more than 300 of its autonomous railcars with leading railroads and expects to launch commercial operations in 2026. The company said it is scaling production of its Generation 3 equipment and related autonomy software train control systems, and has tested its technology’s compatibility with positive train control in collaboration with Union Pacific.

J.B. Hunt Sees Strong Quarterly Intermodal Growth but Faces Tariff-driven Uncertainty

By Bill Stephens | April 16, 2025 | Last updated on April 18, 2025

Although intermodal volume grew 8% and set a first-quarter record, profits fell amid steep competition from trucks



A BNSF Railway domestic intermodal train with a long block of J.B. Hunt containers departs Winslow, Ariz., in August 2022 while another BNSF train switches in the yard. Bill Stephens

LOWELL, Ark. – J.B. Hunt executives say their intermodal crystal ball is cloudy amid the uncertainty created by U.S. trade policy.

Executives from the largest domestic intermodal operator, speaking on the company’s Tuesday evening earnings call, said customers are focused on the potential impacts of U.S. tariffs and the direction of the overall economy. “We recognize there are a lot of questions right now about how tariffs may impact the market,” Spencer Frazier, J.B. Hunt’s executive vice president of sales and marketing, told investors and analysts on the company’s earnings call. “We believe they have the potential to impact both supply and demand, but the magnitude and timing is difficult to predict.”

The Trump administration has levied 10% across the board tariffs on imports but also has imposed reciprocal tariffs that are as steep as 145% on Chinese-made goods. The White House says tariffs will bring manufacturing back to the U.S.

“Our customers continue to plan for multiple what-if scenarios, but most of them are waiting for the dust to settle to determine how tariffs might influence and change their short- and long-term business strategies,” Frazier says. “As part of this scenario planning process, some customers are considering ways to alter supply chain freight flows and/or their country of origin sourcing, but these changes will be part of a much longer decision process.”

J.B. Hunt executives say that 20% to 30% of the company’s intermodal business originates on the West Coast, but it’s not clear how much of that volume is tied to China.

Although intermodal profit margins remain challenged, the company set a first quarter intermodal volume record on the heels of record intermodal volume levels in the second half of 2024.

“Volumes in the quarter were up 8% year-over-year, and by month, we’re up 9% in January, up 6% in February, and up 7% in March,” says Darren Field, president of J.B. Hunt’s intermodal division.

J.B. Hunt’s first quarter intermodal volume grew 13% in the East, where its primary partner is Norfolk Southern. Transcon intermodal business, which originates on BNSF Railway, was up 4% for the quarter.

“We also saw very strong volumes in our Mexico business, a market in which we see significant opportunities in the future,” Field says. “I remain encouraged by our demand, particularly in the Eastern network where we face the greatest competition from depressed truck rates. This is a testament to the strong service levels of the rails and how that translates into an attractive and valuable alternative to truck for our customers.”

Field said it was unclear how much of the volume growth was related to importers pulling forward their orders in order to beat the implementation of U.S. tariffs.

As the freight recession enters its third year, J.B. Hunt did not see relief from depressed truck rates, which have put downward pressure on intermodal pricing and profit margins. But the company remains focused on gaining price increases and boosting margins. Quarterly intermodal revenue climbed 5% for the quarter, to \$1.47 billion, but the segment’s operating income declined 7%, to \$94.4 million.

J.B. Hunt has been able to achieve some rate increases, Field says, but also has lost intermodal business where customers refused to accept higher rates.

“It is competitive, I will say that,” Field says.

J.B. Hunt’s intermodal segment accounts for 53% of the company’s operating income. Overall, the company’s quarterly revenue declined 1%, operating income slumped 8%, and earnings per share decreased 4%.

U.S. Weekly Rail Traffic Remains Ahead of 2024 Levels

By David Lassen | April 17, 2025 | Last updated on April 18, 2025

Carload, intermodal traffic both up for week ending April 12

U.S. Rail Traffic¹ Week 15, 2025 – Ended April 12, 2025

	This Week		Year-To-Date		
	Cars	vs 2024	Cumulative	Avg/wk ²	vs 2024
Total Carloads	217,566	4.3%	3,219,891	214,659	0.9%
Chemicals	32,222	-0.3%	493,839	32,923	2.0%
Coal	51,600	13.9%	849,186	56,612	1.9%
Farm Products excl. Grain, and Food	16,611	-2.3%	256,242	17,083	2.6%
Forest Products	7,760	-3.2%	123,526	8,235	-0.3%
Grain	24,119	17.7%	318,504	21,234	3.8%
Metallic Ores and Metals	18,638	-0.1%	275,943	18,396	-4.6%
Motor Vehicles and Parts	16,251	-0.2%	218,800	14,587	-0.9%
Nonmetallic Minerals	31,076	-1.7%	402,274	26,818	-0.6%
Petroleum and Petroleum Products	9,778	-5.9%	152,258	10,151	0.9%
Other	9,511	12.4%	129,319	8,621	1.3%
Total Intermodal Units	274,342	6.3%	4,088,865	272,591	8.5%
Total Traffic	491,908	5.4%	7,308,756	487,250	5.0%

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

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

WASHINGTON — U.S. carload and intermodal rail traffic were both up for the week ending April 12, 2025, continuing the recent trend of weekly volume running ahead of 2024 levels.

[Statistics from the Association of American Railroads](#) show volume for the week was 491,908 carloads and intermodal units, a 5.4% increase over the same week a year ago. That included 217,566 carloads, up 4.3% from the corresponding week in 2024, and 274,342 containers and trailers, up 6.3%.

It is the seventh straight week volume has run ahead of 2024 levels.

Through 15 weeks of 2025, total U.S. traffic is 7,308,756 carloads and intermodal units, a 5% increase over the same period last year. That includes a 0.9% increase in carloads and an 8.5% gain in intermodal volume.

North American volume for the week, from the nine reporting U.S., Canadian, and Mexican railroads, was 687,452 carloads and intermodal units, a 3.9% increase over the same week in 2024. That includes 325,409 carloads, up 2.3%, and 362,043 intermodal units, up 5.3%.

For the year to date, the North America volume of 10,051,332 carloads and intermodal units is up 3.3% over the first 15 weeks of 2024. That includes a 0.3% increase in Canada and a 9.5% decline in Mexico.

Posner, Iowa Interstate Honored at Short Line Conference

By Trains Staff | April 18, 2025 | Last updated on April 19, 2025

Chairman inducted into Short Line Hall of Fame; railroad receives two awards



L: Iowa Interstate Chairman Henry Posner III (right) and his daughter Ida, a member of the railroad's board, arrive in Denver on the railroad's private car, the Hawkeye, for the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association conference earlier this month. Henry Posner was one of three inductees into the organization's Short Line Hall of Fame. Chip Sherman

DENVER — The Hall of Fame induction of Iowa Interstate Railroad Chairman Henry Posner III highlighted the railroad's week at the recent American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association conference in Denver, which also saw Iowa Interstate recognized with two major awards.

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Posner was inducted into the Short Line Railroad Industry Hall of Fame, along with longtime railroad executive and former Federal Railroad Administrator Ron Batory, and the late Earl Durden, who was instrumental in the development of the ASLRRRA, as well as a manager of some 16 short lines [see [“ASLRRRA names three new members ...,”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Jan. 7, 2025].

Posner, in his acceptance speech, called the occasion “a great opportunity to raise the consciousness of our industry peers on many subjects: safety, policy, education, and also about the willingness to fail, doing the right thing, and attracting the next generation. But most importantly, it was about family. IAIS is a family in its own way and is part of the RDC family of companies.” Driving home the point of Iowa Interstate as family, Posner was introduced by his daughter, Ida, also an Iowa Interstate board member.

The railroad was also named 2025 Regional Railroad of the Year by *Railway Age*, and received [the ASLRRRA Environmental Award](#) for its work developing the Newton Energy Rail Park in Newton, Iowa. The facility supports rail movement of wind turbine blades and tower sections.

Iowa Interstate celebrated the occasion by bringing its historic business car, the Hawkeye, to Denver Union Station, where it hosted friends, family, and colleagues during the conference. The modernized heavyweight car began life as a Frisco dining car in 1928, was rebuilt into an office car in 1949, and moved through several owners before being purchased by Iowa Interstate from Kansas City Southern in 2006.

U.S. Railroads May Benefit From Some Changes to Proposed Port Fees on Chinese Ships

By Bill Stephens | April 18, 2025

But an executive order from the White House may be a headwind for Canadian ports and railways



A ship takes on coal at Pier 6, the heart of Norfolk Southern's Lamberts Point Coal Terminal in Norfolk, Va. NS

WASHINGTON – In what's likely to be a mixed bag for railroads, the U.S. Trade Representative yesterday watered down its plans to impose steep fees on Chinese ships that call on American ports. The U.S. Trade Representative modified many of the fees that were proposed in February but had received widespread criticism from importers, exporters, and the maritime industry during hearings last month. In the initial proposal, vessels operated by Chinese companies would have faced a \$1 million port call fee. Ships built in China would have to pay a \$1.5 million fee per port call. And any shipping line that has placed more than 50% of its new vessel orders with Chinese shipyards would incur a \$1 million port entry fee. “The new proposal has major changes compared to the first proposal with downward revisions of some fees,” says Lars Jensen, a maritime expert based in Copenhagen. Now the port call fee would be levied once per trip to the U.S. — rather than at every port a ship touches on its route. The fees would be based on ship tonnage or by container and would apply to Chinese operated and Chinese-built vessels.

In a significant move, the new proposal exempts ships that arrive empty and are used to export bulk commodities like grain and coal. That's good news for CSX and Norfolk Southern, which handle lucrative metallurgical coal export traffic, as well as for BNSF Railway and Union Pacific, which carry grain to West Coast and Gulf Coast ports.

The shipping fees would have made U.S. exports less competitive in global markets.

Intermodal analyst Larry Gross says the new plan likely will limit the potential for major changes in containerized freight flows, which might have occurred under the original proposal because ocean carriers likely would have concentrated on major ports and dropped service to smaller ports to avoid cumulative fees.

“From an intermodal perspective this addresses a lot of the disruptive potential that the other plan had for inland transport,” Gross says. “It's still hugely disruptive for the ocean carriers, obviously.”

The initial plan also would have further incentivized shippers to avoid fees by using Canadian or Mexican ports for their U.S.-bound containers. The revamped plan does not address this back door entry to the U.S., but an executive order that President Donald Trump signed on April 9 does.

The order effectively would treat containers that arrive in the U.S. from Canada or Mexico as if they had arrived at a U.S. port. That means they would be subject to all the same fees, including a harbor maintenance tax. Canada does not levy a harbor tax, which has given its ports a competitive advantage and was among the factors that helped propel international intermodal growth at Canadian National and Canadian Pacific for containers bound for the U.S.

“This is not the death knell for using Canadian ports for U.S.-bound traffic,” Gross says, noting that importers consider a slew of factors when deciding which ports to use.

The executive order removes one of the tailwinds for ports served by CN and CPKC, but it doesn't necessarily make their international intermodal service to the U.S. uneconomic, Gross says.

But the ports at Vancouver and Prince Rupert, British Columbia, have been struggling to regain container volume lost during the past two years of labor disruptions in Canada. In the first quarter this year, international intermodal volume from Western Canada to the U.S. Midwest is down 29%, Gross notes, while volume surged 68% for international containers moving from the Pacific Northwest to the Midwest, based on data from the Intermodal Association of North America.

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“Obviously those two numbers tell you there’s something going on there,” Gross says. “It’s definitely a sea change.” And it’s a change that may benefit BNSF and Union Pacific, which serve the West Coast ports that for two decades have been gradually losing market share to ports in British Columbia. But the port call fees — along with broad tariffs — are still likely to make imported goods more expensive and therefore reduce consumer demand. And that, in turn, would put a dent in U.S. intermodal traffic. Already, the volume of U.S.-bound shipments from China has declined sharply. The American Apparel & Footwear Association, a trade group that represents clothing and shoe manufacturers, was still critical of the port fee proposal. “We are deeply concerned that the newly announced port fees and shipping mandates are destined to have devastating consequences for American workers, consumers, and exporters,” Nate Herman, the association’s senior vice president of policy, said in a statement today. White House says the fees would be used to subsidize the U.S. shipbuilding industry, which no longer produces commercial vessels in meaningful numbers. The administration says the plan also would reduce the global dominance of China’s shipyards. “We fully support strengthening the U.S. maritime industry, but penalizing shippers for not using American-flagged or built vessels, when they cost up to five times more and remain in limited supply, is counterproductive,” Herman said.

New York’s Delaware & Ulster Announces Return of Operations

By Trains News Wire | April 19, 2025

Heritage railway in Catskill Mountains last ran in 2019



The Delaware & Ulster Railroad, which last operated in 2019, is set to resume operations in May. Delaware & Ulster

ARKVILLE, N.Y. — The Delaware & Ulster Railroad, a heritage rail operation that last ran in 2019, has announced plans to resume operation beginning in May.

“The railroad is heading in a new direction literally and figuratively,” Todd Pascarella, executive director of the Catskills Revitalization Corp., the non-profit organization that operates the railroad, said in [an announcement on Facebook](#).

“We will be offering train rides aboard a combination of cars and engines that have been here for decades.

However, for the first time in 25 years, riders will be traveling east from Arkville toward Fleischmanns and eventually to Highmount.”

Since 2001, trains had run north to Halcottsville and Roxbury, N.Y.

The railroad has also brought in a contractor, Stephen Lane, to manage the operation while track reconstruction continues.

“Stephen has quite a bit of experience in the mechanics and logistics of railroads, but the thing we need most right now perhaps is urgency and commitment to the business aspect of our railroad,” Pascarella said, “and Stephen’s entrepreneurial background and leadership experience gives him that balance as well.”

Arkville, in the western Catskills Mountains, is about a 140-mile drive north of New York City and about 70 miles southwest of Albany. The railroad operates on a former New York Central line last operated on a revenue basis by Conrail in 1976. Operations are set to turn on Saturday, May 10, and are currently scheduled for Saturdays and Sundays, the remainder of the year. For more information or tickets, visit [the railroad’s website](#)

Bob Ball Fantastic Photos



Amtrak Train #1333 cruising through Red Rock on time -Bob Ball



CPKC (KCS unit) Rail,Ballast train Red Rock Jun 13 2024 -Bob Ball

Railfan Events

Northstar Chapter NRHS Monthly Meeting	Saturday May10th 2025 6:15pm—8:45pm	Roseville Lutheran Church 1215 Roselawn Ave W Roseville MN 55113	FREE -Guests are Welcome
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
Amtrak Train Ride Day Trip to Wisconsin Dells	Wednesday May 21st 2023	Informal Group from the Northstar Railway Historical Society - Buy ticket on Amtrak, Borealis EB and Empire Builder #7 Return to SPUD Same day	About \$85 round trip

Northstar News
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Address Correction Requested

