



NRHS

Publishers of the Minnesota Rail Calendar

Northstar News

Next Meeting Saturday March 14th 2026 Roseville Lutheran Church

May the spirit of the irish be with you



Duluth #15
 Aug 01 1980
 LSTM Benefit
 train on DWP
 at photo stop
 -Ray Bensen
 photo

Message from the Prez.....

First, what a month.....I hope the government militarized invasion of our community has not impacted you or your family!

March is here, and with it springtime right around the corner.

Here is a quick update on what's going on around the Chapter:

First, I am making an effort to go through the contents of our storage unit, in hopes of reducing our footprint enough to reduce the size/cost to the Chapter. Maybe, one of these upcoming months, we'll have a "member giveaway" special event!

Second, the Calendar Committee under Dawn Holmberg is about ready to start reviewing images for our 2027 calendar. If you have some rare or unusual slides of good quality, consider submitting them for consideration!

Third, I am hoping (expecting, really) each of our members will do their very best to recruit at least one new member to the Northstar Chapter over the coming year. Each recruit will land you one chance at our Sweepstakes giveaway (or TWO chances if the new member is younger than 40)!

A winner will be announced at the annual banquet in December. (Note, I am exempting myself from the competition.... I want to see one of YOU win)! Just be sure to alert Treasurer John Chute to ensure your name gets thrown in the hat for each new recruit you bring in! For our March program (March 14), yours truly will be presenting images taken in his Michigan youth. Titled "The GREAT Grand Trunk Western", this program will feature slides from around Michigan taken between the late 60's and the mid-80's. Expect some colorful views of the "Good Track Road," going all the way back to green and gold geeps and F's.

To round out the evening, our own Ms. Holmberg is preparing to show some additional pix from the Chapter's archives. And please take note: the **April** meeting has been moved back one week to the third Saturday (April 18). At the Church, as usual. See you trackside! / Jack Barbier

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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 April 1st 2026. After this issue, If you have not renewed your chapter membership, you will be dropped from the newsletter distribution list.

From the BOD and membership we wish John Goodman a speedy and complete recovery from his recent health issues.

Note, this editor is not Happy with the Zoom AI Format of the meeting Minutes. The Minutes are scrambled as to sequence of issues covered. However they do save the Secretary a lot of time from keying in the

Meeting Notice:

Saturday March 14th 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: Video of the ‘Good Track road’ of the GTW, A lot of footage in Michigan. Presented by Jack Barbier.

An informal Dinner at Keys Restaurant -Lexington and Larpentour Avenues will be at 4:15 pm March 14th, 2026. Please join us in-person at Roseville Lutheran Church, Saturday March 14th, 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:

Meeting ID: 847 8895 4853
Passcode: 070809
Link: <https://tinyurl.com/bde8xh58>

Time: March 14, 2026 6:00 pm Central Time (US and Canada)
Or Join Zoom Meeting here -->

Dial-in, audio only 507 473 4847

Note: April Meeting will be Saturday April 18 2026, This is the third Saturday on April, a temporary change to our usual 2nd Saturday of the Month.

Meeting Minutes February 14th 2026, Roseville Lutheran Church

The meeting was called to order at about 6:20 pm by Dawn Holmberg (stepping in for President Jack Barbier). Dan Meyer cited safety issues at the Church. Dan Meyer explained the pathway to an alternate exit in the church. There were about 20 members and Guests present. A quorum was determined. (3 of 4 directors and 20% of membership) A motion to members by Dawn Holmberg to approve the meeting minutes in the February 2025 Newsletter from the January 2025 meeting was floored. The motion by two members was voiced and the membership approval of the minutes was carried.

Meeting summary (a product of Zoom AI composition)

Quick recap

The Northstar Chapter meeting covered several key updates and discussions. The chapter approved January meeting minutes and received a treasurer's report indicating a current account balance. A significant update was provided regarding John Goodman's health situation following a fall incident at home, though he is recovering with physical therapy. The chapter discussed upcoming programs, with Jack Barbier confirmed for March and an unnamed presenter for April. The conversation ended with a comprehensive slide presentation by Dawn Holmberg showing Mostly Northstar Commuter railroad photos and documentation from various Northstar Train rides, and other events over the years.

Highlights

Richard Tubbesing: Take the 5 undeliverable membership forms received from Treasurer John Chute and or returned and update the member spreadsheet used for invoicing.

Richard Tubbesing Send email to calendar committee this coming week to set a date for the next calendar committee meeting to review photos for the 2027 Calendar.

Dan Meyer: Organize lunch meeting for the group at Culver's in St. Anthony, coordinate date via Facebook for this month, and include in the newsletter for March. Plan on meeting for lunch the last Wednesday of the month.

Jack Barbier: Present the March program (confirmed for March meeting).

John Goodman: Attempt to confirm speaker (Kate Kratville Wynn or Jim George) for April program.

Russ Isbrandt and Dan Meyer: Chair the storage locker clean-out committee (with John Goodman, Wayne Torseth, Jack Barbier) and schedule a meeting once John is able; follow up with Jack to provide building access code.

Dan Meyer: Send John Goodman's address to those interested in sending cards or support.

Dan Meyer: Send out directions to 2B's place for the calendar committee meeting when date is set.

Richard Tubbesing Put notice about the St. Anthony lunch meeting in the newsletter for March.

Dawn Holmberg NRHS Report: The Spring Conference and the Convention dates and events have not been decided. The next issue of NRHS Bulliten has been sent out.

Dan Meyer stated we need a volunteer to answer the Phone to let folks in the Church after 6pm.

Train Rides and Historical Sites

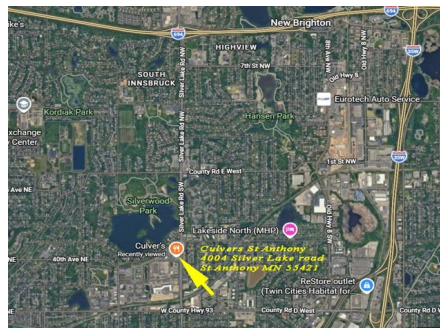
Dawn Holmberg presented a slide show of train rides, including the last run of the Northstar line and a trip to Duluth. She discussed various train stations, events, and historical sites they visited. Dan also shared videos of train rides and mentioned that some videos of the Northstar were not yet released.

Railroad History and Memories Discussion

The group discussed historical railroad photos and memories, including a 1994 trip to Hoffman and various mining engineer trips from the 1990s. Dan Meyer shared photos of train stations, bridges, and equipment from different locations across Minnesota and South Dakota, with particular attention to the Milwaukee Road and Great Northern lines. The discussion included memories of a 1990s cab ride raffle event in Alexandria, where participants traveled by train from Avon to Fergus Falls, and concluded with a question about the fate of some aluminum cars used in that event, which suggested they might have ended up at the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum.

After the meeting was adjourned, Mark Quam provided an update on Wisconsin passenger rail initiatives, including progress on the Eau Claire to St. Paul project and challenges with state funding.

**Monthly Lunch at Culvers Wednesday
March 25th 2026
This month it will be Culvers in St Anthony on Silver
Lake road .at 1:00pm**



**To Culvers from I694 , Exit Silver Lake Rd Exit
Go south Silver Lake Road about 2 miles
And you are There! Hope to see you There!**

Obituary: Longtime Member and former President Cy Svobodny



Photo: March 26 2011



July 2017 -Dawn Holmberg

Cyril Svobodny was 83 years old and was born on 12/01/1942 and passed away January 5th 2026. Cyril lived in Inver Grove Heights, MN. Cyril also answered to Cyril T Svobodny, and perhaps a couple of other names. Currently, Cyril was married. Mary Svobodny, Charlotte Svobodny, Cyril Svobodny, Raymond Wolf and Joseph Deleon, and many others are family members and associates of Cyril. Funeral will be held in late Spring.



Silvis Train Days & Classic Cars 2026 Saturday, April 25, 2026



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



Enjoy a ride in RRHMA's Streamliner Coaches behind ATSF #537 diesel engine! Train rides will depart every hour on the hour starting at 10:00 am on Saturday, April 25, 2026.

Join Railroading Heritage of Midwest America (RRHMA) for an unforgettable Train Day & Classic Car Show all day on April 25, 2026! This family-friendly event is packed with excitement, delicious food, and unique experiences celebrating the rich history of railroading and classic automobiles.

Attendees will have the unique opportunity to enjoy train rides behind recently restored ATSF #537, visit a variety of local food trucks, and a variety of craft vendors! For model train enthusiasts, there will be an impressive model train show and many modular layouts on display. Additionally, guests can take self-guided tours of the RRHMA shop, where the iconic and are currently being rebuilt, and have the opportunity to visit one-on-one with our steam locomotive restoration crew for an exclusive look into what it takes to keep these machines moving.

Admission to the event on Saturday, April 25, is just \$5 donation per entry, granting you access to an exciting lineup of activities and displays. With food trucks, vendors, and family-friendly entertainment, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Don't miss out on this unique experience—get your tickets today!

Tickets for the train rides are available at \$10 (2 years old and under free with a paid adult ticket.) Admission into the shop building, which includes access to the model railroad display, model train show, and self-guided tours with our steam crew will be available for **\$15 per person if purchased prior to the day of the event and \$20 if purchased on the day of the event.** Tickets will go on sale online starting March 1st, 2026.

For Tickets go to the following link: <https://rrhma.com/silvis-train-day/>



Images provided by the Union Pacific Steam Club.



Big Boy No. 4014's Schedule

Union Pacific's Big Boy No. 4014 will embark on a 2026 tour to celebrate the U.S. 250th anniversary, featuring a spring trip to California (March 29 – April 24) and a separate eastern tour. Key stops include Roseville, CA (April 10-11) and Ogden, UT (April 18-19), with the train accompanied by the #1776 locomotive.

About the Coast to Coast Tour

Big Boy No. 4014, the world's largest operating steam locomotive, will be joined by two commemorative locomotives, including the railroad's newest locomotive: No. 1776 – America250. This new commemorative locomotive pays tribute to the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of this nation. The locomotive will feature the emblem of the America250 Semiquincentennial Commission, the national nonpartisan organization established by Congress to lead the nation's 250th anniversary. More information about No. 1776 will be announced soon.

"We are proud to honor our nation's great history and legacy of innovation with our heritage locomotives. For the first time, we will share the Big Boy with communities on the East Coast, operating it from ocean to ocean," said CEO Jim Vena. "America has never been afraid to dream about what's possible – and neither is Union Pacific as we carry the grain that feeds families, the steel that builds cities and the household goods that stock store shelves."

Union Pacific is proud that our efforts to create America's first transcontinental railroad are making a coast-to-coast Big Boy tour possible. Our [combination with Norfolk Southern](#) will strengthen America's competitiveness, enhance safety, safeguard union jobs and deliver exceptional service.

Key Definitions:

Public Display Admission to display days are free (no tickets required), though parking at surrounding parking facilities may involve a charge. These are the best times to see the Big Boy. Outside of these display times, there is no public access to see the Big Boy.

Public Viewing Listed whistle stops and public viewing times are shorter duration opportunities to see the Big Boy. Admission is free, though parking may involve a charge. In some cases, the Big Boy will be behind a fence or other perimeter; you may not be able to get close.

Ticketed Viewing Some viewing opportunities require admission tickets as a fundraiser. In Portola, the viewing is from the Western Pacific Museum's observation deck; there is no up close access.

Passenger Excursion Opportunities to ride are rare, but when they are available as a fundraiser for charitable groups, they WILL be listed on this schedule. Any passenger excursion tickets are sold by outside entities -- not Union Pacific -- and are not available on the day of the excursion. All authorized passenger excursions will be listed on our schedule. There will not be a passenger excursion during the western leg of the Coast to Coast tour, though there will be an exciting opportunity to ride in the Big Boy's cab! As part of the tour, the [Union Pacific Railroad Museum](#) will be auctioning off four cab rides on Big Boy No. 4014, with proceeds going to support the non-profit Union Pacific Museum Association. The auction starts Monday, March 2 and ends Thursday, March 19. Details can be found at <https://rarauctions.com/upm>.

Overnight Stops Locations where the Big Boy stops overnight are closed to the public due to safety and security reasons, unless otherwise noted on the schedule. Non-employees who access these locations without permission will be treated as trespassers. Afternoon arrival locations and times are not available.

Big Boy No. 4014 Coast-to-Coast Tour -Western Leg Schedule

Sunday, March 29		
Cheyenne, WY NO PUBLIC ACCESS	Depart	8:00 a.m. MDT
Laramie, WY Laramie Railroad Depot 1st St & East Kearney St.	Arrive Depart	11:15 a.m. MDT 11:45 a.m. MDT
Medicine Bow, WY	Arrive	1:30 p.m. MDT
Monday, March 30		
Rawlins, WY NO PUBLIC ACCESS	Depart	9:00 a.m. MDT

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Wamsutter, WY Broadway & Boyd St.	Arrive Depart	10:30 a.m. MDT 11:00 a.m. MDT
Tuesday, March 31		
Rock Springs, WY	Public Viewing	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. MDT
Wednesday, April 1		
Rock Springs, WY	Depart	9:00 a.m. MDT
Green River, WY	Arrive	10:00 a.m. MDT
Thursday, April 2		
Evanston, WY	Depart	9:00 a.m. MDT
Morgan, UT Morgan Depot 98 Commercial St.	Arrive Depart	11:45 a.m. MDT 12:15 p.m. MDT
Salt Lake City, UT	Arrive	More to follow
Saturday, April 4		
Salt Lake City, UT	Depart	9:00 a.m. MDT
Wells, NV Pacific Ave. Crossing	Arrive Depart	4:15 p.m. PDT 4:45 p.m. PDT
Monday, April 6		
Elko, NV	Depart	9:00 a.m. PDT
Carlin, NV	Arrive	10:00 a.m. PDT
Battle Mountain, NV N. Reese Road Crossing	Arrive Depart	12:30 p.m. PDT 1:00 p.m. PDT
Tuesday, April 7		
Winnemucca, NV	Depart	9:00 a.m. PDT
Gerlach, NV Main St. & Beechnut Court	Arrive Depart	12:30 p.m. PDT 12:45 p.m. PDT
Wednesday, April 8		
Portola, CA Western Pacific Railroad Museum 600 Western Pacific Way	Ticketed Fundraiser	9:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. PDT More information will be available from wplives.org .
Thursday, April 9		
Portola, CA NO PUBLIC ACCESS	Depart	8:00 a.m. PDT
Oroville, CA Old Depot 2181 High St.	Arrive Depart	2:00 p.m. PDT 2:30 p.m. PDT
Marysville, CA 7th Street Crossing	Arrive Depart	3:30 p.m. PDT 3:45 p.m. PDT
Lincoln, CA 7th Street Crossing	Arrive Depart	4:30 p.m. PDT 4:45 p.m. PDT
Roseville, CA NO PUBLIC ACCESS	Private Union Pacific Employee Event	

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Friday, April 10		
Roseville, CA	Public Display	1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. PDT
Saturday, April 11		
Roseville, CA	Public Display	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. PDT
Sunday, April 12		
Roseville, CA	Depart	9:30 a.m. PDT
Colfax, CA Amtrak Depot 99 Railroad St.	Arrive Depart	12:00 Noon PDT 12:30 p.m. PDT
Truckee, CA Old Depot 10065 Donner Pass Road	Arrive Depart	4:30 p.m. PDT 4:45 p.m. PDT
Monday, April 13		
Sparks, NV	Private Union Pacific Employee Event	
Tuesday, April 14		
Sparks, NV	Depart	9:00 a.m. PDT
Lovelock, NV 8th Street Crossing	Arrive Depart	1:00 p.m. PDT 1:30 p.m. PDT
Wednesday, April 15		
Winnemucca, NV	Depart	9:00 a.m. PDT
Carlin, NV B Street Crossing.	Arrive Depart	1:15 p.m. PDT 1:45 p.m. PDT
Elko, NV Manzanita Dr and Zaga-way	Public Viewing	3:00 p.m - 5:00 p.m. PDT NO PUBLIC ACCESS after 5 p.m.
Friday, April 17		
Elko, NV	Depart	8:00 a.m. PDT
Wells, NV 7th St. between Wells and Humboldt	Arrive Depart	9:45 a.m. PDT 10:15 a.m. PDT
Montello, NV	Arrive Depart	12:00 Noon PDT 12:30 p.m. PDT
The Union Pacific Museum will be auctioning off two cab rides on April 17 in the locomotive, with proceeds going to the		
Saturday, April 18		
Ogden, UT Ogden Union Station	Public Display	10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. MDT Ride UTA
Sunday, April 19		
Ogden, UT Ogden Union Station	Public Display	11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. MDT No UTA Service on Sunday
Monday, April 20		
Ogden, UT NO PUBLIC ACCESS	Depart	8:00 a.m. MDT

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Morgan, WY Morgan Depot 98 Commercial St.	Arrive Depart	9:30 a.m. MDT 10:00 a.m. MDT
Tuesday, April 21		
Evanston, WY NO PUBLIC ACCESS	Depart	9:00 a.m. MDT
Green River, WY 300 E. Railroad Ave.	Arrive Depart	12:45 p.m. MDT 1:30 p.m. MDT
Thursday, April 23		
Rock Springs, WY NO PUBLIC ACCESS	Depart	9:00 a.m. MDT
Point of Rocks, WY Black Buttes Road Crossing.	Arrive Depart	10:00 a.m. MDT 10:15 a.m. MDT
Wamsutter, WY Broadway & Boyd St.	Arrive Depart	12:00 Noon 12:30 p.m. MDT
Friday, April 24		
Rawlins, WY NO PUBLIC ACCESS	Depart	9:00 a.m. MDT
Medicine Bow, WY McFadden Road Crossing	Arrive Depart	11:00 a.m. MDT 11:30 a.m. MDT
Laramie, WY Laramie Railroad Depot 1st St & East Kearney St.	Arrive Depart	1:15 p.m. MDT 1:45 p.m. MDT
Cheyenne, WY NO PUBLIC ACCESS	Arrive	4:00 p.m. MDT

After a multi-day locomotive maintenance period, the Coast-to-Coast Steam Tour will resume with the eastern leg. Details will be released as the eastern leg approaches.

Federal Railroad Administration Plans to Accept New Applications for Corridor Identification and Development Program

: Frederick Krenske <rick@usjet.net> January 28, 2026

Good news for new corridors. In December, the Federal Railroad Administration announced it would be accepting applications in 2026 for its Corridor Identification and Development program. The Corridor ID program is intended to provide a pipeline of new passenger rail projects across the US. Projects could provide additional frequency (additional trains per day), new service, and extension of existing service.

All Aboard Minnesota (AAMN) is asking the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to be ready to submit two applications for the 2026 funding round. One application would propose to study additional service on the corridor between Saint Paul and Fargo/Moorhead and the other to study new service on the corridor between Saint Paul and Kansas City. AAMN is asking the Minnesota legislature to direct MnDOT to make these applications.

The FRA funded 69 projects in the first funding round in 2022. Projects most relevant to Minnesota are shown below. Funded Corridor Study Proposer Collaborators Northern Lights Express (NLX) from Minneapolis to Duluth MnDOT WISDOT Second Daily Borealis via La Crosse WISDOT MnDOT Eau Claire-Twin Cities new service on an existing alignment Eau Claire County, WI MnDOT and WISDOT Milwaukee-Madison-Eau Claire-Twin Cities through Madison WI. WISDOT MnDOT Big Sky North Coast – Chicago to Seattle/Portland through southern MT Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority MnDOT, WISDOT, others In December, the FRA stated that a number of projects funded in 2022 would soon be given approval to advance to Step 2 of the Corridor ID process. AAMN hopes that Northern Lights Express (NLX) and other projects in the Midwest would move to Step 2. Step two requires a local match of 10 percent, which the Minnesota Legislature has already allocated for NLX.

MN: A St. Paul to Kansas City Passenger Train? St. Paul City Council Urges a Go.

Frederick Krenske <rick@usjet.net> Monday, February 9, 2026 (Metro News)

If they build it, would riders come along on the “TC to KC” line for a long weekend, with thoughts of Kansas City barbeque in mind? Fans of the Borealis Amtrak train route from St. Paul to Chicago have asked for state planners to keep up momentum and study additional passenger rail lines.

On Wednesday, the St. Paul City Council passed a resolution calling for a state study of new passenger rail service between St. Paul and Fargo/ Moorhead, as well as a potential “TC to KC” route connecting St. Paul to Kansas City, Mo.

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Both corridors are already listed as passenger rail priorities in the Minnesota Department of Transportation's state rail plan. They also were recommended in last year's Federal Railroad Administration's Amtrak Daily Long-Distance Service Study, which includes a potential extension to Texas.

The Federal Railroad Administration is expected to open a new grant application round this year for its "Corridor Identification and Development Program," which plans for intercity passenger rail development throughout the country. The city council resolution calls upon the Legislature to direct MnDOT to submit a Corridor Identification grant application to the FRA.

Amtrak's Empire Builder already makes daily stops in Fargo/ Moorhead, but it's notorious for falling hours off-schedule as it competes with freight trains in the Northern Plains and confronts weather delays. The council resolution notes that a second daily train would improve scheduling and better connect the Twin Cities to North Dakota.

Meanwhile, a St. Paul-to- Kansas City corridor would draw from three major population centers — the Twin Cities region (3.7 million people), the Des Moines area (740,000) and the Kansas City region (2.2 million). It also would connect existing Amtrak routes that serve Denver, San Francisco, Phoenix and Los Angeles.

The city council resolution notes that freight railroads, which often operate on the same tracks as Amtrak, would benefit from the increased capital investment, including railroad crossing upgrades.

The state-supported Borealis train, which launched in May 2024, has seen first-year ridership exceed projections by about 50%.

Rather than merely drawing passengers away from the St. Paul-to- Chicago segment of the Empire Builder route, the combined ridership showed a 227% increase at 293,000 riders, according to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

Duluth Train Spared Federal Ax

Tuesday, February 10, 2026 Frederick Krenske <rick@usjet.net> (Metro News)

Duluth train spared federal ax. A Republican-backed spending bill in the U.S. House last year would've explicitly banned federal funding for the long-planned Twin Cities-to-Duluth Northern Lights Express passenger rail line.

But that language wasn't in the Senate bill and didn't make it into the final version that passed Congress last week. Keith Nelson, chair of NLX Alliance, an advocacy group, said in a statement he was encouraged by the final bill and offered thanks to DFL Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith.

The state's congressional DFLers had opposed the NLX federal funding ban. Republicans, including Rep. Pete Stauber, whose district would host much of the line, supported it.

The final bill also did not include the House's massive cut to a Federal Transit Administration grant program that could fund a significant portion of Metro Transit's planned extension of the Blue Line through north Minneapolis and nearby suburbs.

It remains to be seen if the federal government will ultimately pony up the hundreds of millions of dollars the NLX and the Blue Line extension each need to become reality.

Union Pacific Recognized as Industry Leader in Intermodal Service in 2025

Wednesday, February 11, 2026 Frederick Krenske <rick@usjet.net> (Metro News)

Union Pacific has been rated North America's best performing railroad for intermodal service in 2025 in the Intermodal Service Scorecard published by the Journal of Commerce.

"We put a high value on our customers and their feedback. It's why this recognition is so meaningful, because it comes from the people and businesses we serve," said Union Pacific Executive Vice President of Marketing and Sales Kenny Rocker. "Our customers have choices and we're proud they trust Union Pacific to keep their supply chains moving."

Union Pacific was ranked the best Class I railroad for performance in intermodal service in both the Journal of Commerce's spring and fall surveys for 2025. In the latest survey, which covers the second half of 2025, the railroad received "good" or "very good" ratings from 80% of respondents. Customers gave high marks to Union Pacific's terminal gate processes for both inbound and outbound containers, and for equipment availability.

Demonstrating Union Pacific's strong intermodal service performance, the railroad continued to expand and enhance its intermodal service last year with new offerings, including the opening of its new intermodal terminal in Kansas City, Kansas.

"Our intermodal service is the best in the industry, and it's going to be even stronger through our merger with Norfolk Southern," said Rocker. "Not only is single-line cross-country service a game changer for enhanced reliability and lowering costs, but customers will also have one point of contact and one invoice."

Union Pacific's intermodal network reaches more markets, more frequently than any other North American railroad. The railroad's 32,000 miles of track provide access to intermodal ramps in growing population centers across the western United States.

In August 2025, Union Pacific announced a new domestic intermodal service product, connecting the City of Industry in Southern California to the new terminal in Kansas City. Also, during that same month, Union Pacific introduced a new, truck-competitive domestic intermodal service connecting Southern California's Inland Empire to Chicago, significantly boosting its intermodal capacity.

In September 2025, Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern announced a new domestic intermodal service connecting Union Pacific customers in western and southern markets with Norfolk Southern's modernized intermodal facilities in the Louisville area.

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

Reading & Northern Announces 2026 Excursions to Jim Thorpe, Pa.

By Trains Staff | February 19, 2026

Trains to run Saturdays, Sundays, some holidays



A Reading & Northern excursion train from Pittston arrives in Jim Thorpe, Pa. R&N

PORT CLINTON, Pa. — The Reading & Northern has announced its 2026 schedule of mainline excursions to Jim Thorpe, Pa., featuring operations from Pittston and Reading, Pa.

Trains will run Saturdays and Sundays through Sept. 20, as well as St. Patrick’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day. The railroad will also offer its annual fall foliage excursions, to be announced at a later date, and weekend trips in November and December. Regular fares remain at \$39 from either location, and can be purchased at the railroad website or by calling 610-562-2102 daily between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Trains from the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton regional station in Pittston depart at 8:45 a.m. and also make stops at Mountain Top/ Penobscot and White Haven. These trains feature first-class observation car King Coal, which can only be boarded at Pittston, and Crown Class coaches, along with a dining car offering snacks, beverages, and souvenirs

Trains from Reading are mainly served by the railroad’s Budd Rail Diesel Cars, which feature a refreshment counter in RDC No. 9166. Those trains depart Reading at 9 a.m. and make stops at Port Clinton and Tamaqua.

More information is available at [the R&N passenger website](#)

Adirondack Passenger Cars Obtained for Maine’s Rockland Branch Excursions

By Bob Johnston | October 21, 2025

Downeaster operating agency plans to monitor developments



Two Adirondack Railway coaches were spotted at Cumberland and Knox’s Rockland servicing facility on Oct. 10, 2025. The railroad expects a third coach to be purchased this winter. A full schedule of excursions is being planned for 2026 but regular connecting service with Amtrak trains at Brunswick, Me., is unlikely. Willard Carroll



Passengers depart from an Amtrak Downeaster arriving at Brunswick, Me. on Aug. 22, 2022. One of the problems of staging passenger connections at Brunswick is that the Rockland Branch operator’s jurisdiction does not include the station platform area or adjacent tracks, which are controlled by CSX. Bob Johnston

ROCKLAND, Maine—Two former Adirondack Railroad coaches equipped with heating and air conditioning have arrived at Cumberland & Knox Railroad’s Rockland facility for excursion operations on the state-owned Rockland branch.

Finn Kelly, the line’s government affairs manager, tells *Trains.com.*, “We’re still evaluating different options for excursions” on the 56-mile former Maine Central branch from Brunswick, Maine, to Rockland. “At this point we’re looking into a limited Christmas schedule and mapping out our 2026 excursions. We will likely utilize portions of the branch for regular excursions, but also offer rides over the whole railroad for special events.”

The service will run under “Pen Bay Scenic Railroad” auspices, the operating title of the Midcoast Rail Heritage Trust. This is the non-for-profit entity that also operates Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad passenger trips. “The excursions will run separately from Cumberland & Knox freight operations, but will utilize CKRR locomotives,” Kelly says.

Maine’s Department of Transportation awarded operating rights to Cumberland & Knox, a newly formed subsidiary of Maine Switching Services, after previous Rockland Branch operator Finger Lakes Railway relinquished its lease in 2024 following a precipitous drop in traffic by the line’s principal freight customer, Dragon Cement.

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Part of Finger Lakes' original pitch to Maine's DOT was that it would develop regularly scheduled passenger service between Rockland and Brunswick, where the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority-sponsored *Downeasters* now terminate. The plan was to utilize leased Budd rail diesel cars, which the company had modified to include an enlarged accessible restroom [see "["Coastliner? RDCs to debut ..."](#)" *Trains.com*, June 28, 2023]. The NNEPRA explored working out a connecting arrangement with the operator, as well as extending some Amtrak-operated round trips from Boston to Rockland. Then the RDCs developed mechanical problems and Finger Lakes' freight business collapsed.

Since Cumberland & Knox began revenue operations at the end of May, Kelly says the railroad's freights have gone from operating approximately twice monthly to weekly departures [see "["Cumberland & Knox runs first revenue train ..."](#)" *Trains.com*, June 3, 2025]. "Dragon Cement has increased their volumes and former customer Dicaperl Minerals of Thomaston, Me., has come back on line," he says. "Additionally, we expect Bath Iron Works to resume shipments of steel for new naval vessels being built." The company has also leased less than a mile of Maine Central's former "Lower Road" at Brunswick to facilitate interchange with CSX as it increases carload volume.

The excursion operating model Cumberland & Knox has chosen precludes any immediate implementation of scheduled passenger service that would regularly connect with *Downeasters*. Liability insurance and Federal Railroad Administration reporting requirements would require substantial initial and ongoing investments. Maine's legislature had originally designated \$3 million for such a pilot program, but those DOT funds have since been reallocated.

At a recent NNEPRA board of directors meeting in which the topic of 2026 priorities came up, executive director Patricia Quinn said the organization would "explore opportunities to revisit the Rockland expansion and to monitor the ongoing rail activities on the line." In an email to *Trains.com*, she writes, "I have had no discussions with Cumberland & Knox, but am interested in learning what the plans are when they become available."

Auburn Road Special Excursions to Benefit URHS

By Bob Lettenberger | February 24, 2026

Rare mileage trips slated for New York's Finger Lakes Railway



The Auburn Road Special on Finger Lakes Railway will feature a single-locomotive and three former New York Central lounge cars from the United Railway Historical Society of New Jersey collection. URHS



The rear-facing Lookout Lounge aboard the *Hickory Creek* offers a view of the passing scenery through over-sized windows. Proceeds from the Auburn Road Special will be used for improvements to the 20th Century Limited tail car. URHS

BOONTON, N.J. — The United Railroad Historical Society of New Jersey will be hosting a weekend of rail excursions along the former New York Central Auburn Road branch on April 18-19, the organization announced in [a Facebook post](#).

The Auburn Road Special will offer two excursions covering what is now the east end of the Finger Lakes Railway. Proceeds will support improvements to the society's former **20th Century Limited** lounge car ***Hickory Creek***.

There are 78 tickets available per trip. Tickets sales begin at 10 a.m., Friday, Feb. 27.

One excursion will be run each day. The trips are scheduled for six hours between Solvay and Seneca Falls, N.Y. Passengers will ride aboard one of URHS's three authentic New York Central lounge cars — *Hickory Creek*, tavern-lounge No. 43, or the *Swift Stream*. The trips will feature lunch served on board, two photo runbys, a single-locomotive consist, and a tour of the historic 1870 Martisco, N.Y., station.

During the Auburn Road Special, passengers ticketed for the *Hickory Creek* will enjoy a three-course meal prepared by an onboard chef, with beer and wine served throughout, all included in the ticket price. Professional staff in period attire will be on hand for the entire trip to serve guests at their seats. *Hickory Creek* passengers will also enjoy the spectacular rear view from the Lookout Lounge, unobstructed by a locomotive for the first half of the excursion.

Seats in the *Swift Stream* are sold in groups of two or four at either reserved tables in the car's lounge or private suites in the car's Pullman bedrooms. Suites consist of two bedrooms opened up to each other, arranged for daytime seating, as they would have been in the 1940s. Seats in the tavern-lounge No. 43 consist of either banquette seating or lounge chairs, with plenty of room for passengers to move about. The event will serve as a fundraiser for planned improvements to the *Hickory Creek*, the signature tail car from the 1948 edition of the *20th Century Limited*.

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When the car was restored, key historical details were unavailable, notably the correct carpet pattern and the identity of the painting that originally hung on the lounge wall. Through research in recent years, URHS has accurately identified the carpet pattern and the painting. Both will now be added to the car.

The *Hickory Creek*, according to Kevin Phalon, URHS executive director, was one of a few cars of its type, if not the only one, to carry an original painting hung on the wall of its lounge area. "Through advanced reverse photo searching techniques we have been able to identify that painting," Phalon says. "We found it now belongs to a museum in Maine. They have agreed to provide a high-quality scan for reproduction. It is one more detail that will bring the car closer to original status."

These excursions mark the beginning of the Finger Lakes Rail Experience's second season. Founded in 2025 as a partnership between FMW Rail Operations and the Finger Lakes Railway, FLRX brought wine train excursions to life across several New York counties, including Ontario, Seneca, and Cayuga, carrying more than 11,000 passengers in its inaugural season.

For additional information or ticket purchase, please visit the United Railway Historical Society of New Jersey [website](#)

Northern Pacific No. 1364 Runs Again After 73 years

By [Bob Lettenberger](#) | February 23, 2026

Locomotive restoration took several attempts and decades to complete



Former Northern Pacific 4-6-0 No. 1364 rolls into the Toppenish, Wash., station, which is now the Northern Pacific Railway Museum, under its own power. After decades of restoration work the 1902 Baldwin Locomotive Works product has been brought back to life by museum volunteers. NPRM



One of the final restoration hurdles for No. 1364 was moving the locomotive into a shop facility so the elements would not impede progress. That was done in 2001. Here, No. 1364 sits inside the Northern Pacific Railway Museum's shop. NPRM

Following these modifications, the S-4s became well liked locomotives, working branch lines on the Northern Pacific's west end. Most of the class, including No. 1364, logged more than 50 years of service until displaced by diesel power. No. 1364 was removed from the roster on Jan. 1, 1954. For decades, No. 1364 has been on static display or stored following several restoration attempts. After retirement, the Northern Pacific refurbished the locomotive and donated it to the city of Tacoma in 1954 for display in Point Defiance Park. In 1974, the group Trains, Inc. moved the locomotive to a leased siding in nearby Nallys Valley. The intent was an operational restoration. Without funding and after finding more rust than anticipated, this effort failed when the siding lease expired in 1979. No. 1364 was moved from the Nallys Valley location to Tacoma's tidal flats, where it sat in the salt air for six years. Then in 1985, the locomotive was transferred to the Mount Rainier Scenic Railroad near Mineral, Wash., and left in pieces on a siding. Finally, in 1994, No. 1364 was moved to Toppenish, Wash., where the current restoration effort began. Beyond work on the locomotive, there was one significant final hurdle — the organization did not have an indoor shop facility and the weather continued to take its toll on the project.

. Finally, in 2001 a shop building was acquired and No. 1364 moved inside for the balance of the restoration. The museum indicates No. 1364 will operate on its tracks for events. An operational schedule will be announced shortly via its [Facebook page](#).

For more information about the Northern Pacific Railway Museum and No. 1364, visit its [website](#)



Baltimore Streetcar Museum Profile

By [Lucas Iverson](#) | February 23, 2026

Since 1968, the Baltimore Streetcar Museum has operated its distinctive and unique collection of streetcars and other transit equipment.

Since 1968, the Baltimore Streetcar Museum has operated its distinctive and unique collection of [streetcars](#) and other transit equipment. In recent years, the collection's scope has expanded slightly to include cars from Philadelphia and New Jersey.

Choices

At the Baltimore Streetcar Museum, take a 1-mile round trip up the former right-of-way of the Maryland & Pennsylvania RR in the Jones Falls Valley, passing the historic former Ma & Pa freight house and roundhouse before turning on a loop for return. The visitor center houses museum displays, a gift shop, an auditorium, and a research library.

When to go

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The museum is open Sunday afternoons from March through December and Saturday afternoons from June through October; summers in Baltimore can be excessively hot and muggy. Holiday events run in December, and private and school charters occasionally run during the week.

Good to know

There is a family admission plan as well as individual admission; all include unlimited rides, car house tours, museum access, and a guide pamphlet.

Worth doing

Baltimore is a historic city full of things to see, from the B&O Railroad Museum and the Baltimore Civil War Museum (in a restored rail station headhouse) to the National Aquarium and the *USS Constellation*. The Mt. Vernon neighborhood, with the Walters Art Gallery, Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, the Peabody Institute, and shops and restaurants, is a short distance to the south.

Don't miss

A total of 13 Baltimore streetcars, ranging from a horsecar to the city's last PCC, plus four Philadelphia and Newark PCCs and snow-sweepers, as well as several buses and "trackless trolleys," are in the museum's collection.

Getting there

The museum is in the northern part of the central section of the city, two blocks west of the major north-south streets of Charles St. and Maryland Avenue. Amtrak's Penn Station is a couple of minutes' walk to the east. The MTA Light Rail also serves Penn Station. The Purple Route of the city's free Charm City Circulator bus service connects downtown and Federal Hill with the aforementioned Penn Station.

Location: 1901 Falls Road, Baltimore, MD

Phone: 410-547-0264

Website: baltimorestreetcarmuseum.org

E-mail: info@baltimorestreetcarmuseum.org

Kentucky Railway Museum Profile

By [Lucas Iverson](#) | February 23, 2026

The Kentucky Railway Museum has more than 50,000 items in its collection and more than 120 locomotives and pieces of rolling stock.



Named the official steam locomotive of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Louisville & Nashville No. 152 is the showpiece of the Kentucky Railway Museum and is currently undergoing restoration. KRM

Housed in a replica of the original New Haven station, the Kentucky Railway Museum has more than 50,000 items in its collection and more than 120 locomotives and pieces of rolling stock. The museum also operates excursions on 17 miles of the former Louisville & Nashville track.

Choices

The excursion at the Kentucky Railway Museum takes you on a nostalgic trip along L&N's historic Lebanon Branch. Diesel operating power includes ex-Monon BL-2 No. 32 and ex-AT&SF CF-7 No. 2546. You can ride in climate-controlled coaches.

When to go

The museum is open year-round, and excursions take place from April to December. Trains run on weekends throughout the season with added Tuesday excursions during the summer months. Spring and fall scenery is nice, with temperatures in the 70s and low 80s.

Commonwealth of Kentucky and is [currently under restoration](#)

Good to know

Steam locomotive No. 152 was built in 1905 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was designated the official steam locomotive of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and is [currently under restoration](#)

Worth doing

Abraham Lincoln was born nearby, and historical sites to visit include his birthplace, boyhood home, and the Lincoln Museum. Mammoth Cave National Park, Fort Knox, the General George Patton Museum, and My Old Kentucky Home State Park are also close by.

Don't miss

The museum offers specialty trains that include dining by rail, locomotive cab rides, train robberies, and Santa trains.

Getting there

The museum is about 45 miles from Louisville and 65 miles from Lexington. If driving from Louisville, take I-65 south to Exit 105, Route 61 to Boston, and then Route 52 to New Haven. From Lexington, take Highway 60 west to the Martha Layne Collins Parkway. Take the parkway to Exit 21 and then Route 31E to New Haven.

Location: 136 South Main Street, New Haven, KY

Phone: 800-272-0152

Website: kyrail.org



Vermont Rail System Passenger Services Profile

By [Lucas Iverson](#) | February 23, 2026

Vermont Rail System, owner of five short lines in New York and the Green Mountain State, operates a variety of special trains out of its Burlington headquarters.

Vermont Rail System Passenger Services, the owner of five short lines in New York and the Green Mountain State, operates a variety of special trains out of its Burlington headquarters. The **Vermont Rail System** is a privately held company that operates multiple short lines. It's family-owned by the Wulfson family for more than 50 years.

Choices

Dinner trains operate out of Burlington on weekends from June through October by the Vermont Rail System Passenger Services. The premier operation is the *Champlain Valley Dinner Train*, featuring a three-hour ride to Middlebury and returns, with a three-course meal prepared on board. Wine tasting Murder Mystery, and specials also are scheduled. The railroad operates chartered train rides throughout the state for the benefit of organizations and charities, and some of these are open to the public. See the website for options and a complete schedule of excursions taking place.

When to go

Vermont is famed for its spectacular fall foliage, usually peaking in early October. Summer is less crowded, making for a pleasant visit during those months.

Good to know

Train operations and special charters change from year to year, so be sure to check the website before planning your visit.

Worth doing

Burlington, along the shore of Lake Champlain, is the state's largest city and home of the University of Vermont and offers plenty to see and do. You can take a ferry across the lake to Port Kent, N.Y.

Don't miss

The railroad's passenger fleet includes green heavyweight cars built for the Central Railroad of New Jersey and stainless-steel equipment from the [Santa Fe](#).

Getting there

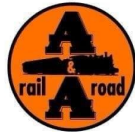
Burlington's station is located downtown near the shore of Lake Champlain. Use Exit 14 from Interstate 89 and go west on U.S. Route 2.

Location: 1 Railway Lane, Burlington, VT

Phone: 800-707-3530

Website: rails-vt.com

E-mail: passenger@vrs.us.com



Arcade and Attica Railroad Profile

By [Lucas Iverson](#) | February 23, 2026

The train of World War I-era cars, powered by General-Electric diesel locomotives from the 1940s and 50s, is truly a blast from the past.

The train of World War I-era cars, powered by a steam locomotive or General-Electric diesels from the 1940s and 50s, is truly a blast from the past. The scenic ride passes through countryside that has changed little over the last two centuries. The Arcade and Attica Railroad is an authentic shortline railroad with the distinction of being one of the last "common carriers" — running freight and passenger trains weekly.

Choices

On the 14-mile, 2.5-hour round trip of the Arcade and Attica Railroad, passengers may opt to ride in either 1915-era steel coaches built for the [Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad](#), or in a covered open-air car.

When to go

Most trips operate weekends only from May through October, with holiday trips in December. Additional weekday service is sometimes added during July, August, and October. Be sure to check the railroad's website for up-to-date schedules.

Good to know

Steam locomotive 2-8-0 No. 18 was built in November 1920 by the American Locomotive Co. It operates on select days, with a schedule posted on the railroad's website and [Facebook pages](#).

Worth doing

Throughout the year, the railroad offers a variety of special events, including Civil War and World War II reenactments, a Great Train Robbery, Murder Mystery Dinner Theater, Halloween Haunted trains, and of course *Santa's Wonderful Express* in December. Adult-themed events include "Whiskey on Wheels," "Ale on the Rails," and other adult beverage tasting trips.

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Don't miss

Be sure to check out a vintage freight train on display at the railroad's parking lot as well as artifacts, photographs, and operating model railroads in the Arcade station.

Getting there

Arcade is located about an hour's drive south of Buffalo. The museum is located 3 miles east of Route 16 on Main Street at Railroad Avenue.

Location: 278 Main Street, Arcade, NY

Phone: 585-492-3100

Website: aarailroad.com

E-mail: arcadeandatticarr@yahoo.com

Steamtown's Future: Railroad Heritage at a Crossroads

By John Hankey | August 29, 2025

Steamtown has the potential to redefine railroad heritage in America



A fractured glass plate negative in the Steamtown National Historic Site collection shows Wilmington & Weldon's No. 36, a 4-4-0 built by Rogers in 1866. As a new superintendent takes the helm, Steamtown in Scranton, Pa., remains one of the most significant railroad preservation efforts on the continent, but its full potential has yet to be realized. National Park Service



Out of service since 2010, Canadian Pacific 4-6-2 No. 2317 poses in low-angle sunlight at Steamtown National Historic Site while visitors record their encounter with railroading's past. National Park Service

Thirty years after its grand opening as a unit of the National Park Service, **Steamtown National Historic Site** in Scranton, Pa., is at a crossroads. Whether you admire or disdain it, know nothing about it, or simply hope for its survival, it remains a significant railroad preservation effort. Steamtown has the potential to expand the ways we think about railroad heritage and could redefine the ways future generations understand how railroad mobility helped shape America.

Or it could be left to wither by a federal agency under great stress, with hundreds of NPS units competing for diminishing resources while dealing with increasing demands. No one has yet described the situation in such stark terms. But to me, the risks look all too real.

Time for a reset

The present moment seems particularly ripe for a reset. It has been almost 70 years since Steamtown took shape as a concept and project, and 40 years since its authorization as a National Historic Site. In a rapidly changing world, an occasional course correction is not just prudent — it may mean long-term survival. We should be clear about a few basic realities. Steamtown is a unit of the National Park Service, and has to conform to the NPS mission and process. Its audience is not the 150,000 serious railroad enthusiasts, but 340 million Americans. NPS administers 433 wildly diverse sites and parks with a staff of roughly 18,000 full- and part-time employees. If it were a railroad, it would rank with the Class I's in complexity. Steamtown is one of five railroad-focused sites nestled within that vast NPS enterprise. The others are **Golden Spike National Historical Park**, celebrating the completion of the Pacific railroad; **Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site**, which is primarily railroad archeology; **Pullman National Historical Park** in Chicago; and **Cuyahoga Valley National Park**, which hosts a partner's excursion operation. Another half-dozen NPS units have some kind of railroad component. Steamtown, with its varied program of railroad operations, is part of a very small cohort. As such, it does not fit easily into the usual NPS categories, never has, never will. It isn't exactly an orphan, but the very nature of railroad heritage preservation and operations introduces multiple challenges that NPS policy and procedures are not well-equipped to handle.

Steamtown recently welcomed a new superintendent — its sixth, not counting a few in interim capacities. My strong impression is that Jeremy Komasz is the right person at the right time with the right skills. The superintendent of Steamtown does not need to be a railroad expert or historian. The ability to lead, administrative savvy, open-mindedness, and courage are more important.

Komasz comes from "the outside" — specifically, the U.S. Navy and defense industry. He continues to serve as a SEAL and is a captain in the Naval Reserves. His degree from The George Washington University is in International Relations with a minor in History. I imagine his M.A. from the Naval War College in Strategic Studies, and his experience with tribal relations in Afghanistan will help him negotiate the sometimes tribal world of railroad preservation.

The military, railroading, and the National Park Service share a strong sense of mission, and understand strategy, tactics, logistics, and process. Less remarked upon are parallel traditions of accommodations, work-arounds, and ways to make rules work in your favor.

The goal is not to avoid or subvert the NPS process, but to compliment Steamtown's work with the help of volunteers, colleague institutions, and its Official Philanthropic Partner, the Iron Horse Society.

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What Next?

There is no “best way” to address how Steamtown’s future unfolds. I’m certain NPS has its priorities, and Komasz brings both military and corporate approaches to visioning, planning, and strategy. Still, I’d like to think that lessons and insights from our particular branch of cultural resource management — Train World — will be part of the mix.

Let’s start with a pause, review, exploration of options, and perhaps restart on a better basis. This review might develop a clear understanding of what Steamtown can, and cannot, do as an NPS unit. That would be coupled with an outline what the site would like to do — short-and long-term objectives, needs, wants, deficiencies, and so forth. A Dutch uncle would suggest that Steamtown acknowledge it is part of many other relevant communities, and pay more attention to colleague institutions — especially in history of industry and technology, railroad preservation, and heritage operations. NPS, and many of its sites, tend to be inwardly focused and seemingly aloof. Komasz has already begun the kind of outreach that, to my knowledge, none of his predecessors seriously undertook. I’d like to think we will reciprocate.

There will be some heavy lifting, but all of us — the National Park Service, the railroad heritage community, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the region, and even potential visitors — have a great deal to lose if we can’t help SNHS regain its footing and boost its visitation.

We can do many things to encourage Steamtown’s renaissance. First, we simply need to accept Steamtown as it is now, not what we think was promised four decades ago. Those were vastly different times, and reality outran good intentions. At some point it does no good to nitpick, complain of deficiencies, or critique without contributing something as well. Visits are always in order. Joining the [Iron Horse Society](#) is substantive and helpful.

Better yet, let your Senator or Representative know you appreciate NPS efforts to conserve and present the story of American railroading. We all know how important grease is to squeaky wheels. We need to squeak more.

Celebrate the fact that the National Park Service regards railroad heritage as part of our nation’s heritage. Steamtown will never be the country’s largest or most important railroad site or collection, but it can punch far above its weight.

A New Era?

What do we, as a large and diverse community of railroad interests, think Steamtown should aspire to become? That may seem like an amusing thought experiment but good ideas tend to rise to the top, and gradually gain traction. Collectively, Train World has thousands of years of experience presenting our slice of the American Experience to all sorts of audiences. It is in our best interest to help Steamtown reach as many people as possible with the most interesting and persuasive messages we can devise. It is a safe bet that whatever good works come out of a rejuvenated Steamtown will be useful at other railroad sites.

Now also would be a fine time for a symposium to assess the overall state of railway heritage and preservation, and where it might be in 10 or 20 years. We did that sort of thing years ago, and accomplished a lot. Zoom will not do.

Railway heritage, NPS, and Steamtown share many broad concerns, such as how we engage young people as visitors and as potential participants. How do we train future generations in the often-arcane ways of traditional railroad work? At the other extreme, every operator of steam locomotives in the country — including NPS — comes under the same strict regulatory regime. As they were at the California State Railroad Museum and Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, a gathering at Steamtown would offer context, examples, and the chance to build relationships.

It’s also time to revisit Steamtown’s own mission. NPS has changed, as have Steamtown’s many audiences.

The academic fields of railroad history, history of technology, and American cultural history have matured greatly and offer a large and sophisticated set of tools. A symposium at Steamtown, about Steamtown and the future of railroad heritage, is overdue. Why not envision Steamtown as a presentation of American railroading, but in the larger, richer context of America’s First Industrial Revolution? Make it an integrated account of how railroad mobility, coal, and iron made it possible to settle the continent and create great cities. Nothing Steamtown has done would be wasted — but its opportunities for growth and relevance (and new resources) would expand considerably.

With a more comprehensive and coherent agenda, we can legitimately ask other people (industries, agencies, foundations, interest groups) to share some of the costs. In any event, we have to start somewhere, and a new superintendent from a different cut of cloth is an excellent next step. No single leader can revive an institution the size of Steamtown by himself, or even with the small — but capable — staff he has to work with. We should be careful not to expect too much too soon. But I also have a hunch that whatever the job throws at him, Komasz will find a way over, around, or through it.

Our mission, should we choose to accept it, is to put the past behind us and think creatively about what could happen. While we can’t change anything that unfolded in the last 40 years, we absolutely can do things differently in the next 40.

[Read an overview of Steamtown’s history](#)

Rails to the Sky: Cass Scenic Railroad

By C.A. Burdette | August 19, 2024

A summer of firing on West Virginia’s Cass Scenic Railroad

THIS IS A STORY ABOUT ONE SUMMER in the life of a fireman on the [Cass Scenic Railroad](#) in Cass, W.Va. I was hired in 1972 as a shop hand and extra fireman. I worked about six months in the shop and then was put on as regular fireman on the short run — a 4-mile trip up Cheat Mountain, with grades up to 10%, three times a day. The regular engineer was a man who liked to run fast and with the Johnson Bar full forward for maximum power. I had my work cut out for me to maintain water and steam in the boiler. The engine I drew was 80-ton Shay No. 4, which was a good steamer.

THE FIREMAN’S DAY

My day started long before the first tourist appeared. Each morning, I first checked the boiler water level, then blowing down the water glass to see if it was working properly.

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Shay No. 2 climbs to the first switchback tail track with a June 2016 Trains Photo Special. Built in 1928, it came to Cass from Mayo Lumber Co. on Canada's Vancouver Island in May 1972. The engine has burned wood, oil, and coal in its life. Three photos, Kevin Gilliam

The one remaining original Cass engine, three-truck Shay No. 5, heads up a freight just below Whittaker during Railfan Weekend 2014. Built for the Greenbrier & Elk River Railroad in 1905, it is the second-oldest Shay in operation.

Western Maryland No. 6, the last Shay ever built and the largest in existence, climbs Cass Hill in May 2009. The 150-ton, three-truck Shay spent its regular service hauling coal on WM's Chaffee Branch in Maryland, and was returned to service at Cass in 1981

Next, I would open the firebox door and look for leaks or any kind of bulge in the boiler. Then I would put the screen on the smokestack to keep hot cinders from setting fire to the right-of-way. Leveling out the fire and shaking the grates until the ashes fell in the ash pan was next, followed by going under the engine and raking out the ash pan. By now steam pressure would be rising. Back in the cab I added a little more coal to the fire and checked both injectors to see if they were working. As I waited for steam pressure to rise, I would sweep the cab roof and running boards. Then, if there was time, I'd shine the bell and number plate. With the steam up, it was time to make up our train and head for the depot. On my first run up the mountain I did everything my father, a lifelong railroad man, had taught me years before. No. 4 was a good steamer, but the engineer showed me no mercy on my first day. I fought all the way for steam and water and made it without stalling. I got better with each trip, learned the grade, and knew what the engineer was going to do before he did it. I was known as the fireman that did not make smoke and could lift No. 4's safety valves at any time. I played a trick on our conductor by being on my seat, looking out the window, when the train was in a long curve allowing him to view the fireman's side. One day, in the shop, he said a fireman who worked back in log train days could fire an engine and stay seated half of the time. "Now," he said, "Burdette can fire one of these engines and sit on his seat all of the time." What he didn't know was I fired before the curve, making sure the stack was clear in time to be in my window watching the scenery when we reached that curve.

NO. 4 ON THE GROUND

Once, on the day's first trip up the mountain, we came out of the first switchback and into Gum Curve, which is on a heavy grade. Suddenly No. 4 began to spin its wheels wildly and jumped the track. We climbed down and discovered the line shaft had come apart just behind the cylinders. That rendered the rear two trucks useless, as they were receiving no power. The broken line shaft landed on the track and derailed the front truck. We waited until the Bald Knob train came up. They took our passengers and returned to Cass. We put down the rerailers and, with the front trucks for power and the downhill pull of the cars, rerailed No. 4. We got her back to the shop on her own power. The next day I fired No. 5. She was known to be hard to steam — if the engineer abused her. I knew I was in trouble by the time we passed the shop. I watched the engineer open the throttle wider and my steam pressure go down 25 pounds. No. 5 is a 90-ton Shay with the safety valve set to pop at 200 pounds of pressure. I had 175 pounds of steam and the grade was getting steeper. Something had to be done quickly. I began to think of things my dad told me to watch when steam pressure dropped quickly. I got the fire hook down from the tender, turned it upside down, and began running it all over the firebox. It didn't take long to discover two large holes in the front of the fire. I shut off the injector, raked hot coals back on the bare grates, and put several shovels of coal in that area. The injector couldn't be left off too long or I would have low water and low steam. I waited until the needle on the steam gauge started to move upward, and then put the gun (injector) back on. All the way to the first switchback I kept the injector off, thereby not losing any pressure from opening of the fire door. Pulling into the first switchback, the engineer closed the throttle, and No. 5 lifted her safety valve. My water was on the mark. Now came the real test. A Shay is harder to fire when it is backing up, and it's about a mile to the next switchback. As we began moving backward, I waited until the smoke cleared from the stack, then turned my shovel upside down and stuck it in the fire door, turning it in different directions. This made the fire "lay down," allowing me to see its condition. My fire was pool-table level. After the first hard pull, the fire was white hot, and I began my firing routine again, never firing against the gun but jerking it on with one sweeping motion each time the last full shovel of coal went through the fire door. The steam pressure stayed right at 200 pounds. I would not allow the safety to pop, or for the steam to drop.

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As we backed through what is known as Limestone Cut, I could not resist any longer. It's a hard pull through this cut and most firemen, if they don't watch carefully, will lose 15 to 20 pounds of steam. Today, as No. 5 got down on her knees, the pop valves lifted with a mighty roar. We backed on up to the second switchback with the pop valve just ready to release.

Next, I was facing a 11% grade and five curves into Whittaker Station. As we came forward out of the switchback, the engineer really opened the throttle wide. I shut off the gun and bailed coal into the firebox. The gun stayed off until we entered the first of the five curves and began ascending the 11% grade. The steep grade was getting the better of the engine. It began slowing down. The safety was about to pop off. I put the gun back on, keeping steam pressure at 200 pounds.

I got up on my seat, and watched the scenery go by. It is all up to the engineer now — my steam pressure and water were right on the mark. The engine got down to a crawl and you could feel the locomotive shudder as it strained against the load. Whittaker Station came into sight. It feels like my father and grandfather are riding with me. In a way they were, because my firing was just as they had taught me years before. In the days that followed, there was no trouble in keeping No. 5 hot.

TAKING ON NO. 6 — A HEISLER

I fired No. 5 for about a month, then got the No. 4 back. About a week later, No. 4 had to go into the shop. This time I drew No. 6 — a 100-ton Heisler locomotive, which was known to be a tough engine to keep hot. No. 6 had a long firebox, and a fire door close to the cab floor. This combination forced you to bend way over when shoveling coal, making it exceedingly hard to reach the firebox front. Additionally, No. 6 was easy to flood — put too much water in the boiler and it will end up in the cylinders.

As we went around the water tank on my first No. 6 trip, I promptly lost 25 pounds of steam. I knew I was in trouble because we were just starting up the mountain.

A mile up the mountain, at the first road crossing, steam was still down to 175 pounds and the grade was getting tougher. I fought for every foot of track. My water level was dropping as well as my steam pressure and the engineer would not ease up on the throttle and give No. 6 and I a chance to catch up.

We limped to the first switchback with 150 pounds of steam and low water. Here I thought the engineer would let me catch up on water and steam, but instead he reversed the locomotive and began backing up the steep grade into Gum Field.

The water was too low for me to knock off the gun. We made it to Gum Curve — and stalled. Knowing the engineer would try to make up for lost time, I made no attempt to raise steam until enough water was in the boiler. Once we started to move, having plenty of water would allow me to leave the gun off a bit. This way we might be able to limp into the next switchback, while gaining a little more steam and maintaining water. We sat there stalled for what seemed like an hour to a red-faced fireman, but was only a few minutes.

The engineer waited until steam pressure reached 200 pounds and then pulled out. We made it to the second switchback with enough water but low steam pressure. Now it was a different story. The gun could stay off. As we came out of the switchback going forward, I could see No. 6 was getting hot. As we went into the S curve at the base of the grade, No. 6's safety was trying to pop but I wasn't going to allow it and put the injector on. Still, she tried to pop. I began fanning the fire door — opening and closing it, letting cold air enter the firebox.

I kept the safety from lifting until we got up over that section of track then, just for the heck of it, let her pop!

I fired No. 6 many times after this and while she remained a cranky old lady, she never stalled on me again.

OIL-BURNING NO. 3

The next engine I fired at Cass was No. 3, an oil-burning, 100-ton Shay. No. 3 was a good steamer and rode easy. She had a large all-weather cab, and all the firing controls were easy to reach from the fireman's seat. The water glass and steam gauge were also easy for the fireman to see. I fired the No. 3 for a long time before returning to my regular engine, No. 4.

ONE FAST WEEKEND

One day as I was going to my car after work, the boss stopped me and said I was to report the next day as fireman on the lead engine for the "long run" — the train that goes to the top of Cheat Mountain with grades up to 12%. He told me I would be on No. 2, a 100-ton oil-fired Shay. My engineer would be a retired man coming back to work for just one weekend.

The next morning found the engineer bragging that he was going to get to the top of Cheat Mountain 30 minutes ahead of the regular arrival time.

No. 5 was serving as the helper engine today. I got No. 2 ready, and we were at the depot on time. As departure time grew near, I wondered what the trip would be like. At five minutes before departure time, No. 5 coupled on to our tender. Up in No. 2's cab I made some last-minute adjustments. My water was right where I wanted it; the steam gauge read 199 pounds.

The conductor gave us the highball signal as he came out of the depot. I turned and relayed it to the engineer, who reached up pulling the whistle cord twice, released the brakes, and opened the throttle. We left the depot right on time.

He gave her time until we reached the locomotive shop and then the throttle really came out! No. 2 shot smoke and steam sky high, and the drivers began to spin wildly. He didn't let up on the throttle, he just put more sand on the rails. The noise in the cab was like I had never heard before. I thought surely No. 2 would tear apart in the middle. Turning the oil valve almost closed, I got down on the gangway, putting sand through the firebox door to clear the soot out of the flues. I glanced up at the steam gauge and had lost 25 pounds in the time it took to do this. I grabbed the oil valve, turning it wide open, and watched for what seemed like a long time before the steam pressure started back up. By the time we passed the first road crossing I was back up to 185 pounds on the pressure gauge.

From here to the first switchback, it was a battle to maintain water and steam. We pulled into the switchback with 175 pounds of steam, but the water was good. As we backed between the first and second switchbacks, I was only able to hold the 175 pounds of steam.

If I could limp into Whittaker Station — where we would stop for about 30 minutes — maybe I could catch up. Well, he hogged her into Whittaker Station ahead of time. As we sat there, I went back to the pusher engine to see how they were doing and talk about what a ride we were taking. The engineer of No. 5 said, "Hell, man, you are taking the whole train. It's all I can do just to keep up."

When the trip resumed, I was back at it, maintaining my water level but unable to get above 185 pounds of steam. Although we arrived at the top 30 minutes early, as my engineer had boasted, I knew he would try to beat that the next day.

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Lying in bed that night, I tried to figure out why I couldn't get No. 2 above 185 pounds of pressure. I remembered adjusting the controls didn't seem to make a difference but when I sanded the flues it helped steam pressure for a while. I decided, there in bed, to do more sanding of the flues and leave the controls set in a good position.

The next morning, I made sure the sandbox in No. 2's cab was full. We went to the depot on time and when we got there, two railroad officials from Charleston, W.Va., climbed up in the cab and told the engineer what a fine job he had done the day before. I knew today was going to be a fast ride!

I went back to the No. 5 pusher engine and relayed what had been said, warning them to expect an even faster trip. I had No. 2 ready when No. 5 coupled up. I glanced back at the pusher fireman, who wiped his face as if already sweating.

We left on time and, again, as we cleared the shop area, the No. 2's throttle was pulled wide open. This time I was ready. I left the oil valve alone but put about 5 gallons of sand through the fire door. Much to my surprise, the hand on the steam gauge rose steadily towards the 200-pound mark, which was where the pop valve would lift. I could now cut back on the oil valve and control the pop valve.

For the rest of the trip, whenever steam pressure would lag, I knew it was time to sand the flues.

Our two trips to Bald Knob on Cheat Mountain that weekend were the fastest ever to the summit — a record that still stands today. I learned a Shay will take a good amount of punishment and keep on going.

HOME COMING

I'm no longer with the railroad but I return each summer and fire at least one trip up the mountain. On some weekends I have fired the mighty No. 6 Shay, acquired from the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum following my departure from Cass. It is the last Shay built and weighs in at a whopping 162 tons. No. 6 is a good steamer and rides like a rocking chair.

I have many of good memories of my railroad days and will never forget the smell of valve oil mingled with steam.

My favorite engine to fire? That's easy: No. 5. She's the oldest engine at Cass, arriving new in 1905 and has spent her entire life on Cheat Mountain. She has seen a lot of engineers and firemen come and go. My dad engineered No. 5 for many years and was the first engineer to put her on top of Bald Knob.

No. 5 is like one of the family to me. I try to return each summer to shovel a little coal into her firebox and listen to her soft exhaust as she works her way up Cheat Mountain on rails that seem to reach the sky.

California State Railroad Museum Announces Events to Mark Transcontinental Railroad Anniversary

NEWSWIRE

By [Angela Cotey](#) | November 19, 2018 | Last updated on November 3, 2020

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The California State Railroad Museum will host a number of events in 2019 to mark the completion of the first transcontinental railroad.

SACRAMENTO – In 2019, the California State Railroad Museum & Foundation are proud to present a series of exciting events, activities and exhibits to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. As history can attest, the completion of the 1,912-mile continuous railroad line was arguably the single greatest technological feat of the 19th century. It helped to connect the country, shape the nation, and put the United States on a path to economic prosperity. “The completion of the Transcontinental Railroad is not simply a railroad story, it is our story,” said Ty Smith, Museum Director of the California State Railroad Museum. “It is a milestone of monumental importance. It bound the United States at a fragile time and it has impacted every one of our lives. At the Railroad Museum, we are honored to do our part to interpret the complex history and share the stories of the people who lived, worked, and died in this tremendous endeavor.” Sacramento played a pivotal role in the remarkable feat that ultimately took thousands of laborers – largely Chinese railroad workers – and multiple private railroad companies to complete. On January 8, 1863, then-governor Leland Stanford officially broke ground in Sacramento to begin construction of the Central Pacific Railroad. Approximately six years later, the first Transcontinental Railroad was completed on May 10, 1869, when Stanford drove a ceremonial Gold Spike at Promontory Summit, Utah to officially connect the country.

The original completion date of May 8, 1869 was delayed by two days due in part to a labor dispute and a major storm. With plans in place and dignitaries already poised to participate on May 8, the city of Sacramento commemorated the completion in grand style two days before the rest of the nation did on May 10, 1869.

To commemorate the important milestone in our nation's history, the California State Railroad Museum & Foundation are proud to present and/or support the following events, activities and exhibits that culminate in May 2019 (while some have already begun, and others extend throughout the year).

HeritageRail Conference in Sacramento – April 25-27

Working in collaboration with the HeritageRail Alliance, the California State Railroad Museum & Foundation are helping to coordinate a prestigious gathering of railroad operators, historians and supporters from throughout North America to visit Sacramento for an annual conference that is timed to help kick off the sesquicentennial celebration. Information on events that are open to the public will follow at a later date. Judah Map on Public Display inside the Railroad Museum – Debuts in April 2019

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For six weeks in Spring 2019, visitors to the California State Railroad will have the unique opportunity to see the 66' Judah Map in person – on loan from the California State Archives – that has never been on public display in its entirety. Theodore Judah was the first engineer to systematically explore the western Sierra Nevada mountains and map the route of the Central Pacific Railroad. The map will debut on April 15, 2019 and will remain on public display through May 31, 2019.

Gold Spike Exhibit Redesign inside the Railroad Museum – Spring 2019

The California State Railroad Museum is home to both the priceless “lost” Gold Spike and the famous “Last Spike” painting by Thomas Hill. The spike was cast at the same time as the gold spike used at the Promontory Summit ceremony. Thomas Hill’s painting illustrates the scene of the famous joining of the Union and Central Pacific Railroads. The California State Railroad Museum will re-design the Gold Spike exhibit areas so museum guests can enjoy a more interpretive and interactive exhibit experience.

The Chinese Workers’ Experience Exhibit inside the Railroad Museum – Spring 2019

The California State Railroad Museum plans to debut an enhanced exhibit that will showcase and share stories of the of Chinese railroad workers who were instrumental in the building of the Transcontinental Railroad. Once completed, the exhibit will allow visitors to immerse themselves in the toil and experiences of Chinese railroad workers who endured and persevered through severe weather and treacherous terrain.

Free Community Sesquicentennial Event – May 8, 2019

To gain a better understanding and experience the commemorative events (as closely as possible) to those that took place 150 years prior, the California State Railroad Museum & Foundation invite the community-at-large to visit the Old Sacramento Waterfront for a free outdoor Sesquicentennial event beginning at 10 a.m. on May 8, 2019. Planned free activities will include (but are not limited to) the following:

Historic re-creation of the parade that took place on May 8, 1869 complete with flags, music, historic fire brigade, horse-drawn carriages, and more;

Complimentary historic and authentic excursion train rides aboard the Sacramento Southern Railroad throughout the day;

Entertaining and interpretive Transcontinental Railroad melodrama performances playing in the historic Eagle Theatre; Community Picnic where guests can bring a sack lunch to enjoy on 1849 Scene (big grassy area in front of the Railroad Museum) that will feature entertaining live music along with docents and historians telling stories of the Transcontinental Railroad.

Sesquicentennial VIP Gala at the Railroad Museum – May 11, 2019

The California State Railroad Museum Foundation is proud and excited to offer a memorable evening of dinner, dancing and a private walk-through of one of the most influential and far-reaching moments in our nation’s history during a special Sesquicentennial VIP gala inside the impressive Railroad Museum. Sponsorships are available now, and more event information to follow at a later date.

Waterfront Days Heritage Event at the Old Sacramento Waterfront – May 24-26, 2019

In collaboration with the Downtown Sacramento Partnership, the Old Sacramento Living History Program and Sacramento History Museum, the California State Railroad Museum & Foundation are proud to support a free heritage event over Memorial Day weekend that will include three days of engaging, educational and fun festivities. Friday is Education Day with a focus on school groups and the community festival is scheduled for Saturday & Sunday. More details and event information will follow at a later date.

“Next year is shaping up to be the year of the railroad in Sacramento and beyond,” said Cheryl Marcell, President & CEO of the California State Railroad Museum Foundation. “And while it’s fitting that the Railroad Museum & Foundation are leading the way to recognize and honor this historic achievement in Sacramento, we’re thrilled to see our community partners stepping up to join in the effort in exciting and innovative ways. We applaud and invite the entire community to pause, reflect and commemorate with us in 2019.”

In addition to the California State Railroad Museum & Foundation, the region-wide museum community is also planning numerous ways to mark the pivotal date in our nation’s history with special events, exhibits and activations. A number of museums and destinations with plans in place for 2019 include the following: California Automobile Museum, Center for Sacramento History, Crocker Art Museum, Locke Boarding House Museum, Roseville Utility Exploration Center, Sacramento Historic City Cemetery, Sacramento History Museum, and SSVMS Museum of Medical History. More detailed information will follow and/or be available from each respective museum and/or destination.

For more details and updated information about events, activities and exhibits presented by the California State Railroad Museum & Foundation, please visit www.Railroad150.org; for more information about the Museum or Foundation visit www.californiarailroad.museum; and for more information about Waterfront Days happening over Memorial Day Weekend, please visit www.oldsacramento.com.

Source: California State Railroad Museum

Diesel Helpers Often Lend a Hand on Mainline Steam Excursions

By Trains Staff | March 8, 2024 | Last updated on July 18, 2024

From adding a layer of power to a layer of security, steam excursions often use diesel helpers to offer an assist.

“Diesel Helpers” are two buzzwords associated with today’s mainline steam excursions – from short lines to Class I railroads, and even selected tourist railroads off the national network. The use of one, or lack thereof, differs between railroads, organizations, and their operating preferences. Some are comfortable letting the steam locomotive travel solo. Others would prefer a little peace of mind, usually right behind the tender, with a reason or a few that’ll help answer the age-old question, “Why is there a diesel helper?”

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Grand Canyon Railway 2-8-2 No. 4960 departs Williams, Ariz., in July 2013. Michael T. Burkhart



Union Pacific Big Boy 4-8-8-4 No. 4014 leads a matched UP office car train westward through Spear, Wyo., in 2019. Jim Wrinn



Union Pacific Big Boy No. 4014 and PTC-equipped SD70M No. 4015 round a curve on the Yoder Subdivision between Egbert and Albin, Wyo., on June 7, the first day of the 2023 Home Run Express. Kevin Gilliam



Southern Pacific Daylight No. 4449 chuffs across the Green River and up the 2.2% grade of Stampede Pass with the NRHS Convention's signature excursion in tow, on June 25, 2011. David Honan



An Indiana Northeastern GP9 attaches to the rear of an Indiana Rail Experience steam train to pull it north from Pleasant Lake, Ind. Bryson Sleppy



Two Reading & Northern "Fast Freight Service" SD50s assist 4-8-4 No. 2102 (doubleheading with 4-6-2 No. 425 on this day) to wye an 18-car North Reading-Jim Thorpe excursion at Nesquehoning Junction, Pa., Aug. 13, 2022. Scott A. Hartley

1. Power limitations

Not all steam excursions traverse flat terrain. Depending on the terrain's ruggedness (whether ascending or descending grades), the train's length and tonnage, and how powerful the steam locomotive is, diesel helpers may be included to provide extra muscle.

Example: Arizona's Grand Canyon Railway is a former [Santa Fe](#) branch line, with the allure of mainline mountain railroading stretching along the route from Williams to Grand Canyon National Park. Unassisted, the railway's [2-8-2 No. 4960](#) and 2-8-0 No. 29 can each handle up to eight passenger cars while navigating the sharp curves and 3.5% grades. When the excursion trains exceed beyond the eight cars, adding the railway's F40 diesels right behind the steam locomotives is considered a must.

2. Fuel range

Logistics can make or break a mainline steam excursion, and the source for fuel can add a complicated piece to the puzzle. Gone are the days where accessible facilities are located along the route so a locomotive can easily stop, replenish coal/oil and water, and be on its way. Today, longer distances between limited fuel stops are part of the norm. Running a diesel helper, usually at a lower throttle notch, can help slow fuel consumption on the steam locomotive. **Example:** [Union Pacific Railroad's](#) steam program revolves around system-wide tours with 4-8-4 No. 844 and 4-8-8-4 Big Boy No. 4014, which can last from a few days to a few months. No. 4014's daily operations can cover at least 150 miles without refueling, according to [Trains' Jan. 2022 issue](#). No. 4014 uses 5,900 gallons of used motor oil and 75,000 gallons of treated water spread among the main tender and two auxiliary tenders. If the locomotive needs help stretching the fuel range and covering the distance, a selected diesel from UP's roster is included.

3. Positive Train Control

Mainline steam heading a train across a Class I railroad has become a rarity in the world of Positive Train Control (PTC). Rightly so as former *Trains'* Editor Jim Wrinn reported in the [July 2018 issue](#): "Any system combining these old and new technologies will be complicated and expensive." Recent steps have been taken to identify a solution, with one example being the LeapTC, designed and developed by John Howard of Santa Fe No. 2926's owner, the [New Mexico Steam Locomotive & Railroad Historical Society](#). Utilizing a PTC-compliant diesel helper, the system relays information from said unit to the cab of the steam locomotive.

Examples: No. 2926, along with Santa Fe No. 3751 and UP No. 4014 are reported to have LeapTC installed. The latter has been the only steam locomotive to use it extensively, with Union Pacific's EMD SD70M No. 4015 hosting many of the components needed since 2021. But now with both [Canadian Pacific No. 2816](#) and No. 4014 fully equipped with PTC and Nos. 3751 and 2926 following suit, how far the LeapTC system will go for the future of Class I steam operations is yet to be determined.

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4. Head-end power

[Head-end power](#) (HEP) has become the standard in providing heat, air conditioning, lights, and other electrical appliances aboard today's passenger trains. This also applies to mainline steam excursions. Not all diesel helpers can provide the 480-volt HEP, but when one can deliver the juice, it'll usually stand in as an auxiliary power car.

Example: When steam locomotives – such as Southern Pacific No. 4449 and Milwaukee Road No. 261 – operated excursions as an Amtrak charter, a diesel helper provided by the United States passenger rail carrier was regulated. Part of the deal was the accompanied GE Genesis and [Dash 8-32BWH](#) locomotives generating the HEP needed for the train.

5. Limited turning facilities

diesel positioned at the rear of the steam train is not technically a “helper,” as it's usually there to head the return trip back to its origin. Sometimes, though, it's the complete opposite with the diesel leading outbound followed by the steam locomotive inbound. Steam excursions often operate on lines with few to no turning facilities – examples being a wye track and turntable. If there is a run-around track available, the steam locomotive could be put on the rear end of the train for one direction of the trip but would be running tender-first. Many museums and tourist railroads do this regularly, but this backwards running is only for a few miles and usually at slow speeds. For longer trips, higher speeds, and a bigger steam locomotive, many operators couple a diesel to the rear of the train.

Although not officially a helper, an engineer in the trailing diesel can add a bit of tractive effort when the steam engineer calls for it. **Example:** The Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society's [Indiana Rail Experience](#) is a recent example of this. Due to a single wye on the Indiana Northeastern Railroad in Hillsdale, Mich., excursions starring Nickel Plate Road No. 765 not heading to Hillsdale for turning will use a diesel at the other end of the train. The society's *Indiana Ice Cream* and *Summer BBQ* trains take advantage of this operating practice while making shorter and multiple runs in a day.

6. Security blanket

Steam locomotives can be unpredictable. Even the most well-maintained machine with the best crew in the industry can encounter a mechanical failure while on the road. That's why some railroads and excursion operators breathe easier when a diesel is part of the consist. In the event of a mechanical failure, the helper can provide immediate assistance while keeping both the excursion and traffic along the railroad moving. It can also lend a hand as a switcher if the train needs to be rearranged or repositioned.

Example: In its first year since the 2022 restoration, [Reading & Northern's T-1 No. 2102](#) lugged 18-car excursions while barking up the grades from Reading to Jim Thorpe, Pa., all unassisted. However, the [regional railroad](#) commissioned a pair of EMD SD40-2 and SD50 diesels to follow closely behind as the security blanket. It came in handy on Oct. 8, 2022, when No. 2102 had to be set off in Port Clinton after its firing table failed. The helper units also have assisted in turning the train during the layover in Jim Thorpe. This practice has since ended with the T-1 now on its own.

The ‘Rolling Roundhouse’: Tool Cars Provide Support for Mainline Steam Excursions

By Trains Staff | March 18, 2024

From tools and spare parts to oil drums and grease guns, these portable mechanical shops keep steam excursions running



Built by St. Louis Car in 1952 as US Army hospital car No. 89520, this converted baggage-dormitory is one of multiple tool cars used for mainline steam excursions. It's now part of the CPKC steam program behind Canadian Pacific 4-6-4 No. 2816. Steve Glischinski



Built in 1962 as a baggage car for the Union Pacific, the Art Lockman travels with 4-8-8-4 Big Boy No. 4014 as the maintenance tool car on July 28, 2022. Trains.com Video

From short lines to the Class I railroads, chances are you'll come across a mainline steam excursion with one or more non-passenger railcars near the front of the train (sometimes coupled directly behind the locomotive). They're carrying, as the name implies, tools and more to support the steam locomotive when out on the road and away from home.

“Rolling Roundhouse”

In the era of steam, monstrous facilities stood at almost every division point along North America's railroads. With many shaped into the iconic roundhouse, these structures easily held the essentials for maintenance and repairs, specifically on steam locomotives.

By the 1960s, full dieselization made many of these facilities completely obsolete with most reduced to rubble. For the surviving locomotives continuing to steam along the main lines in the modern day, whether it be a day-long out and back or a transnational tour, the tool car fills the void as a “rolling roundhouse.”

Sometimes, it's not just tools

Tool cars will normally carry racks, cabinets, and work benches full of many if not all the tools and supplies needed to service its designated steam locomotive. Tools can include wrenches and screwdrivers, oil drums and an Alemite pneumatic grease gun for lubrication. These essentials can usually be found stored in the car and ready for immediate use by the support crew.

Sometimes it's not just tools. Spare parts and additional equipment/machines can be found aboard, providing a one-stop shop for the crew members. Speaking of crew, some tool cars have been configured with living and eating spaces for the men and women accompanying the locomotive.

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As you can imagine, not all tool cars on mainline steam excursions are the same. Some can carry tools, parts, equipment, and crew all under one roof. Others cannot, so occasionally multiple support cars with specific accommodations are necessary. This practice is typically most common with Class I steam programs on [Union Pacific Railroad](#) and [CPKC](#).

Car types

When it comes to selecting a tool car for mainline steam excursions, the most common pick has been baggage cars from the hotshot passenger trains of the past. Some were even reconfigured as tool cars long before for maintenance of way along their respected railroads. Other pieces of rolling stock that have found their way into steam-support duties include:

- Railway Post Office (RPO) cars, Combination passenger/baggage cars, Boxcars
- Passenger cars rebuilt as maintenance-of-way baggage/tool cars
- Modified troop sleepers, kitchen cars, and hospital cars as surplus from the U.S. Army

Rocky Mountaineer: No Plans for ‘Canyon Spirit’ Route to Santa Fe, N.M.

[By Bob Johnston](#) | February 16, 2026

Future of excursions on threatened ex-BC Rail trackage still in limbo



An eastbound “Rockies to Red Rocks” media preview excursion from Salt Lake City climbs Utah’s Soldier Summit on July 26, 2025. Canyon Spirit trips on an extended route to and from Denver begin this April, but the company says it has no specific plans to seek other U.S. routes at this time. Bob Johnston



Also on July 26, 2025, a Banff-bound Rocky Mountaineer pulls away from Kamloops, B.C., with a mix of single-level SilverLeaf and GoldLeaf cars at milepost 118 on CPKC’s Shuswap Subdivision. The company will be offering 13 Jasper-Kamloops-Banff itineraries in June and July 2026 when World Cup activities boost demand for Vancouver, B.C. hotel rooms. Russ Grycan

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Beginning April 7 from Denver and April 10 from Salt Lake City, Rocky Mountaineer’s U.S. brand, Canyon Spirit, will begin operating weekly “Rockies to Red Rocks” round trips. These travel on the *California Zephyr’s* route plus passage over Union Pacific’s Cane Creek branch in Utah through mid-November. However, there are no plans on the drawing board for any new U.S. routes. A reader comment on a recent *Trains* report [[“Flex-dining’ lunch additions ...”](#), *Trains.com*, Feb. 10, 2026] indicated the company was studying expansion south of Denver to Santa Fe, N.M. However, Rocky Mountaineer communications manager Dallas Carlson says, “I can confirm that this is false. While we continue to explore potential new route options in the U.S., we are not considering a route to New Mexico at this time.” She adds: “When speaking with colleagues, they mentioned that the area was briefly researched around 10 years ago, but nothing since.” Carlson says that bookings for both the Colorado-Utah excursions and this year’s Canadian offerings “are pacing above target for both brands.” Despite new cross-border requirements and fees imposed by the U.S. government, “the United States remains our strongest market for both Rocky Mountaineer and Canyon Spirit.” A *Trains* spot check of [the Canyon Spirit website](#) reveals that the premier upgrade for the Denver-Salt Lake journey, allowing access to the train’s lounge car and other perks, is already sold out on some departures. Prices for the three-day trip — with overnight stops in Glenwood Springs, Colo., and Moab, Utah — start at more than \$2,000 per person, including meals and hotel stays. The influx of crowds attending World Cup soccer matches beginning June 13 through early July has pushed the price of hotel rooms in Vancouver, B.C., and other North American host cities into the stratosphere. As previously reported, the company will operate 13 new “Passage to the Peaks” two-day excursions between Banff and Jasper, Alberta, with an overnight stop in Kamloops, B.C. [see [“Rocky Mountaineer announces ...”](#), *Trains.com*, Aug. 15, 2025]. This is in lieu of serving the Kamloops-Vancouver segment. The last trips making the revised circuit depart Banff on July 8 and Jasper on July 10; Vancouver will continue to be served by one or two trips weekly in each direction during the period, depending upon the route. Details are available on [Rocky Mountaineer’s website](#). Meanwhile, operation beyond 2026 over Canadian National’s former BC Rail route north of Vancouver through Whistler, Lillooet, and Quesnel, B.C., is still uncertain. The railroad announced its intention to abandon 214 miles of track last year [see [“CN seeks to end lease ...”](#), July 22, 2025]. Rocky Mountaineer’s website shows a 2027 booking option for these “Rainforest to Gold Rush” itineraries between North Vancouver and Jasper. But according to Carlson, “At this time, we do not have any information to share regarding the operation of Rainforest to Gold Rush in 2027. We are still waiting to hear more from CN regarding the rail line and will share more information when we have it.”

Former Izaak Walton Inn Faces Closure

By David Lassen | February 15, 2026

ESSEX, Mont. — LOGE Glacier, the former Izaak Walton Inn beloved by railfans for its location adjacent to BNSF Railway’s Northern Transcon route and Glacier National Park, will close next month because its parent company is in financial distress.

LOGE Camps is slated to close all its operations, [the Flathead Beacon reports](#). The [LOGE website](#) lists six other hotels in Washington, Colorado, and Montana. Other properties have already closed. Employees at the Essex property were informed by email that their employment “is expected to conclude on or about March 6, 2026,” the newspaper reports.

LOGE purchased the property, which includes a main hotel building, cabins, and cabooses and an F45 locomotive converted to lodging, for \$13.5 million in December 2022 [see [“Montana’s Izaak Walton Inn is sold.”](#) Trains.com, Dec. 16, 2022]. After a prolonged remodeling, the facility reopened under its new name in September 2024. Today (Feb. 15) was one of just four nights on which the hotel’s website shows room availability between now and the closing date; the others show the lowest available rate ranging from \$157 to \$201

An eastbound BNSF unit tank train passes the Izaak Walton Inn in July 2019. The facility, sold in 2022 and remodeled and renamed as LOGE Glacier, is set to close next month. Scott A. Hartley

The *Beacon* reports emails show the company’s board found in November that its CEO had hidden details of some financial dealings, and as a result its real estate portfolio “was in significant distress.” It subsequently decided to end operations at its remaining properties. The inn, opened by the Great Northern Railway, is served by Amtrak’s *Empire Builder*. LOGE is only the fourth owner of the inn since it opened. The future of the facility is unknown.

New York Central’s Jet-powered Speed Record

By Carl Swanson | May 29, 2025

New York Central set a speed record with a jet-powered RDC



New York Central’s jet-powered ex *Pride of the New York Central*/ RDC kicks up dust and pelts onlookers with flying ballast on its way to a 183.85-mph railroad speed record in July 1966. The General Electric J-47 jet engines accelerated the 139,000-pound car from a standing start to peak speed in four minutes. The standard Budd disc brakes needed only a mile to stop the railcar. New York Central

On July 23, 1966, New York Central set a new U.S. railroad speed record when jet-powered RDC M-497, dubbed the *Pride of the New York Central*, hit 183.85 mph on a 24-mile tangent section of 26-year-old jointed rail between Butler, Ind. and Stryker, Ohio. The RDC sported cylindrical wheels in place of normal tapered-tread wheels, skirting, an additional set of shock absorbers, and a sloped nose with F-unit number boards for windshields. The modifications reportedly cost just \$35,000. The Central said the jet RDC was a scientific experiment to determine the capabilities of standard equipment to run at ultra-high speed. But some observers darkly suggested that it was an attempt to generate good publicity even as the railroad was plotting to murder its passenger trains – this same year, 1966, the NYC would seek permission to end its legendary *20th Century Limited*. Whatever the reason, the jet RDC was a fascinating mix of old and new technology and bold innovation.



---AMTRAK News---

Amtrak Still Working to Recover from Snowstorm

By David Lassen | February 24, 2026

Most routes operating, albeit at reduced levels



The westbound *Lake Shore Limited* passes through Hammond, Ind., in January 2024. The *Lake Shore* was among long-distance trains that managed to depart from the Northeast despite snow disruptions on Monday, Feb. 23. James L. Burd

NEW YORK — Amtrak service remains subject to significant disruptions on the Northeast Corridor, with a large number of cancellations already announced today (Tuesday, Feb. 24).

Service between New York and Boston, shut down since mid-morning on Monday, was tentatively scheduled to resume as of 8 a.m. ET, according to the [most recent Amtrak customer advisory](#), posted late Monday. However, as of 9 a.m. ET, the [Transitdocs rail map](#) still shows no trains between the two cities.

These cancellations in the Northeast were announced earlier on the [Amtrak NEC Alerts](#) social media feed:

Acelas: Nos. 2201, 2203, 2205, 2206, 2214, 2218, 2222, 2223, 2248, 2249, 2250, and 2271.

Northeast Regionals: Nos. 88, 101, 109, 143, 142, 144, 146, 150, 153, 160, 168, 194, and 196, as well as Nos. 135, 163, and 165 between Boston and New York, and No. 103 between New York and Philadelphia.

Other regional trains: *Vermonters* Nos. 54 and 57.

Keystone Service: Nos. 607, 658, 650, and 661.

Empire Service: Nos. 233, 236, 243, and 244.

Notably, Amtrak did manage to get some long-distance trains out of the Northeast on Monday, albeit with delays. The westbound *Lake Shore Limited* left New York three hours, 35 minutes late and was four hours, 33 minutes late at Cleveland. The southbound *Silver Meteor* left New York five hours, 41 minutes late and is currently more than 7 hours late. The southbound *Crescent* left New York three hours, 41 minutes late, but has made up almost an hour, running two hours, 43 minutes late at Greenville, S.C.

Adding to challenges for passengers attempting to adjust travel plans, Amtrak’s booking systems were knocked out for a time on Monday evening [by a network outage](#).

Massive Storm Halts Most Northeast Rail Traffic (updated)

By David Lassen | February 23, 2026

Amtrak cancels many morning trains; transit agencies shut down or operating limited schedules



NJ Transit employees work to clear snow from a train platform. NJ Transit is one of several agencies that have currently stopped all operations following heavy snow overnight. NJ

NEW YORK — Amtrak is reporting large-scale cancellations and most rail transit operations in the Northeast are shut down or operating on a limited basis today (Monday, Feb. 23) following a blizzard that passed through the area overnight.

The [National Weather Service is reporting](#) snowfall totals for the last 24 hours of 20 inches or more in portions of New York and New Jersey, and a foot or more elsewhere on the Northeast Corridor. In New York City, [a ban on vehicular travel](#) is in place until noon.

As of 9 a.m. ET, Amtrak has [suspended all operations](#) between New York and Boston’s South Station. Originally announced as continuing through at least 4 p.m., the suspension has subsequently been extended for the remainder of the day.

Previously, the company had announced the following cancellations throughout the Northeast: **Acelas** Nos. 2201, 2203, 2205, 2206, 2214, 2218, 2222, 2223, 2248, 2249, 2250, and 2271. **Also canceled** are *Northeast Regional* trains 82, 101, 103, 109, 124, 126, 127, 140, 143, 144, 146, 150, 151, 152, 153, 160, 162, 163, and 195; *Vermonters* No. 54 and 57; *Downeasters* Nos. 680, 681, 682, and 683; *Empire Service* trains Nos. 233, 236, 238, 243, and 244; and *Keystone Service* Nos. 601, 605, 607, 661, 643, 609, 640, 642, 600, 646, and 658. Other trains may also be canceled; check Amtrak’s website or app before any planned travel. As of 7:40 a.m. CT, transit agencies along the Northeast Corridor are reporting these conditions:

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority: Commuter rail, subway, and bus service is operating on a reduced schedule; ferry service is canceled; The RIDE service may experience delays.

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CTrail: All CTrail [Hartford Line](#) trains are canceled, as are Amtrak Hartford Line trains 490, 470, 143, 496, 147, 471, 140, and 146. All [Shore Line East](#) trains are canceled. Determinations will be made later on Tuesday operations.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority: Long Island Rail Road service will return on a limited basis on Tuesday at 4 a.m. on the Ronkonkoma, Huntington, Babylon, Oyster Bay, Montauk, and Port Washington branches., according to an update at 5:55 p.m. ET today. On the Montauk Branch, trains will operate between Speonk and points west. The Oyster Bay Branch will operate westbound for the morning rush, then add eastbound service.

Metro-North service is running hourly on the Hudson, Harlem, and New Haven lines, and on a weekend schedule on branches, except on the West-of-Hudson services operated in conjunction with NJ Transit. On Tuesday, Metro-North will operate on half-hour intervals during morning and evening peak periods on the Hudson, Harlem and New Haven lines. The New Canaan and Danbury branches will be on a weekend schedule. Buses will replace trains on the Waterbury and Wassaucott branches.

Staten Island Railway service is also suspended. The subway system is operating with some express trains running local, and delays, some of which could be severe, should be expected on lines that run outdoors.

NJ Transit: Newark light rail and River Line light rail were slated to resume operation about 4 p.m. ET, and are operating on Sunday schedules, according to a midafternoon update. Hudson-Bergen light rail will resume in the 6 p.m. hour on a weekend schedule. All other services remain suspended “until conditions safely allow for the gradual resumption of service.”

Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority: Regional Rail service is in the process of being restored on a line-by-line basis, with the Trenton Line operating on a Saturday schedule as of [an update at 4:45 p.m. ET](#). The Paoli/Thorndale and Wilmington/Newark lines have subsequently resumed service, also on Saturday schedules. Metro rapid transit lines have resumed operation. Buses are also being restored on a line-by-line basis.

MARC: The Penn Line is operating on a Saturday schedule and the Camden and Brunswick lines are on an “R” schedule. This reflects the storm’s significant impact at Washington Union Station, according to [this advisory](#). Regular service is planned for Tuesday.

Virginia Railway Express: VRE trains are operating on a reduced schedule, with morning trains terminating in Alexandria and evening trains originating there. More details [are here](#). Regular operations are planned for Tuesday.

— Updated at 9:33 a.m. CT with suspension of Amtrak operations between New York and Boston. Updated at 4:30 p.m. CT with new information from NJ Transit, MTA, and SEPTA. Updated at 5:10 p.m. CT with LIRR operating plans. Updated at 5:33 p.m. with extended shutdown of Amtrak operations between New York and Boston. Updated at 7:05 p.m. with additional information from SEPTA, MARC, and VRE. No further updates are planned for today.

Northeast Rail Operations Almost Completely Restored After Storm

[By Trains Staff](#) | February 25, 2022

Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North still have some service modifications

NEW YORK — Amtrak and rail transit operations are essentially back to normal today (Wednesday, Feb. 25) after disruptions that began Sunday night because of a blizzard passing through the Northeast.

As of 7:15 a.m. CT, the train status feature of Amtrak’s website shows no cancellations or delays for Northeast Corridor trains originating in Boston or Washington. There are some delays listed out of New York Penn Station to both Boston and Washington, but no cancellations. The only cancellations listed on the [Amtrak NEC Alerts](#) social media feed are two Keystone Service trains, Nos. 661 and 648, attributed to equipment availability.

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority had previously announced it would return to regular service, while NJ Transit said it would return to its Portal Cutover weekday schedule, which is effective through mid-March.

The Long Island Rail Road, which resumed service at 12:01 a.m. today, is running on special schedules on all lines except the Long Beach and Ronkonkoma branches, which reporting some delays. On Metro-North, bus substitutions continue on the Waterbury Branch; delays are reported on the Harlem, Hudson, and New Haven lines, and West-of-Hudson service includes delays on the Pascack Valley line. Line-by-line information [is available here](#).

Passengers Injured in Low-speed Collision Between City of New Orleans, CN Freight

[By Trains Staff](#) | February 22, 2026 | Last updated on February 23, 2026

NTSB to investigate incident near Memphis



*The southbound **City of New Orleans** skirts Lake Ponchartrain near Frenier, La., on June 4, 2021. The southbound **City of New Orleans** was involved in a collision with a Canadian National freight train on Sunday, Feb. 22, near Memphis, Tenn. Bob Johnston*

MEMPHIS — Three passengers were injured on Sunday (Feb. 22) in a low-speed collision between Amtrak’s *City of New Orleans* and a Canadian National freight train.

Amtrak said in a statement that the incident occurred about 11 a.m. in New South Memphis, Tenn., when southbound train No. 59, which was stopped, was “contacted by a freight train traveling at a slow rate of speed.” A total of 128 people were on board.

While Amtrak said three people were injured, Memphis police said two people had been taken to the hospital with non-critical injuries, according to WREG-TV.

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A CN spokeswoman said no fires or hazardous materials were involved.

The National Transportation Safety Board said in [a social media post](#) this evening that it is sending a team of investigators to the scene of the collision.

The *City of New Orleans* had left Chicago more than 3 hours late on Saturday night, and was 3 hours, 15 minutes late leaving Memphis prior to the collision. The train eventually resumed its journey about 8 hours, 20 minutes behind schedule, according to the train status feature on the Amtrak website. It arrived in New Orleans at 11:21 p.m., some seven hours, 34 minutes late.

— Updated Feb. 23 at 8:50 a.m. CT with information from Amtrak statement and arrival time of train in New Orleans. Follow [Trains.com](#) for further details as they become available.

FRA Proposes Amtrak Become Holding Company, Overseeing three Divisions, Passenger Group Says

By [Bob Johnston](#) | February 21, 2026 | Last updated on February 22, 2026
 Separate entities would handle operations, equipment, infrastructure



The eastbound California Zephyr passes Metra’s Fairview Avenue station in Downers Grove, Ill., on Feb. 14, 2026. The Federal Railroad Administration is considering restructuring Amtrak into a holding company with separate divisions for operations, equipment, and infrastructure, the Rail Passenger Association reports. David Lassen

WASHINGTON — Federal Railroad Administration officials have briefed the Rail Passengers Association on a plan that would recast Amtrak as a holding company that would oversee separate entities responsible for operations, equipment management and leasing, and infrastructure and construction.

According to a statement [on the RPA website](#), there are only cursory details of how the reorganized company would be structured, and no indication of how federal or state funding would be addressed. The proposal comes in a year when all current federal surface transportation authorizations expire.

[A paywalled Bloomberg report](#) quotes a Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen official who warns restructuring will be a first step toward privatization. Officials at other unions have also speculated to their membership about that possibility. However, U.S. Department of Transportation spokeswoman Danna Almeida told Bloomberg, “The Trump Administration is considering ways to strengthen and modernize Amtrak for the future, but privatization is not under consideration.”

Based on discussions with the FRA, the Rail Passengers Association document contains an overview of its “understanding of the USDOT restructuring proposal” as well as a list of the association’s proposed “metrics of success for any restructuring.” Among those is a call for an explicit rejection of profitability as a system-wide goal: “Instead, the primary object should be for services, construction projects, and rolling stock to be delivered quickly, on time, and on budget.”

I-80 Closes, but California Zephyr Gets Through Sierras

By [Bob Johnston](#) | February 20, 2026 | Last updated on February 21, 2026
 Train continues to operate despite massive snowfall



The westbound California Zephyr encounters heavy snow near California’s Donner Pass on Christmas Day in 2021. The Zephyr has continued to operate through the Sierras despite up to 90 inches of snow this week. Luke Sharrett

TRUCKEE, Calif.— The eastbound *California Zephyr* arrived in Truckee today (Feb. 20) just after 1 a.m. Pacific Time, 11 hours late. But it won the battle against massive snowdrifts that had shut down parallel Interstate 80 through the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Televised news reports [like this one](#) described multiple I-80 closures throughout a week that saw trapped cross-country skiers lose their lives in an avalanche. But they almost never mentioned that Union Pacific track crews kept the route open for its freight trains and the *Zephyr* despite the conditions.

Thursday afternoon’s train no. 6 had departed Colfax, Calif., two hours late. Westbound counterpart no. 5 had been running an hour behind schedule leaving Truckee and lost two hours heading through the increasingly heavy snow as I-80 was being closed to all traffic. Status reports from Amtrak and other sources indicate that the eastbound’s lead locomotive stalled out on the climb between Colfax and Truckee. A relief engine was called and the *Zephyr* was finally able to proceed. As of Friday afternoon, it remained more than 11 hours late approaching Salt Lake City.

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The avalanche that closed highways and prompted travel restrictions beginning Tuesday, Feb. 17, had resulted in delays to eastbound *Zephyrs* no more than one hour and 45 minutes until the rescue of no. 6 Thursday evening. The longest westbound delay occurred Wednesday when the CZ arrived almost seven hours late into Colfax.

More than 90 inches of snow has fallen in the Sierra Nevada since midweek; [another storm is predicted](#) this weekend. *Zephyr* coach seats were sold out in both directions between Sacramento and Reno on Friday and Sunday.

Amtrak Offers First Look at Airo Equipment

By [Rip Watson](#) | February 10, 2026 | Last updated on February 11, 2026

Also from Edward Pope edwardpope47@gmail.com

Media gets chance to tour Cascades trainset currently testing in Northeast



Amtrak unveiled its Airo equipment at a Feb. 10, 2026, event at Washington Union Station. Amtrak



The interior of a coach-class car on the new Airo trainset. Rip Watson



A safety feature of the Airo seats is a grab handle in each headrest along the aisles.



Cup holders are included on seatbacks between the normal tray tables; those tables, when folded down, reveal a cell-phone holder. Rip Watson



Food service will be at this counter in the café car. Note the electronic menu display at the end of the counter, and the grab-and-go food offerings in the background. Rip Watson



Cars include baggage racks as well as space above seating areas. Some trainsets will include compartments for checked baggage. Rip Watson

WASHINGTON — Amtrak unveiled Airo, its newest fleet addition, on Tuesday with a media tour that featured an in-depth look at the interior of the shiny, feature-filled trainset that’s slated to begin revenue service this summer on the *Amtrak Cascades*’ service in the Pacific Northwest.

Before offering a tour of coach, café car, and business class equipment, speakers from Amtrak, manufacturer Siemens, and the Department of Transportation extolled the virtues of the program slated to produce 83 trainsets for service on routes less than 750 miles long. The Airo equipment is intended for 14 routes in the East, as well as the *Cascades* that run between Eugene, Ore., and Vancouver, British Columbia.

Amtrak President Roger Harris called the trainset parked at Union Station — wearing the green, brown, and white paint scheme unique to the *Cascades* — “the next step in Amtrak’s transformation,” following the introduction of NextGen Acela less than five months ago. “We can all be proud,” said Tobias Bauer, CEO of Siemens North America. “The train is beautiful.”

Amtrak literature describes Airo as an “elevated experience” with “spacious seating” and improved signage. For a reporter, the tour showed off bright and carefully designed seating, signage, and amenities intended as upgrades from Amtrak’s workhorse Amfleet railcars.

There are three different types of Airo consist: seven-car trainsets with 317-seat and 335-seat configurations, and a nine-car version seating 479. The 317-seat arrangement includes a baggage compartment. *Cascades* service will continue to offer checked baggage, said Michael Carter, senior director of the Airo program.

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In general, the train offers larger windows and seating meant to improve on Amfleet design shortcomings, including one that put too many seats in places where riders had difficulty looking out the windows. The gray, ribbed seats feel much like Amfleet, based on a brief test that doesn't offer a clue how they would feel on a long trip. Seat pitch is 37 inches in coach and 39 inches in business class. Amtrak literature describes Airo as an "elevated experience" with "spacious seating" and improved signage. For a reporter, the tour showed off bright and carefully designed seating, signage, and amenities intended as upgrades from Amtrak's workhorse Amfleet railcars.

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Among changes from Amfleet: 3 inches of extra space between neighboring coach seats, reflecting customer research that showed more space was a popular feature that Amfleet doesn't offer. While Amfleet cars have footrests (and Amfleet II features leg rests), coach seats in the new trains seats do not have footrests, although business class seats retain them.

The drop-down seatback tables have space for a 15-inch laptop, as well as a slot to hold phones or tablets. Plugs are located under each seat. Each aisle seat has a grab bar for safety, said Amtrak Principal Electrical Engineer Kevin Choi. Each seat has a reading light as well, plugs for multiple devices, and a USB-C outlet, Choi said.

Features in business class include the familiar two-and-one seating configuration, with 49 seats per car. Choi said there are additional outlets as well as a coat hanger on the seat and 6 inches of space between passengers on the two-seat side of the car.

The café car includes a dining space with 21 seats and a total of four tables — unlike the NextGen Acela design, which has no sit-down café space. The counter where passengers order from the attendant faces the business-class end of the train. While passengers looking to order can line up at either end, there is no real space where those waiting to order can congregate, other than in the aisle. The counter is in the center of the café car. Several cabinets are near the end of the café on the coach side. One bright café car feature is the ability to change the lights for holidays and special occasions, Choi said.

Interior lighting is adjustable, with further tests planned on intensity of ceiling lights, Choi said. Current settings are 80% for daytime and 25% at night.

Special attention was paid to Americans with Disabilities Act standards, resulting in spaces that include tables and other improvements, Choi said. These include aisles wide enough in the café to accommodate mobility aids such as wheelchairs, allowing passengers to order from the attendant or access items in grab-and-go food cases.

Along with the introductory statement and equipment tour, officials emphasized the made-in-America theme for the trainsets. They are being built at Siemens plants in Sacramento, Calif., and Lexington, N.C. Suppliers in 31 states provide parts.

Details that casual riders might not notice include a small space for conductors featuring screens for diagnostic information and train announcements — avoiding the need to have the crew members occupy tables or seats that passengers could have used. There is a video surveillance system in each car that activates if the conductor reports an event.

The new equipment is part of a \$7.3 billion order, including a long-term parts and service agreement and related expense, announced in July 2021 [see "[Amtrak, Siemens finalize deal ...](#)" *Trains.com*, July 7, 2021]. While the initial sets for the Cascades are diesel powered, the order also calls for dual-power and battery hybrid trainsets.

Ten Amtrak Trains Canceled in Midwest

[By Trains Staff](#) | February 6, 2026

Cancellations also continue in Northeast



Lincoln Service train no. 305 arrives at Normal, Ill., on May 17, 2023. The train is one of 10 cancelled today in the Midwest. Bob Johnston

CHICAGO — [Amtrak](#) has canceled several trains in the Midwest and Pacific Northwest today (Friday, Feb. 6), along with a second day of large-scale cancellations in the Northwest.

Canceled today are Chicago-St. Louis *Lincoln Service* Nos. 300, 302, 305, and 307; Chicago-Pontiac, Mich., *Wolverines* Nos. 351, 352, 353, and 354; and Chicago-Quincy, Ill., *Illinois Zephyrs* Nos. 380 and 383. They are part of a series of multi-day equipment cancellations announced previously [see "[Amtrak 'weather-related' cancellations extended,](#)" *Trains.com*, Feb. 3, 2026].

An Amtrak spokesman wrote in an email, "We are working to restore service for our state partners and our passengers. This disruption is winter weather-related." In the Pacific Northwest, *Amtrak Cascades* Nos. 516 (Seattle-Vancouver, British Columbia), 518 (Eugene, Ore.-Vancouver), and 519 (Vancouver-Seattle) have been canceled. These are attributed to equipment unavailability and are reportedly related to a freight derailment.

These cancellations come as 20 trains on the Northeast Corridor are canceled for a second consecutive day [see "[Amtrak cancels 20 trains ...](#)" Feb. 5, 2026].

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— Updated at 10:51 a.m. CT to correct Illinois Zephyr train numbers; updated at 12:40 with link to previous article and additional detail on Cascades cancellations.; updated at 4:40 p.m. with Amtrak comment.



BNSF, TCU Intermodal Employees Reach Contract Agreement

[By Trains Staff](#) | February 23, 2026

Tentative deal covers 746 workers at four terminals



A westbound intermodal train departs BNSF's Cicero Intermodal Facility as a Metra commuter train approaches on another track. BNSF has announced a tentative contract agreement with the union covering intermodal employees at Cicero and three other facilities. David Lassen

FORT WORTH, Texas — BNSF Railway has reached a tentative five-year agreement with members of the Transportation Communications Union Intermodal group, the railroad announced on Friday, Feb. 20.

“This new tentative agreement reflects the vital role our TCU intermodal team members play in our operation,” BNSF CEO Katie Farmer said in a press release. “Open, honest collaboration is the foundation of our success, and this marks our unwavering commitment to maintaining exceptional safety and service for our customers.”

The agreement covers 746 employees at BNSF’s Cicero, Corwith, Seattle, and Memphis intermodal terminals. It would provide raises totaling 17.5% (18.8% compounded) over the five-year life of the agreement, with retroactive pay to July 1, 2025. It also includes enhanced vacation and preserved health care benefits.

“I want to commend our bargaining committee for their efforts to secure real gains, and I’m confident this agreement moves our members forward,” said

“I also recognize the cooperation of BNSF CEO Katie Farmer and her labor relations team. Reaching agreements for such a large number of employees isn’t always the easiest task, but I appreciate the effort of both groups who worked diligently to reach a fair agreement.”

With the latest agreement, 95% of the railroad’s union employees and 12 of its 13 unions are covered by ratified or tentative agreements.

BNSF Train Derailed by Fatal Grade-crossing Accident

[By Trains Staff](#) | February 20, 2026

Vehicle occupant killed in collision near Amboy, Neb.

AMBOY, Neb. — One person in a vehicle was killed Thursday (Feb. 19) in a grade crossing collision that derailed a BNSF Railway train in Amboy.

BNSF said in [a statement to Nebraska Television](#) that the accident occurred about 10 a.m. when “a vehicle struck an empty grain train at a crossing near Red Cloud, Neb., derailing 10 cars. There were no reported injuries to the crew. The vehicle occupant was fatally injured.” The collision occurred at a crossing protected with lights and bells, the railroad said.

U.S. Route 136 was closed by the incident but reopened early on Friday, the Webster County Sheriff’s Office [reported on social media](#).

The derailment occurred on BNSF’s Wymore Subdivision, a 20-mile branch line paralleling the Nebraska-Kansas state line between Lester Junction and Superior, Neb. The accident site is approximately 33 miles due south of Hastings, Neb

BNSF Agrees to New Standards for Transport of Plastic Pellets

[By David Lassen](#) | February 8, 2026

New shipping requirements grow out of San Diego-area legal action



A BNSF train of covered hoppers heads east through Western Springs, Ill., on Feb. 1, 2026. BNSF is enacting new rules for the shipment of plastic pellets by rail. David Lassen

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — Environmental group San Diego Coastkeeper has announced an agreement with BNSF Railway for development of rules for safe transportation of plastic pellets, also known as nurdles — the raw material for the production of almost all plastic products.

The agreement, announced Thursday, Feb. 5, also involves the Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation and North County Transit District, operator of Coaster commuter trains and owner of the Surf Line route used by BNSF along the San Diego County coast. *Continued on next page:*

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The pellets are roughly the size of a lentil, and are difficult to clean up in the event of a release. BNSF’s new policies require customers to seal both loaded and unloaded cars that transport the pellets, and say the railroad will not handle non-compliant cars, with escalating fees for non-compliance. The railroad is working with the Association of American Railroads and pellet shippers and receivers to develop best practices for pellet transportation.

“BNSF remains dedicated to its industry-leading efforts to ensure that railroads are the most environmentally preferred mode of surface transportation and thanks CERF and Coastkeeper for the constructive collaboration to address these issues,” Scot Bates, assistant vice president, chemicals and plastics at BNSF, said in [a press release](#).

Patrick McDonough, senior attorney at Coastkeeper, called the agreement “a significant win for our oceans, both globally and locally. With an estimated 25 to 30 billion nurdles entering our ocean each day, we’re thrilled BNSF and NCTD have joined Coastkeeper and CERF to take a leadership role in tackling this crisis.”

The agreement settles a legal dispute dating to 2024, when Coastkeeper and CERF announced the intent to sue BNSF, saying the railroad was violating the Clean Water Act because of nurdles spilling or leaking from freight trains.

BNSF, Union Pacific Deliver Perfect Peak Seasons for Intermodal Customers

By [Bill Stephens](#) | February 9, 2026

The traditional holiday parcel rush boosts intermodal volumes



BNSF and Union Pacific posted perfect peak seasons for their parcel customers in 2025. Here, a string of UPS trailers descend Cajon Pass in California on BNSF in 2019. Bill Stephens

BNSF Railway and Union Pacific say they delivered perfect peak seasons for their parcel customers during the holiday rush of 2025.

BNSF says its teams safely delivered more than 80 million parcel shipments on time — a 9% increase over volumes in the Thanksgiving-to-Christmas period of 2024.

“Every year at BNSF, we come together to deliver holiday parcels to loved ones all across the country,” said Jon Gabriel, group vice president of consumer products. “Our parcel customers put tremendous trust in us during this critical time of year because of the confidence we’ve built over the years.” BNSF says collaboration is at the heart of peak season success. Over a six-week period, BNSF hosts over a dozen on-site field planning meetings, including our parcel customers, various BNSF departments, and key BNSF partners. The details from train schedules to con-

Union Pacific says it posted its third consecutive perfect peak season in 2025. UP handled more than 26,000 priority loads, surpassing last year’s total. Alongside UPS, FedEx increased its presence on Union Pacific, increasing its annual peak volumes significantly during the height of the holiday season, the railroad said.

“These results underscore the premium community’s confidence in Union Pacific’s ability to deliver sustained, best-in-class service,” said Todd Lenczowski, general director-sales.



--- UP News ---

Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern to File Revised Merger Application April 30

By [Bill Stephens](#) | February 17, 2026

The railroads informed regulators in a letter today



A Norfolk Southern engine passes a waiting Union Pacific train at Elmhurst, Ill., on Aug. 23, 2025. David Lassen

WASHINGTON — Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern will submit their revised merger application on April 30, [the railroads informed the Surface Transportation Board today](#).

The STB on Jan. 16 rejected the original 6,692-page application as incomplete.

The railroads initially expected to file the revised application as early as March. Regulators pointed out that their decision “should not be read as an indication of how the Board might ultimately assess any future revised application.”

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The revised application will address the three serious shortcomings the STB identified with the railroads' Dec. 19 filing. The board said in its 15-page decision that the application didn't provide the required projections for post-merger market-share, failed to include the complete merger agreement between the two railroads, and did not appropriately address control of the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis.

The board found a disconnect between the application's projections of extensive growth and its use of 2023 data to define the market share that would be controlled by the merged railroad. "The application does not contain future market share projections showing the combined effects of merger-related growth, diversions, and merger-influenced and other changes to market conditions that Applicants anticipate," the board said in a press release.

"Applicants' market impact analyses must necessarily project market shares beyond the transaction's consummation date, and therefore that the application does not include the 'projected market shares' as required," the release says.

The board also agreed with the contention made by other railroads that the application was incomplete because it did not include the entire merger agreement between UP and NS. Specifically, they said it omitted a section on the terms that would allow UP to walk away from the transaction.

The UP-NS application treated the disposition of the TRRA as a minor transaction, but the board ruled it is a significant transaction that requires more extensive review. The TRRA is jointly owned by UP, NS, BNSF Railway, Canadian National, and CSX. The merger would give UP a controlling interest, although the merger application says UP plans to divest the share that would give it control.

Union Pacific CEO Explains Delay in Revised Merger Filing

By [Bill Stephens](#) | February 18, 2026

Jim Vena also contends the other Class I railroads fear competing with a transcontinental UP



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

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. — Union Pacific's plans to submit its revised Norfolk Southern merger application slipped from March to April after federal regulators clarified how certain data must be formatted, UP CEO Jim Vena says.

On Tuesday, UP and NS told the Surface Transportation Board that they would file their updated merger application on April 30. The railroads had previously hoped to submit it in March.

"They said that we needed to give them some more information. Last week, through the liaison, they told us that the way they wanted to see that information was different than we thought three weeks ago," Vena told an investor conference on Wednesday morning.

The STB on Jan. 16 rejected the application as incomplete. In a 15-page decision, the board said the application didn't provide the required projections for post-merger market share, failed to include the complete merger agreement between the two railroads, and did not appropriately address control of the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis.

The April 30 filing date will give the railroads' consultants the time required to prepare traffic and economic studies, Vena explained.

"This is not a surprise," Vena says of a regulatory process that does not move as fast as he would like.

Other Class I railroads have said that the UP-NS merger will not enhance rail-to-rail competition, as required under the STB's 2001 merger review rules. How does UP view this criticism of the \$85 billion NS deal?

Vena points out that UP currently handles 27% of the rail industry's gross ton-miles in the U.S. After the acquisition of NS, UP would carry 39% of the GTMs — which is identical to what BNSF Railway handles today, Vena says.

"We're going to be the same size," he says. Plus, 75% of merger-related traffic growth is projected to come from truck diversions, UP Chief Financial Officer Jennifer Hamann says. "It's not coming from another railroad," she says. "It's coming off the highway."

The primary argument behind the Canadian Pacific-Kansas City Southern merger — that CPKC's end-to-end combination would be able to offer customers seamless, single-line service — also applies to UP-NS, Vena says. By eliminating 24- to 48-hour delays related to interchange, a combined UP-NS will be able to move freight faster and more efficiently across the U.S., Vena says. This will save shippers money, he says, because they will be able to use fewer freight cars to move the same amount of product.

Other railroads will have to try to compete against a faster UP system, Vena contends. "If you're one of our competitors, you need to compete against service, which you're going to have a hard time doing because you're not set up to go across the country," Vena says of the need to interchange cars at gateways from Chicago to New Orleans. The other railroads may be forced to reduce their rates in order to hang on to traffic that could migrate to a faster UP system, Vena contends. And that, he says, explains the opposition from other Class I railroads. The other big systems also have noted that UP and NS lines overlap in the Midwest. But Vena says the pre-merger CP and KCS networks had about the same amount of overlap as the UP-NS system would. "And then you need to ask them about Canada," Vena says of the other Class I railroads. Canadian National and CPKC operate all the way across Canada, Vena says, yet no one suggests that CN and CPKC should be split into a four railroad system like the U.S. has.

Vena says other railroads will aim to gain merger-related concessions from the STB to close a financial gap with UP.

He spoke at the Barclays 43rd Annual Industrial Select Conference.

Seven State Attorneys General ask Justice Department to Scrutinize UP-NS Merger

By [Stuart Chirls](#) | February 17, 2026



An eastbound Union Pacific coal train passes through La Fox, Ill., on Feb. 13, 2026. A group of attorneys general from seven Republican states has asked the Department of Justice to review the UP-Norfolk Southern merger. David Lassen

WASHINGTON — Top legal officials in seven Republican states are asking the U.S. Department of Justice to scrutinize the proposed Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger.

The group of state attorneys general led by Montana’s Austin Knudsen claim that the east-west consolidation will stifle competition and increase costs for Americans.

The coalition in a letter asks Acting Assistant Attorney General Omeed Assefi to review the proposed merger to provide additional analysis as the Surface Transportation Board evaluates the transaction. The STB has the sole authority to approve or reject the \$85 billion deal, but the Justice Department’s Antitrust Division weighs in on rail mergers in filings with the railroad regulator.

Union Pacific plans to file an updated merger application with the STB on April 30.

A preliminary review by the attorneys general found the companies have failed to adequately address the clear loss of horizontal competition, raising antitrust concerns, the AGs said in [a press release](#).

“By entrenching a single rail behemoth across key east-west corridors, the deal would shackle domestic manufacturers, energy producers, and farmers with higher rates and fewer shipping options, thereby blunting their competitive edge against foreign rivals, squeezing household budgets, and weakening the supply chains that underpin our national security,” Knudsen wrote in [the letter](#). “Accordingly, we encourage the Department of Justice Antitrust Division to carefully scrutinize the merger, applying the existing law and merger guidelines to support the Surface Transportation Board’s review of the transaction.”

The coalition said the merger — which, if approved, would shrink the number of big U.S. Class I railroads from four to three — “could reduce shipping options by limiting cooperation with other railroads for interline services, which raises questions of whether the railroad companies’ commitment to keeping connection points open for freight and railcars is truthful, given it is not enforceable. “Although Union Pacific claims the merger will result in increased growth and efficiency, the attorneys general also highlighted the importance of DOJ’s review of the deal considering the company’s nearly decade-long decline in rail service.”

Along with Knudsen, the letter was signed by attorney generals from Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Tennessee. It comes just days after Assistant Attorney General and antitrust specialist Gail Slater was [reportedly forced out of her position](#).

— A version of this article originally appeared [at FreightWaves.com](#)

Union Pacific Reports Record Financial Results

By [Bill Stephens](#) | January 27, 2026

The railroad moved more freight with fewer employees in 2025, CEO Jim Vena says



A westbound Union Pacific manifest freight crosses Hill Avenue in Wheaton, Ill., on June 28, 2025. David Lassen

OMAHA, Neb. — Union Pacific today reported record financial and operational results for 2025 despite a drop in fourth-quarter operating income.

“The Union Pacific team delivered our best ever full year across safety, service and operating excellence,” CEO Jim Vena said on the railroad’s earnings call on Tuesday morning. “As we close out the year, it’s clear the team is consistently delivering at the highest levels, and I’m confident that’s what we’ll continue to do.”

For the year, operating income rose 1%, to \$9.8 billion, as revenue rose 1%, to \$24.5 billion. Overall volume also was up 1%. Earnings per share grew 8%, to \$11.09. The railroad’s operating ratio was 59.8%, an improvement of 0.1 points.

“We remain disciplined, setting the best ever full-year record for workforce productivity as we utilized 3% fewer employees to move 1% more volume,” Vena said.

Fourth-quarter volume declined 4% due to a 10% drop in premium traffic, which includes intermodal and automotive business.

Most of the intermodal decline was due to a 30% drop in international volume, which came down from record levels in 2024. Domestic intermodal volume had a record quarter and year, said Kenny Rocker, the railroad’s executive vice president of marketing and sales. Bulk traffic, which includes coal, was up 3%, while industrial products traffic notched out a 1% quarterly gain.

Fourth-quarter operating income declined 5%, to \$2.4 billion, as revenue declined 1%, to \$6.08 billion. Earnings per share increased 7%, to \$3.11. The railroad’s fourth-quarter operating ratio was 60.5%, a 1.8-point increase compared to the fourth quarter of 2024, as expenses increased 2%, to \$3.68 billion.

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Quarterly freight car velocity increased 9% to a record 239 car-miles per day. Average train speed was up 7%, while terminal dwell was down 9% to a record 19.8 hours. Average train length was a record, at 9,729 feet.

Eric Gehringer, executive vice president of operations, noted that the railroad had its lowest ever train accident and employee injury rates in 2025.

Chief Financial Officer Jennier Hamann says UP expects to hit the three-year financial targets outlined at its September 2024 investor day. For this year, UP forecasts earnings per share growth of around 5%, along with operating ratio improvement despite a muted economic outlook.

Rocker says UP has a positive outlook for coal, grain, and chemicals and plastics traffic this year. The railroad’s outlook is negative, however, for forest products, intermodal, and automotive.

UP’s \$3.3 billion 2026 capital plan includes \$1.9 on track maintenance, \$600 million for capacity improvements and siding extensions, \$400 million for locomotive modernizations, and \$400 million for technology projects.



CN Productivity Efforts to Focus on Terminals

By David Lassen | February 17, 2026

Railroad remains ready when growth arrives, CEO says



A Canadian National train heads north near Trevor, Wis., on July 13, 2024. CN efforts to increase operating efficiency are now focusing on terminals, CEO Tracy Robinson told an investor conference. David Lassen



Canadian National CEO Tracy Robinson. CN

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. — Canadian National’s ongoing effort to operate a “leaner and more productive” railroad is now focusing on terminal operations, CEO Tracy Robinson told an investor conference today (Tuesday, Feb. 17).

Chief Operating Officer Patrick Whitehead is currently focusing on those terminals, Robinson said. “That’s where something like 50% of our operating labor is,” she said. “He’s going through every terminal — they’re calling it fast-tracking to redo the processes. We look to make sure we’re fluid, we get the right resources, but we’re not over-resourced, whether it’s facilities or locomotives or people, and create that next level of fluidity.”

Robinson said the railroad is “poised” for growth when it appears, through recent capacity expansion projects and reserves in equipment and manpower.

“We’ve got locomotives tucked away,” she said. “We’ve got 800 or 900 people furloughed that we’re staying every close to. We showed a great ability to get those guys back on the property. And so we’re poised. ... When it comes, we’ll have considerable operating leverage. You’ll see that fall directly to the bottom line.”

Robinson noted that the railroad is currently enjoying strong grain traffic — almost records for the company from September through December, and the second-best January in history — and that “we’re being surprised a little bit on the upside of potash, which is good for us. But from a contour perspective, we’re not expecting the international intermodal volume to be strong anywhere in North America through the first half of the year. So we’ll see that start to come only towards the second half. Our energy volumes are strong and will continue to strengthen through the year. Our coal volumes will continue to strengthen through the year. What we can’t see right now is what the impact of the tariffs are going to be.” That’s particularly true as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement on trade is renegotiated this year.

“It’s a little blurry out there,” Robinson said. “Do you know what’s going to happen on the negotiations? What we’ve done in our plan, because I think that’s the only thing we can do, is we’ve assumed the same tariffs as we have now. There is opportunity if, in the negotiations, that the tariffs on lumber, on steel, on aluminum and automotive are moderated somewhat. ... We’re focusing right now on what we can control, bringing our cost base down. It’s going to be lower this year than it was last year, and lower last year than it was the year before.”

Merger concessions?

As is now standard in any public forum for a rail executive, Robinson was asked about CN’s stand on the proposed Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger. “We’re very positive on competition and we’re very much aligned with the industry on wanting a lighter touch on regulation to make us more nimble and able to invest,” Robinson said. “And this merger application works against both of those things. ... There’s areas on the two networks where you will in effect see a reduction in competition, and they’ve done some work to address that, but not nearly enough.” Given the regulatory requirement that a merger increase competition, “and increase it in a way that you couldn’t do in any other way but a merger,” she said, “it’s difficult to imagine how bringing together those two railroads and having one railroad that large is going to reach that hurdle.”

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Because CN originates 85% of its traffic and originates and terminates 65%, she said the railroad is “a bit ring-fenced” in terms of the impact of a UP-NS merger. “So the impact is likely to be less on us than on anyone else, but there will be an impact.” And so, she said, there are “certain areas on the continent where we would look for the ability to get into new markets, the ability to service customers that we don’t serve right now” through “various mechanisms to pricing, trackage rights, those kinds of things.” Robinson was speaking at the Barclays 43rd Industrial Select Conference. Union Pacific officials including CEO Jim Vena are scheduled to speak at the conference on Wednesday, with CPKC CEO Keith Creel appearing on Thursday.

CPKC CEO says UP-NS merger Application Has a ‘long way to go’

By David Lassen | January 30, 2026

Robinson sees unanswered questions on preserving, enhancing competition

MONTREAL — Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern have “a long way to go” to address issues with their merger application, Canadian National CEO Tracy Robinson said during the company’s quarterly earnings call today (Friday, Jan. 30). “It is not at all clear that the transaction as proposed addresses many of the questions around the negative impact on competition, as well as the bigger issue of increasing rail competition,” Robinson said as part of her opening remarks. “The concessions required to achieve this will be significant. This should be the focus as UP and NS prepare their refiling. And we’re eager to see how they’ll address these issues in their revised application. I’d say they’ve got a long way to go.” Responding to a subsequent question, she said the initial application falls “considerably short” in addressing how it increases rail competition, and “portrays the merger as a complete end-to-end in spite of pretty obvious areas of overlap. ... “They didn’t give us the projected market share of the new entity, and therefore how big it would be in the potential harm that would come from market power. So these are only examples, that they suggest the gap in assessments of harm. “And as importantly, I think, it failed to propose conditions that would adequately preserve competition, and it said nothing on how it’s going enhance competition, save an open gateway model that I think has been proven not to work, and a gateway commitment that applies to by our assessment to just a very small fraction of the impacted traffic and not at all [to] the Canadian railways. And it expires with a merged entity, and of course its impacts are permanent.” There needs to be more information, she said, to fully understand the impact on shippers, which in turn would lead to “a much more substantive portfolio of concessions to mitigate those impacts if we are held to the STB’s new rules. Based on the available information, she said, “there will be an impact to competitive access for our customers and for our business. Now our assessment would suggest that the impact on CN will be less than that of the other road, but it won’t be zero. And so, if this merger is to proceed, we intend to rigorously pursue concessions that will protect and improve competition.” Robinson also explained why the company has brought in outside advisors to help evaluate the merger and potential future consolidation. “It’s an industry-changing deal and I think it’s inherent upon all of us who are going to participate that we understand the detail, and there is a great level of detail that we’re going to be looking at on how this is going to impact the industry,” she said. “Where I think I would expect most or all of us to bring in an expert, [it’s] let’s make sure we do that in a way that isn’t disrupting how we run the day-to-day business. Most, if not nearly all, of this organization needs to be focused on delivering for our customers every day. ... And so we have important and trusted advisors that we bring to bear on this.”



---- CPKC News ----

CPKC Sets Record for January Grain Moves; CN has Near-record Month

By David Lassen | February 2, 2026 | Last updated on February 6, 2026

Tonnage, carloads break marks from January 2023



A CPKC grain train with grain moves through Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan CPKC/CNW Group

CALGARY, Alberta — CPKC broke its January record for Canadian grain shipments in the just-completed month, moving 2.396 million metric tons and 24,688 carloads, the railroad announced today (Feb. 2, 2026). Both figures surpass records set in January 2023. “By working closely with our grain customers and working efficiently with our supply chain collaborators, our railroaders have delivered record amounts of grain and grain products across Western Canada to start the year,” Jonathan Wahba, senior vice-president, Sales and Marketing, said in [a press release](#).

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“This performance and record volumes have been made possible through significant investment in the grain supply chain made by CPKC and our customers in new and upgraded grain-handling capacity and high-capacity hopper cars.”

Through the first 26 weeks of the 2025-26 crop year, CPKC has shipped more than 15.1 million metric tons of grain and grain products, the largest totals since a record-setting crop year in 2020-21.

Details on CPKC’s grain service are available in [its annual grain plan](#).

CN has near-record month

MONTREAL — Canadian National said on Feb. 5 that it had its second-best month January on record for grain movements, shipping more than 2.27 million metric tons from Western Canada. The record for the month remains 2.85 million metric tons in 2020. The railroad says it adjusted its operations to handle the grain movements despite extreme cold across the network.

Creel: UP-NS Merger ‘not a layup’ after STB Rejects Initial Application

By Bill Stephens | February 19, 2026

CPKC CEO warns of integration risks, market power concerns, and possible wave of additional consolidation



A three-way meet occurs in Meridian, Miss., on the Meridian Speedway. A Kansas City Southern “Grey Ghost” leads an intermodal train bound for Wylie, Texas, out of town first, while Union Pacific C44CTE No. 5638, on the point of a Los Angeles-Atlanta stack train, waits in the clear along with a northbound Norfolk Southern mixed freight in June 2022. Dylan Jones

MIAMI — Canadian Pacific Kansas City CEO Keith Creel says the Surface Transportation Board’s rejection of the initial Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger application shows the \$85 billion transaction is not a done deal. “I’m not drinking the merger Kool-Aid that this thing’s going to get approved. It may or it may not,” Creel told an investor conference on Wednesday. “I believe, especially in light of the last ruling when their application was ruled incomplete, it says that ... this isn’t a layup,” Creel says.

UP CEO Jim Vena has argued that the deal to create a transcontinental railroad is so good for shippers, the rail industry, and the country that it will be a regulatory slam dunk. The railroads will file a revised application on April 30.

The STB has said that the Jan. 16 rejection of the application as incomplete is not an indication of how the board may rule on the merger itself.

But Creel noted that the STB’s current merger review rules were drawn up in 2001 after the disruption caused by Class I railroad megamergers of the 1990s. The earlier regulations encouraged industry consolidation, while the new ones were written to pause and ultimately stop major mergers between the largest Class I systems, Creel contends.

“Those integrations were painful,” Creel said of Burlington Northern-Santa Fe, Union Pacific-Southern Pacific, and the CSX and Norfolk Southern split of Conrail.

Creel contends that those troubled merger integrations foreshadow what’s to come if the STB approves the UP-NS merger. “The risk factor — that’s huge,” Creel says, no matter how much planning goes into crucial steps like extending UP’s NetControl computer system to the NS network. UP executives have promised a smooth computer system transition like the one they accomplished in 2024 when NetControl was activated. When CPKC shut down the legacy KCS computer system in the U.S. in favor of the CP system in May 2025, it promptly led to service problems on CPKC in the Gulf Coast. “They’ve done a great job in cutting over their own system,” Creel says of UP. “But ... replacing your own system with a system you designed, versus marrying another company and trying to integrate and cut over a system you uniquely do not know? There’s complexities that are involved that with the best of planning it’s impossible to get it all right,” Creel says, noting that no one fully understood things that were going on in the background that kept the KCS system working. Creel also says a merger the size of UP-NS poses operational risks in and of itself. “Jim’s a good railroader, a good operating guy,” Creel says of Vena, a former Canadian National colleague. But even if the integration goes relatively smoothly, things like harsh weather in Chicago can quickly knock a railroad off kilter, Creel says. “When it’s 40 below zero for an extended period of time, and you’re in the middle of Chicago and the snow falls, you have a problem,” he says.

While the UP-NS merger will take some cars out of the Belt Railway of Chicago’s Clearing Yard — the busiest classification facility in the Windy City — the expanded UP would still be the biggest user of the yard and will control almost half of the rail traffic in the U.S. Given that, Creel says that if UP stubs its toe, it will affect the entire rail network. The primary argument behind the Canadian Pacific-Kansas City Southern merger — that CPKC’s end-to-end combination would be able to offer customers seamless, single-line service — also applies to UP-NS, Vena told an investor conference this week. Vena also said that the degree of overlap between the UP and NS systems is roughly the same as on the pre-merger CP and KCS networks. “Some people would say, Keith, you’re a hypocrite. You’re a product of consolidation,” Creel says of the CP-KCS merger, which was judged under the STB’s old merger rules. “I’m not a hypocrite. I understand the facts. What we did complemented and created competition without tilting the scales of market power to the disadvantage of any particular customer. There’s not one single customer that lost an option with us. It truly was end to end.” He also says CPKC didn’t have to offer shippers anything like Committed Gateway Pricing, which UP is offering to ensure gateway through rates are preserved for UP-CSX and NS-BNSF routings. “And what was true about us is not true about this combination,” Creel says. “You’re talking about something that creates, if it’s approved, a Goliath that is going to have exponential market power.” CPKC united the two smallest Class I lines — railroads that touched only at Kansas City, where they shared Knoche Yard for decades, Creel notes. CPKC is still the smallest Class I.

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“The scale is the X factor. It’s uniquely different than what we did,” Creel says of UP-NS. “Again, Chicago is a great example. The bigger it gets, the more complicated it gets, and the more the pain if you get it wrong.”

CPKC has struggled to meet merger-related volume growth targets, partly due to ongoing trade tensions involving the U.S. and Canada and Mexico. And Creel questioned the UP-NS growth projections of taking 2 million trucks off the highway annually.

“To achieve them, you’re assuming that the trucking industry is just going to roll over. They’re not. I think we’ve learned that that’s a different beast to compete against,” Creel says.

Creel says consolidation in the rail industry is not necessary. But he also says that if UP-NS is approved, it will prompt additional mergers.

“It will definitely create an environment where it will be necessary for additional consolidation. Now I’m not speaking out of both sides of my mouth. I do not believe we need consolidation. I do not want consolidation,” Creel says. “But if it happens, then I think you’re going to have additional consolidation that is necessary and that is inevitable. And how it all shakes out, I’m not certain.”

Creel spoke at the Citi Global Tech and Mobility Conference on Wednesday. He made similar comments today at a Barclays conference.

--- Other Railroad News ---

Intermodal Spot Rates Haven’t Kept Pace with Trucking’s Spot Market Surge — But That’s About to Change in 2026

By [Craig Fuller](#) | February 15, 2026

Intermodal spot rates are running at half of their trucking counterparts.



An eastbound BNSF intermodal train passes through snowy Hinsdale, Ill., on Feb. 17, 2021. David Lassen

The freight market has been sending mixed signals for months, but one trend stands out clearly as we move deeper into 2026: Trucking spot rates have staged a meaningful recovery, while intermodal rates remain stubbornly anchored near cycle lows. Look at the data. Truckload spot rates (inclusive of fuel) are holding elevated around \$2.80 per mile nationally, per recent SONAR readings, up 23% from a year ago where it was at \$2.33 per mile. Tender rejections are hovering near 14% — levels not seen consistently since the post-COVID unwind in 2022, and higher than anything in 2023, 2024, and 2025. Carriers are rejecting loads, pushing spot pricing higher, and creating real headaches for shippers’ routing guides. Intermodal, meanwhile, tells a different story. Domestic intermodal spot rates (excluding fuel) sit at \$1.39 per mile, down from \$1.48 per mile a year ago, a decline of 5% — basically the same levels of where intermodal spot rates were during the COVID shut-downs in March 2020. That’s despite strong intermodal volume performance, with slight fourth-quarter year-over-year gains fueled by reliable rail service and a significant rate spread versus truckload (often 20% to 30% savings on key long-haul lanes). Intermodal spot rates are running at half of their trucking counterparts.

This divergence isn’t new. For much of the past couple of years, shippers chased cost savings by shifting longer-haul freight to intermodal, especially as truckload capacity was abundant and spot rates soft. Railroads capitalized with excellent service reliability entering its second year of strong performance, excess container availability, and aggressive pricing to capture share. Intermodal volumes grew even as truckload volumes dipped negative in spots.

But the market is shifting under our feet. Trucking capacity continues to tighten — driven by ongoing carrier exits, regulatory pressures on drivers (English proficiency rules, non-domiciled CDL restrictions, ELD enforcement), winter weather disruptions, and early signs that domestic freight demand is returning, particularly in the Rust Belt.

Tender rejections remain multi-year highs throughout the country, but especially in the Midwest, where capacity remains incredibly tight. National spot rate averages exceed typical seasonal norms. Trucking spot rates surged in recent weeks and it is now obvious to even the most cynical observer that the recent surge is not simply a weather phenomenon.

Trucking is set for a banner year, with both tightening capacity and demand moving in the direction that favors motor carriers. We believe that shippers could experience multiple rounds of rate increases by the end of the year, with some models showing double-digit contract rate increases by December.

Intermodal’s pricing advantage, while still attractive, is starting to look vulnerable. Truckload provides the effective “ceiling” for intermodal rates — railroads can’t price too far below trucking without risking margin erosion, but they also can’t ignore a tightening over-the-road market forever. As spot truckload strength persists and potentially bleeds into contract renewals later this year, intermodal providers will face pressure to adjust.

Several catalysts could accelerate this:

- **Capacity attrition in trucking:** If exits continue (and early 2026 data suggests they are), the supply-demand balance tilts further toward carriers, making truckload more competitive on transit time, visibility, and door-to-door service — exactly the areas where intermodal has won share.
- **Demand surprises:** Consumer spending has held up better than expected in places. If inventories contract while urgency returns (e.g., via tariff-driven frontloading or unexpected surges), shippers may pay up for speed, pulling freight off rails and onto trucks.

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- Rail strategy:** Railroads have enjoyed volume gains from cost-conscious shippers. But with truckload rates firming, holding intermodal pricing flat risks losing that momentum. Expect selective increases to capture better margins, especially on high-volume lanes.
- Don't expect a dramatic flip overnight — intermodal's structural advantages on long-haul economics remain. But the wide rate spread that fueled modal conversion is narrowing, and intermodal rates are poised to catch up as trucking's tightness exerts upward pressure across surface modes.
- Shippers should prepare for this shift. Those locked into long-term intermodal contracts may see renewal pressure; spot users could face less aggressive discounts. Carriers and railroads alike will be watching tender rejection trends and spot indices closely — because when trucking leads, intermodal often follows.
- The freight market rewarded patience through the downcycle. Now, it's rewarding those positioned for the inevitable rebalancing. In 2026, intermodal's lag ends — and rates rise to reflect the new reality.

U.S. Rail Traffic Rebounds After Two Weeks of Declines

By [David Lassen](#) | February 19, 2026

Carload, intermodal volume both see increases

U.S. Rail Traffic¹ Week 6, 2026 – Ended February 14, 2026

	This Week		Year-To-Date		
	Cars	vs 2025	Cumulative	Avg/wk ²	vs 2025
Total Carloads	225,283	7.7%	1,297,249	216,208	3.4%
Chemicals	33,957	5.2%	198,033	33,006	1.9%
Coal	58,413	7.2%	346,016	57,669	3.3%
Farm Products excl. Grain, and Food	17,170	3.6%	102,167	17,028	-1.2%
Forest Products	8,074	-2.1%	46,107	7,685	-6.8%
Grain	27,822	41.6%	147,817	24,636	18.5%
Metallic Ores and Metals	18,713	8.4%	109,882	18,314	4.9%
Motor Vehicles and Parts	14,608	-1.2%	78,083	13,014	-4.4%
Nonmetallic Minerals	27,189	2.3%	153,309	25,552	4.2%
Petroleum and Petroleum Products	10,963	0.1%	65,134	10,856	3.7%
Other	8,374	-0.6%	50,701	8,450	-1.7%
Total Intermodal Units	285,116	5.0%	1,631,915	271,986	-1.8%
Total Traffic	510,399	6.2%	2,929,164	488,194	0.4%

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

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

Association of American Railroads

WASHINGTON — U.S. rail traffic rebounded after two down weeks, with overall volume up 6.2% for the week ending Feb. 14. According to the Association of American Railroads, overall traffic was 510,399 carloads and intermodal units, accounting for the gain compared to the same week a year ago. That included 225,283 carloads, up 7.7% from the corresponding week in 2025, and 285,116 containers and trailers, up 5%. The carload volume was led by a 41.6% gain in grain traffic compared to a year ago. For the year to date, the volume of 2,929,164 carloads and intermodal units is a 0.5% gain over the first six weeks of 2025. The 1,297,249 carloads are a gain of 3.4%, while the 1,631,915 intermodal units are a decline of 1.8%.

North American volume for the week, as reported by nine U.S., Canadian, and Mexican railroads, was 705,242 carloads and intermodal units, a gain of 7.2% over the same week in 2025. That figure includes 333,151 carloads, up 7.8%, and 372,091 intermodal units, up 6.7%. For the year to date, the North American volume of 4,035,344 carloads and intermodal units is a 1.1% increase over the first six weeks of 2025.

The week's traffic in Canada included 94,385 carloads, up 8.5%, and 72,528 intermodal units, up 10.6% from the same week a year ago. Through six weeks of 2026, Canadian volume is 974,293 carloads and intermodal units, a drop of 0.2%.

In Mexico, volume for the week included 13,483 carloads, up 5.1% from a year ago, and 14,447 intermodal units, up 22.8%. For the year to date, the 158,887 carloads and intermodal units represent a 26.4% gain over the first six weeks of 2025.

Documentary Looks at Iowa Interstate’s first 40 Years

[By Trains Staff](#) | February 19, 2026

Film now available at railroad’s YouTube page



A new documentary looks at the first 40 years of Iowa Interstate. David Lassen

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa — A new documentary about the Iowa Interstate Railroad marking the railroad’s 40th anniversary is now available at the company’s YouTube page.

“Revival and Redemption: Iowa Interstate at 40” is a 34-minute feature looking at the railroad’s growth from startup in 1984 to its current regional role linking Iowa and Illinois with the national rail network. “This documentary is not just about trains — it’s about resilience,” Iowa Interstate Chairman Henry Posner III said in a press release. “The Iowa Interstate Railroad represents what can happen when local leadership, passionate employees, and strong communities come together to preserve and enhance an essential transportation link.” Railroad President Joe Parsons calls the documentary “a fascinating look at how a once-dead railroad overcame all odds in the post-Staggers era of railroading.” The film includes footage of the railroad’s early years; interviews with key individuals in the foundation, growth, and success of the railroad; Iowa Interstate’s role in supporting Midwest agriculture, manufacturing, and international trade; and a look at preparations for the future.

“As I learned more about the history of the Iowa Interstate Railroad from past and present employees, it became clear how much determination, innovation, and teamwork was required to build the railroad into what it is today,” said Nicholas Ozorak, owner of Streamliner Media and director of the film. “I greatly appreciated working with Railroad Development Corp. and the Iowa Interstate Railroad team to share this story with a wider audience.”

The documentary [is available here](#).

Front Range Passenger Agency Launches Town Hall Meetings on Project

[By Trains Staff](#) | February 24, 2026

First meeting set for Thursday, Feb. 26, in Colorado Springs



The proposed Front Range Passenger Rail route. Front Range Passenger Rail District

DENVER — The Front Range Passenger Rail District has scheduled the first in a series of town hall meetings to hear from residents as part of the ongoing planning for proposed service between Fort Collins and Pueblo, Colo.

The first meeting is Thursday, Feb. 26, in Colorado Springs, followed by meetings in Pueblo on March 8, Denver on March 19, and again in Colorado Springs on March 26.

Attendees will hear a brief overview of the proposed service and have the opportunity to ask questions to project officials and share feedback and local priorities. Residents, business owners, and local leaders are invited to take part.

The district describes the meetings as part of outreach “designed to provide clear, factual information about the project and gather community input as planning advances.” More meetings are planned in the months ahead.

Both sessions in Colorado Springs will be held from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center, 530 Communication Circle. The Pueblo meeting, on a Sunday, is set for 1-3 p.m. at Pueblo Union Depot, 132 W. B Street; the Denver session is from noon to 1:30 p.m. at the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library, 2401 Welton Street.

More information, including plans for additional meetings, [can be found here](#). More on the district is available [at its website](#).

News Photo: SunRail Wraps Train to Mark USA’s 250th Birthday

[By Trains Staff](#) | February 10, 2026

ORLANDO, Fla. — Florida commuter operator SunRail has decorated one of its trainsets to mark America’s semiquincentennial, with the Florida Department of Transportation saying the move is one way the agency is “showcasing the state’s contributions to the Republic and the importance of the state’s transportation system.”

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The locomotive, an MPI MP32PH-Q, features a predominantly white design, while the two Bombardier coaches feature designs with such state symbols and attributes as citrus flowers; wildlife, including a manatee and alligator; technology; and historical sites. Crews operating the train wear patriotic uniform shirts, while “Celebrate America on SunRail” banners and posters are featured on the train and in stations.

SunRail, which began service in 2014, operates 42 trains each day Monday through Friday. More information is available at [the SunRail website](https://www.sunrail.com).

Florida’s SunRail has wrapped one of its trainsets to mark the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. SunRail

Sound Transit Sets March 28 for Opening of Light Rail Crosslake Connection

By David Lassen | January 24, 2026

Completion of segment across Lake Washington will connect Link lines 1 and 2



four-car Sound Transit train crosses the I-90 floating bridge during testing on Dec. 18, 2025. Regular service on the route will begin March 28. Sound Transit



Sound Transit’s Crosslake Connection, connecting Line 1 and Line 2 via a bridge across Lake Washington, will include two new stations. Sound Transit

SEATTLE — Sound Transit’s light rail Crosslake Connection — the section of Line 2 across Lake Washington to complete the route to Redmond, Wash. — will open on March 28, the transit agency announced Friday.

The section between International District/Chinatown and South Bellevue, which will connect Line 2 with the north-south Line 1, includes the unique floating bridge shared with Interstate 90.

“After decades of hard work, creative design, and world-class engineering, we are finally linking the east and west sides of Lake Washington with rail,” Sound Transit Board Chair Dave Somers said in [a press release](#). “I applaud all those who worked on this project, and I appreciate the patience of the traveling public as the project worked through many barriers. Today is a very important milestone, and we look forward to Link light rail connecting Tacoma, Seattle, Everett, and Bellevue in the not-too-distant future.”

The completed Line 2 “will serve 26 stations and more than 35 miles,” said board member Girmay Zahilay, “while knitting together five King County cities and two Snohomish County cities, creating new transit hubs throughout the region.” It will add two new stations and expand the full Link light rail network from 55 to 62 miles.

Completion of the 7.4-mile connection comes more than two years after the original projected opening date of mid-2023. The delay stems from construction delays including the need to rebuild or reinforce concrete supports on 4 miles of approaches to the floating bridge section, as well as precast blocks and fastener bolts on the bridge itself [see [“Construction delays push back opening”](#) Trains.com, Aug. 22, 2022]. Sound Transit eventually elected to open an isolated but completed section of Line 2 between South Bellevue and Redmond in 2024 [see [“Sound Transit launches”](#) April 28, 2024n

Full details on opening day will be announced at a future date [at this page](#) on the Sound Transit website. Sound Transit produced the video below on the floating bridge project.

<https://youtu.be/-tImk5T3iiU>



VIA Gets Little Attention in Parliamentary Hearing

By David Lassen | February 24, 2026

Passenger operator overshadowed by port concerns in House committee session



Passengers line up at Dorval, Quebec, as morning VIA Rail Canada train No. 61 to Toronto arrives on Sept. 30, 2024, with a P42 locomotive hauling a consist of LRC coaches. VIA received minimal attention in a Monday, Feb. 23, parliamentary hearing. Bob Johnston

OTTAWA — Given the myriad of current issues with VIA Rail Canada performance, it would be reasonable to think that a parliamentary hearing entitled “Improving VIA Rail’s Safety and Customer Service” could lead to a substantial number of passenger rail questions for Canadian Transport Minister Steven MacKinnon.

That’s not the way things played out before the House of Commons Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities Committee on Monday, Feb. 23. MacKinnon appeared during the second half of a two-hour session also addressing issues regarding Canadian ports, and as a result, the focus on VIA was completely overshadowed by port questions. Even the high-speed Alto project — only tangentially connected to the topics at hand — generated more questions from committee members (two) than VIA (one).

“I want to be clear,” MacKinnon said in his prepared opening remarks. “VIA Rail must do better. This service is essential for connecting communities across Canada. As minister of transport, it is my top priority to ensure that all Canadians remain safe in our transportation networks.”

MacKinnon also referred to the aftermath of a 2024 incident in which passengers were stranded on a train in Quebec for more than 10 hours — an incident similar to one last December in which passengers traveling between Toronto and Ottawa were stuck on VIA trains overnight. [See [“VIA passengers stranded overnight ...”](#) Trains.com, Dec. 11, 2025].

“After Transport Canada completed its own review, we made it clear that VIA Rail needs to strengthen staff training, address equipment failures, and keep passengers well-being at the forefront during any service disruption,” MacKinnon said. “In response to the government and the recommendations of the independent investigation, VIA Rail updated its response protocols and staff training, introduced new measures to improve communications with passengers, and established a new reporting procedure to involve Transport Canada officials sooner when major disruptions occur.”

The lone VIA question came from MP Dan Muys, the Conservative Party’s associate shadow minister of transport, who noted ongoing concerns about train delays, specifically with VIA’s corridor services. He asked what MacKinnon would do to address those concerns.

“Let’s agree that the service has not been as customer friendly, reliable, or as punctual in recent years as it’s needed to be,” MacKinnon said. “Now let’s also agree, I hope, that we live in a northern country with at sometimes unpredictable weather. We also live with a situation where along many segments of the so-called corridor, VIA shares tracks, and in fact does not have priority over those tracks, with a railway. ...

“We certainly want VIA and CN to collaborate to the extent that it’s possible and make that situation better. But I’ve made, in no uncertain terms, my expectation clear to the new senior management at VIA Rail that this must improve — that customer service communication with customers must improve, that reliability of service, people want to know that trains are going to depart on time and arrive on time ... the things that are controllable, I expect VIA Rail to control.”

BNSF Nears Completion of PTC on Former Montana Rail Link

By Trains Staff | October 28, 2025

Work expected to be completed by December



Montana Rail Link’s westbound Gas Local along the Flathead River between Perma and Dixon, Mont. BNSF is nearing completion of positive train control installation on the former MRL. Tom Danneman

MISSOULA, Mont. — BNSF Railway expects to complete installation of positive train control on the former Montana Rail Link by December, concluding a long-running project that predates BNSF’s acquisition of the regional railroad.

[BNSF said on social media](#) that PTC was implemented on 36 miles of its MRL Subdivision in June, with work in progress on another 570 miles.

Montana Rail Link said in 2018 it would voluntarily install PTC on five subdivisions between Billings, Mont., and Sandpoint, Idaho [see [“Montana Rail Link to install ...”](#) Trains.com, Nov. 5, 2018]. MRL received a \$3.5 million Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant toward the project in 2019 [see [“Montana Rail gets \\$3.5 million federal grant ...”](#) Trains.com, June 28, 2019].



*Amtrak Borealis Train
1340 runs through Red Rock on track
2 Jul 16 -Bob Ball*



*Amtrak Borealis with Superliner equipment
Seen here at Frontenac -Bob Ball*

Railfan Events –also thanks to Rick Krenske

Northstar Chapter NRHS Monthly Meeting	<i>Saturday March 14th 2026 6:15pm—8:45pm</i>	Roseville Lutheran Church Diamond room 1215 Roselawn Ave W Roseville MN 55113	FREE -Guests are Welcome
Greater Upper Midwest Train show: Century College Model RR Flea Market	<u>April 11th 2026</u>	Century College West Campus 3401 Century Ave N White Bear Lake MN 55110	\$7
Lakes & Pines TCA Train Show and Swap Meet	<u>March 8th 2026 12:15pm</u>	John P Murzyn Hall 530 Mill Street NE Columbia Heights MN 55421	
45th Annual La Crosse & Three Rivers Model Railroad Show.	March 14th 2026 <u>9am—5pm</u> March 15th 2026 <u>10am -3pm</u>	The Omni Center 255 Riders Club Road Onalaska/ La Crosse, Wisconsin 54650	\$8 one day \$12 both days
Randolph Railroad Days at Randolph High School.	March 28th 2026 <u>9am—3pm</u> March 29th 2026 <u>10am—2pm</u>	Randolph Minnesota High School and Museum <i>29110 Davisson Ave Randolph, MN 55016</i>	\$7 per day

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