



NRHS

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

Northstar News

Happy New Year! Next Meeting Saturday January 10th 2026 Roseville Lutheran Church



L: CP Holiday Train Chicago IL Dec 10 2025
-Facebook -Jeff Terry

R: MNNR 76 outside of the yard in its new bicentennial scheme. Also the first major snowfall of the season 2
-Facebook -Khang Lu



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There are no Minutes in this issue, as The December meeting was the Holiday Banquet at Mancini's in St Paul. An Excellent program was given by Elizabeth Guenzler on the British Columbia Interurban around Vancouver BC.

Meeting Notice:
Saturday January 10th 2026 6:15 pm At Roseville Lutheran Church, our September Meeting also will be a ZOOM meeting. Note: in 2026 meetings will held on the 2nd Saturday of the month,

Program: Robert Rivard and the Soo Line, slides from his Collection, don't miss this program!

An informal Dinner at Keys Restaurant -Lexington and Larpenteur Avenues will be at 4:15 pm January 10th, 2026. Please join us in-person at Roseville Lutheran Church, Saturday January 10th 2026 at 6 pm. **Due to Church Policy,**

Doors open at 5:30pm and will close at 6:00pm. If you are late, you must call one of our officers cell phone to come and let you in.

Our business meeting will begin at 6:15 followed by the program. If you are unable to join us in person, the Zoom Meeting login information are here:

NRHS January 10th 2026 Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 864 0803 5189 Passcode: 401426
or <https://tinyurl.com/3xjeh54b>

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 February 1st 2026.

Also note, Invoices for 2026 dues will be sent out in the soon.

Last run of the Northstar Commuter train will be for the Vikings Game Jan 4th 2026. Sadly, the train service will be no more after this date.

A Ride on the Floridian Chicago to Virginia
by Dr Brett Williams November 2025 (Notes added by your editor)



Amtrak Floridian Photo Selville Florida Dec 15 2024 Rail-pictures.net.jpg



Amtrak Floridian at Lady Street Overpass Columbia SC Nov 11 2025 Rail-pictures.net .jpeg



Amtrak Floridian Screen shot.jpg

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Amtrak Floridian Map .jpg

The Train now runs Chicago to Miami via Washington DC and now uses single-level Viewliner and Amfleet cars (unlike the bi-level Superliners on other routes).

Classes:

Coach Class (wide seats) and First Class Private Rooms (Roomette, Bedroom, Accessible Bedroom).

Amenities:

Free WiFi, showers (for room guests), sleeper car attendants, large windows, and luggage space.

Dining:

Café Car for purchases; full Dining Car with chef-prepared meals, table service, and complimentary meals for First Class guests.

To the left and previous page, Photos copied from the Web by your Editor.

Following are a couple of photos from my November trip to West Virginia and Virginia. Flexible dining meals were microwaved in the Microwave that you can see on the right side of the picture in the snack bar counter picture verses in the traditional dining car where we had our own waiter that took our orders at our both.



Snack Car



Dining Car



Sleeper Car



CSX Train at Clifton Forge VA



Amtrak #41 The Floridian Train Arrives, Brett Williams and Friend



A Departing Amtrak Train Roanoke VA With Charger Locomotive

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Amtrak #51 The Cardinal Train in Huntington West Virginia



Return Trip on #51 the Cardinal – Viewliner Cars

All Photos above by Dr. Brett Williams

From my recent Amtrak trip to West Virginia and Virginia in early November 2025
Short paragraph summary as follows:

In early November traveled from St Paul to Martinsburg, West Virginia on Empire builder and the Floridian # 41. Primarily fleet equipment, including View liner, sleeping cars and dining car, which is pictured here - with Traditional dining format. While in Roanoke was able to view the departing Amtrak train, leaving Roanoke for Lynchburg and Washington DC, which is pictured here.

Return trip started at Clifton Forge Virginia and boarded the triweekly Cardinal # 51 with Amfleet equipment that included a snack car which served flexible dining meals. Viewliner sleeping cars were included in the consist.

Additional image of the headend power on the Cardinal was taken after dark at crew change point in Huntington, West Virginia. -Dr Brett Williams

Holiday Banquet at Mancini's Restaurant December 7 2025 Photos by Dawn Holmberg

Members and guests filled up our private room at Mancini's and enjoyed a great meal that included a great spread of hors d'oeuvres. A great program was given by Elizabeth Guentzler on the history and preservation of The British Columbia Interurban and of restored equipment that is now a museum near Vancouver BC.. Many Thanks to John Goodman for Co-ordinating this event!



Dr. Brett Williams, Gary Weldon, Russ and Martha Isbrandt on the left. On the right side there two guest of Gary Weldon's (Beverly Lucas and Tammara Murray, then Gary and Nancy Rumler



Janet and Ralph Bierbaum (guests), Ralph Tillma, Jeff Napierala, are on the left side of the table. Dan Meyer, Glen Holmberg and Wayne Torseth on the right side.

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Dick Hyllestad, Linda and John Cartwright, Jack Barbier. On the right side: Matt Nelson, Dick Hyllestad's guest, Don Anderson, Craig Raddatz, Dick Tubbesing and Richard Kasseth .



Mary, Ed Johnson's wife, Mark Quam, Dave Baniewicz, Frank Wilkie and John Chute. On the right side: Ed Johnson, Bill Dredge, Roger Libra, Gerry Ratlaff and Robert Thurn

CPKC Holiday Train in Golden Valley MN Dec 14, 2025 -Photos by Dawn Holmberg

On the former M&NS Line



L & R: Holiday Train heading to Golden Valley at the UP diamond



L ; Holiday Train at Golden Valley

R: Band Playing from CPKC lighted boxcar in Golden Valley



A Group Ride on the Northstar Commuter from Mpls to Big Lake and Return

December 17, 2025 Photos by Richard Tubbesing Dawn Holmberg



L: Dawn Holmberg (Camera Ready) waiting for the NB Northstar at the Fridley Station

R: Dan Meyer , Glen Holmberg , Janet and Ralph Bierbaum try to stay warm waiting for the Northstar to arrive at the Fridley Station in the heated waiting area.



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Train arrives on time at Fridley Station NB to Big Lake (Screen shot)



Riders enjoying the trip to Big Lake



Glen Holmberg, Wayne Torseth, Gary Rumler



Bill Dredge, John Chute, Dan Meyer, Dick Tubbesing, Jack Barbier



SB Train departing Fridley Station returning to Minneapolis



Subject: NorthStar Commuter Rail Update as on 12.16.2025

From: Doug Borglund Wednesday, December 17, 2025 1:00 PM Provided by John Goodman

Good Afternoon Mayor and City Councilmembers,
 I hope this message finds you well, enjoying the holiday season and the recent stretch of warmer weather.
 I'd like to provide you with an update on several components related to the shuttering of the NorthStar Commuter Rail and the ongoing transition to bus service. At the conclusion of this email, I will highlight items that are specifically relevant to the City of Anoka. To ensure you have the most complete picture of the situation as it stands today, I've attached recent emails and other communications for your review.

North Star Shuttering and Bus Conversion Process

1) Commuter Rail to Bus Service Transition Update

- Effective January 5, 2026, NorthStar commuter rail service to be suspended indefinitely.
- Last train trip after Packers-Vikings game on January 3rd or January 4th; Bus service starts on January 5th
 - o All Station Platforms to be secured starting on January 5th with 6 foot fencing.
 - o Bus service and new routes will start on January 5th.

2) Station Removal & Corridor Restoration Update

- Phase I
 - o Scope: Removal of stations at Elk River and Coon Rapids-Riverdale (including overpass)
 - o Status: Revising final design plans to address BNSF comments
 - o Timeline:
 - January 2026: Submit revised design plans to BNSF for review
 - February 2026: Invitation for Bids
 - March 2026: Bid Opening
 - Early Spring 2026: Contract Award
 - Late Spring 2026: Start of Demolition
- Phase II to be determined based on outcome of ongoing discussions in the new year.

3) Other Transition Activities Update

- Negotiating agreement amendments or new agreements with BNSF
 - o Park-and-ride related encroachments at Fridley and Elk River stations
 - o Industrial trackage agreement for the Big Lake VMF
 - o Target Field Station for future intercity passenger rail use
- Complying with Federal Transit Administration Rules & Regulations
 - o Developing Draft Disposition Plans (Infrastructure, Real Estate, Rolling Stock)
 - o Estimating Depreciated Value of Capital Assets

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4) Looking Ahead to the 2026 Schedule

January 2026: Begin Capital Asset Disposition Discussions with FTA

- o Transfer Park-and-Rides (Big Lake and Elk River) to MnDOT
- o Transfer Vehicle Maintenance Facility (Big Lake) to MnDOT
- o Transfer Rolling Stock to MnDOT
- o Transfer Target Field, Anoka, and Big Lake Station Platforms to MnDOT
- o Transfer Grade Separated Pedestrian Crossings to Ramsey, Anoka, and Fridley
- o Remove Elk River, Ramsey and Coon Rapids-Riverdale Stations

Winter 2025

- o Continued conversations with Ramsey, Anoka and Fridley re: Grade Separated Pedestrian Crossings
- o Continued conversations with Amtrak and MnDOT re: Potential Future Intercity Passenger Rail
- o Continued conversations with BNSF re: Infrastructure & Equipment within BNSF Right-of-Way
- o Continued conversations with FTA re: Disposition & Potential Repayment of Value of Capital Assets (Depreciated) & Real Estate (Appraised)

5) Preliminary Disposition Plan

CAPITAL ASSET	PROPOSED DISPOSITION & CURRENT STATUS
Big Lake Vehicle Maintenance Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Requested by MnDOT · Transfer to MnDOT pending concurrence from FTA & MMB, and final acceptance by MnDOT. · BNSF agrees to retain track connection pending successful negotiation of
Rolling Stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Requested by MnDOT · Transfer to MnDOT pending concurrence from FTA & MMB, and final acceptance by MnDOT.
Station Platforms	
Big Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Requested by MnDOT · Transfer to MnDOT pending concurrence from FTA, MMB and BNSF, and final acceptance by MnDOT; BNSF demanding removal.
Elk River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Phase 1 Removal pending concurrence from FTA & MMB.
Ramsey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Phase 2 Removal pending concurrence from FTA & MMB.
Anoka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Requested by City and MnDOT. · Transfer to MnDOT pending concurrence from FTA, MMB & BNSF, and final acceptance by MnDOT; BNSF demanding removal
Coon Rapids-Riverdale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Phase 1 Removal pending concurrence from FTA & MMB.
Fridley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Phase 2 Removal pending concurrence from FTA & MMB.
Target Field (inc. Vertical Circulation Building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Requested by MnDOT · Transfer to MnDOT pending concurrence from FTA & MMB, and final acceptance by MnDOT · BNSF agrees to retain pending successful negotiation of agreement(s).
Grade Separated Pedestrian Crossings	
Ramsey Overpass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Requested by City as integral part of the planned Regional Mississippi Overpass Multiuse Trail Bridge. · Transfer to City pending concurrence from FTA, MMB & BNSF, and final acceptance by the City; BNSF demanding removal. · Council willing to allow the City the opportunity to seek Regional Solicitation funding in 2026 for Regional Mississippi Overpass Multiuse Trail Bridge.
Anoka Overpass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Requested by City and MnDOT. · Transfer to MnDOT pending concurrence from FTA, MMB & BNSF, and final acceptance by MnDOT; BNSF demanding removal
Coon Rapids-Riverdale Overpass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Phase 1 Removal pending concurrence from FTA & MMB.
Fridley Underpass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Requested by City with modifications for acceptance. · Transfer to City pending concurrence from FTA & MMB, and final acceptance by the City.

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	· BNSF agrees in principle to retain pending successful negotiation of agreement(s).
Park-and-Rides	
Big Lake	· Transfer to MnDOT pending concurrence from FTA & MMB, and final acceptance by MnDOT.
Elk River	· Transfer to MnDOT pending concurrence from FTA & MMB, and final acceptance by MnDOT. · BNSF agrees in principle to allow encroachments to remain pending successful negotiation of agreement(s).
Ramsey	· Parking ramp owned by City; To be serve by bus transit service.
Anoka	· Parking ramp (south) and parking lot (north) owned by City; Parking ramp to be serve by bus transit; Parking lot to be redeveloped.
Coon Rapids-Riverdale	· Parking lot owned by Met Council and to be served by bus transit.
Fridley	· Parking lot (west) owned by Met Council and to be served by bus transit. · BNSF agrees in principle to allow encroachments to remain pending successful negotiation of agreement(s).
Miscellaneous	
Anoka South Vertical Circulation Tower	· Requested by City and Met Council for access to parking ramp · Under Discussion with BNSF
Wayside Signal Systems	· Modifications & removals by BNSF pending concurrence from MnDOT, FTA & MMB.
Interim Crossovers	· Modifications & removals by BNSF pending concurrence from MnDOT, FTA & MMB.

City of Anoka Summary

Bus Service Transition

Security fences will be installed, and bus service will begin on **January 5th**.

Metro Transit will provide communication materials we can use to promote the change.

Amtrak Engagement

Amtrak has recently reached out, and I will schedule a meeting with them after the holidays.

Infrastructure Ownership Discussions

Amtrak and MnDOT are in active discussions with BNSF.

The disposition table indicates that platforms and the overpass may transfer to MnDOT ownership.

The rationale: Amtrak and MnDOT are exploring the Borealis Line with BNSF. If successful, MnDOT would retain infrastructure for future use (e.g., Big Lake for a maintenance facility, Anoka for a stop).

South Tower Advocacy

Metro Transit/Met Council is pressing BNSF to ensure that, regardless of outcomes, the south tower connected to our ramp remains in place.

Results of Metro Transit/Met Council's discussions today (12.16.2025) with BNSF and the south tower:

We did have a very positive conversation with BNSF this morning regarding preserving the south tower and overpass connection to the parking ramp. They have asked us to put together design plans demonstrating how those assets would be secured from their ROW under a scenario where the platform, north tower, and overpass between the towers is removed. Our next meeting with BNSF is 1/23/26. We are going to strive to have plans developed by then.

Craig A. Lamothe, AICP

Pronouns: (he/him/his)

Director, NorthStar Transition

Metro Transit

Multi-Party Coordination

Numerous stakeholders are engaged simultaneously:

FTA (Federal Transit Administration)

BNSF (Railroad)

Met Council/Metro Transit (Regional Government)

Amtrak (Rail Service Provider)

All Aboard Minnesota (Borealis Line advocacy group)

I remain fully engaged in these conversations on behalf of the City. As you'll see in the attached communications, our work with Amtrak began as early as 2022 well before the decision to shutter the NorthStar line. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions regarding this update. Enjoy the day!

Doug Borglund Community Development Director City of Anoka 2015 First Avenue North Anoka, MN 55303

(763) 576-2723 dborglund@ci.anoka.mn.us



CONSTRUCTION

METRO Green Line Extension Construction Newsletter: December 12, 2025

Featured Video: Progress update on the HRSF
by Sam Kissel Council Authorized Representative Green Line Extension

Put this link in your browser or just click on it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqEefhxrL0>



Season's Greetings from the Friends of the 261!

As we close out an unforgettable year on the rails, we want to share some highlights from 2025 — from spring private excursions to the Harvest BBQ Express, the magical North Pole Express, and even the return of the Railroad Revival Tour.

But the best part? We're already laying the tracks for an even bigger 2026.

We'll be raising funds for key restoration projects, including:

- fresh Milwaukee Road paint for the St. Croix Valley
- new coach windows
- new batteries for diesel locomotive 32A

These upgrades will help keep America's rail history rolling for future generations — and we can't do it without you.

Read the full year-end recap and make a donation today at 261.com

Thank you for your continued support, passion, and dedication.



#5511's Headlight Restored!

Wednesday, December 17, 2025 at 02:45:38 PM CST



Union Pacific #5511's headlight and number plate are fresh out of the paint booth, looking better than ever!

The headlight underwent complete disassembly and re-wiring, with brand new fixtures and old-stock replacement lenses and reflectors. The numberboard indicators on the side of the headlight were cleaned and re-used, and will be used for reference with Union Pacific #3985's headlight restoration coming soon!

As the end of the year approaches, we have one final update on the way. Keep an eye out in your inbox for our end of the year recap, and December 2025 Update!

Donate Now : <https://rrhma.com/support-rrhma/>

TRAINS + BUSES

From Rick Krenske : Wednesday, December 3, 2025 at 07:04:59 PM CST

BLUE LINE: via *KSTP*, **VERBATIM:** “Residents, business owners and nonprofit leaders packed a small meeting space in north Minneapolis Tuesday morning to express almost universal opposition to the current plans for the Blue Line Extension. ... The event was promoted as a ‘listening session’ by Rep. **Jon Koznick**, R-Lakeville. ... ‘What we heard was there is a lot of concern,’ Koznick said. He recently authored legislation ordering the Metropolitan Council to study the possibility of scrapping plans for the light rail extension and replacing it with bus rapid transit. Koznick was joined at the listening session by other Republican members of the House Transportation Committee.”

READ/WATCH: <https://fluence-media.co/4otMGly> From Rick Krenske

BRONZE LINE: via *WCCO-TV*, **VERBATIM:** “Residents of the eastern Twin Cities metro area have long been promised a transit line that would connect downtown Minneapolis and Maplewood. Now, there’s a brand new proposal for a rapid bus line. Originally dubbed the Purple Line, Metro Transit says the forthcoming Bronze Line will connect Union Station in Downtown St. Paul to the transit hub at Maplewood Mall. ... Ramsey County will be footing 90% of the estimated \$375 million cost, according to a county commissioner. ... Planning is expected to take three years, with construction expected to begin in 2029 — and service finally going live in the early 2030s.” **READ/WATCH:** <https://fluence-media.co/4pL4XvZOUTSTATE>
Metro News - New Bus Route From Woodbury To Airport & MOA Friday.

MN: New Metro Transit Route Connects Woodbury Area with MSP Airport and MOA

December 12, 2025 at 10:36:40 AM CST From Rick Krenske

BUS

A new Metro Transit bus route will connect Washington and Dakota county riders to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and Mall of America while restoring service to the Newport Transit Station.

By Talia

McWright **Source** Pioneer Press (TNS)

A new Metro Transit bus route will connect Washington and Dakota county riders to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and Mall of America while restoring service to the Newport Transit Station.

“It’s a big day for the community and for the east metro to be able to have this expansion of transit,” Washington County District 4 Commissioner Karla Bigham said.

Service for the new Route 345 began Sunday, with the goal of providing “faster and more reliable service to the southeast metro,” according to Metro Transit. Route 345 connects to other routes including the Gold Line, Blue Line and Red Line. Buses will run every hour and service is available between 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily.

The new route is said to reduce commute time between Woodbury and the Mall of America by close to 30 minutes, according to Metro Transit.

“Two weeks ago, if someone was trying to make this trip between Woodbury and the Mall of America, they would take Gold Line to the 54, and that would be about an hour and a half total transit travel time,” Metro Transit senior service planner Steve Baisden said.

“Now, with Route 345, that travel time is cut almost in half.”

Route 345 was established as part of Network Now, a project designed by the Metropolitan Council to strengthen the regional transit network in response to the impacts of the pandemic, according to Baisden. Along with Route 345, Metro Transit introduced two additional new routes, 725 and 837, and added a few new stops to existing routes. These new routes were funded through the council’s Regional Transportation Sales and Use Tax, according to Metro Transit.

“It’s a new route, so it will inevitably expand network access and improve regional accessibility, mainly along the Highway 62 and I-494 corridor,” Baisden said. “Route 345 will also restore service at Newport Transit Station, as well as serving the various communities along the route.”

More than a year ago, the Metropolitan Council and the Red Rock Corridor Commission, which Bigham chairs, re-envisioned what the Red Rock Corridor transit line would look like, Bigham said. The idea for Route 345 came from transit and ridership data, as well as conversations with residents and stakeholders about the need for a route traveling from east to west, Bigham said.

“We didn’t have public transportation in the east metro, like Washington County, to the airport or to the Mall of America, which is pretty important,” Bigham said.

Bigham said Route 345, which connects with the Gold Line in Woodbury, will be an even greater resource when the Gold Line extends into Minneapolis.

“I think it’s going to serve multiple residents in their needs to access transit,” Bigham said. “Folks that either don’t have a vehicle or are in a one-car household, it allows people to have access to our communities, and I think it’s a long time coming.”

In Woodbury, Route 345 stops at Woodlane Station, which also serves routes 323, 355, and Metro Micro along with the Gold Line. The new route also serves the newly reopened Newport Transit Station, which had experienced low ridership numbers before it temporarily closed in the spring of 2020, according to Baisden.

Bigham said she expects Newport ridership to increase with the new route.

“This is a route that’s providing new connections that were not possible prior to the pandemic,” Baisden said. “It’s trying to respond to the changing travel patterns of riders. Trying to get riders from a certain area or certain areas within the southeast metro to either jobs or services in the south metro.”

In West St. Paul, the new route connects with Route 68 at Robert Street and Marie Avenue and Route 75 on Livingston Avenue.

Baisden said Route 345 in the future will also connect to the G Line along South Robert Street, which is scheduled to open in 2028.

Route 345 has three Park & Ride lots at Woodlane Station in Woodbury, the Newport Transit Center and at 30th Avenue Station in Bloomington.



President's Message by Al Churella

Dear Fellow Lexingtonians:

As 2025 comes to an end, I again have an opportunity to reflect on – and be immensely thankful for – the opportunity to serve as the president of such an outstanding organization. The best part, of course, is that I can interact with so many extraordinary individuals. I was delighted to see many of you at our annual meeting in Fort Worth, Texas. The event would not have been possible without the efforts of John Friedmann, who was responsible for local arrangements; Shae LeDune, who skillfully handled the registration and check-in; Chuck Weinstock, whose IT skills created a seamless online registration process; Roy Wullich, who paid the bills; and Julie King, who promoted the meeting through the Lexington Quarterly. Thanks, too, to our other board members Carlos Schwantes, Bon French, and Daniel Rust.

Our meeting was a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Our hosts at BNSF, Trinity Metro, and the Grapevine Vintage Railroad enthusiastically welcomed us and provided great excursion opportunities.

We also heard superb presentations on an extraordinary variety of topics, from the changing nature of freight rail services to the challenges of operating private cars to race relations on the railroads. Much of this information appeared in the fourth edition of the superb conference book, assembled with consummate skill by Frank Dewey and the late Ray Lichty. The loss of Ray and other members and friends of the Lexington Group saddens me and reminds me that we are now a quarter of the way through the twenty-first century. Yet I am also excited about what the new year will bring – including our next annual meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina, October 21-24, 2026. The conference hotel is now accepting reservations. Details and a reservation link can be found below in the Save-the-Date section.

Several people have already offered suggestions for presentation topics. I will send out a formal “call for papers” early in the new year, but I encourage you to keep sending ideas for consideration by the program committee. And, of course, I would be remiss if I did not remind everyone that memberships expire on December 31. An online renewal link and mail-in renewal form are available in the Treasurer's Message below. If you have not renewed and paid your dues for 2026, there is still time to do so!

Enjoy this issue of the Lexington Quarterly, enjoy your membership in the Lexington Group, and – above all – cherish the opportunity to be with friends and family during this special time of the year.

With warmest holiday wishes, Al

Al Churella, President

The Lexington Group, Inc.

Treasurer's Message

By Roy Wullich

On behalf of the Board, I want to say thank you to everyone who has generously donated above and beyond their regular membership dues and throughout the year, including contributions with your conference registrations.

Both the year-end and annual dues renewal season are great opportunities to help us out -- whether to the General Lexington Fund or to the Overton Award Fund.

Besides including an extra amount with your dues renewal, we also welcome the following gifts that can also be helpful for tax purposes: Qualified Charitable Distributions from your retirement distributions, Donations or Grants from your Donor Advised Funds, and Appreciated securities (stock, etc.).

For more information please contact me, and as always, your tax advisor to learn more about the options and potential tax savings.

Thank you in advance for your kindness and generosity. Have a safe and happy holiday season!

Roy

Overton Award News

By John Friedmann

Dear Lexingtonians,

Through the years, the Overton Award has supported groundbreaking research to explore and educate about a wide variety of projects related to the history of transportation. I hope you will enjoy learning about some of our 2025 award recipients and their winning research projects. The Overton Awards provide two benefits to recipients: the prestige of being selected helps advance the project and the recipient's career, and the funding -- however modest -- fills crucial gaps that helps keep research going. Your support of this important grant fund is greatly appreciated. As you renew your membership for 2026, please consider making an additional donation to help amplify the power of our recognition.

Retrospective of George Overton (1775-1825)

Project Summary:

Overton became a civil engineer of national importance focusing on the development of tramroads and the infrastructure for these early horse-drawn railways. He engineered what is the second oldest surviving iron railway bridge in the world, and he would get involved in the early Stockton & Darlington Railway proposals. We researched and presented a conference paper at the Early Railways conference in Darlington for the bicentenary celebrations in September and lobbied for an information panel on him and his work, which was recently unveiled. Our conference paper has been completed and we have presented the talk on four occasions with one to come in January.

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Researchers:

Stephen Rowson was born in Cardiff, Wales, with a long-term interest in industrial archaeology and with the late Ian L. Wright, wrote the definitive history of the 'Glamorganshire and Aberdare Canals'. Stephen K. Jones is a fellow Cardiffian, a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers, and author of the 'Brunel in South Wales' trilogy.

Baltimore & Ohio Railroad 200th Anniversary

Project Summary:

The Center for Railroad Photography & Art's First Crossing (working title) will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad by examining, through art and photography, the uniquely American enterprise of mountain railroading as it played out in the Appalachian Mountains. We are currently crafting a narrative around the infrastructure, power, and people that make up this story, and selecting images from CRP&A's own collection, as well as outside institutions. We are also beginning to search for partner institutions to help tell this story for the anniversary in 2027 and beyond.

Researcher:

Justin Franz is a freelance writer, photographer, and editor in Montana. He earned a degree in print journalism from the University of Montana and spent 10 years working for a weekly newspaper before becoming associate editor of Railfan & Railroad Magazine. His writing and photography work regularly appear in state, regional and national outlets, including the Washington Post, Atlas Obscura, Montana Free Press and Railway Age, where he serves as a contributing editor. He is also a board member of the Center for Railroad Photography & Art.

Dutch and East India Company Shipping Cooperation in the early 17th Century

Project Summary:

My book project explores commerce, empire, and war in the enterprising early years of Dutch and English expansion around the world. The Overton Award supported the purchase of document scans related to transportation and the Dutch and English East India Companies from the Dutch Nationaal Archief. The scans deepened understanding of the role shipping played in the surprising cooperation between the companies. Based on this research, a chapter of the book will center on the cartel the companies formed in 1619.

Researcher:

Elizabeth Hines is an Axson Johnson Institute for Statecraft and Diplomacy Postdoctoral Fellow at Johns Hopkins University. She received a PhD in history from the University of Chicago in 2024. Her research on early modern Anglo-Dutch relations and imperial projects has appeared in *Diplomatica* and *The Court Historian*, and she has another article forthcoming in the *Journal of Early Modern History*.

Railway Planning, Extraterritoriality, and the Making of Uneven Development, Shanghai 1876–1953

Summary:

This project examines railway planning in Shanghai and East China from 1870s to 1950s, focusing on how infrastructure reinforced and challenged the extraterritorial governance within the city's foreign concessions and Chinese zones. By highlighting the agency of local technocrats in competing with colonial authorities, the research demonstrates how railway networks shaped patterns of uneven development throughout the city's colonial and post-colonial transitions. Based on a preliminary presentation at the 2024 IPHS conference, I am currently drafting a paper focused on railway geopolitics and extraterritoriality. The Overton Award will support further archival research scheduled for Spring 2026 to finalize these studies.

Researcher:

Zengxin Wen is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in architecture at Tongji University and was a Visiting Graduate Fellow at MIT (2023-24). His research intersects the transnational histories of 20th-century built environment, Science and Technology Studies, and the political economy of design. He has presented his work at interdisciplinary platforms such as the Harvard STS Forum and the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies.

The Rise of the Global Hinterland:

Long-Distance Commodity Circulation in California, 1769 - 1969

Summary:

The project examines how natural resources moved across distant landscapes during the late second millennium CE. It focuses on California between 1769 and 1969, but seeks broader patterns that may be relevant beyond this region. Drawing on archival documents from Spain, Mexico, and the United States, the researcher argues that the long-distance circulation of bulk goods gave rise to a new type of resource-catchment areas, which he calls the global hinterland, and that four major transportation regimes -- somatic, solar, hybrid, and industrial -- can be identified in California during the period under consideration. The archival research for this dissertation is complete and the researcher expects to defend in the spring of 2027.

Researcher:

Francisco Centola is a PhD candidate in Environmental History at Georgetown University. His research lies at the intersection of economic, environmental, and technological history, with a focus on long-distance commodity flows in transportation in California.

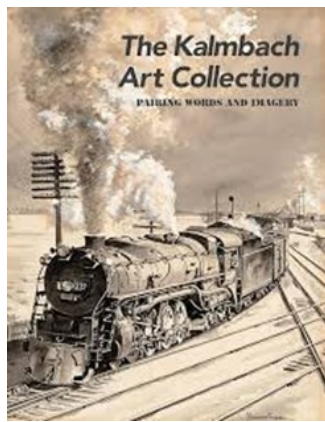
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Book Review

The Kalmbach Art Collection: Pairing Words and Imagery

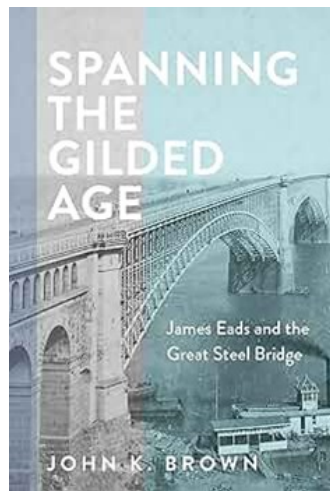
By Kevin P. Keefe

The more than fifty original works once owned by the now-defunct Kalmbach Publishing Company almost certainly were the finest and most influential collection of railroad art in North America. With works by top-tier artists such as Ted Rose, Gil Reid, and John Swatsley, combined with the unmatched reach of Kalmbach's magazines and books from the 1940s through the 1990s, the KPC collection shaped how multiple generations of fans visualized railroading in an era before online image collections. This new book from the Center For Railroad Photography & Art gives enthusiasts and historians the opportunity to enjoy the collection, which most only saw in KPC publications. (The book also served as the catalog for a 2025 exhibition of the KPC collection at Milwaukee's Grohmann Museum.) Kalmbach retiree Kevin P. Keefe, who offers the lead essay, is not only an expert on the collection, but his advocacy was the key reason for its survival. When KPC was shutting down, he served as the bridge between KPC management and the team at the Center, to which KPC donated the collection.



For the book, Keefe enhanced his already-deep personal knowledge of the collection, and the book gives the reader the benefit of his efforts. Center Executive Director Scott Lothes provides information about each piece of art depicted (52 by my count) and its appearance(s) in KPC publications, short biographies of the artists, and interviews by Center program administrator Lisa Hardy of Keefe (former editor of Trains), David Lassen (Trains senior editor), as well as Rob McGonigal and Brian Schmidt, who have both served as Editor of Classic Trains.

Even for those of us who had the opportunity to see the collection at the KPC offices, the book contains some delightful surprises, such as how early in Ted Rose's career (a college internship) his work appeared on a KPC book cover (Canadian Steam, 1961), or a Howard Fogg sketch of an NYC Niagara that was on the reverse side of another painting. Due to the limits of the format, some of the paintings cross the gutter of the softcover book, but thanks to skillful placement and cropping, few details are lost. The Kalmbach Art Collection provided a delightful evening of nostalgic reading. For those who have an interest in railroad art, the history of the railroad hobbies, or even the history of KPC, I recommend it highly. *By Terry Thompson*



Annual Meeting Recap November 12 – 15

H. Roger Grant Award -for Outstanding Scholarship in Railroad History

Thanks to the generosity of Julia Grant, we were privileged to present the first H. Roger Grant Award for Outstanding Scholarship in Railroad History to John K. "Jack" Brown, for his outstanding book, *Spanning the Gilded Age: James Eads and the Great Steel Bridge*.

Brown is a native of Philadelphia with a BA in History from Emory University and a PhD in American History from the University of Virginia. For 25 years, he taught history of technology, applied ethics, writing, and public speaking to undergraduates in the School of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Virginia. Research specialties in American industrial, business, and technological history led him to his interest in the Eads Bridge. Click [here](#) for a review.



Congratulations to Geoff Doughty, Jeff Darbee, and Gene Harmon. They were recipients of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society's George W. and Constance M. Hilton Book Award presented by R&LHS president Robert Holzweiss (center).



Lexingtonians enjoyed outstanding presentations on a range of topics, including "Collecting Rare Mileage on High Iron's Explorers' trips: 850,000 Miles Throughout North America," by Nona Hill and Clark Johnson. Photos by Scott Lothes

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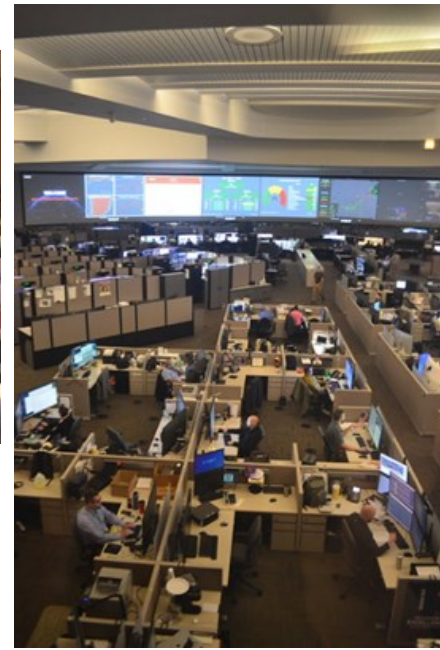
BNSF Headquarters Tour



Members arrive at BNSF Headquarters on a beautiful, sunny morning for a day of tours, presentations, and lunch courtesy of BNSF Railway. Photo by Mike Matejka



The group gathered in the conference room overlooking BNSF Railway's Network Operations Center. Photo by Mike Matejka



The Network Operations Center serves as the command hub for BNSF's vast network, optimizing train movements, managing disruptions, and providing real-time data on its massive video wall. The building is a hardened structure with a strong concrete shell designed to withstand severe weather. Photo by Mike Matejka

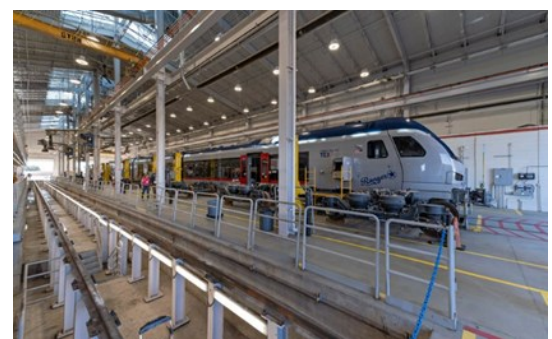
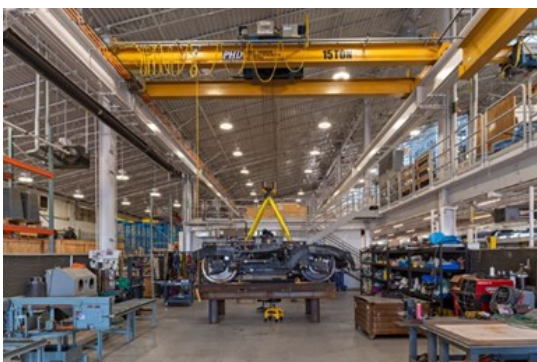


BNSF's stunning art collection was a highlight of our visit. In the early 19th and 20th centuries, BNSF predecessor lines Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and Santa Fe engaged dozens of talented commercial artists to travel the West and capture its natural splendor on canvas as a way to promote tourism and settlement. Their paintings offered many people east of the Mississippi River their first glimpse of the wonders of the frontier. Today, this collection showcases the intersection of history, commerce, and art, telling the story of both a railroad and a nation. Photos above and below by Bon French

BNSF Executive Director Public Affairs, Matt Larseingue, coordinated our activities for the day and assembled a dynamic group of speakers on the railroad's current initiatives, including:
Jon Gabriel, Group Vice President - Consumer Products; Topic: BNSF Intermodal
Justin Devine, Director - Track Measurement; Topic: BNSF Track Geometry and Optical Systems
Michael Cook, Assistant Vice President- System Safety; Topic: BNSF Safety
Ashley Jeffus, Project Manager II - Compliance; Topic: BNSF Artifacts

Trinity Metro TEXRail Shop Tour

After enjoying lunch courtesy of BNSF, meeting attendees had the option of touring BNSF's Alliance Yard or Trinity Metro's TEXRail Shop. Photos of the TEXRail Shop below by Scott Lothes



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Grapevine Vintage Railroad Excursion



The GVRR's collection of 1920's-era Victorian coaches were festively decorated for the holiday season. Photos by Bon French (left) and Mike Matejka (right).

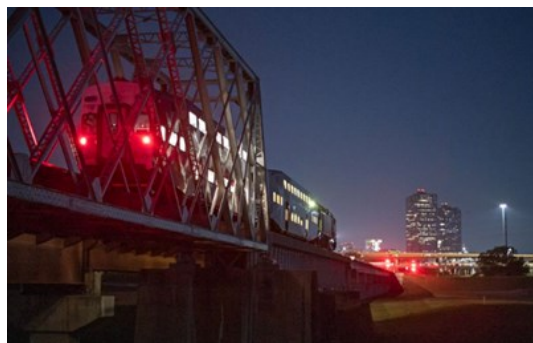


The Grapevine Vintage Railroad consist crosses the Trinity River against the backdrop of the Ft. Worth skyline. Photo by Scott Lothes

Trainspotting



The Ft. Worth metro area offered plenty of opportunities for Lexingtonians interested in trainspotting. Here, Trinity Railway Express 2914 meets BNSF freight crossing the Trinity River. Photo by Scott Lothes



Trinity Rail Express 2907 glows in the evening light on November 13th. Photo by Scott Lothes



The calm waters of the Trinity River create a perfect reflection of Trinity Railway Express 915. Photo by Scott Lothes

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Save The Date 2026 Annual Meeting | Oct. 21 - 24, 2026



Location:

Charlotte, North Carolina

Highlights:

North Carolina Transportation Museum
Aberdeen, Carolina & Western Railway excursion

Hotel:

Embassy Suites by Hilton Charlotte Uptown
401 East Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202
\$219.00/night, including breakfast
704.940.2517

Please book your room directly through the hotel. If you use a booking site, your room will not be credited to headcount for the Lexington Group room block which could result in us owing a penalty to the hotel.

Also note that we will return to the hotel late on the evening of Saturday, October 24th, after our AC&W excursion, so you will want to check out on Sunday, October 25th.

————End of Lexington Group quarterly News! ————



Volume 9* Issue 12 *December, 2025 www.rpca.com

Provided by John Goodman

President's Message

As I write this, the fallen leaves in my yard confirm that we are well into the Holiday Season.



When this reaches you, I hope you have had a wonderful Thanksgiving and are in the midst of a successful holiday train season if you are operating one, or just planning some quality, quiet time with family. Cherish these moments with family and friends because if there is one thing that is constant, it is change.

Sadly, a change that I must report here is the untimely passing of longtime RPCA member K.C. Smith, who passed away unexpectedly while working in Cumberland, MD, on November 18th. K.C. was a very knowledgeable and talented railcar restorer and a funny guy. I know many of you shared some good times with him at the RPCA Conferences over the years. He always enjoyed a good joke and played more than a few on people over the years. He also shared his knowledge and experiences with young people and anyone who sought information. He will be missed by many.

In rail preservation, this is a great season of sharing and introducing the public to our operations and the magical link between the Holidays and trains. The railroads, ever the masters of transportation advertising, produced many unique and some quite beautiful advertisements for inclusion in national magazines, newspapers, station advertising posters, and even billboards. Before Santa became the ubiquitous salesman for Coca-Cola, he was featured in a New York Central ad of 1948 holding a smiling young girl on his lap, proclaiming "Oh what fun it is to ride...(the NYC). In the same year, Pennsylvania produced an ad showing a family picking up relatives train side, with a little girl running from the train to the waiting arms of a relative standing next to a horse-drawn sleigh. The title of the latter ad is "Holiday Homecoming...". Travel for the holidays to reunite with relatives and friends has been an American tradition that was first made practical by the railroad. That theme is one of the centerpieces that we can use as we bring families together to ride our Holiday trains.

In the case of my own family, I am reminded of my mother's experience of holiday travel during WWII. Between assignments in her Naval career, my mother was home in Oakland, CA for Thanksgiving with her family. Having recently graduated from Oregon State University, she had many sorority sisters who were stuck there for the holidays due to travel restrictions, and she decided to see if she could convince a Southern Pacific Conductor to transport her to Corvallis, OR, without military orders. Through a pretty smile, a Naval officer's uniform, and some very accommodating SP employees, she was able to make the trip on the overnight trains, occupying a seat in the dining car. I'm thankful for those generous railroad employees, for without their help, my mother would never have met my father...but that is another story.

However you celebrate this Holiday Season, I hope that your celebrations will be rewarding and enjoyable, and of course, you know what I am going to say....Safe! In my case, I just need to avoid overdosing on the Christmas cookies...LOL

HIGHLIGHTS JANUARY 29- FEBRUARY 1



Wednesday, January 28 – Registration opens in the lobby of Embassy Suites in the afternoon.

Thursday, January 29 – The conference unofficially kicks-off with a ride on the Hiwassee River Scenic Railroad’s excursion route through the Hiwassee River Gorge and around its famous Hiwassee “Loop” to the joint towns of Copperhill, TN, and McCalysville, GA*. Later in the evening, TVRM will offer one of its more popular services, a two-hour dinner train departing from Grand Junction Station. This experience will harken back to days gone by when traveling by rail included classic dining car accommodations*.

Friday, January 30 – The official conference kicks-off in the Embassy Suites convention and meeting area with the opening general session, followed by educational seminars running throughout the day. For those not attending seminars, there will be an outing to TVRM’s “Homefront Tea Room” for a throwback time of food and fun*. That evening, a special event will be offered on the TVRM campus as a fundraiser with a donation going to the Fuehring Fund for youth. A buffet BBQ dinner* will be served, with the opportunity to view historical exhibits and enjoy a presentation on past and present operations by TVRM President Tim Andrews.

Saturday, January 31 – Amtrak and FRA presentations will be featured in the morning, and mechanical seminars in the afternoon at TVRM’s Soule Shops in East Chattanooga. An optional “trolley tour” will be offered featuring some of Chattanooga’s sights, as well as a ride on the Lookout Mountain Incline Railway*. The Saturday night banquet will be prepared and served by the premier catering staff of Ruth’s Chris onsite at Embassy Suites*.

Sunday, February 1 – The RPCA Annual Meeting will be held in the morning, followed by a final slate of educational seminars at Embassy Suites. Afterward, there will be an opportunity for an “on your own” visit to ride TVRM’s Missionary Ridge Local train in the afternoon

More RPCA Conference Information Excursions
“Copperhill” Rail Excursion

Extra cost item--\$115, includes box lunch
Special one-way trip on TVRM’s Hiwassee River Scenic Railroad line from Hiwassee/Ocoee Scenic River State Park to the joint towns of Copperhill, Tennessee, and McCalysville, Georgia. Bus motorcoaches will transport participants from Embassy Suites to the boarding location near Etowah, Tennessee. Passengers will ride the Copperhill Train in climate-controlled coaches, along the Hiwassee River, and around the world-famous “Hiwassee Loop” en route to Copperhill. The train ride will take approximately 3 hours, and a box lunch will be included for all passengers on board. Buses will retrieve passengers in Copperhill and return to the conference hotel in Chattanooga.



Evening Dinner Train

Extra cost item - \$125

Evening Dinner Train at TVRM with bus motorcoach transportation to and from the conference hotel. The train will be following the route from Grand Junction Station, across Chickamauga Creek, through the pre-Civil War Missionary Ridge Tunnel, and onto the East Chattanooga Belt Railway. Traveling through a portion of East Chattanooga, the route travels along Holtzclaw Avenue, passing Warner Park and Chattanooga’s National Cemetery. Onboard, the dedicated dining car crew will serve your selected delicious entrées, and even better desserts!

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It's never a bad time, but now is a great time to consider a tax-deductible year-end donation to the RPCA Foundation. You can opt to contribute to our RailCamp Scholarship Program, the Fuerhing Fund for Future Leaders or the general operation and support of the Foundation.

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Missionary Ridge Local

After the conference has concluded, attendees will have the opportunity for a complimentary "on your own" visit to TVRM with a ride on the "Missionary Ridge Local". Trains depart at 11:00, 12:30, 2:00, and 3:30 for a ride over Chickamauga Creek and through pre-Civil War Missionary Ridge Tunnel to East Chattanooga and return. Instructions for obtaining your free train ride will be included in your registration packet.

Tips for Your Trip

Chattanooga Weather

Chattanooga generally has mild winter weather. The normal high for the Conference period is 52 degrees with a normal low around 33 degrees. Snow and/or ice is relatively rare, but can develop depending on conditions.

Getting to the Conference

Rail Travel

Chattanooga is not yet served by Amtrak, although a new service is tentatively scheduled for 2035. Amtrak's Crescent, trains 19 & 20, stop in Atlanta (Georgia), Anniston and Birmingham (Alabama), all which are a relatively easy drive to Chattanooga of approximately 2-1/2 hours.

Airline Travel

Chattanooga has a small but well-appointed airport served by Delta, American, United, and Allegiant. Additional, more robust,

WHAT WE DO AND WHO WE ARE

This section will highlight the various positions in RPCA and the volunteers who do those jobs. Hopefully, this will prompt you to run for office or volunteer to help keep the organization viable.



Jon Clark - Director

Jon has been a railroad passenger car fan since he was a teenager. Born and raised in Southern California, in 1976 Jon joined a Los Angeles-area railroad club that owned and operated its own fleet of lightweight passenger cars, and started learning about them by joining the club's "Private Car Committee" and working on its cars on weekends. In 1977, he saw an article in the Los Angeles Times about Amtrak selling retired passenger cars at auction in LA, and at that point developed a strong interest in owning his own passenger car someday. Jon started reading about passenger car history and maintenance whenever he could. He bought his first passenger car at an Amtrak auction in 1984 at the age of 24. In 1993, Jon joined RPCA and has been a member ever since.

He attended his first RPCA convention in 1996 and has been to all but 2 of the conventions since then. The RPCA conventions are something Jon really looks forward to each year, as there are few other opportunities for people with this rather obscure interest to get together and talk shop.

Jon worked for 10 years as a Resident Inspector at various passenger car assembly plants, inspecting new equipment for various transit agencies as their new rolling stock was assembled at companies such as Bombardier in Plattsburg, NY, Alstom in Hornell, NY, and Kawasaki in Lincoln, Nebraska. Jon says he would have preferred to have been inspecting new cars at Budd, Pullman-Standard, or ACF, but he was born too late for that.

Jon worked part-time for many years on various private car-related projects and currently works full-time on vintage railroad passenger cars. He does mechanical work, Inspections, helps customers move cars in freight service, and assists aspiring car owners with finding cars to purchase that are suitable for what they have in mind. Over the years, Jon has also moved a total of 23 passenger cars and 2 cabooses by highway from isolated track back to live rail. While based in the Los Angeles area, he frequently travels to various locations in

YEAR END DONATIONS



It's never a bad time, but now is a great time to consider a tax-deductible year-end donation to the RPCA Foundation. You can opt to contribute to our RailCamp Scholarship Program, the Fuerhing Fund for Future Leaders or the general operation and support of the Foundation.

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The RPCA Foundation is the IRS Sec 501(c)(3) non-profit support Organization that is part of the RPCA. We gladly accept checks and credit cards. For donations of appreciated stock or to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA), please contact Roy Wullich for additional information at rjwullich2@aol.com or (650) 245-2994, or by mail at:

RPCA Foundation Inc.
PO Box 719

Quinton, VA 23141-0719

As always, thank you to those of you who included a little extra with your Conference registrations and dues renewals!

RAILCAMP

RailCamp **2026 planning** is already underway. Plans are now being made, including dates, reservations for housing, and arrangements with partners. All will be decided by year's end, and the application will be available on January 1, 2026.

RailCamp is open to students entering grade nine to those graduating from twelfth grade. You do not need a sponsor or to belong to the NRHS. In the past, several Chapters and other organizations, such as the RPCA, have sponsored campers

RPCA typically sponsors a male and female student thanks to the generosity of our members and our insurance partner -- United Shortline Insurance. Rail camp scholarships are the Caldwell-Luebke and Stanlee Weller scholarships, both named after members that have passed on. We prefer to give priority to our members and members of Organizations belonging to RPCA. As you may imagine, camps fill up very quickly. Applications arrive quickly once the form is posted.

In 2025 we again had a record number of applicants. There is limited capacity for both camps. Full and partial scholarships were awarded to 19 campers. A camper's ability to pay the tuition is not considered in reviewing candidates.

The young people attending RailCamp are anxious to learn about all aspects of railroading. Many want to be engineers and run trains. They soon learn that there is so much more to the rail industry. Employment opportunities are part of the program. When visiting our partners, past campers, now employees, give talks and demonstrate how they have found careers in railroading.

RailCamp operates completely with volunteers. Directors, counselors, and support staff give their time and knowledge to make this opportunity available. It is one of the most successful programs offered by the NRHS. If you would like to be part of this experience, please get in touch with us at railcampnrhs@yahoo.com.

If you would like to contribute to the RPCA RailCamp Scholarships (or to the Fuehring Fund for Future Leaders) please contact me. The RPCA Foundation is happy to take cash, checks, and credit cards, and your donation to the Foundation is now tax-deductible!
Roy Wullich

IN MEMORIAM



K.C. SMITH

KC served on the Board of RPCA and was also on the board of the RPCNB. He helped with numerous seminars at conventions and countless other things. In addition to RPCA, he created the Volunteer Railroaders Association, served as an officer at the Bergen Rockland Chapter NRHS, and was active at the United Railroad Historical Society at times. He also worked on dozens of different cars for many different organizations. He gained an immense knowledge of passenger cars and their construction, as well as how to repair them. He was also a strong believer in helping and supporting young people. He actually was one, way back when!

KC and I met in July 1976, when he was 15. Even then, he was a charismatic, fun-loving, smiling young man. A leader, to be sure, but more along the lines of "that looks like fun. Let's do it!" Part of a large family, he was, in reality, very well grounded, the kind of person who stopped to take care of people and animals in trouble. . He and I, along with several others, railfanned over most of the country. In 1985, we stumbled across an old heavyweight open platform car marked "hold for dismantle" in Cumberland, MD, and he said, "That looks like fun. Let's do it!"

We bought the car, which turned out to be 1912 10 section lounge car MUSINA, and moved it to near my house at the time in Stewartstown PA. After several years of working on her (and some AMAZING parties!), we both decided to sell her to a third party. It wasn't long before he and I had each bought other cars with other partners. He had long owned a camera store, eventually selling it to his younger brother, before adventures with his lounge car GOOD VIBRATIONS led to involvement with the NYS&W Railroad (Susquehanna) and Ross Rowland, both of which led to full-time employment in the railroad industry. He was a terrific manager and problem solver, whether it involved railroad operations, on-board service, or what he eventually became known for, mechanical and rebuilding/refurbishing passenger cars. I had the pleasure of working with him on a number of occasions over the years, one of the most memorable of which was two separate stints as Car Shop Manager at the San Luis and Rio Grande Railroad in Alamosa, CO. His ability to inspire others and make difficult situations seem OK was in full march, and all of the people who worked for him would have happily marched into hell for him. "That looks like fun. Let's do it!" He started dating the woman who would become his wife shortly after he and I met, and they got married in the early 80s. They were husband and wife for 43 years, or more accurately, soul-mates. Their son, Kenny eventually married as well and they soon had three grandkids to dote on. KC was a huge sports fan as well, but those of us in RPCA will remember his shared passion in our cars, stories in the hospitality room, and occasional adventures that began with "that looks like fun. Let's do it!" What I will always remember is the twinkle in his eye and his big grin when he said that.
BY KEN BITTEN

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AMTRAK

10/31/25 Conference Call between RPCA, Amtrak and AAPRCO.

For FYE 2025, Moves and Segments are down, but mileage is up by 8,266 for a total of 428,907 miles traveled by PVs for the year. Emily O'Brien, in training, will eventually replace Jamal in special movements.

Amtrak highlighted a couple of focus items, which can also be found on Amtrak's Private Car web page:

Under General Conditions, Item 4: Private Cars on Amtrak Trains or on Amtrak Property must have safety appliances such as hand brakes accessible at any time to Amtrak operating crews and personnel responsible for **Amtrak operations**.

Regarding Private Car Inspectors:

Any Private Car Inspector on the Private Car Inspectors List will be subject to the following:

E. The Private Car Inspector shall be fully cognizant of and governed by all appropriate safety rules and standards governing their conduct in and about railroad property and equipment, which at a minimum includes safety rules and standards issued (1) by Amtrak and available on Amtrak's Private Car Website, (2) by each host railroad on which the Private Car is located, and (3) by any applicable agencies having jurisdiction over the Private Car and the Private Car Move such as the Federal Railroad Administration (see applicable parts of 49 CFR Parts 200-299). All 219.603(c) plans must be submitted to Amtrak Sr Manager Drug and Alcohol Compliance each calendar year. It is the responsibility of each Private Car Inspector to be familiar with and comply with all applicable rules and standards.

PV owners wishing to travel to Boston may not do so on the NEC, as Amtrak is unwilling to slow trains between NYP and BOS to 110 mph. Currently, all trains between those points run at maximum speeds of 125 mph or higher at some points on the route. The alternative, taking Empire service to ALB and changing to the Lakeshore Boston section, was suspended due to track work east of ALB. Lakeshore service to BOS will resume on 11/29/25 and service from BOS on 12/1/25.

PVs may travel between WAS and NYP on trains 19/20 (Crescent) and 97/98 as these trains have a maximum speed of 110 mph.

PVs between NYP and PHL may travel on trains 42/43.

Effective immediately, all emails concerning MECHANICAL issues, such as PC-1 forms, must go to tasks@amtrak.com

INSURANCE CORNER

A shout out to Tom Johnson, who chaired the Insurance committee for many years and is still on this committee, for reminding me that not all damage to our cars is from vandalism. Theft is also a concern, particularly copper theft. I still receive a check every month after 20 years from Franklin County, PA, as restitution from the person who sawed off the HEP wiring from one of my cars. One of the most frustrating aspects of this is that even though they might get fairly good money for 4/0 HEP cable, it is a tiny fraction of the cost of the replacement cable plus the installation labor. Copper continues to be an expensive commodity and as such is potentially attractive for would-be thieves.

HEP cable is not the only treasure these scoundrels have. Most cars have substantial additional wiring, and while not as large in diameter as HEP cable and out in the open, people have been known to damage and destroy conduit to get to the wire inside. Also, much of the original plumbing on our cars was done in copper. Most lightweight cars also have a copper brake pipe, as well as the other air brake piping. This actually winds up being a windfall for the thieves since railroads used heavy-wall copper for most of their piping, meaning more weight and more money when they turn it in at the scrap yard. There's a car in Alamosa, CO, that is missing almost the entire length of the copper brake pipe that was originally on it. This will mean thousands of dollars of materials and labor before the car can be made railworthy and be sent to the museum that owns it. Yeah

Locomotives are not immune either. Traction motor leads have enough copper to be highly desirable, and usually the thieves cut the wire off right at the edge of the traction motor housing, making splicing new cables on very difficult.

Keep in mind that thieves tend not to be too discerning. I remember a friend telling me a story about finding someone who had broken into one of his cars and had stripped the lighting wire out. They were sitting on the floor in front of a lit candle, stripping insulation from the tiny 16-gauge wire and putting it in a coffee can so they could gather enough money for their next bottle of wine.

We will talk more about finding safe locations and hardening them, but one thing you can do specifically with regard to copper and brass is to make sure that any new repairs or exposed piping are either covered or painted another color. Seeing shiny or even green copper colored materials may be enough to set up a temptation for a would-be thief that is too great to ignore. At as much as \$4.50 a pound in scrap, we prefer that they don't notice it...

RAILROAD NEWS

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

Please submit your railroad news to media@rpca.com

Museum and Excursion Trains

The Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum has received a \$100,000 grant from the State of Tennessee for capital maintenance and improvement projects. The museum will use the funds for additional improvements to its Grand Junction depot area. This is the third year of the competitive grant program designed for museums with a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization or affiliated with a governmental entity for capital maintenance and improvements. The awards went to 99 museums, ranging from \$5,000 to the maximum \$100,000. The Grand Junction Depot is an integral part of the TVRM facilities. Through the depot, the museum's exhibit space, its restoration work, and train rides, TVRM works to interpret the role of railroads in the history and development of Tennessee. *Continued on next page:*

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The 5-hour test firing was successful and without significant challenges. No. 557 is one of 2,120 S-160 class 2-8-0 Consolidations built for the U.S. Army Transportation Corp between 1942 and 1945. Originally intended for use in Europe and Africa, 12 S-160s were transferred for service in Alaska to relieve an acute motive power shortage. In 1954, when No. 557 became the final steam locomotive on the roster, it was converted from coal-fired to oil-burning.

The 557 Restoration Co. has successfully fired the last Alaska Railroad steam locomotive. After 13 years and more than 500,000 volunteer working hours, the rebuild is now 95% complete.

Amtrak/Freight/Federal Agencies



Amtrak ridership grew 5% in the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2025, and revenue surged 11%. Preliminary results for FY25 (Oct. 2024 – Sept. 2025) include: Ridership: 34.5 million customer trips, a 5.1% increase over FY24 and an all-time record. Adjusted Ticket Revenue: \$2.7 billion – a first in Amtrak’s history and 10.4% higher year-over-year. Customer On-time Performance: Northeast Regional trains reached their highest on-time performance in recent years this September.

Miles Traveled: Amtrak passengers logged 6.9 billion miles in FY25. New Trains: Made history with the launch of Amtrak Mardi Gras Service along the Gulf Coast and NextGen Acela on the Northeast Corridor; Borealis service drew over a quarter million riders in the Midwest since its FY24 debut.

Capital Investments: Record \$5.5 billion – up nearly 25% year-over-year – in major projects and state-of-good-repair initiatives. Fleet modernization accelerated with the launch of NextGen Acela, America’s newest high-speed train, which welcomed more than 60,000 riders in its first month of service. The full report can be accessed at <https://media.amtrak.com/2025/11/amtrak-a-year-of-records/>



The first two “Landmark Series” locomotives, each showcasing the name of a city that helped shape the railroad’s history and “America’s story,” were recently completed. The Birmingham and the Atlanta (SD70IACs 1230 and 1231) made their official debut pulling NS business cars for a special Tracks of Hope event. The Landmark Series units will join NS’s fleet of 23 heritage units.

Shareholders of Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern, have approved the merger of the two railroads to form a U.S. transcontinental, with in-favor margins approaching 100%. UP officials said 99.5% of votes cast by its shareholders were in favor of issuing new shares of UP common stock in connection with its NS merger. NS shareholders voted overwhelmingly, with nearly 99% of the shares cast in favor, to approve. The transaction is expected to close by early 2027, subject to Surface Transportation Board review and approval.

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

Two Disney Steam Locomotives Turn 100

By Bob Lettenberger | December 11, 2025

'Roger E. Broggie,' 'Walter E. Disney' built in 1925



No. 3, the Roger E. Broggie, powers the Walt Disney World train. The locomotive, built in 1925 by Baldwin Locomotive Works, was purchased by Disney in the late 1960s from the Yucatan Railroad in Mexico. Two photos, Stephen Host

Disney World No. 1, also a 1925 Baldwin 4-6-0, is named for the boss. The Walter E. Disney carries on Walt's love of trains and railroads daily in the Magic Kingdom.

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Two of Disney World's steam locomotives have reached the century mark. No. 3, *Roger E. Broggie*, and No. 1, *Walter E. Disney*, both 4-6-0s, were both built by Baldwin Locomotive Works in 1925. Both have been part of the Disney World roster in Florida since the park opened in 1971.

While the locomotives are currently operational, construction work in the Magic Kingdom theme park has abbreviated their route. Portions of the railroad have been removed in the northwestern part of the park near Frontierland to accommodate several new attractions. The trains run a back-and-forth shuttle service between the two stations that remain open: Fantasyland and the Main Street USA Train Station.

[Nos. 1 and 3 were built for the Mexican narrow-gauge line](#), the United Railroads of the Yucatan. Roger Broggie, one of Disney's Imagineers, was placed in charge of transportation systems for the developing Disney World attraction. Broggie traveled to the Yucatan in the late 1960s and purchased the locomotives for the new park.

The *Broggie* went through inspection and rebuilding for five years, returning to service in 2024. The *Disney* was rebuilt from 2016 to 2020. The Strasburg Rail Road was contracted for this work.

On a daily basis Disney cast members, like 35-year veteran Lou Berkheiser, transportation engineering service manager, maintain the railroad's equipment. Berkheiser assisted with both rebuilds. He described the process as watching a locomotive come apart piece by piece so it can shine again — a careful and detailed restoration that blends engineering precision with tradition.

"It's not just a job — it's an adventure," says Berkheiser of working on the Disney railroad. "[This is] carrying on one of Walt's original passions."

It was no secret that Walt Disney loved trains.

For more information about the Disney railroad and locomotives, look for the books *Walt Disney's Railroad Story* by Michael Broggie or *Welcome Aboard the Disneyland Railroad!* by Steve DeGaetano. Also visit the [Disney World](#) website.

Rio Grande Southern No. 20 Visits Durango

By Bob Lettenberger | December 1, 2025

Locomotive trucked in for special excursions



While on its way to the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, Rio Grande Southern No. 20 pauses atop Lizard Head Pass. The locomotive, part of the Colorado Railroad Museum collection, ran over this pass in the early 1900s. CRM

DURANGO, Colo. — Rio Grande Southern 4-6-0 No. 20 recently traveled from its home at the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden to the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. The trip, aboard a semitruck, took the locomotive over Colorado's 10,222-foot-high Lizard Head Pass, where it once operated. No. 20 last crossed this pass in the 1950s. The locomotive will pull winter excursion trains on the D&SNG during January and February 2026.

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The trips will run from Durango to Cascade Canyon. The Presidential Excursion, featuring first-class cars, is scheduled for Friday, Jan. 9. General Excursions are planned for Saturday, Jan. 31 and Sunday, Feb. 1, with standard coaches.

Schenectady Locomotive Works built No. 20 in 1899 for the Florence & Cripple Creek Railroad. In 1916, it was sold to the Rio Grande Southern for \$2,500. The locomotive was overhauled at the Denver & Rio Grande's Alamosa, Colo., shops before returning to Durango. It then ran between Durango and Ridgeway on the RGS until the line bankrupted in 1951. No. 20 was moved to the Colorado Railroad Museum in 1959 and returned to service in 2020, after a 14-year, \$1.5 million restoration. Since then it has operated at CRM and traveled to the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad.

For additional information on the Colorado Railroad Museum, please visit its website. If you are interested in tickets

Lake State Railway Purchases Four SD70ACe-T4 Locomotives

[By Bill Stephens](#) | December 9, 2025

The Progress Rail units, the Michigan railroad's first AC-traction locomotives, will be delivered by the end of the year



Lake State Railway has acquired four SD70ACe Tier 4 locomotives from Progress Rail. Lake State Railway

SAGINAW, Mich. — Lake State Railway Co., the Michigan regional railroad, today announced that it is purchasing four SD70ACe-T4 locomotives from Progress Rail.

LSRC received an emissions grant to replace five older locomotives with four newer Tier 4 locomotives. The railroad says it chose the SD70ACe-T4 built by EMD successor Progress Rail due to several factors, including delivery timing, parts commonality, and after sale support.

Locomotives being retired include four SD50-3 locomotives and an SD40-2, all of which are over 40 years old. LSRC's 32-locomotive roster is all-EMD and includes MP15, GP38, GP40, SD40, SD50, and SD70 variants. With the new locomotives, the LSRC locomotive fleet will be one of the newest rostered by a shortline or regional railroad and the SD70 model type will represent 40% of the fleet. The locomotives will be numbered LSRC No. 6451 through No. 6454 and are former demonstrator units which have been thoroughly reconditioned and updated. The locomotives are expected to be delivered by the end of 2025.

LSRC Chief Mechanical Officer Roger Fuehring noted the support offered by Progress Rail helped make the decision on which locomotive vendor to use.

"I have managed several projects in my career which upgraded locomotive fleets for better emissions, and I feel very comfortable we will be receiving a great product," Fuehring said in a statement. "We especially value the support Progress Rail has offered after the sale, which is critical given how much more complex these locomotives are compared to the older generation locomotives."

LSRC CEO Mike Stickel says the new units will support traffic growth on the 375-mile regional, which handles about 60,000 carloads per year. "The new locomotives will be helpful as our train sizes and carload volumes continue to grow. These are not only the first Tier 4 locomotives on our railroad, they are also the first AC-traction locomotives," he said.

LSRC maintains its fleet in a modern shop in Saginaw.

U.S. Sugar Steam Photo Charter Set for Jan. 17-18

[By Trains Staff](#) | November 11, 2025

Event will see locomotive backdated to 1950s appear-



U.S. Sugar 4-6-2 No. 148 will be backdated to its late 1950s appearance for a two-day photo charter in January. Sugar Express/Mark Turkovich

CLEWISTON, Fla. — U.S. Sugar's Sugar Express will host a two-day photo charter in January featuring steam locomotive No. 148 in a recreation of 1950s-era railroading.

The event on Jan. 17-18, 2026, will feature No. 148 — the Alco 4-6-2 built for Florida East Coast in 1920 and sold to U.S. Sugar in 1952 — backdated to its late 1950s/early 1960s appearance, with a historic consist and other period details including vintage vehicles. The event will feature authentic cane-loading sites and access to exclusive photo locations with transportation provided aboard the train during two day of dawn-to-dusk operation across more than 100 miles of U.S. Sugar trackage. There will also be informal photography during servicing on Jan. 16.

"Steam locomotive No. 148 is one of the last survivors of U.S. Sugar's original steam fleet, and this charter offers a living glimpse into the company's working past," said Sugar Express Superintendent Scott Ogle. "This event celebrates not only rail history but the industrial and agricultural heritage that shaped South Florida."

Tickets for the charter — \$675, including lunch, light snacks and refreshments — are available here. Participants are responsible for their own transportation and lodging



Great Northern's Rugged 2-8-8-0 Locomotives

Monday, December 1, 2025 at 01:03:51 PM CST

Provided by Ray Bensen and John Goodman



One of Great Northern's handsome 2-8-8-0s, #2012 (N-3), is seen here on a September day in 1951 after just leaving the Hillyard Shops in Spokane, Washington before being transferred to the Minot Division. Built in 1940 by GN shop forces, she had previously worked the Inside Gateway on the Klamath Division between Bend, Oregon and Bieber, California where freight was interchanged with the Western Pacific. She could produce 4,200 horsepower, carried 63-inch drivers, and offered 104,200 pounds of tractive effort. Gayle Christen photo.



A Union Pacific publicity photo featuring 2-8-8-0 "Bull Moose" #3646 with a freight extra on Wyoming's Sherman Hill (between Cheyenne and Laramie) during the early 1940's. The 2-8-8-0's were built as Mallet's but later converted to simple expansion between 1936-1944. Author's collection.

A Brief History

The history of the 2-8-8-0 began in 1911 at the Santa Fe's Topeka, Kansas shops as one of the railroad's first such locomotives put into service. The AT&SF thought that by basically smashing together a pair of standard 2-8-0 Consolidations a more powerful unit could be created. What resulted was a design the Santa Fe called the Consolidation Mallet, a name that stuck in describing the wheel arrangement. The first unit outshopped was #3296 but the unit encountered balancing issues and did not achieve a desired tractive effort rating. The railroad went on to roster four examples in all (3296-3299) but was never particularly happy with the results. According to SteamLocomotive.com after only a decade of service the units were rebuilt back into 2-8-0s around 1923.

Soon after the AT&SF's experimentation with the 2-8-8-0 the Great Northern received a batch of 25 Consolidation Mallets from Baldwin in 1912 numbered 2000-2024 and listed as Class N-1.

Here, the design found far more success as the GN was quite pleased with its examples as they received the nickname of "Bull Moose" for their ability to pull almost anything.

According to SteamLocomotive.com the GN's fleet of 2-8-8-0s utilized the Belpaire Firebox (only the Great Northern and Pennsylvania used this firebox in wide-scale use within its steam fleet) and offered tractive efforts that exceeded 98,000 pounds.



Kansas City Southern 2-8-8-0 "Big Mallie" #757 (G-2), manufactured by Alco's Brooks Works in 1924. Like most roads, the KCS found these satisfactory in drag service stating the G-2's could pull 2,700 tons "...over a ruling grade of 1.5% southbound and 1.35% northbound."

After only a decade of service the original compound locomotives were simplified in 1925 boosting their boilers to 240 psi and offering tractive efforts exceeding 100,000 pounds.

The GN continued to refine their fleet of Consolidation Mallets, overhauling the units in 1940 with, among other improvements, roller bearings and a boiler rating of 265 psi.

The more powerful 2-8-8-0s were used in both passenger and freight service where they were well liked. As it turns out the Union Pacific was another system quite fond of the 2-8-8-0 and also referred to its fleet using the "Bull Moose" designation. The railroad went on to roster 70 of these Mallets either built by its own shops or manufactured by the American Locomotive Company (Alco) and first went into service in 1918.

Listed as Class MC by the UP the locomotives were upgraded twice during their service lives, in 1924 and 1937 (where tractive efforts reached more than 100,000 pounds), and primarily operated as helpers over the stiff grades of the Wyoming Division.

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The only eastern line to use the 2-8-8-0 design in large numbers was the Baltimore & Ohio, which first put its Class EL-1s into service during 1916. This fleet of 70 was built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works and the B&O intended them for use over the mountainous West End of the Cumberland Division tackling Cranberry Grade and other stiff sections of the route. Like the Union Pacific and Great Northern, the B&O was very fond of its Consolidation Mallets where it found the locomotives quite suitable as helpers in drag service with tractive efforts over 110,000 pounds (after they were overhauled). In 1920 the railroad acquired a fleet of sixteen former Seaboard Coast Line 2-8-8-2 *Chesapeakes*, which were numbered 7300-7315 and given Class EL-6a. The B&O did not like the trailing axle and converted them into 2-8-8-0s. In all, the railroad rostered seven different classes of Consolidation Mallets (EL-1, EL-2/a, EL-3/a, EL-5/a, and EL-6a) with the "a" designation referring to the units being rebuilt from compound to simple operation. The 2-8-8-0s proved so useful on the B&O that they remained in service through the mid-1950s, essentially until the end of the steam era. The three other roads to operate the 2-8-8-0 included the Utah Railway, Pennsylvania (which rostered only a single unit it built at its Juniata Shops in 1919, #3700), and Kansas City Southern. The KCS purchased a fleet of 17 units (#750-766) from Alco between 1918 and 1924 listed as Class G-1/2 thanks in large part to the success of its Class G 0-6-6-0s. The railroad normally operated the 2-8-8-0s, which it referred to as "Big Mallies," along its northern Division between Kansas City and De Queen, Arkansas. The locomotives remained in regular service until after 1950. Finally, the Utah had a fleet of three it purchased from Baldwin in 1920, #200-202, that the railroad also liked very well and used them in heavy coal drag service until the 1950s.

Steam Locomotive Profile: 2-8-8-4 Yellowstone

By Neil Carlson | November 19, 2025



Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range 2-8-8-4 No. 236 hauls an empty ore train north out of Two Harbors, Minn. DM&IR's Yellowstone were equipped with all-weather cabs and centipede tenders. Franklin A. King



Southern Pacific cab-forward 4-8-8-2 No. 4246, a 1942 Baldwin, races through western Nevada. Robert Hale

In 1928, the Northern Pacific went shopping for a locomotive that could eliminate doubleheading on the eastern end of its Yellowstone Division between Mandan, N.Dak., and Glendive, Mont. NP's line through the Badlands had a series of long grades in both directions that made helpers impracticable and had long been one of the railroad's operational headaches.

Together with Alco, NP set about designing a large simple articulated. The starting point was the 2-8-8-2, which quickly grew into a 2-8-8-4.

The NP burned coal from lineside mines in Montana, although it had only two-thirds the heat content of the bituminous coal used on other railroads. As a result, greater volumes of the low-quality coal had to be burned in order to generate the same amount of power. This, in turn, required a mammoth firebox, which needed the support of a four-wheel trailing truck, thereby creating the 2-8-8-4 Yellowstone. Initially, NP took delivery of one engine from Alco in 1928. A giant locomotive, its 715,000-pound weight made it the heaviest in the world until C&O's Alleghenies and Union Pacific's Big Boys burst on the scene.

After two years of testing, NP ordered eleven more in 1930 — but this time from Baldwin. The name Yellowstone was bestowed on the wheel arrangement in recognition of the railroad division over which the locomotive first operated.

While NP was testing its new locomotive, Southern Pacific was assessing the motive power situation on its 139-mile Sacramento Division between Reno, Nev., and Roseville, Calif. This was a heavy-duty mountain railroad with grades exceeding 2 percent that crested Donner Pass in the Sierra Nevadas at an elevation of 7,017 feet.

SP had been using oil-burning cab-forward 2-8-8-2 Mallets on the line since 1909. By the 1920s, however, it was clear that more modern power was needed. SP had started using 2-10-2s and 4-10-2s, which outperformed the Mallets, but the operating costs were high because of the need to double- and triple-head trains. Ten-coupled power did the job on Donner; it was just expensive.

Two other railroads owned 2-8-8-4 Yellowstone locomotives. Arguably the very best of the type were those of the Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range. This iron-ore hauler had been home to 2-8-8-2s and 2-10-2s, which were having trouble keeping the line fluid as World War II heated up.

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In 1941, the railroad took delivery of eight massive Baldwin 2-8-8-4s to help cope with its traffic needs. These handsome engines, with all-weather cabs and centipede tenders, allowed the railroad to double its train sizes. Ten more were delivered in 1943. DM&IR's 2-8-8-4s remained in service until 1960, when diesels took over. The smallest Yellowstones built went to the Baltimore & Ohio. During World War II, the railroad needed new power to ease the load on its lines west of Cumberland, Md., through the Allegheny Mountains. B&O's first choice would have been diesels, but War Production Board restrictions dictated otherwise. Consequently, the B&O turned to Baldwin for 30 new 2-8-8-4s, delivered in 1944 and 1945. The B&O had a restricted loading gauge because of some tunnel clearances and, as a result, all prior 2-8-8-4s would have been too big. So Baldwin built the engines to an entirely new design. B&O put its 2-8-8-4s to work on the Cumberland Division, then in the 1950s when diesels replaced steam in the mountains, reassigned the Yellowstones to Ohio where they hauled coal and ore trains to the Lake Erie ports of Lorain and Fairport Harbor. Classified EM-1s, they were considered by many to be the B&O's finest steam power.



---AMTRAK News---

Seven Billion Reasons for Amtrak to Rethink its Superliner Plan: Analysis

By [Bill Stephens](#) | December 8, 2025

Amtrak should weigh the benefits of replacing its aging bilevel equipment with a single-level national fleet



Amtrak's **Coast Starlight**, detouring over Union Pacific's Mojave Subdivision due to track work, rounds a bend in Caliente, Calif., on Sept. 14, 2019, with 10 Superliners in the consist. Bill Stephens



Amtrak special train No. 964, ferrying the first Airo trainset, passes through Arvada, Colo., on Union Pacific's Moffat Tunnel Subdivision at 8:01 p.m. on July 23, 2025. Joe McMillan



A true dome car is among the car types VIA Rail Canada will seek as part of an order for new long-distance passenger equipment. VIA Rail Canada

Amtrak should be asking itself a \$7 billion question about the future of its long-distance trains. Should it spend that Bipartisan Infrastructure Law windfall on nearly 600 new bilevel cars that would replace aging Superliner equipment — and continue with a problematic procurement process? Or would that money be better spent on a national single-level fleet? There's a strong case to be made for a systemwide equipment standard. Make a reservation for a Southwest flight and you know you'll be taking off in a Boeing 737. It's the only aircraft Southwest flies, and with good reason: The simplification and savings that comes from standardization. Railroads have long embraced standardization, going back to the days of E.H. Harriman, who insisted that Union Pacific and Southern Pacific settle on standard designs for locomotives and rolling stock, as well as their operating practices. Amtrak, in contrast, runs an alphabet soup of equipment — Acela, Amfleet, Horizon, Superliner, Venture, Viewliner — each requiring its own parts inventory, maintenance skills, and training for onboard personnel. Plus, Superliners can't roam the entire network because of tight clearances in the Northeast.

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The NextGen Acela has begun to replace the original fast fleet. Airo trainsets are due to start taking over state-supported routes next year. And Amtrak is seeking proposals for successors to Superliners and some of its single-level equipment. Settling on a common long-distance and corridor train would streamline parts inventories and simplify maintenance and training. It would save a bundle in maintenance-related costs, too, which is no small thing for a railroad facing intensifying political pressure to turn an operational profit.

Operationally, a single fleet would give Amtrak the ability to easily substitute equipment on any conventional speed train in the network, potentially putting an end to equipment shortages.

There's no indication Amtrak is rethinking its plan to replace Superliners on its six Western long-distance trains plus the *Auto Train*, *Capitol Limited*, and *City of New Orleans*. The process has stalled, however, partly because carbuilders have balked at Amtrak's request to equip the cars with elevators that would make them compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

An Amtrak Inspector General report also points out that by seeking an all-new bilevel design, Amtrak risks spiraling cost increases and lengthy delivery delays that could affect its ability to maintain Superliner-equipped long-distance service.

The Superliner pause offers Amtrak the opportunity to rethink its approach.

Right now Siemens Mobility seems to be the only manufacturer ready to deliver conventional, diesel-hauled single-level equipment that meets U.S. safety standards and can use high and low platforms. Its Venture/Airo shells are modular, allowing interiors to be configured as sleepers, diners, or lounges — all designs that Siemens has produced for European operators.

The lone supplier situation would complicate the bidding process. But let's face it. The North American passenger market is too small to be truly competitive. One by one the historic big three passenger car manufacturers — Budd, Pullman Standard, and American Car & Foundry — exited the market. Among the reasons they couldn't survive: Because Amtrak has no steady, predictable source funding for equipment purchases, orders come along only once every few decades.

An Amtrak bilevel order would be another one-off. And that means higher engineering, tooling, and production costs. After delivery winds down, there would be no incentive for the manufacturer to maintain a production line or keep making parts.

Tacking single-level long-distance equipment on to current and future Airo and Venture orders for state-supported service — and linking up with VIA Rail Canada for single-level long-distance equipment — would boost production volumes and provide Amtrak with more bargaining power. It also would sidestep bilevel accessibility headaches.

While boarding the *Borealis* in Milwaukee last month I was reminded how tricky it can be to lug a just carry-on bag and a small backpack up a Superliner's narrow, twisting stairway. Fortunately, I'm nimble. I could only imagine how formidable the challenge would be for a senior citizen or someone with mobility issues. Single-level equipment wins a practicality contest, hands down.

Adopting a systemwide single-level fleet would not be without its drawbacks. Western trains would have to be longer to accommodate the same number of passengers that Superliners carry. This would complicate some station stops, perhaps enough to require longer schedules.

Superliners offer passengers a unique vantage point. I still remember my first trip on the *Southwest Chief* out of Chicago and how the Superliner perspective high above the Santa Fe rails gave me the sensation of flying across the Prairie State. You don't get that on single-level equipment.

But the advantages of a common fleet would almost certainly outweigh these tradeoffs, particularly since it would make Amtrak operations more flexible, efficient, and resilient.

You can reach Bill Stephens at bill.stephens@firecrown.com and follow him on LinkedIn and X @bybillstephens

Merger Filing Portends Amtrak Operating Issues, Precludes Expanded Service: Analysis

By [Bob Johnston](#) | December 19, 2025 | Last updated on December 20, 2025

Crescent, Sunset at greatest risk from UP-NS plans



The northbound Crescent hugs Lake Ponchartrain on Norfolk Southern rails leaving New Orleans on Nov. 4, 2025. The Crescent, with its mostly single-track route, would be among the Amtrak trains at risk of severe impacts from the UP-NS merger. Bob Johnston

WASHINGTON — The Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger application filed with the Surface Transportation Board on Friday attempts to explain away adverse effects on passenger trains by vague promises of future “targeted infrastructure enhancements,” but generally doesn't outline what those might be. In one case, a combined UP-NS proposes adding nine daily freights to a single-track route.

Following a series of maps explaining the creation of cross-country intermodal trains to bypass time-consuming terminal interchanges, a section of the massive filing addresses “Impacts on Passenger Operations.” (This begins on page 637 in Vol. 2 of the four-volume filing.) It begins with a patently false statement: “The UP/NS merger will not result in any adverse impact to passenger operations.”

That would only be true if the merged railroad promised to coordinate the new expedited intermodal moves with passenger train schedules, present and future. Instead, a review of each passenger route currently operated by either UP or Norfolk Southern is accompanied by the caveat that the merged system would “ensure compliance with existing passenger obligations.”

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As seen from onboard the Amtrak train, the west-bound **Sunset Limited** waits for the first of two eastbound Union Pacific freights west of Sierra Blanca, Texas, on May 23, 2012. That same year, Amtrak was told it would have to fund \$750 million of capacity improvements if it wanted to run the *Sunset* daily. Bob Johnston

What about the Speedway?

Not acknowledged in the UP-NS filing is the Southern Rail Commission's ongoing Corridor ID grant which studies extending a section of the *Crescent* from Meridian to Shreveport, La., on the joint CPKC-NS "Meridian Speedway;" Union Pacific from Shreveport to Marshall, Texas; then on the UP's *Texas Eagle* route to Dallas.

The CPKC, as part of its successful merger application in 2021, said it would support passenger service on the Speedway. Judging from the numbers on both sides of Meridian, it appears that about six new intermodal trains will connect existing NS and UP lines between Meridian and Shreveport. The impact of these trains on the proposed passenger expansion across the Atlanta-Dallas I-20 corridor was not addressed, possibly because the merger's sponsors assume any passenger expansion is off the table.

A daily *Sunset Limited*?

The proposal for a long-sought daily New Orleans-Los Angeles *Sunset Limited* was also not referenced. Depending upon the segment, the filing indicates the triweekly train will face two to six additional trains. The most additional traffic is on approximately 800 miles between West Colton, Calif., and El Paso, Texas, much of which UP has already double tracked.

In 2012, the railroad told then-Amtrak President Joseph Boardman that the company would have to pay \$750 million for a daily *Sunset* without fully explaining why trains could run on time some days but not others without the improvements. During service challenges following the Southern Pacific merger in 1996 and from 2003 to 2005, the train suffered long delays in the Houston-Beaumont area.

History's lessons

Rail Passengers Association President and CEO Jim Mathews was blunt in his preliminary assessment [posted on RPA's website](#). "These assurances [that Amtrak trains won't be impacted] come from two companies with well-documented histories of noncompliance with passenger on-time performance requirements, raising legitimate questions about enforceability," Mathews wrote. "In short, the transaction appears designed to protect existing obligations rather than advance passenger rail expansion, leaving passengers and the public with limited upside and significant execution risk."

When additional passenger train frequencies are proposed on any given route, the railroads almost always demand capacity improvements that would keep existing and future freight flowing. This is how Norfolk Southern was able to extract a state and federally financed infrastructure package for a second Harrisburg-Pittsburgh *Pennsylvanian* round trip, even though two passenger trains routinely traversed the multi-track thoroughfare each way for most of the Amtrak era.

Passing tracks were also added on NS's busy Chicago-Porter, Ind., segment after a big meltdown there in 2016, but the railroad hasn't allowed any more Michigan or Chicago-Cleveland Amtrak frequencies. Now it wants to field one or two more daily freights and says passenger trains won't be affected.

Applying this reasoning, the Surface Transportation Board or transportation advocates might suggest that more intermodal trains would require specific improvements designed to protect existing and future passenger service. For the *Sunset* in particular, this would mean daily service and restoration of a route through and west of Phoenix as a condition of approving the transaction, since improving the train's financial performance is in the public's interest. If UP and NS wants more trains, shouldn't they have to mitigate the impact on Amtrak and other operators?

— Updated Dec. 20 at 7 p.m. CT to add information on planned Atlanta-New Orleans capacity improvements. To report news or errors, contact trainsnewswire@firecrown.com.

Choke points

While many routes would be affected by one or two more daily trains and some would see a decrease, the New York-New Orleans *Crescent* and the New Orleans-Los Angeles *Sunset Limited* appear to take big hits. The *Crescent* already has had its schedule lengthened at Norfolk Southern's insistence without the new additions, purportedly to improve punctuality, but it suffers from a near-midnight Atlanta northbound departure that kills the train's potential to carry Northeast travelers overnight. With stepped-up intermodal departures under the merger, the *Crescent* will face:

- Manassas-Lynchburg, Va.: two to three additional trains.
- Greensboro-Charlotte, N.C.: two to three additional trains (Eight *Piedmonts* share these tracks).
- Atlanta-Meridian, Miss.: nine to 10 additional trains.
- Meridian-New Orleans: three to four additional trains.

Much of the route between Atlanta and Meridian is a hilly, single-track railroad, with the added complication that major junctions at those endpoints are dispatched by either CSX or CPKC. The UP-NS filing does indicate that eight passing sidings are to be extended between Atlanta and New Orleans, along with a section of second main at the north end of Meridian. That would help mitigate the impact of nine more intermodal trains. but this also the portion of the single-track route where the two daily passenger trains have to meet.

Winter Woes Plague Some Amtrak Trains in Midwest

By Bob Johnston | December 14, 2025 | Last updated on December 15, 2025

Derailment disrupts California Zephyr; Cascades, Empire Builder resume routes in Washington state



L: Passengers wait to board the Chicago-bound *Blue Water* on March 30, 2025. The train suffered cold-weather-related delays last week after the equipment spent frigid evenings overnight at Port Huron, Mich. Bob Johnston



Workers tend to the *Floridian* and cars and locomotives for other trains at Amtrak's Chicago coach yard on Nov. 30, 2025. While most trains were on time leaving Chicago during a weekend of extreme cold, some departures were delayed. Bob Johnston

CHICAGO — With temperatures hovering around zero over the weekend of Dec. 12-14, most Amtrak trains were able to leave Chicago on time, but a number were delayed more than two hours at their points of origin, while others had to contend with disabled freight trains.

Meanwhile, service resumed through areas flooded earlier in the week in the Pacific Northwest.

Trouble began Thursday, Dec. 11, when the westbound *Blue Water* was nearly two hours late at its first stop. The next day's train departed Port Huron three and a half hours late. The train normally operates push-pull with a Charger locomotive at each end. Today (Sunday, Dec. 14), with temperatures below zero, another Michigan train, the *Pere Marquette*, was stopped for two hours after leaving Grand Rapids for a "mechanical assessment" before the problem was resolved.

Terminal delays impacted a number of trains at Chicago or shortly after leaving. These included Friday's *California Zephyr* (two hours, 22 minutes late) and *Floridian* (one hour, 41 minutes late); Saturday's *Southwest Chief* (one hour, 16 minutes late); and Sunday morning *Lincoln Service* train No. 301, which departed two hours, 35 minutes late after what Amtrak called a "mandatory locomotive adjustment."

Saturday's westbound *Chief* was later delayed more than two additional hours by a disabled BNSF freight west of Galesburg, Ill. The nearly four-hour delay resulted in a four-hour layover for the eastbound *Chief* at Kansas City, Mo., today to allow the engineers and conductors from the Saturday westbound train to get mandatory crew rest. Similarly, a stalled Union Pacific freight blocked westbound *Missouri River Runner* No. 311 today, causing it to be held at Jefferson City, Mo., for more than two hours.

The eastbound *Chief* arriving in Chicago on Saturday was nearly six hours late, also impacted by the disabled freight and "an intermittent communication outage on the route ahead." Alerts had attributed two hours of earlier delay between Lamy, N.M., and La Junta, Colo., to "heavy freight train interference" on a segment of BNSF where the two *Chiefs* are the only trains on the line.

Derailment, flooding issues in the West.

Further west, [a Union Pacific derailment near Colfax, Calif.](#), resulted in the westbound *California Zephyr* short-turning in Reno, Nev., on Saturday to become the eastbound train. Chartered buses provided connections for passengers at Reno, while passengers from both trains were also accommodated on Capitol Corridor service west of Sacramento.

Also on Saturday, service resumed in Washington state that had been halted because of severe flooding north and east of Seattle [see "[Washington flooding spurs ...](#)" *Trains.com*, Dec. 11, 2025]. The westbound *Empire Builder* was the first through the flood area. Its eastbound counterpart departed Seattle following a locomotive swap, then lost an hour east of Everett, Wash., through previously flooded areas. Saturday afternoon's *Amtrak Cascades* round trips to and from Vancouver, British Columbia, also resumed operation though Mount Vernon, Wash., which suffered severe Skagit River flooding. Few delays were reported for those trains, and the *Builders* were able to manage four days of below-zero North Dakota temperatures through Saturday with minimal disruption.

Amtrak Mechanical Issues Hobble Departing Chicago Trains

By Bob Johnston | December 9, 2025 | Last updated on December 10, 2025

CHICAGO — More evidence of the toll Amtrak's aging locomotive and passenger car fleet is taking on operations was provided in recent days when long-distance and regional trains were canceled or suffered hours-long delays, most shortly after leaving Chicago. The common thread? Problems with electrical head-end power. On Monday, both the westbound *California Zephyr* and *Southwest Chief* didn't make it through the first night of their trips. Their eastbound counterparts, set to utilize the same scarce equipment, have already been canceled: Wednesday's *Chief* from Los Angeles and Thursday's *Zephyr* from Emeryville, Calif. One of the first trains to be affected was Monday's westbound *Borealis*, which departed Chicago for St. Paul, Minn., at 1:56 p.m. — two hours, 46 minutes late — following "equipment adjustments at the maintenance facility," according to an Amtrak advisory to passengers. The day's westbound *California Zephyr* made it as far as Ottumwa, Iowa, after experiencing recurring problems with one of the train's passenger cars. Amtrak reports indicate a lengthy delay at Burlington, Iowa, due to "equipment adjustments," but the train stopped again west of Ottumwa, after departing there at 1:21 a.m., when the train was almost six and a half hours late. As of 3:31 a.m. it was canceled for the rest of its journey to Emeryville.

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Superliner and single level passenger cars wait for their next assignment at Amtrak's Chicago coach yard on Nov. 30, 2025, as a train prepares to move to Chicago Union Station. Bob Johnston



The westbound Borealis rolls through Brookfield, Wis., on Dec. 9, 2025. The previous day's westbound left Chicago almost three hours late. David Lassen

The same day's *Southwest Chief* departed on time behind the *Zephyr* but didn't make it to Naperville, Ill., until almost two hours later after undergoing a "locomotive assessment." West of Fort Madison, Iowa, the train stopped another three hours, "due to a mechanical assessment and an adjustment to the train's consist, then advanced to the next stop, LaPlata, Mo., "to be further evaluated." That's where the train was canceled. Amtrak says head-end power issues were responsible in both cases. *Zephyr* passengers were given the choice of returning by bus to Chicago or remaining in Ottumwa until they could continue by train; those who chose to stay were housed by Amtrak. Those on the *Chief* were taken to Kansas City, where substitute transportation back to Chicago was similarly made available. Both trains were then deadheaded to Chicago. Passengers will be provided full refunds and other compensation, in addition to housing and meals, along with the company's apologies, according to an Amtrak spokesman. The railroad is analyzing the cause of the problems. About the time those issues were unfolding in Iowa and Missouri, Amtrak's eastbound *Floridian* made an unscheduled stop at the Hammond-Whiting, Ind., station. The train was shown departing Chicago one minute late at 6:41 p.m. but nearly three hours later had traveled only 16 miles. First reported as a locomotive "mechanical assessment" at 9:19 p.m., the cause of the delay was soon attributed to "readjusting a coach car to the end of the train." However, that maneuver took another three hours. Following a mandatory operating crew change, the train reached its first scheduled stop, South Bend, Ind., at 3:36 a.m., some six hours, 27 minutes late. The *Floridian's* delay follows a similar electrical problem that occurred when the westbound *Cardinal* departing New York on Friday suffered an apparent short in head-end power cables west of Hinton, W.Va., on Friday evening, Dec. 5. The train limped into Charleston, W.Va., an hour late, but the problem couldn't be fixed.

Passengers were bused overnight from there to all intermediate stops and the equipment deadheaded to Chicago.

— Updated Dec. 10 at 8:22 a.m. to clarify that passengers could return to Chicago or choose to wait to continue by train.



----BNSF News-----

News Photos: Flooding on BNSF in Washington

By Trains Staff | December 15, 2025

Crews have repaired flood damage to BNSF Railway lines in Washing-



BNSF crews work to keep flooding debris clear around the Mt. Vernon Bridge over the Skagit River in Washington. BNSF

R: BNSF Railway issued this line outage map as part of a Dec. 12 customer advisory. BNSF Railway



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L: BNSF Railway's Stampede Subdivision had a washout at milepost 66 during last week's flooding. BNSF Railway

BNSF Railway crews worked over the weekend to repair flood-damaged sections of the railroad in Washington state, which was hit by record rainfall last week. Some areas of western Washington and Oregon received 10 to 17 inches of rain, which is more than some locations receive in a month, BNSF said in a customer advisory last week. The flooding also disrupted Amtrak operations in the area [see ["Washington flooding spurs ..."](#) Trains.com, Dec. 11, 2025], but those services have resumed.

BNSF CEO Reiterates Opposition to UP-NS merger (updated)

By David Lassen | December 19, 2025

CPKC says it is still reviewing merger application, and that approval 'is not inevitable'



BNSF CEO Katie Farmer has reiterated the railroad's opposition to the Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger. David Lassen

FORT WORTH, Texas — BNSF CEO Katie Farmer says the railroad's initial review of the Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger application filed today "does not change BNSF's opposition to the proposed merger."

CPKC and Canadian National have also issued statements on the filing, with CN saying the application "falls well below both the 2001 and old merger rules set out by the Surface Transportation Board," while CPKC said it is still reviewing the filing. Farmer, [in a statement](#) issued today (Dec. 19), says the deal "poses a significant threat to the U.S. economy and the American consumer through its long-term competitive harms. It would leave shippers with fewer options — driving higher rates and ultimately higher prices for consumers." Farmer says the benefits "appear to accrue primarily to shareholders. Past mergers demonstrate the risk of serious service failures with destructive impacts to customers, the U.S. rail network, and the American economy. "This is precisely why the STB strengthened its merger rules: applicants must now prove their deal will not only preserve but enhance competition; that it serves the public interest, and its purported benefits can't be delivered through partnerships. BNSF is confident that UP has not met these requirements."

BNSF has questioned whether UP had complied with conditions of its merger with Southern Pacific [see ["BNSF asks STB to review ..."](#) Trains.com, Dec. 1, 2025], and Farmer says "UP has a long history of making promises in past mergers that they back away from once they've secured approval." She said BNSF "remains focused on achieving these same benefits through partnership and collaboration which results in streamlined service, and greater operational flexibility — delivering real, immediate benefits to customers." --

Farmer said BNSF will have more to say about the merger application "soon."

CN says application fails to meet requirements for approval

In its statement, CN says the UP-NS application "fails to demonstrate that the merger would enhance competition or generate significant public benefits that would require a merger. ...

"Protecting competition is not optional, it is essential to keep costs down and the economy sound. The fact is that this merger would reduce rail transportation options for customers while creating a single entity that controls more than 40% of the US freight rail market. Without real railroad competition, prices go up and consumers lose." CN said it will be an active participant in the STB process and encourages all stakeholders to participate.

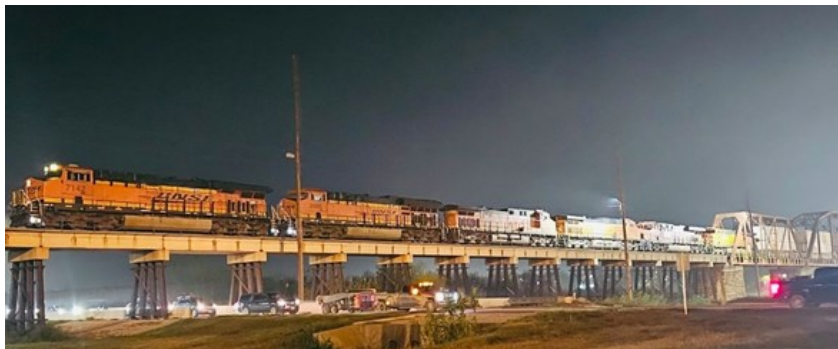
CPKC review of application continuing CPKC said [in a statement](#) that it "will be thoroughly reviewing" the merger application in the coming days, and will examine it from "at least two perspectives: Whether it complies with the Board's 2001 Major Merger Rules and provides the STB and interested parties an adequate basis for evaluating the public-interest consequences of the UP-NS proposal, [and] whether the UP-NS proposal is consistent with the public interest." CPKC said approval "is not inevitable" — echoing an earlier comment by CEO Keith Creel [see ["Creel warns UP-NS merger is no' fait accompli,"](#) Dec. 2, 2025]. It calls the UP-NS merger "unprecedented in scale and scope" and says it would "radically and permanently change the U.S. rail network. If approved, the merger would pose extraordinary and far-reaching risks to customers, rail employees, and broader supply chains."

CPKC, like CN, said it will be an active participant in evaluation of the merger and called on other stakeholders to "express their views about how this proposed merger would affect their business." — Updated at noon CT with CPKC statement; updated at 7:30 p.m. CT with CN statement. To report news or errors, contact trainsnews@firecrown.com.

BNSF Asks STB to Review UP's Compliance with UP-SP Merger Conditions

By Bill Stephens | December 1, 2025

BNSF alleges that UP has, for decades, sought to obstruct conditions designed to preserve rail competition in the West



WASHINGTON — BNSF Railway has asked the Surface Transportation Board to review Union Pacific's compliance with conditions that the board imposed to preserve competition after UP's 1996 acquisition of Southern Pacific.

Due to considerable overlap between the UP and SP systems, the STB granted BNSF the ability to serve customers at so-called 2-to-1 locations, where shippers served by both UP and SP would be served by just UP after the merger.

"In the nearly 30 years since the UP/SP merger, however, UP has engaged in a pattern of obstructive conduct that has diminished those competitive options and has harmed customers by delaying or preventing BNSF from fully replacing the competition that was lost through the UP/SP merger as the Board originally intended," [BNSF said in a Nov. 28 regulatory filing.](#)

Carrying J.B. Hunt containers, BNSF Railway's first northbound intermodal train to use the Eagle Pass, Texas, gateway crosses the Rio Grande in December 2023. BNSF claims that Union Pacific favors its own trains at the Eagle Pass, where BNSF operates on trackage rights granted as part of UP's 1996 acquisition of Southern Pacific. BNSF

"Although BNSF has diligently worked to enforce the rights the Board entrusted to it through constant vigilance, extensive negotiations with UP, and numerous petitions to the Board, its efforts have faced repeated resistance and obstruction from UP. Unfortunately, UP's efforts have been successful in many ways leading to customers having fewer options for service at locations that were previously served by UP and SP." BNSF's petition asks the STB to review the UP-SP merger conditions, "enforce the obligations UP has refused to abide by," and modify the conditions as necessary. UP says it abides by the merger conditions. "Union Pacific has granted BNSF access on about 85% of their requests over the last 15 years, providing significant opportunities for competition, while ensuring customers have options," UP spokeswoman Kristen South said in an email. "In the few cases taken to the Surface Transportation Board, BNSF was asking for more than was agreed upon." BNSF's request comes a week or so before UP and Norfolk Southern are expected to file their merger application with the STB. "Arguments on the merits of UP's recently announced merger with Norfolk Southern ... will be presented in that proceeding. While the Board will have the opportunity to evaluate the proposed UP/NS merger and its potential impact on competition and other public interest concerns, it is not clear that the Board can review UP's compliance with the UP/SP merger conditions as part of the Board's consideration of the UP/NS merger," BNSF told the board. BNSF said it has made every effort to compete with UP. "But UP has increasingly sought to frustrate the UP/SP merger conditions and, at times, simply refused to abide by the conditions," BNSF told the STB.

UP has sought to delay and deny BNSF access to customers, made "unreasonable operational demands," and refused to update trackage rights agreements, BNSF said. As a result, BNSF says it has been forced to file more than a dozen petitions with the STB to enforce UP-SP merger conditions. BNSF also claims that UP engages in discriminatory dispatching on its trackage-rights routes. Dispatching protocols in merger agreements require UP to provide equal treatment for BNSF trains, BNSF notes. Instead, UP favors its own traffic by imposing limited operating windows and disrupting BNSF operations by holding UP trains on a single-track main, BNSF told the STB. BNSF proposed a 188-day schedule for the board to review, enforce, and modify UP-SP merger conditions as necessary.

Note: Updated at 11 a.m. Central with comment from Union Pacific.



--- Union Pacific News---

Union Pacific's Big Boy Locomotive to Return to the Tracks Next Year (Repeat from last newsletter)

KSN.com National / World by: [Ryan Newton](#) Posted: Oct 27, 2025 / 11:40 AM CDT Updated: Oct 27, 2025 / 11:59 AM CD



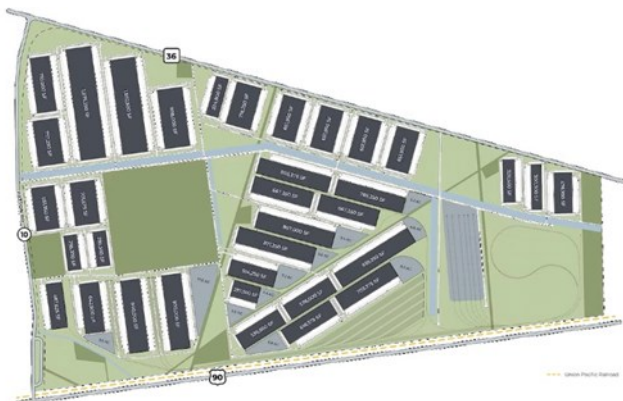
from video

WICHITA, Kan. (KSNW) – Union Pacific's Big Boy No. 4014 will return to the rails in a big way in 2026 to celebrate America's 250th anniversary. The CEO of Union Pacific told Trains.com late last week that the company plans to send the engine on a transcontinental trip and has been in discussions with Norfolk Southern about hosting it on its lines. No. 4014, the 133-foot-long, 1.2-million-pound engine, was returned to service in May 2019 and traveled around parts of the country and Kansas to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad's Completion. The engine is stationed in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The seven remaining Big Boys are on public display in St. Louis, Missouri; Dallas, Texas; Omaha, Nebraska; Denver, Colorado; Scranton, Pennsylvania; Green Bay, Wisconsin; and Cheyenne, Wyoming. [Join the Union Pacific's Steam Club](#) by clicking here to be notified about No. 4014's travels.

Union Pacific to Develop Industrial Park Near Houston

By Trains Staff | December 17, 2025

2,000-acre Mainline Texas park will include 1,300 rail-served acres



The site plan for the Mainline Texas Industrial Park, to be developed by Union Pacific near Rosenberg, Texas. UP

OMAHA, Neb. — Union Pacific has announced plans to develop a 2,000-acre industrial park outside Houston that will feature 1,300 acres of rail-served land.

The Mainline Texas Industrial Park is just west of Rosenberg, Texas, and about 40 miles southwest of downtown Houston. It will be bordered on one side by the main line of UP’s Glidden Subdivision and parallel U.S. Route 90, and on another by State Route 36, with nearby access to Interstate 69, offering what the railroad calls seamless transportation to major population centers and international gateways in Laredo, Eagle Pass, and El Paso. “We’re excited about the new growth opportunities this park opens up for our customers,” Kenny Rocker, UP executive vice president, marketing and sales, said in a [press release](#). “It’s near the state’s largest concentration of people, industry and commerce, and allows customers to reach more than 25 million consumers within a 250-mile radius. That’s real growth potential and another example of how we are planning into the future with our customers.”

The development will also include 700 acres for non-rail industrial and commercial uses. It will include railcar storage, on-site water and wastewater systems, and access to high-capacity gas infrastructure, and has the potential for more than 20 million square feet of Class A development.

More information is available at [the Mainline Texas website](#)

UP and NS Say Their Merger Will Take 2 Million Trucks Off the Highway Annually

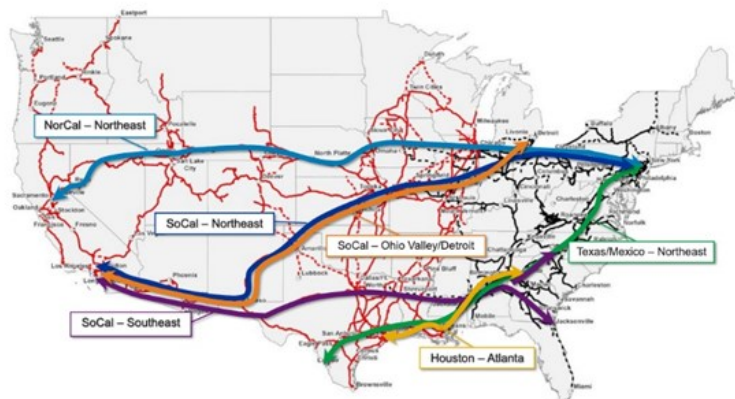
By Bill Stephens | December 19, 2025

Their merger application, filed today with the Surface Transportation Board, details plans for the first transcontinental railroad in the U.S.



Union Pacific ES44AC No. 7819 and Norfolk Southern Dash 9-40C No. 8767 bring a west-bound UP manifest freight through River Forest,

R: The combined Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern Network. UP



The combined railroad plans to add six new premium intermodal lanes. UP

OMAHA, Neb. — Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern say their proposed transcontinental merger will take more than 2 million trucks off the road annually, boosting the combined system’s traffic by 1.4 million intermodal loads and 425,000 carloads.

The nearly 12% growth projection is among the details included in the 6,692-page merger application the railroads filed with the Surface Transportation Board on Friday (Dec. 19).

The combined railroad would see revenue growth of \$4.2 billion three years into the merger, with nearly \$1 billion in cost synergies. UP will spend \$1.1 billion in capacity improvements, plus another \$1.1 billion on technology integration and other investments.

“We look forward to working with the Surface Transportation Board as it reviews our historic application to create America’s first transcontinental railroad,” UP CEO Jim Vena said in a statement.

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“As time and technology continue to transform how freight is delivered, our industry must keep pace and move forward, reaching underserved markets with new rail solutions and strengthening the U.S. supply chain. Customers deserve stronger, more connected freight rail, and our merger will make that happen.”

UP and NS said their merger would help stem the loss of rail market share, which declined nearly 10% from 2014 to 2023, according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics. The single-line service created by the merger will level the playing field with trucks, the railroads said — noting that rail’s market share is two to three times higher for single-line moves than for freight moving in interline service.

“This transaction is intended to stop and reverse that share loss by offering more single line options to shippers so rail can compete more effectively with the highway alternatives,” Norfolk Southern CEO Mark George told analysts on the railroads’ Friday morning webcast.

Roughly 75% of the projected merger-related traffic growth will come from converting truckload business to rail, he says, with the balance diverted from competing railroads.

A transcontinental UP system will create 10,000 new single-line service lanes, which will eliminate the costly and time-consuming interchange of 2,400 carloads and containers per day at gateways from Chicago to New Orleans. UP also points out that interline merchandise traffic moving between 1,000 and 1,500 miles costs an average of 35% more than a comparable move involving just one railroad.

UP sees significant growth in the so-called watershed markets — the vast swath of the American heartland that lies within a few hundred miles of the Mississippi River, the de facto dividing line between the Eastern and Western railroads.

Eliminating interchange friction, short hauls, and revenue division challenges will enable 105,000 carloads of merchandise traffic to shift from road to rail in the watershed, UP said, citing estimates from the Oliver Wyman consulting firm.

“We see meaningful opportunity in the watershed, which we define as the manufacturing and agricultural heart of the country that lies roughly 250 miles from our major gateways along the Mississippi River,” NS Chief Commercial Officer Ed Elkins said on the webcast. “Today, rail massively underperforms in these watershed markets, capturing less than 10% of the volume.”

Operational changes

UP’s operating plan adds merchandise and intermodal trains that avoid stops at current gateways, including Chicago.

Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern anticipate adding several routes, including two new daily intermodal train pairs connecting the East and the West with more direct service – reducing estimated transit times from Southern California to the Ohio Valley and Northeast by up to 20 hours and from Southern California to the Southeast by more than two days.

To meet expected intermodal growth, the combined company plans to introduce a total of six premium intermodal lanes operating seven days a week.

new intermodal train connecting Southern California to the Ohio Valley and the Northeast will use UP’s Sunset and Golden State routes to Kansas City, where it will get on Norfolk Southern’s former Wabash main line to Butler, Ind., the connection with the NS Premier Corridor main line to the East Coast. Eliminating the interchange in Chicago will shorten the trip by up to 252 miles and reduce estimated transit times by up to 20 hours.

In another example, UP and NS will shave approximately 70 hours of transit time on intermodal traffic moving from Southern and Northern California to the Southeast, including Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina, and approximately 95 hours on westbound traffic by routing it via the Shreveport, La.-Meridian, Miss., Meridian Speedway rather than via Memphis.

The combined railroad also will introduce six new manifest trains to bridge the East-West divide more efficiently, reducing over 600 daily car handlings.

“We’ve estimated that 40% of the combined company’s manifest routes will benefit from fewer handlings. Driving these results is a simpler, streamlined, and more efficient rail network,” John Orr, the NS chief operating officer, told analysts.

He adds: “This equates to almost 900,000 fewer handlings, about 1.7 million fewer train miles and a reduction of nearly 22,000 car miles.”

Main line and terminal capacity expansion projects will enable a transcontinental UP to handle projected traffic growth, executives said.

“Major projects identified include Union Pacific Sunset and Golden State routes as well as Norfolk Southern’s Kansas City to Butler, Ind., and New Orleans to Atlanta corridors,” Eric Gehringer, UP’s executive vice president of operations, said on the webcast.

The investments will add sections of double track, extend sidings, and add other improvements that will improve transit times and service, he says.

UP will expand seven intermodal terminals, two hump yards, and two auto ramps with projects set for Texas, Southern California, Tennessee, Ohio, and Florida. “Key locations for investment include Houston, Port of Laredo, L.A.’s Inland Empire, Chattanooga, Toledo, and Jacksonville,” Gehringer says.

Impact on competition

UP and NS said their combination would enhance railroad competition. Only three customer locations — out of more than 20,000 — are served by UP and NS but no other railroad. UP says it will provide the three locations with competitive options.

In September, UP and NS said they expected that potential concessions necessary to gain regulatory approval might reduce merger-related synergies by \$750 million. But now, after preparing the merger application, they say that’s no longer the case.

“We now do not believe significant concessions are needed given the strong value offered by the merger in combination with the enhancements that we are offering,” UP Chief Financial Officer Jennifer Hamann told analysts.

The railroads said they will keep all current gateways open. “Committed Gateway Pricing,” the railroads said, will streamline pricing

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“Without CGP, a fully served UP industrial chemical customer in Texas shipping to a fully served CSX customer in South Carolina would not see any benefits from our transaction,” Kenny Rocker, UP’s executive vice president of marketing and sales, said on the webcast. “With CGP, however, the CSX will be able to market directly to that customer using a formulaic competitive rate based on shipments moving in that market and extending the benefits from our merger. Committed gateway pricing is purely additive, providing an extra rate and service option without removing any existing choices.”

UP will not divest any principal routes after the merger. But it will divest shares of the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis and the Peoria & Pekin Union Railway to prevent what otherwise would become majority ownership post-merger. In addition, UP says it will eliminate potential competitive concerns involving TTX — the railcar pooling company — by reducing its TTX stake to not greater than 50%.

Phased integration

To avoid the disruptions that have accompanied other major railroad mergers, UP and NS say the transition to a combined system will move forward in phases. They also said that the end-to-end nature of the merger reduces the risk of service disruptions because most traffic moving on the two networks will not be affected, and that most yards and terminals will not experience any significant merger-related increase in traffic.

The application also outlines how the railroads will combine best safety practices under a safety integration plan that was created in conjunction with the Federal Railroad Administration.

More than 2,000 letters of support — including 500 from customers — are included in the merger application.

Add all this up, UP says, and the merger meets the regulatory requirements for approval: It enhances competition and is in the public interest, the two higher hurdles that are part of the STB’s tougher 2001 merger rules.

The UP-NS combination is the first to be judged under those rules, which were put into place after rapid and initially chaotic mergers in the 1990s.

The rules also require merging railroads to address the so-called downstream effects of their combination, such as how it might prompt other mergers. UP and NS punted on this, telling the STB that they could not predict whether other Class I railroads may choose to pursue mergers. They also argue that even if other railroads merged in response to the UP-NS combination, “it would not diminish the substantial public benefits of the proposed transaction.”

Further mergers, railroads said, wouldn’t result in any harm if they mirrored the UP-NS merger, took steps to protect competition, and carefully planned their integration.

The STB now has 30 days to accept the application as complete or reject it as incomplete.

— *Updated at 7:45 a.m. CT with additional details. Updated at 7:58 a.m. with graphics. Updated at 1:30 p.m. with additional detail from morning webcast with analysts. To report news or errors, contact trainsnews@firecrown.com.*

Union Pacific Completes Expansion of Casa Grande, Ariz., Yard

By Trains Staff | December 15, 2025

Work doubles capacity of facility west of Tucson



Union Pacific has doubled the capacity of its yard at Casa Grande, Ariz. UP

CASA GRANDE, Ariz. — Union Pacific has completed expansion of its Casa Grande Yard, doubling capacity at the facility about 70 miles west of Tucson on the railroad’s Gila Subdivision.

The project added four tracks and a new industrial lead, and included a powered switch, a new yard control point, and upgraded mainline signals.

“The new power switch helps train crews, who can avoid slips, trips, and strain by no longer having to hand throw the switch,” Marc Chavez, UP manager-Signal Construction, said [on the railroad’s website](#).

The yard serves local industries and supports manifest freight as part of the railroad’s Sunset Route.

Initial Reactions to Merger Plan Mostly Skeptical or Negative

By David Lassen | December 19, 2025

Trade associations renew opposition to UP-NS transaction; dispatchers join unions against deal

Reactions to the Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger filing began collecting shortly after the 6,992-page, four-volume document was released early Friday, with most expressing skepticism about the benefits of the first transcontinental merger. Trade groups representing shippers, which had previously indicated concerns about the merger, have issued renewed statements of opposition.

Chet Thompson, president and CEO of the American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, said [in a statement](#) that while his group needs “competitive, efficient, and reliable rail networks . . . decades of bad service and price increases in the wake of freight rail consolidation leave us and other carload shippers highly skeptical of this merger. Unless the Surface Transportation Board can demonstrate conclusively that it will enhance competition across all modes of transport — especially between railroads — this merger application should be denied.”

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A Union Pacific train with UP and Norfolk Southern power crosses UP's diamond with NS at Mokena, Ill., on April 10, 2022. David Lasen

Alliance for Chemical Distribution CEO Eric Byer's [statement](#) said his organization "strongly opposes this merger proposal as it will expand monopolistic control of freight rail at the expense of America's crucial chemical supply chain." The Fertilizer Institute's statement said the fertilizer industry faces "a take-it-or-leave-it" approach from railroads, and seeks a balanced relationship between carriers and shippers. "While we are still reviewing today's STB filing," the statement reads, "it is difficult to see how any coast-to-coast merger would improve this imbalance or meet the standard set out in the Surface Transportation Board's merger rules." The first elected official to weigh in was U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis). [In a press release](#), she said, "Approving this merger would take us in the wrong direction – stifling competition, worsening service, and raising costs on consumers and businesses who are already facing growing headwinds because of the Trump Administration."

[A statement from U.S. Rep. Sam Graves](#) (R-Mo.), chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said the railroads' promise in the merger application "to significantly invest in a more efficient rail network, increase safety, and enhance competition is encouraging. However, with a merger of this size, I want to ensure the STB is deliberative in assessing what potential effects this would have on the system as a whole."

Union reaction to the merger has been split, and on Friday, the American Train Dispatchers Association joined those against the merger. The organization cited confirmed job losses among dispatchers, potential relocation of its members in Atlanta, and what it called "unresolved safety and workforce concerns embedded in the merger application." The application projects a net loss of 33 dispatching jobs.

"These job losses are not a coincidence," ATDA President Ed Dowell said [in a statement](#). "They are intentionally built into the merger plan and tied directly to expanding dispatcher territories and consolidating operational control by leveraging unregulated technologies. These cuts, driven by Wall Street, jeopardize the very safety and efficiency the railroads claim to improve. ... We will not support this merger as long as it is paid for at the expense of our members' livelihoods or the safety of the general public."



---- CPKC News ----

News Photo: CPKC Takes Delivery of 100th New ET44AC from Wabtec

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

CP No. 7549 was delivered last week



CALGARY, Alberta — Canadian Pacific Kansas City said today that it has taken delivery of the 100th — and final — ET44AC in its order from Wabtec.

CP No. 7549 was delivered last week, the railroad said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

"These locomotives, being built in Fort Worth, Texas, already are in service supporting the execution of our precision scheduled railroading operating model and helping us provide even more efficient and reliable service to our customers across the North American economy," CPKC said.

NS and CPKC are Trying to Iron Out Differences Over Meridian Speedway

[By Bill Stephens](#) | December 12, 2025

CPKC has lifted its train length restriction, Norfolk Southern says

WASHINGTON — Norfolk Southern told federal regulators this week that it hopes to smooth over its dispute with Canadian Pacific Kansas City regarding operations over their joint Meridian Speedway.

But NS also said it disagrees with nearly everything CPKC has told the Surface Transportation Board about service over the 302-mile corridor that runs from Meridian, Miss., to Shreveport, La., and is a shortcut linking the Southeast and Southwest.

NS claims CPKC's service has not been up to snuff since the Canadian Pacific-Kansas City Southern merger in 2023. In September NS asked the STB to enforce CPKC's merger-related promise to uphold service on the corridor, which carries NS intermodal trains linking Atlanta and Dallas as well as interline Union Pacific-NS stack trains connecting the West Coast and Atlanta. [See "[Norfolk Southern claims Meridian Speedway service woes push freight to trucks](#)," Trains.com, Oct. 3, 2025] *Continued on next page:*



CPKC CEO Keith Creel addresses the Midwest Association of Rail Shippers on Jan. 11, 2024. David Lassen



A Kansas City Southern empty grain train rolls by the Union Pacific depot and yard in Laredo, Texas, in November 2017. CPKC says it will seek concessions as part of any regulatory approval of the proposed UP-Norfolk Southern merger. Bill Stephens

“If they get this wrong, it brings the nation to its knees. I think that’s a huge risk,” Creel says. “Now, you’re talking about a regulatory body that understands that.” The CP-KCS merger was a straightforward combination of the two smallest Class I railroads, Creel says. The UP-NS combination is an entirely different matter, he says. “We didn’t shift the balance, the scale, not even remotely close to the same complexity,” Creel says. “They’re going to take all that into account.” The STB will take a fact-based approach to reviewing the UP-NS merger, Creel says. If the facts lead them to a “no” vote, Creel says the STB will have the courage to reject the merger.

If they do approve the deal, the STB likely will seek to preserve competition by imposing significant conditions, he says. Conditions could take many forms, he says, including line divestitures, the granting of trackage rights, and opening some customer locations to other railroads.

Creel also raised concerns about anti-competitive behavior from a transcontinental UP. “UP sometimes has a hard time seeing the regulatory requirements the same way the regulator might,” Creel says, noting that [BNSF Railway this month asked the STB to scrutinize UP’s record](#) of abiding by conditions imposed as part of the approval of the UP-SP merger.

CPKC will ask the board to ensure that any merger conditions have teeth, Creel says.

UP and NS have said that their end-to-end merger will boost competition and will not require any concessions to other railroads. Yet UP and NS have disclosed that potential concessions necessary for regulatory approval could reduce planned merger synergies by as much as \$750 million, to a net of \$2 billion.

Creel says CPKC alone will seek concessions that might approach the \$750 million figure.

Speaking at the same conference, Vena said there was no reason why the STB would need to grant another railroad trackage rights over an expanded UP because it’s an end-to-end merger with very little overlap. Only about 10 customers are jointly served by UP and NS in the Midwest, and UP has said that its application will outline competitive remedies for them.

UP and NS, which have promised a smooth merger integration, expect to file their merger application with the STB the week of Dec. 16.

Creel and Vena spoke at the UBS Global Industrials and Transportation Conference.

— To report news or errors, contact trainsnewswire@firecrown.com.

Evacuation Order Lifted Following British Columbia Derailment

By Trains Staff | November 30, 2025

CRANBROOK, British Columbia — The evacuation order stemming from a CPKC derailment near Cranbrook has been lifted. [The Cranbrook Townsman reports](#) the order, covering five properties along the Kootenay River, was lifted Saturday evening (Nov. 29). It had been issued about 12:30 p.m. following a Saturday morning derailment involving an estimated 12 cars, including some tank cars of propane. [see [“CPKC derailment in British Columbia ...”](#) Trains.com, Nov. 29, 2025].

“This evening, following further assessment, response agencies have confirmed that there is no longer a risk to the public, allowing residents to return home,” Christina Carbrey, regional emergency operations center director, told the Townsman.

The derailment was about 16 kilometers (10 miles) east of Cranbrook on CPKC’s Cranbrook Subdivision.



---- CN News ----

CN Tells STB That Union Pacific is Blocking Access to a Customer in Illinois

By Bill Stephens | December 4, 2025

WASHINGTON — Canadian National has asked federal regulators to confirm that the railroad has operating authority on trackage in Springfield, Ill., where its efforts to serve an agricultural shipper have been stymied by Union Pacific.

CN subsidiary Illinois Central maintained trackage rights in the Springfield area when in 1986 it sold its 631-mile line linking Joliet, Ill., with Kansas City, Mo., and East St. Louis, Ill., to Chicago, Missouri & Western, which is now part of UP.

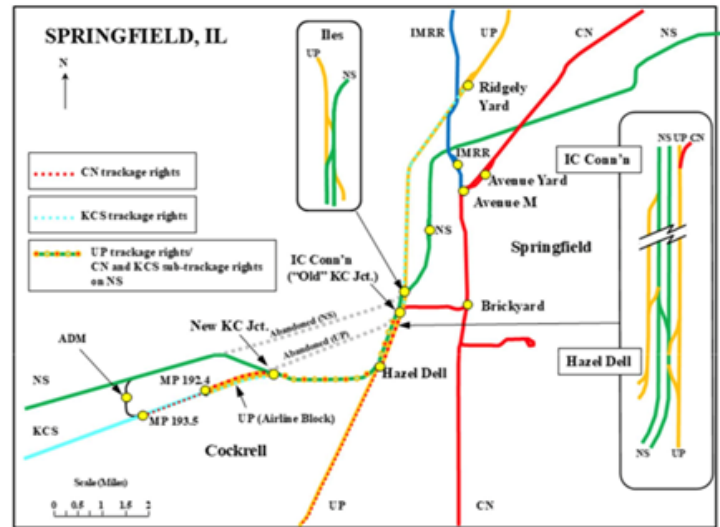
“A live controversy exists because Union Pacific Railroad ... has refused to qualify IC crews, which obstructs IC’s exercise of its right and obligation to serve customers — in particular Archer Daniels Midland Company’s Cockrell facility — on lines over which IC has long been authorized as a common carrier,”

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Illinois Central SD70 No. 1025 leads a Canadian National local past the Hill Topper Wind Farm near Mt. Pulaski, Ill, on Jan. 16, 2020. The train is en route to Springfield, Ill. Steve Smedley



Canadian National says its trackage rights in the Springfield, Ill., area provide access to an ADM facility. CN

," CN told the board in a regulatory filing this week. "The refusal undermines common carrier service, interferes with competition, and exposes shippers to harm."

CN regularly operates over UP and Norfolk Southern trackage in the Springfield area to serve a customer near Hazel Dell. "IC's crews are already qualified to operate over the IC Connection-Hazel Dell segment. ADM's requests for service also require IC to operate from Hazel Dell to the customer facility near MP 193.5: (1) from Hazel Dell to New KC Jct. as UP's subtenant over NS tracks; (2) from New KC Jct. to MP 192.4 as trackage rights tenant of UP; and (3) from MP 192.4 to MP 193.5 as trackage rights tenant of CPKC," CN told the board. "IC has operated over this segment before, including as UP's subtenant over the NS tracks from Hazel Dell to New KC Jct., but not since 2016 — hence IC's repeated requests to UP, for nearly a year, to admit IC by qualifying its crews."

UP argues that an expired agreement with NS prevents CN from operating over the trackage, CN said. NS has confirmed, CN said, that CN has the right to operate as UP's subtenant. CN argues that its trackage rights don't stem from the UP-NS contract. Rather, they were obtained as part of the 1986 line sale, and CN said it remains a common carrier on the trackage.

"By refusing to qualify IC crews notwithstanding IC's continuing common carrier authority over the segment, UP is denying ADM access to IC's service at Cockrell and, with it, the associated price, service, and resiliency benefits that can flow from head-to-head railroad competition at a customer facility," CN told the board.

Of note: The ADM facility can be served by UP, NS, and CN, according to CN.

"By obstructing IC's common carrier access to a facility that NS can serve, UP ensures that IC cannot compete against NS for the shipper's traffic today and, in doing so, shields its proposed merger partner from near-term competition at a location where the shipper has sought an IC option," CN said. "UP's conduct thus functions as a targeted foreclosure strategy: it reduces the competitive field at ADM's facility by denying an additional service option, while preserving and potentially enhancing the traffic base of the carrier UP proposes to control."

Union Pacific expects the STB will back its position on the trackage rights.

"Union Pacific and CN have been negotiating these trackage rights for nearly a year. Union Pacific has been committed to a reasonable outcome throughout and anticipate the Surface Transportation Board will affirm our position," spokeswoman Kristen South says.

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--- Other RR News ---

Longer Brightline Trains are Impressive But Deceptive

VeroNews.com
YOUR LOCAL NEWS SOURCE FOR INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Written by: [Steve Thomas](#) December 03 2025 Provided by Ray Bensen & John Goodman

Island residents who drive west of the Florida East Coast Railway tracks have probably noticed that Brightline's colorful trains keep getting longer, flashing by with 10 passenger cars in November, up from six in August and from four just last year.

At first glance, that looks like progress and success for the beleaguered train company. But the appearance is deceiving.

The train company continues to flounder under a crushing, \$5.5-billion load of debt in an atmosphere of operational confusion that is reverberating through the bond market. Bloomberg reported last week that, "investors are growing more anxious about the ability of Brightline to pay its debts," with one of its bonds trading at low of 29.5 cents on the dollar.

That means an investment fund that bought \$1 million worth of those unrated bonds, lured by the double-digit interest rates Brightline had to pay to attract investors, now holds an asset worth \$300,000, a 70-percent loss in less than a year.

Continued on next page:



PHOTO BY JOSHUA KODIS

“The bond last traded at around 50 cents on the dollar in October and as high as \$1.08 earlier this year, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The new low, hit last Tuesday, follows a deterioration that began in July after Brightline deferred an interest payment on the debt.” The deferral, which affected \$1.2 billion in bonds, did not amount to a default, but “it sent ripples through the high-yield municipal bond market,” according to Morningstar, an investment research, bond rating and wealth management behemoth. “Since then, the largest owners of Brightline debt have suffered steep losses.” First Eagle High Yield Municipal, a multibillion-dollar investment fund that has the highest percentage of Brightline debt, lost five percent of its total value overnight after the deferral. The stop-gap measure hurt Brightline, too, requiring it to up the interest it pays on the bonds by 2 percent, further draining its resources. The train company now pays 14.89 percent interest on its most degraded bonds. On the operational side, under intense financial pressure, the company has spent the past year slashing fares, stopping and then restarting the sale of commuter passes, and repeatedly changing the number trains it runs between South Florida cities and between Miami and Orlando in a scattergun attempt to increase ridership.

“Big price cuts have resulted in 16-percent a boost in passengers, [and] more deals are coming,” USA Today reported in October. “Less than a month after slashing fares to and from West Palm Beach within South Florida, Brightline is cutting prices again . . . [with fares] now as cheap as \$12.”

A 16-percent increase in passengers sounds good but is unlikely to provide financial relief since the company was already losing \$55 per passenger under the old higher fares, according to the Orlando Business Journal.

The perception of operational chaos at the company was fueled by Brightline’s September Monthly Revenue and Ridership report.

This passage is from page four of the report: “In May 2024, we discontinued offering commuter passes to free up capacity for our growing long-distance service. [When that move fell flat] we reintroduced the commuter pass products in May 2025 and are now building back that customer segment . . . generating 17,600 rides for the month of September . . . Previously, the commuter pass product generated 30,000-40,000 rides per month [and] we plan to restore the commuter business to historic levels over the next several months.”

That’s no way to run a railroad.

As for the longer trains we see in Vero, the impressive 10-passenger-car lengths are counterbalanced by a 35 percent reduction in the number of trains running between Miami and Orlando.

This summer, there were 32 trains racing between the two cities each day, 16 northbound and 16 southbound. Now there are only 10 trains traveling in each direction for a total of 20 per day.

There was also some genuine good news in Brightline’s September report, which is the most recent available. Total local and long-distance ridership was up 11 percent in September compared to the year before, and revenue was up 13 percent. Year-to-date increases were almost identical to that, with a 13 percent rise in revenue that amounts to an extra \$18 million in the first nine months of the year, compared to the same period last year.

But an \$18 million increase in revenue is miniscule compared to the company’s costs and losses, the equivalent of bringing a bag of pennies to the bank on the eve of a multimillion foreclosure.

The Palm Beach Post reported in May that the company lost a whopping \$549 million in 2024.

“Brightline spent \$341 million running and maintaining its trains and stations in 2024, bringing in about \$188 million from ticket sales and other sources, for a deficit of more than \$153 million,” according to the Post.

In addition, Brightline “paid \$178 million in interest on its debt,” and another \$218 million to refinance debt.

The company’s operating loss so far this year exceeds \$70 million, a number that does not include its massive, ever-increasing interest payments or ongoing construction costs.

Attempting to find a way out, Brightline is looking to sell “equity in the train service to outside investors,” according to Miami radio station WLRN.

How much of the company it is looking to sell, at what price and to whom isn’t known, but Brightline said in the September report that it ‘continues to actively progress the planned issuance of a substantial amount of equity, with a global process underway engaging with numerous potential strategic partners.

“Equity proceeds would be used to repay principal and interest of existing debt and to increase cash reserves.”

Unverified reports floating around on the internet say the company will run out of operating funds by the end of the year, but Brightline says it has enough cash to keep running trains and paying bond interest until 2027.

Now backed by Fortress Investment Group, Brightline was founded as All Aboard Florida in 2012 and went through several changes in ownership before completing its 235-mile Miami to Orlando route in September 2023.

It operates 10 trains daily in both directions, hitting speeds of 125 miles an hour. The trains currently have an engine at each end and nine or 10 passenger cars, including one first class car. The trip from Miami to Orlando takes about 3.5 hours, according to multiple published reports, with one-way fares ranging from \$79 to \$155 on Monday.

Metro-North, Long Island Rail Road Holiday Lights Trains to Make Season Debut Friday

By Trains Staff | November 26, 2025

Trains will run through the New Year across



Metro-North's Holiday Lights Train will begin 2025 operations on Friday, Nov. 28. The Long Island Rail Road will have its own version of the train. MTA/Emily Moser

NEW YORK — The Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad will launch their Holiday Lights Trains this Friday, Nov. 28. The colorfully lit trains will operate through New Year's and will display special holiday-themed safety messages at select stations. This year, Metro-North is adding a diesel-powered train for the first time, bringing the holiday trains to all of Metro-North's East of Hudson lines.

"The Holiday Lights Trains are a wonderful early gift to Metro-North riders and the best way for everyone to get to all the amazing holiday destinations in New York City, the Hudson Valley and Connecticut," Metro-North President Justin Vonashek said in a press release.

"Metro-North is creating lifetime memories for everyone who rides these festive trains or sees it roll through their town."

On the LIRR, trains will operate on all electrified branches. On both railroads, the lights trains will operate on a random rotation of regularly scheduled trains at all times of day and night.

"The holidays are a wonderful time of the year and the Long Island Rail Road is the most reliable, greenest and festive way to see family and friends during the holidays," said LIRR President Rob Free.

"It's a fun thrill for kids, train enthusiasts, and adults alike to be able to board a train covered in colorful lights and spread holiday cheer throughout our territory."

Operation North Pole Train Returns to Metra

By Trains Staff | December 10, 2025

Trip for ill children and their families set for Dec. 20; specially decorated train now operating in regular commuter service



Metra's Operation North Pole train, set for its special trip for ill children and their families on Dec. 20, is now operating in regular commuter service. Metra

CHICAGO — For the first time in six years, the Operation North Pole train for seriously and terminally ill children and their families is set to operate on Metra on Dec. 20, with Metra and Operation North Pole encouraging area residents to come view the train to show support for those on board.

The train will operate on Metra's Union Pacific Northwest Line, with its trip including a charity event at the Barrington, Ill., station, while at the starting point, Pingree Grove, the Crystal Lake Fire Rescue Department, Crystal Lake Police Department, McHenry County Fire Department, and local school children will be singing carols and handing out treats for those onboard. On arrival in Des Plaines, local first responders and Santa and Mrs. Claus will escort the families to an event at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Ill.

Because of buses and escort vehicles involved in the event, and to accommodate the needs of the families, the public is encouraged to view the train between the Pingree Road and Cumberland stations.

The train's schedule on Dec. 20:

- 12:30 p.m.: Depart Pingree Road station, Crystal Lake
- 12:35 p.m.: Cary
- 12:38 p.m.: Fox River Grove
- 12:44 p.m.: Barrington ([Pack the Train Depot](#) charity event, noon to 1 p.m.)
- 12:51 p.m.: Palatine
- 12:55 p.m.: Arlington Park
- 12:58 p.m.: Arlington Heights
- 1:06 p.m.: Cumberland
- 1:10 p.m.: Arrive at North Pole (Des Plaines)

More information, including details on how to volunteer or donate, is available at [the Operation North Pole website](#).

The specially decorated Operation North Pole train is now in use on Metra's three Union Pacific lines and will be used for the Metra Holiday Train on the UP Northwest Line on Dec. 13. With the exception of that trip and the Operation North Pole train, the ONP trainset will operate on the Northwest Line through Dec. 14, the UP North Line Dec. 15-21, and the UP West Line Dec. 22-Jan. 2.

Metro News - Minnesota Commercial #76

Wednesday, November 26, 2025 at 01:18:34 PM CST from Rick Krenski

Back in 2023 the Minnesota Commercial acquired a General Electric B36-7 and they renumbered it to #76. Now they have repainted the unit into a patriotic scheme to help celebrate our countries 250th birthday. I think between now and then many railroads will paint special units just like they did in 1976. I think tomorrow after filling up with turkey I'll head to the roundhouse and see if it's sitting around or maybe they will protect it and have it hidden in a roundhouse stall. We'll see.

Railfan Events –also thanks to Rick Krenske

<p>Northstar Chapter NRHS Monthly Meeting</p>	<p><i>Saturday January 11th 2026</i> <u>6:15pm—8:45pm</u></p>	<p>Roseville Lutheran Church Diamond room 1215 Roselawn Ave W Roseville MN 55113</p>	<p>FREE -Guests are Welcome</p>
<p>Granite City Train Show</p>	<p>February 28th, 2026 <u>9am to 3pm</u></p>	<p>River's Edge Convention Center, 10 4th Avenue South Saint Cloud, Minnesota 56301</p>	<p>\$6</p>
<p>Century College Model RR Flea Market</p>	<p><i>Date Pending at publishing time</i></p>	<p>Century College West Campus 3401 Century Ave N White Bear Lake MN 55110</p>	<p>\$7</p>
<p>Twin City Model Railroad Museum Night Trains A Must SEE! Go to Web site for special evenings: https://www.tcmrm.org/special-</p>	<p>November 8 Thru February 28, 2026 @ Every Saturday. The event runs from <u>3:00pm to 7pm</u>, tickets will be sold for 2 hour time blocks</p>	<p>Twin City Model Railroad Museum 668 Transfer Road, Suite 8 Saint Paul, MN 55114 United States Link to map: + Google Map Phone 651-647-9628</p>	<p>\$15</p>

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