

THE FLATWHEEL

The Official Monthly Publication of the Central Florida
Railway Historical Society, Inc.



July 2014

July 2014 Meeting

Monday, July 14th at 7:00 PM
Central Florida RR Museum
101 S. Boyd St., Winter Garden, FL
Program: The Dora Doodlebug
By: Neil Bagaus
Refreshments: Laura Ansell

August 2014 Meeting

Monday, August 11th at 7:00 PM
Central Florida RR Museum
101 S. Boyd St., Winter Garden, FL
Program: The United, Verde & Pacific RR
By: Phil Piet
Refreshments: Ken Murdock

Central Florida Railway Historical Society, Inc.

Central Florida RR Museum Host Duty Schedule — July 2014

DAY	DATE	HOURS	MUSEUM HOST
Saturday	7/5/14	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Jarrod Reynolds
Sunday	7/6/14	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Phil Piet
Saturday	7/12/14	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Irv Lipscomb
Sunday	7/13/14	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Gary Dettman
Saturday	7/19/14	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Mike Kelly
Sunday	7/20/14	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Patrick Smith
Saturday	7/26/14	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Bill Dusenbury
Sunday	7/27/14	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Gary Dettman
Saturday	N/A	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	N/A
Sunday	N/A	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	N/A

July 2014 Museum Work Session Saturday, July 26, 2014

8:30 AM to 3:30 PM

Please come out and help
with the many chores that
need to be done!!!!

Field Trip to Daytona Beach Museum of Arts & Science — Clarence Hurt

The City of Winter Garden Parks and Recreation Department is going to sponsor a trip to above location on Thursday, July 10th, 2014. Tickets are \$20.00 for City residents & \$22.00 for non-residents. **This includes transportation and museum admission.** (Lunch is on your own). Regular admission to the museum is 12.95 (Seniors \$10.95) Bus leaves from Community Center, 310 N. Dillard Street at 9:00 and returns at 5:30.

The DBMAS is know as the primary art, history and science museum in Central Florida. It has more than 30,000 objects and as most of you know, **it houses a number of the prime RAILROAD artifacts from the Root family collection.** They have some of the Drumheads off famous passenger trains, a dining car and the Beaver Tail Milwaukee observation car from the Hiawatha.

They have 22 spots available with 12 of them already committed, but should they have requests for as many as 44 they will engage a larger bus to accommodate. If you have an interest in going along on this trip, call 407-656-4155 and speak with either Mona or Carol.

July Birthdays

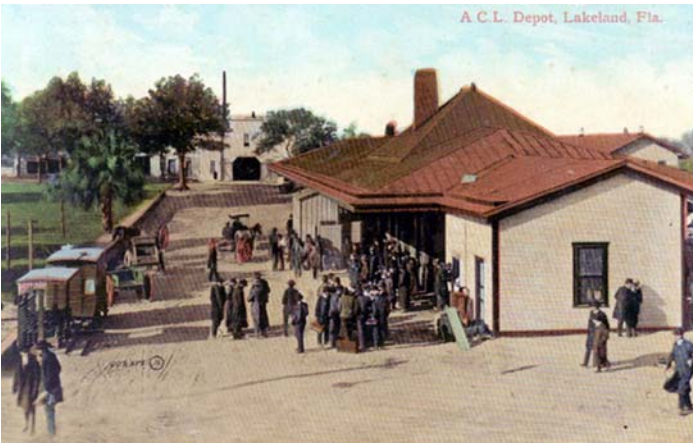
Sharon Lamb 7/5
Patricia Smith 7/10
Don Andrus 7/16
Chuck Hanus 7/22
Richard Bazzo 7/24

This Is The Way It Was

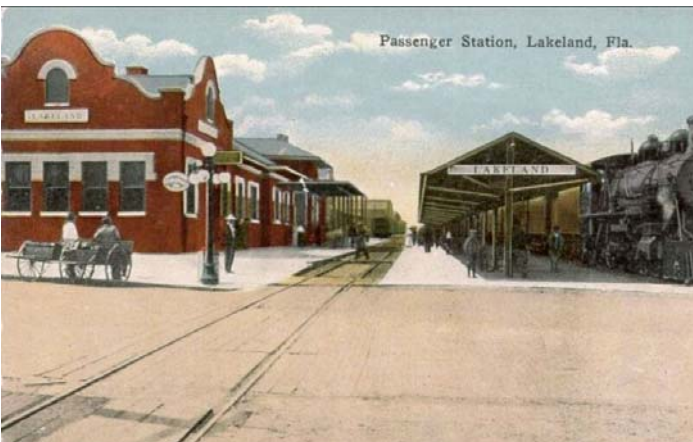
This monthly photo column by Ken Murdock features railroad scenes of the past, a look back into railroading's history.



This is Lakeland's first depot, built by the South Florida RR at Munn Park, soon after their tracks reached this town in 1884. Though quite an elaborate depot for this small town, it didn't last long. It burned in 1901. - Florida Archives photo



The original depot was soon replaced with this much smaller, one story structure. It quickly proved to be inadequate and was demolished by the ACL in 1910 to make way for Lakeland's third depot. - Florida Archives photo



The ACL replaced Lakeland's second depot in 1911 with this mostly single story building with a red brick exterior. This was a major improvement over the earlier depot but the interior structure was wood. It burned in 1918 and the ACL rebuilt it and enlarged it. Next month will cover Lakeland's fourth, fifth and sixth depots. - Dick Kerns collection

June 2014 Museum Report

By Ken Murdock, Museum Curator

June proved to be a very busy month where many projects were worked on and some of them were actually completed.

We continued our Museum Inventory Workdays during the four Wednesdays of month and we are now concentrating on artwork and photos displayed on the walls. Al Sharp was able to participate on the first Wednesday of the month before leaving for his mountain home in North Carolina. Al also donated the electrical wire for our crossing signal project, and we pulled it thru the conduit to the underside of the Roper Building on the Wednesday before he left. Jarrod Reynolds was there to help us and to work on inventory. Others that participated on Wednesday inventory work during the month included Irv Lipscomb, Phil Piet, Jarrod Reynolds, Jerry and Ginger Honeter and me. Ginger continued polishing our silver and hosted in the afternoons.

I also completed a museum project at home during the month. I restored our recently donated ACL Ocklawaha depot sign. The sign had only a small amount of paint left, but enough for me to re-create the lettering style and restore it to its original colors which was ACL purple with white lettering.

Speaking of at home projects, Mike Ryan continues scanning Society slides and cleaning them up with Photo Shop before putting them on CDs. These CDs will make great programs if anyone would like to take this on.

We had an unscheduled min-workday on Friday, June 20, to set our railroad crossing signal on the concrete base that was formed and poured last month. Florida Metal Craft of Winter Garden provided a crane for lifting the signal. The crane made an otherwise very difficult job quite easy. No strain, no pain! Phil Cross, Jarrod Reynolds, my grandson Connor and me participated.

Then on the next day, Saturday, June 21, we had our scheduled monthly museum workday. We had seven members participating which included Phil Cross, Allen Quinn, Lloyd Brown, Jarrod Reynolds, Jerry and Ginger Honeter and me. Irv Lipscomb hosted the museum in the afternoon and came early and joined us for lunch. Tasks accomplished included housekeeping chores, placing casters on another showcase, starting to rewire and assemble the crossing signal, pressing on with the library inventory and installing our ACL Ocklawaha depot sign. I actually found a place to display this almost 10' long piece of ACL's history. See if you can spot it at the July meeting.

Thanks to each of you who came out at the various work activities and made this another phenomenal month!

Pleased see Page 7 for photos from the June work sessions.

Upcoming Events

July 12, 2014 — Deland, FL — 48th Florida Rail Fair, Volusia County Fairgrounds, 3150 East New York Avenue, 9 am – 4 pm. Contact: Charles Miller, 386-736-8185, rrshows@aol.com. Website: <http://www.gserr.com>.

July 14, 2014 — Winter Garden, FL — Monthly Meeting of the Central Florida Railway Historical Society at 7:00 PM in the Central Florida Railroad Museum, 101 South Boyd Street.

August 9, 2014 — Norcross, GA — 47th Atlanta Model Train Show, North Atlanta Trade Center, 1700 Jeurgens Court, 9 AM to 4 PM. Contact: Charles Miller, 386-736-8185, rrshows@aol.com. Website: <http://www.gserr.com>.

August 11, 2014 — Winter Garden, FL — Monthly Meeting of the Central Florida Railway Historical Society at 7:00 PM in the Central Florida Railroad Museum, 101 South Boyd Street.

August 16-17, 2014 — The Villages Railroad Historical Society presents its Summer Rail Expo Sales and Show at the Savannah Regional Recreation Center 1545 Buena Vista Blvd, The Villages, FL. Saturday August 16 (9:00AM-4:00PM) and Sunday August 17 (10:00AM-3:00PM). Over 100 tables of vendors selling in all scales. Several operating layouts. Door prizes and raffle. FREE PARKING! Admission \$5.00 (\$4.00 with coupon). Children under 10 FREE with an adult. Call 352-751-3034 or 352-205-4322 for further information or email amgold15@hotmail.com.

September 8, 2014 — Winter Garden, FL — Monthly Meeting of the Central Florida Railway Historical Society at 7:00 PM in the Central Florida Railroad Museum, 101 South Boyd Street.

October 4, 2014 — Deland, FL — 49th Florida Rail Fair, Volusia County Fairgrounds, 3150 East New York Avenue, 9 am – 4 pm. Contact: Charles Miller, 386-736-8185, rrshows@aol.com. Website: <http://www.gserr.com>.

October 4-5 and 11-12, 2014 — St. Marys, GA — The Gramling Locomotive Company's #126 Saddle-tank Locomotive will power the St. Mary's Railroad Tourist Trains round trip between St. Marys, GA and Kingsland, GA.

October 13, 2014 — Winter Garden, FL — Monthly Meeting of the Central Florida Railway Historical Society at 7:00 PM in the Central Florida Railroad Museum, 101 South Boyd Street.

November 10, 2014 — Winter Garden, FL — Monthly Meeting of the Central Florida Railway Historical Society at 7:00 PM in the Central Florida Railroad Museum, 101 South Boyd Street.

December 20-21, 2014 — Tampa, FL — 12th Tampa Train Show & Sale, Florida State Fairgrounds Special Events Center, 9 AM to 5 PM Saturday, 10 AM to 4 PM Sunday. Contact: Charles Miller, 386-736-8185, rrshows@aol.com. Website: <http://www.gserr.com>.

December 6, 2014 — Clermont, FL — Annual Meeting of the Central Florida Railway Historical Society at the 801 City Grille, beginning with a social hour at 6 PM.

Thanks to Society Member Bill Dusenbury for the following story.

Calling All Train Buffs With a Spare £800,000

By Patrick Sawyer
June 8, 2014



It is every boy's dream – a real steam locomotive set complete with a perfectly restored mail carriage.

Only this one is full size (or 1.1 as model railway aficionados would say) and is on offer for just over £800,000.

The Swiss-based owners of 141R 568 have decided they can no longer justify keeping the 136-ton locomotive and tender, and have put it on the market, hoping to find a steam buff with money to spare and a rather large sidings in which to park it.

Andrew Cook, the chairman of William Cook Holdings, owners of Swiss Classic Train, which is selling the 568, said: "It's a fantastic buy for anyone with that sort of money. It really is a wonderful machine with so many gadgets and it is one of the last of its kind. It also has a great history."

Indeed, behind this particular engine lies an intriguing story of how the United States helped the French railways get back on their feet after the Second World War.

Six years of occupation and war had reduced much of the rolling stock and engines owned by SNCF, the French national railway system, to ruin and there was a desperate need for a large fleet of new engines to aid the post-war recovery effort.

With French industry so badly damaged, SNCF looked to the US, which was already providing aid to rebuild western Europe as part of the Marshall Plan, and a team of SNCF engineers crossed the Atlantic to agree specifications.

Mr. Cook said: "What emerged was the 141R class. It was based on an existing American Mikado design but substantially modified for European use. These [trains] were an immediate success because of their rugged construction, low maintenance and immense power."

Both coal and oil-burning versions were produced and it took four American locomotive builders to fulfill the orders, with locomotive plants in Lima, Ohio and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, along with one in Montreal, Canada, working flat out. By 1948, the fleet was complete – although 12 ended up at the bottom of the Atlantic when the ship carrying them sank.

Continued on Page 4.

Six decades on from when their exploits helped rebuild France, only six 141R engines remain in working order, with two of them, the 568 and the oil-fired 1244, owned by the Mikado Association, operating in Switzerland.

During its 24 years of service with SNCF, locomotive 568 clocked up nearly 900,000 miles.

It was initially based at Belfort where, among other routes, it worked the line to the Swiss frontier station of Delle; hauled heavy car sleeper expresses on the first leg of their journey as far as Amiens; and serviced the coal and steel centre of Sarreguemines, in Lorraine, until the early Seventies.

In later life, 568 found its way to the historic French junction of Capdenac, in the southern Auvergne, where it was going to be used to pull tourist trains. But the project failed and in 2006 the engine and tender were moved to Schaffhausen, north of Zurich, where they were lovingly restored by Swiss Classic Train. The 568 was then used as a tourist train.

The 568's tender is a former French "Postes" mail carriage, complete with the bunk beds used by postal workers in between sorting shifts, a mess room and a workshop.

There is, however, just one hitch to any British owner's dreams of firing up the boiler, blowing the whistle and heading down the track.

Unfortunately, 141R 568 is too wide to be used on most British railway lines, which have less space on either side of the track on corners than Continental railways. In Britain, it could run only on short stretches of "heritage" track.

That might be just as well. When running under steam, loco 568 needs 11 tons of coal for a journey of 250 miles. At a cost of £350 per ton just to refuel, that makes it a rather pricey train set.

"The problem was it was so expensive to run," admitted Mr. Cook. "But if you have the money, or just want to put it on display, it really is a wonderful machine."

Central Florida Railway Historical Society Quarterly Board Meeting Agenda Central Florida RR Museum June 7, 2014 8:30 AM

Call to Order – Bill Dusenbury. Meeting called to order by President Dusenbury at 8:40 AM. Board members present were Bill Dusenbury, Irv Lipscomb, Frank Milmore, Joe Lehmann, Phil Cross, and Ken Murdock.

Opening Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance – Ken Murdock led the Board in prayer and the pledge in the absence of David Rhea..

The Central Florida Railway Historical Society, Inc. – Bill Dusenbury.

- Society 2014 Budget Update – Frank Milmore presented the budget update. Same is on file.
- Society Certificates of Deposit – Frank Milmore led a short discussion on Certificate of Deposits, decide to leave the CD where it is at.
- Society Membership – Phil Cross reported in the absence of Jerry Honetor.
 - ◇ Membership Report
 - * Society Members = 34
 - * Society Century Members = 10
 - * Society Family Members = 14
 - * Society Friends = 8
 - * Total Members = 66 (Includes those that have not yet renewed for 2014)
 - * Membership Renewal for 2014 – 48 members have renewed and we have 3 new members – Total is 51. Phil sent out individual reminders to members that have not renewed.
- Society Field Trips & Other Activities – Phil Cross reported in the absence of Jerry Honetor.
 - ◇ Field trip to the new CSX intermodal facility in Winter Haven is in the planning stages.
 - ◇ Field trip to SunRail (Sanford Maintenance Facility) is in the planning stages.
 - ◇ Trip to Plant City RR museum and Train Platform, Frank Milmore will coordinate the trip.
- Museum Update – Ken Murdock.
 - ◇ Past Perfect Database Update – Work continues on the entering of the Society's collection into the database. Al Sharp has gone back north. Jarrod Reynolds has begun to help Ken to update the system.
 - ◇ Library Committee Update – The Library Committee continues to work on the cataloging of the books, periodicals and videos in the library.
 - ◇ Technology Committee Update — Discussion on maintaining connectivity after the WGHF moves to the new building. Phil will arrange a meeting with WGHF to work out the details.
 - ◇ Website Committee Update – The committee is working on completing two pages still under construction (Railroad History and Photo Gallery). Ken will work on putting together content for two remaining pages.

- ◇ Museum Update.
 - * Ken Murdock reported the pad has been poured for the signal crossing.
 - * June 20 set to mount the crossing signal. Florida Metal Craft will provide a crane to lift the signal in place.
 - * Winter Park museum has their railroad display set up and open to the public. Ken went there and didn't see many of the items we loaned to them on display. Ken will check to see if they plan to use them, if not he will request they return them.
- ◇ Recent Donations.
 - * DVDs donated by Stanley Smith to be played in the museum.
 - * 2 N gauge cars and 1 HO gauge car donated by Dwight Stoffel.
- ◇ Recent Museum Visitor Comment (Visited in February 2014) – *“The gentleman that was there that afternoon wasn't in a good humor, or didn't like people, or something. Upon our arrival he didn't greet us and was rather agitated when we asked for clarification on the price of a souvenir my son wanted to buy.”* Irv will send emails to the docents making them aware of the comment and ask them represent the Society in a positive light.
- 2014 Annual Meeting – Phil Cross in the absence of Jerry Honetor.
 - ◇ Scheduled for Saturday, December 6th, 801 City Grille, Corner of Eighth & Montrose Streets in downtown Clermont, beginning with a social hour at 6 PM, followed by dinner at 7 PM and installation of the 2015 officers at 8 PM. There will not be any program. Entertainment will be Armando Valesquez on the piano.
- CFRR Museum Facebook Page – Bill Dusenbury — Need content for the page.

FCRR, FMRR, FNRR and SunRail Update (Including FCRR Track Upgrade Update) – Bill Dusenbury reported no change in operations over the past few months.

Tourist Train Operations on the Florida Central Railroad – Bill Dusenbury reported the TE&G RR is operating between Mount Dora and Tavares.

Items from Attending Board Members — There were no items presented by the Board members present.

Items from Attending Members — There were no members present at the meeting..

Selection of Date for the 3rd Quarter 2014 Board Meeting – Bill Dusenbury – August 30th, 2014 at 8:30 AM was selected as the date for the next BOD Meeting.

Meeting Adjournment — At 11:15 AM.

Central Florida Railway Historical Society, Inc.
Combined Board & Regular Meeting Agenda
 Central Florida RR Museum
 June 9, 2014
 7:00 PM

Call to Order – Bill Dusenbury called the meeting to order at 7:00.

Meeting Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance – David Rhea.

Recognition of Visitors – Bill Dusenbury – No visitors.

Recognition of Members/Friends Concerns – Bill Dusenbury – none noted.

Approval of the May 12, 2014 Combined Board & Regular Meeting Minutes – Bill Dusenbury — Motion to accept: Irv Lipscomb; Second: Jerry Honetor. Unanimous consent.

May 2014 Treasurer's Report – David Rhea and Frank Milmore — Frank read the financial report. The report was accepted.

Vice President of Membership & Programs Report – Jerry Honetor

- Membership Report
 - ◇ Dues for 2014 are due. A number of members still have not renewed their membership for 2014.
- Society Events and Field Trips for 2014:
 - ◇ Field trip to the new CSX intermodal facility in Winter Haven is in the planning stages.
 - ◇ Field trip to SunRail is in the planning stages.
 - ◇ Trip to Plant City under consideration. Frank Milmore will plan and advise.

Museum Curator Report – Ken Murdock

- May 2014 CFRR Museum Report – 512 visitors for May; and 3,733 visitors for 2014 to date. 272.5 volunteer hours donated by the membership during May; and 1,575.00 hours donated for 2014 to date.

- The Next Museum Work Session: Scheduled for June 21, 2014; Florida Metal Craft's crane will set crossing signal on concrete foundation on June 20, at 10:30 AM.
- Recent Acquisitions & Donations
 - ◊ Stan Smith – DVD's
 - ◊ Neil Chandler – Several items.
 - ◊ David White – Books.
 - ◊ All Sharp – Norfolk Western signs.
 - ◊ Dwight Stoffel – Model railroad items.
 - ◊ Phil Piet – Books & magazines.

Museum Host Schedule for July 2014 – Irv Lipscomb

President's Report – Bill Dusenbury

- Winter Garden Heritage Foundation Board of Directors Activities – The Foundation continues with their Capital Campaign Program. History Center construction is progressing a little ahead of schedule. Currently scheduled to be complete and ready for occupancy in December 2014.
- CFRHS Facebook Page Update – New photos are being added to the page as time permits.
- RR Museum Host – Greg Fox is no longer serving as the host at the RR Museum. David Rhea has been hired as the new host.

FCRR, FMRR, FNRR & SunRail Update (Including FCRR Track Upgrade Update) – Bill Dusenbury reported no change in operations over the past few months.

Tourist Train Operations on the Florida Central RR – Neil Bagaus/Mike Ryan/Bill Dusenbury – Bill Dusenbury reported the TE&G is operating between Mount Dora and Tavares,

Items from the Board of Directors

- Jerry Honetor – Report on Tennessee Valley RR Museum.
- David Rhea – Looking for 100# weight for freight scale.

Items from Membership

- Dan Crusie – Shared new artwork.

Program: UP Big Boys by Jarred Reynolds

Refreshments Provided By: Lloyd & Sylvia Brown

Reminder – Please help clean up the museum after monthly meetings. We want to leave the Museum in as-good or better condition than we found it. Also, please remember to put away the circular table and return the children's interactive train display to its designated location. All help in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Meeting Adjournment — Moved by Irv Lipscomb; Seconded by David Rhea; Unanimous consent at 7:34 PM.



Patrick Smith — On February 28, 2014, "Mac the Railwolf" poses with CSX GP39-2 number 4319 as she pulls some autoracks out of Taft Yard in south Orlando. Mac is a custom-built mascot costume that I had made to promote railroad safety and train awareness in general; he is patterned after CSX's 'Dark Future' paint scheme. He is a hit with kids and adults alike, wherever he goes! Remember, Any Time is Train Time!



A nice photo of CSX C44AH # 550 in Kaley Yard that Society Member Jarrod Reynolds took a couple of years ago while visiting the Orlando Amtrak Station.



Florida Metal Craft crane truck getting ready to set the signal.



The signal installation crew.



Raising the signal.



Installing the lights.



Tightening the bolts to secure the signal.



The ACL Ocklawaha depot sign.

CFRHS Membership Statistics

Society Members	34
Society Century Members	10
Ward Britt	
Phil Cross	
Ann Cross	
Bill Dusenbury	
Chuck Hanus	
Andy Healy	
Jerry Honetor	
Frank Milmore	
Ken Murdock	
Jim Shoemaker	
Society Friends	8
Society Family Members	14
Society Student Members	0
Total Members	66

**July 2014 Museum
Work Session
Saturday, July 26, 2014
8:30 AM to 3:30 PM
Please come out and help
with the many chores that
need to be done!!!!**

The Flatwheel is the official monthly publication of the Central Florida Railway Historical Society. Opinions and views expressed in this publication are those of the editor and contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the members, officers or directors of the Society.

Material for the Flatwheel (including exchange newsletters) should be sent to the editor via e-mail at:

editor@cfrhs.org .

Please Note: Material from The Flatwheel may be reprinted in other publications provided credit is given as to the source.

The Central Florida Railroad Museum is located at 101 South Boyd Street, Winter Garden, FL, 34787 (downtown Winter Garden, immediately north of the water tower).

The Museum is open daily from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM (excluding selected holidays) or by special arrangements. Large groups are encouraged to contact the Museum at 407-656-0559 to arrange for their tour in advance.

The Central Florida Railroad Museum is operated under a cooperative agreement between the City of Winter Garden, the Winter Garden Heritage Foundation and the Central Florida Railway Historical Society, Inc..

The Central Florida Railway Historical Society, Inc. meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:00 PM at the **Central Florida Railroad Museum**. The Museum is located at 101 South Boyd Street in downtown Winter Garden immediately north of the water tower. Guests and visitors are welcome and encouraged to attend.

All correspondence and other materials for the Society should be mailed to:

Central Florida Railway Historical Society, Inc.

PO Box 770567

Winter Garden, FL 34777-0567

Or e-mailed to the Society at: info@cfrhs.org

Web page: www.cfrhs.org

Mission: The mission of the Central Florida Railway Historical Society, Inc. is: Promoting railway heritage and preservation and educating members and the public about rail transportation, its history and impact, with a focus on Central Florida.

Purpose: The purpose for which this Society is formed and the business or objects to be carried on and promoted by it are mainly historical, educational and not-for-profit. The more particular objects are:

- Preserve the historical materials of rail transportation of all kinds and issue publications relative to the subject.
- Acquire by donation, purchase, lease or otherwise, real or personal property, and to maintain, sell, lease, deed or otherwise manage in a manner appropriate for the Central Florida Railroad Museum and the above mentioned purposes.
- Plan and run a series of programs and events for Society members' education and participation.
- Work and support the activities of the Winter Garden Heritage Foundation. Assist in any and all group projects which benefit the goals and activities of the Society and the Winter Garden Heritage Foundation.

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Rail News

From the *TRAINS*, *Railroad & Railfan* and AAR Web Sites

Courtesy of Society Member Roger Wilson and Some Other Members/Supporters From Time to Time

Newest GWI Short Line Debuts

Written by Douglas John Bowen
Monday, June 02, 2014

Genesee & Wyoming Inc.'s newest rail subsidiary, Rapid City, Pierre & Eastern Railroad, Inc. (RCP&E), began operations Sunday, June 1, 2014, as Canadian Pacific completed the sale of the line, the western stretch of the Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern.

GWI paid about \$210 million for 670 miles of right-of-way, and about \$7.5 million more for the purchase of certain inventory, equipment, and vehicles, Darien, Conn.-based GWI said Friday, May 30.

"We have the right people, locomotives, equipment, and track infrastructure in place to provide the customer-focused service for which short line railroads are known," says RCP&E President Brad Ovitt. "The RCP&E will be locally managed and operated, which enables decisions to be made closest to the customer and empowers our people to resolve issues with the goal of operating safely and exceeding customer expectations."

Customers on the line currently ship approximately 52,000 carloads annually of grain, bentonite clay, ethanol, fertilizer, and other products, GWI said.

Headquartered in Rapid City, S.D., RCP&E operates northwest to Colony, Wyo., southwest to Dakota Junction, Neb., and east to Tracy, Minn. Mechanical shops are located in Rapid City and Huron, S.D., with train crew-start/change locations in Rapid City, Belle Fourche, Pierre, Huron and Brookings, S.D., and Tracy, Minn.

RCP&E interchanges with Class I carriers BNSF, Canadian Pacific, and Union Pacific, as well as short line Nebraska Northwestern.

NS, OLI Back Georgia Whistle-Stop Safety Train

Written by Douglas John Bowen
Monday, June 02, 2014

Norfolk Southern and Operation Lifesaver Inc. are hosting "The Peach State Whistle-Stop Safety Train" this week as a 327-mile tour stretches from Valdosta, in southeast Georgia, north to Dalton, Ga., the carpet capital of the world.

The tour, including nine cities, begins Tuesday, June 3, 2014, with the aim of raising public awareness of highway-rail safety and trespasser issues in the state.

"Our goal is to save lives," said William Miller, Norfolk Southern manager grade crossing safety. "Car-train crashes and casualties caused by trespassing on railroad property are preventable, and we want to remind Georgians to be safe around highway-rail grade crossings and other railroad property."

"Georgia historically ranks in the top 10 states nationally for vehicle-train collisions and trespass incidents because of the high volume of train and vehicular traffic and the large number of crossings, nearly 8,000," said Jennie Glasgow, Operation Lifesaver Georgia state coordinator. "It is imperative that we remind citizens continuously of the inherent dangers of trying to beat a train at a crossing or otherwise trespassing by taking shortcuts on railroad tracks."

The safety train includes two vintage passenger railroad cars restored by Norfolk Southern and outfitted with television monitors showing a live video feed from a camera mounted on the lead locomotive. Passengers get to see firsthand what engineers see every day.

The train, powered by two locomotives painted with the Operation Lifesaver logo, also includes the Norfolk Southern Exhibit Car and an NS research car.

The Georgia train is one of four safety whistle-stops Norfolk Southern will operate across 1,569 miles of railroad, stopping in 41 cities in 10 states.

FRA Administrator Szabo Tours Siemens Louisville Rail Plant

By: "John Licht
Monday, June 2, 2014

Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo visited Siemens' automation plant in Louisville, Ken., which is one of several companies across the country that are making key components for Positive Train Control (PTC) systems.

During his visit, Administrator Szabo highlighted the importance of the GROW AMERICA Act, the Obama Administration's four-year \$302-billion reauthorization bill now before Congress, which will provide \$19 billion for rail, including \$2.3 billion to help passenger rail lines deploy and implement PTC systems.

"The GROW AMERICA Act will provide states, industry and the public with the certainty that we're able to maintain and expand our rail network to meet growing market demand, while helping to refuel our economy with good paying jobs," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx.

To meet the growing customer demand to engineer, manufacture and assemble rail automation systems, Siemens has hired 95 additional employees over the past year to support its rail automation business line. The Louisville plant employs 280 people, with 63 employees engaged in assembly and manufacturing.

"PTC technology is the backbone of the next generation of safety," said Administrator Joseph Szabo. "This technology has the ability to stop a train, avert an accident and consequentially save lives. It is a powerful tool to help us mitigate human error and further reduce the number of train accidents."

The Louisville plant engineers and produces signaling and train control systems. Currently, it produces PTC signaling, wayside signaling systems and crossing control bungalows for a variety of railroads, including Port Authority Trans-Hudson, the Long Island Rail Road, Canadian Pacific, Kansas City Southern, Canadian National and Norfolk Southern.

PTC is an integrated, command, control, communications and information system for controlling the movement of trains. In 2008, the system was mandated for use by Congress on all passenger lines and on certain critical segments of freight routes throughout the country.

How Could EPA's Proposed Coal Regs Affect Railroads?

Written by William C. Vantuono
Tuesday, June 03, 2014

The Obama Administration on Monday, June 2, 2014, announced a proposed Environmental Protection Agency regulation, dubbed "Clean Power Plan," to cut carbon pollution from U.S. power plants 30% from 2005 levels by 2030.

The regulation, according to a report in *The New York Times*, "takes aim at the largest source of carbon pollution in the U.S., the nation's more than 600 coal-fired power plants. If it withstands an expected onslaught of legal and legislative attacks, experts say that it could close hundreds of the plants and also lead, over the course of decades, to systemic changes in the American electricity industry, including transformations in how power is generated and used." It is "one of the strongest actions ever taken by the U.S. government to fight climate change. . . . It is also likely to stand as President Obama's last chance to substantially shape domestic policy and as a defining element of his legacy. The President, who failed to push a sweeping climate change bill through Congress in his first term, is now acting on his own by using his executive authority under the 1970 Clean Air Act to issue the regulation."

How the regulations, if implemented, will affect the U.S. railroad industry is unclear at this point. U.S. Class I coal loadings and revenues have declined in the past few years, largely due to low natural gas prices. In 2012, the railroads originated about 800 million tons of coal — about 7 million carloads (second to intermodal), 41% of all tons, and 21.6% of gross revenues.

The AAR issued a statement from President and CEO Edward R. Hamberger in response to the EPA's Clean Power Plan proposal: "While AAR is still reviewing the proposal, freight railroads are concerned about the economic consequences the rule could have for both the coal industry and the larger American economy. We must not lose sight of the energy needs required to maintain our nation's well-being and economic competitiveness in the years ahead. EPA needs to strike the right balance between environmental goals and technological and economic feasibility, and avoid actions that undermine job growth or place American manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage in world markets."

"While RSI and its member companies are still reviewing the proposal, we are concerned that the EPA's proposed carbon emissions regulations will burden consumers and cause disproportionate harm to the U.S. rail industry and its supply companies, which manufacture goods for and provide services to our nation's freight railroads," said Railway Supply Institute Vice President of Government Affairs Nicole Brewin. "Not only is EPA's proposal unprecedented in its reach, cost, and complexity; the proposed carbon regulations could strike a major blow to our nation's economy, raising energy prices and costing jobs."

“Recent analyses of potential carbon regulations show the impacts could include as many as 178,000 jobs lost per year; Double-digit electricity price increases in many states; and forced shutdown of more than half of all U.S. coal-fired power plants.

“The proposed regulations are of great concern to RSI because most coal in the U.S. is consumed at coal-fueled power plants. Historically, coal has dominated U.S. electricity generation because it is such a cost-effective fuel choice, and freight rail is a big reason for that. According to the Association of American Railroads, more than 70% of the coal delivered to coal-fueled power plants is delivered by rail. In 2012, coal accounted for 41% of rail tonnage and 21.6% of rail gross revenue.

“RSI’s member companies represent a \$23 billion-a-year industry supporting 90,000 American workers. We are very concerned about the consequences this proposal will have on American companies.”

Under EPA’s proposed rule, which the President has directed to be completed in June 2015, states will be given a variety of policy options to achieve the emissions cuts. Rather than immediately shutting down coal plants, states would be allowed to reduce emissions by making changes to their electricity distribution systems (for example, installing wind and solar generation technology, or starting or joining state and regional “cap and trade” programs, in which states agree to cap carbon pollution and buy and sell permits to pollute). States will be required to implement emissions reduction measures and submit compliance plans to the EPA by June 2016.

Though states will have their own reduction standards, the national average is expected to be 25% by 2020 and 30% by 2030. The rule gives states and companies as many as 15 years to comply, more time than some environmental groups had wanted, and a base year favored by utility companies.

EPA says its flexible approach should allow states to comply with the regulation more easily and cost-effectively, by adopting policies best tailored to regional economies and energy mixes. Coal industry groups, particularly those in energy-producing states, are planning to sue to block or delay the rule, and say EPA’s flexible approach makes the rule more open to legal challenges.

EPA’s proposal, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, “is already an explosive point of debate in some Senate and House midterm races, particularly in some energy-producing states where Democrats are vulnerable. . . . Republicans are using the proposed rule to assert that Democrats will raise energy costs and kill jobs, and that carbon restrictions are futile in the absence of similar action by China and other large polluting nations. Many Republicans are linking the rule to other Obama Administration actions that they view as overly intrusive in the economy.”

UTLX “Tank Car of Tomorrow” Nears Testing Milestone

Written by William C. Vantuono
Tuesday, June 03, 2014

Union Tank Car Company’s patent-pending, prototype “Tank Car of Tomorrow” TIH pressure tank car is nearing completion of its second year of accelerated field tests, “reliably equaling more than five years of normal service,” the company announced on June 3, 2014.

In 2011, Union Tank Car built a test group of pressure tank cars under Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) special permit SP-15036. These cars were designed to transport specific Toxic Inhalation Hazard (TIH) commodities that are commonly used by industry, metropolitan water districts, and consumers. Based on a long-standing Union Tank Car design, the double-hull (“tank-within-a-tank”) concept “was enhanced to create a tank car that is more resistant to punctures in an incident involving head or shell impacts,” the company said.

A trial car is now in its 15th cycle of testing by Transportation Technology Center, Inc. (TTCI). Since August 2012, the car has accumulated more than 150,000 miles on a defined route within Union Pacific’s rail network. The test criteria prescribe a mix of loaded and unloaded cycles to approximate real interchange conditions. About halfway through the regimen, the car was visually inspected and unloaded for a battery of magnetic particle and ultrasonic tests. “The car passed every test,” Union Tank Car noted.

In June, the trial car will be returned to the UTLX manufacturing plant in Sheldon, Tex., for intensive inspection according to remaining SP-15036 requirements. The car will be tested with multiple non-destructive methods to further prove the design before being restored to operational readiness. The car then will be returned to TTCI in Pueblo, Colo., for final testing.

Ten more cars built under SP-15036 “are performing safely in revenue service,” Union Tank Car said. “All feedback from carriers and the FRA has been favorable. We will use the test conclusions to collaborate with the U.S. Pipeline

and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) on final regulatory authorizations so that the 'Tank Car of Tomorrow' can go into general production under its own DOT classification."

OLI President Hails Crossing Awareness Day

Written by Douglas John Bowen
Tuesday, June 03, 2014

Operation Lifesaver Inc. President Joyce Rose said Tuesday, June 3, 2014 that she and Operation Lifesaver USA are "proud to observe the sixth annual International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD), bringing worldwide attention to the important issue of safety at crossings."

Operation Lifesaver programs and partners are holding events across the nation in conjunction with ILCAD, noted Rose (in photo at left).

Of particular interest this year, said Rose, was Operation Lifesaver's focus on professional drivers, "because approximately one in four crossing collisions in the USA includes a vehicle driven by professional drivers. Our safety tips and materials specifically created for these drivers help them to make every railroad crossing a safe one."

OLI says vehicle-train collisions and deaths at railroad crossings rose in 2013, as did pedestrian-rail trespass deaths and injuries. "Our new See Tracks? Think Train! safety education campaign www.seetracksthinktrain.org was created to encourage drivers and pedestrians to make safety an automatic habit near train tracks, Rose said.

"We are gratified that more countries around the world are joining in the ILCAD celebration each year," she added. "Our combined efforts will continue to make a difference, and save lives."

Amtrak and the Association of American Railroads have joined OLI in heightening awareness of the importance of railroad crossing safety. Amtrak's Chief Safety Officer is a member of the OLI board of directors. "In support of OLI's mission and its current safety campaign of See Tracks? Think Train! 17 Amtrak stations around the country broadcast the organization's 'It's No Contest' public service announcement to deter trespassing on railroad tracks," Amtrak said.

What Kind of Day Did You Have?

By C. K. Marsh Jr.
Published: June 3, 2014

One day in 1965, a friend and I were searching for the obscure terminal of the Tennessee, Alabama & Georgia Railroad in the Alton Park section of Chattanooga. Coming up on a railroad crossing, we decided to parallel the line in hopes of intersecting the TAG. The edge of the street was right at the end of the ties.

Within two blocks we spied a Louisville & Nashville switch crew approaching with a short cut of cars. As its shadow passed over us (yes, it was that close), we noted a 50-ton-capacity hopper car with extended sides rocking appreciably as it made its way toward downtown along with a dozen loads and empties. Within another couple of blocks we determined this was not the route to the TAG, so we turned around and drove back along the L&N track.

As we approached the original crossing we'd found earlier, we observed a stunning sight. That hopper car, a load of coke, had turned over into the street. A hapless driver was waiting to turn right at the crossing as soon as the train passed. The wayward hopper car did not strike his vehicle, but the lading came out like a tidal wave, flooding the car with coke, beating the sheet metal into a dented mess, breaking out the windows, and flattening all four tires. There was a dark, dusty cloud over the entire scene. I jumped out of our car and observed the motorist, still behind the wheel, right up to his neck in coke. When I opened his door, coke spilled out into my shoes and pants as I helped him get out of the car.

Moments before, he had been an ordinary-looking white man, but now he was black over every visible surface. Since he was not hurt, we did not stay around for the police investigation, but I've often wondered what he told his family around the dinner table that night about his day.

Man Struck by CSX train, is Critically Injured

By: "Dennis Parejko
Wednesday, June 4, 2014

A man was critically injured Tuesday when a CSX train hit him in the 2400 block of Southwest Third Avenue. Marion County sheriff's deputies said the man was transported to Ocala Regional Medical Center, where he

underwent surgery. The man survived the surgery, but Detective Erik Dice, the lead investigator, could not interview him.

The man's name has not been released pending notification of his family.

Officials said the incident occurred next to Country Town Village, a mobile home park.

Dice said he interviewed train officials, who told him they were approaching the area when they noticed someone lying across the tracks. They told Dice that they blew their horns repeatedly, hoping to get the person's attention so the individual would get out of the way.

Train officials said when they noticed the victim was not moving, they tried stopping the train but could not do so in time and it hit the man.

Neighbors living in the older-style mobile homes said they heard the horns blaring and the train locking up its brakes. They said they thought it was nothing because CSX trains frequently pass close by them and they've heard similar noises.

It wasn't until they saw the train stopped and law enforcement officials coming into the area that they realized something was wrong, they said.

Kristin Seay, spokesperson for CSX, said the train had left Waycross, Georgia, and was on its way to Winston in Polk County. The train had two locomotives and 132 cars. Of the 132 cars, 77 were empty, while the remaining 55 had mixed freight, Seay said.

Since the start of the year, two people have died when struck by a CSX train.

In late January, Anton J. Burden, 22, was struck and killed by a CSX train near his Citrus Park residence. Burden, who lived with his father and stepmother, was wearing headphones when he was killed, officials said. Three months later, 37-year-old James Bare III was walking south on the railroad tracks near the 4700 block of Southeast 98th Lane. A CSX train was headed north on the tracks. The train's conductor told a sheriff's deputy they kept blowing the horn but the victim seemed to be mumbling to himself.

At the last second, the train official said the man jumped from the train tracks, but it was too late and he was struck. In an interview with the *Star Banner*, Bare III's father told a reporter that his son was taking medication for what he believed was bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

The investigation into Bare III's death is still ongoing, officials said.

FEC's New ICTF Grand Opening July 14

Wednesday, June 04, 2014

Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) will open its new Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF) adjacent to Port Everglades in the Fort Lauderdale, Fla., area, with a grand opening ceremony on July 14, 2014.

FEC says the 43-acre facility increases the railroad's available intermodal capacity from 100,000 to 450,000 lifts a year and the unique, near-dock facility will improve the transfer of both domestic and international containers between ships and rail. Currently, such containers must be drayed off-port to rail terminals, such as Andrews Avenue rail yard in Fort Lauderdale or to Hialeah rail yard in Miami-Dade County.

Additionally, having empty 53-foot domestic containers and trailers adjacent to the port provides more opportunities to trans-load import cargo from ocean containers to domestic containers for inland rail transport. This results in more domestic containers moving north as loads instead of empties, increasing the efficiency of our intermodal network.

FEC says the new ICTF will facilitate faster delivery times and create less congested roadways by eliminating a high volume of trucks from Florida's state highways.

UBS: "No Collapse in Tank Cars Imminent"

Written by William C. Vantuono

Wednesday, June 04, 2014

"Tank car concerns are creating quite a stir," says Eric Crawford of UBS Investment Research, commenting on the tank car market.

"CBR (crude by rail) volumes are moderating, but a collapse in tank cars is not imminent," says Crawford in analysis released June 4, 2014. "Petroleum and petroleum products volumes represent one-third of tank car

shipments, with chemicals representing the other two-thirds year-to-date. Petroleum and petroleum products volumes are up 7% year-over-year, while chemicals are up 1%, indicating that demand for both categories is holding up well.

“As for tank car supply and demand, we estimate CBR capacity at 1.7 million barrels per day. This may still lead to oversupply, assuming CBR demand is 1.4 million barrels per day. But CBR represents only about 20% of tank car shipping volume, and operating at about 85% capacity utilization, while less than ideal, hardly represents a collapse.

“Railcar orders in recent quarters have been robust, and have shifted away from tank cars toward covered hoppers. With the industry backlog moving toward a more balanced profile, we believe a scenario where railcar deliveries drop off sharply is becoming less likely. . . . We continue to believe a retrofit [of older cars] over replacement makes the most sense. Phasing out as many as 70,000 tank cars at \$130,000 per railcar would cost over \$9 billion, would take at least three years to implement, and the earliest build slots are not available until late 2015, potentially leaving safety an open concern in the meantime. Retrofitting tank cars may be a more viable and effective option. Should new regulations emphasize tank car retrofits over a phase-out of older cars, we believe the benefit to manufacturers could be muted, as many more companies offer repair services.”

GE Begins Tier 4 Locomotive Tests on Donner Pass, Powder River Basin

Published: May 28, 2014

TRUCKEE, Calif. – General Electric continues testing of its pre-production Tier 4 equipped locomotives this week in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California, a source close to the matter tells Trains News Wire. ES44ACs GECX Nos. 2021 and 2022 were moved west from Erie to Roseville, Calif., earlier this month for the tests.

After arrival at Roseville last week, the pair was dispatched east Tuesday morning to Truckee as part of a light power move. The test consist has five ES44ACs: GECX No. 2021; UP Nos. 5301, 5288, 5280; and GECX No. 2022. The consist will test in the high altitude environment on Donner Pass along with extensive tunnel testing.

Two additional Tier 4 equipped ES44ACs continue their testing in the Powder River Basin, with their range recently extended. Initially the two ES44ACs GECX Nos. 2023 and 2024 were captive between South Morrill and the coal fields, but have settled into service on Union Pacific’s coal trains from the Powder River Basin to Nebraska Public Power District’s Gerald Gentleman Station power plant near Sutherland, Neb., just west of North Platte. The two Tier 4 locomotives are part of a three-unit consist with Nos. 2023 and 2024 on the head end and UP AC4400CW No. 7267 on the rear of the train in distributed power mode.

Tier 4 emissions are the fourth and final step in reducing emissions on locomotives in the U.S. All new locomotives delivered after Jan. 1, 2015, must comply with Tier 4.

GE Transportation spokeswoman Jessica Taylor declined to comment on the report.

Polish Passenger Steam Operation to Restart in June

By Keith Fender

Published: May 28, 2014

WARSAW — The last remaining steam-operated, standard gauge passenger trains in the world will again operate in western Poland, hopefully in June. Polish freight operator PKP Cargo has agreed to transfer the steam shop at Wolsztyn and the operation of the trains to a still-unformed organization to ensure the continued operation of steam.

In late April, all parties involved agreed that a new management and operational approach would be adopted. That would cover the remainder of the 2014 season. A permanent agreement is planned for later this year.

In recent months, following the privatization of PKP Cargo, negotiations between the freight company and the local government failed to reach a consensus covering the daily operation of steam-powered trains. As a result, steam service ended on March 31 with little warning.

The Wolsztyn shop has two operable Class OI49 2-6-2 locomotives. Plans call for two more locomotives to operate at Wolsztyn this summer — a Class Pt47 2-8-2 and a Class Tkt48 2-8-2T.

The steam-powered passenger trains operated from June will run for the rest of the year between Wolsztyn and Leszno and not on the traditional route to and from Poznan due to track work on the Poznan line.

The steam-powered service from Wolsztyn have been supported for many years by the British and Polish "Wolsztyn Experience" company, where railfans can pay to operate and fire a steam locomotive on the scheduled runs. This operation, which is continuing, has attracted worldwide attention and visitors from around the globe.

In recent years the Wolsztyn steam locomotives have also been used on a series of public excursions. This program is unaffected by the recent interruption in steam passenger services.

Missouri, Virginia Museums to Trade Historic Locomotives

Published: May 28, 2014

ST. LOUIS — The Museum of Transportation in St. Louis and the Virginia Museum of Transportation in Roanoke are in discussions to bring Norfolk & Western Y6a 2-8-8-2 No. 2156, currently in the St. Louis museum, back to its place of origin at Roanoke, Va., on a five-year loan for display at the Virginia museum, in a transaction facilitated by Norfolk Southern.

In exchange, the Virginia museum will send to St. Louis a former Southern Railway diesel General Motors EMD FTB unit to complement the St. Louis museum's FT demonstration unit No. 103.

"This will reunite the last surviving Y-class locomotive, one of the hardest pulling steam locomotives ever built, with the J-611 and the A-1218 in Roanoke, where all three were designed and built by Norfolk and Western," says Molly Butterworth, cultural site manager for the St. Louis Museum of Transportation. "In return, our historic FT, built in 1939 to demonstrate to the rail industry the efficiency of diesel power, will be reunited with its complimentary B unit."

"We are thrilled to welcome the Y6a home again," says Bev Fitzpatrick, executive director of the Virginia Museum of Transportation. "We're grateful to the St. Louis Museum of Transportation for this opportunity to reunite three powerful sisters of steam in their home town."

The Museum of Transportation, a St. Louis County Park, houses what has been recognized as one of the largest and best collections of transportation vehicles in the world. With more 70 locomotives, half of them "one-of-a-kind" or "sole survivors" of their type, the museum has one of the most complete collections of American railroad motive power.

The Virginia Museum of Transportation, Virginia's official transportation museum, is home to two of the most powerful steam locomotives in existence today: the N&W Class A 2-6-6-4 No. 1218 and the N&W Class J 4-8-4 No. 611. The museum attracts visitors of all ages from across the U.S. and around the world.

New Steamtown Superintendent Looks at Improving Site, Reviving Steam

By Justin Franz

Published: May 28, 2014

SCRANTON, Pa. – Spreading the story of steam railroading is the top priority for Steamtown National Historic Site's newest superintendent, Deborah Conway. Conway is a 28-year veteran of the National Park Service and is succeeding Acting Superintendent Bill Leonard and former Superintendent Harold "Kip" Hagen, who died in December.

Conway began her Park Service career in college and worked seasonal jobs at sites in Ohio. Since then she has worked at a variety of parks across the country and recently was superintendent at Fort Stanwix National Monument in New York. Conway is expected to take the reins sometime in June.

She recently took some time to answer questions from Trains News Wire.

Trains News Wire: You have had a long career with the National Park Service and have worked everywhere from Yosemite to Cuyahoga. How do those experiences shape your worldview as you take on the top spot at Steamtown? Particularly your time at the Cuyahoga National Park, home of the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad?

Conway: I believe the diversity of experiences I have had with the National Park Service really prepared me for this next position at Steamtown. I have had the great fortune to work with some amazing and creative people. I think I am able to pull from my experience to make decisions and lead Steamtown. I have a great network of colleagues across the service I can call on for ideas, information, support and so on. Obviously my experience at Cuyahoga Valley and working with the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad will be extremely useful. I have already spoken to representatives at the park and we plan to meet and share ideas.

Trains News Wire: What initially attracted you to take the superintendent position at Steamtown and what is your interest in railroading?

Conway: From my days at Cuyahoga I have a rich background in our country's industrial heritage. I like that portion of our history and will enjoy the stories associated with steam railroads and the industries they served. I have worked at two canal-related parks, Cuyahoga and C&O Canal, and railroads and canals go hand-in-hand.

Trains News Wire: Last year's government shutdown impacted National Parks across the country and it had a major impact on visitation at Steamtown, which dropped from 106,309 people in 2012 to 81,174 in 2013. The shutdown also had an economic impact on the area, putting a dent in the nearly \$5 million Steamtown visitors spend in the surrounding communities. How do you convey the importance of Steamtown to local communities and businesses?

Conway: Sharing the numbers you mention is critical. You have to help people see and understand the impact the park has on the local economy. A few months ago the National Park Service releases the 2012 economic impact study of the system as a whole as well as each park. It is critical to make sure the local community sees the value of the park. I also think it is important to work with the local chamber of commerce and tourism promotion organization positive impacts the park has on Scranton and the surrounding area.

Trains News Wire: While Steamtown is popular with railfans, how do you go about promoting the park and its story to people who are not necessarily interested in railroading?

Conway: Even though you may not be a railfan, most people do like trains. They are fun and riding a train is a novelty for most. Railroads played an important role in our country's development as well as the development of our national parks. I think there are plenty of ways to try and connect people to the story of railroads.

Trains News Wire: What are some ways that you can encourage repeat visits and make the experience new and different for someone who comes every year?

Conway: One thing to help increase visitation is to mix up your programming and to offer a variety of experiences year round. When I arrived at Fort Stanwix we were focused on the average vacation visitor and we really were not catering to our local community as much. We have tried to shift that a bit over the last several years and our visitation has increased considerably. Again, a good working relationship with the local tourism office is really critical.

Trains News Wire: Telling the story of steam railroading is Steamtown's primary mission and yet in recent years the park has earned the nickname "Steamlessstown" because most of the excursions are hauled by diesels. When the park opened 1995, there were three park-owned steam engines in operating condition, yet today there are none. How will you correct that and is that a top priority?

Conway: I have not had a chance to explore the costs and obstacles to putting steam back in Steamtown, but I certainly feel that should be a goal. The real question comes to how costly an endeavor is this and what other challenges might there be to making that happen.

Trains News Wire: Steamtown has numerous relationships with outside groups, from railroads like the Delaware-Lackawanna and Canadian Pacific, to historical societies. How do you hope to build on these relationships? Are there plans to establish a "friends" group to support the park?

Conway: Partnerships are one of my strengths so yes I plan on building on these relationships and hopefully developing new ones as well. I think developing a friends group for the park is a natural next step and could potentially address some of the issues you raised in earlier questions such as helping get steam back in Steamtown.

Steam Returns to Illinois Railway Museum

Published: May 27, 2014

UNION, Ill. — Steam has returned to the Illinois Railway Museum. The museum fired up former Frisco 2-10-0 No. 1630, a 1918 Baldwin product, for excursions over the holiday weekend after nine years without steam. The locomotive has been at the museum since the early 1970s.

Much of the work centered on the boiler, says Marketing Director Ed Rosengren. It passed a final test in November 2013, which paved the way for additional work throughout the winter. A final Federal Railroad Administration inspection was completed on May 17, in time for its return to service at 3:39 p.m. on May 24.

Rosengren declined to comment about the cost of the rebuild, but did say it was accomplished with volunteer labor and some outside contractors.

The museum plans to operate the locomotive on selected weekends throughout the summer, Rosengren says.

For more about the museum and its upcoming steam schedule, go to www.irm.org.

Amtrak Pursues NEC Wi-Fi Upgrade

Written by Douglas John Bowen
Monday, June 09, 2014

Amtrak seeks to improve and upgrade its Wi-Fi coverage along the Northeast Corridor, and has issued a Request for Proposals to implement such action.

Suppliers interested in the upgrade, labeled Contract No. DOC45231, are expected to reply by July 28, 2014.

On its website, Amtrak states, "Please note that a pre-proposal conference and site visit is scheduled for Wednesday, June 18, 2014, commencing at 8:30 a.m. It is mandatory that any offer or who is interested in attending must register for the pre-proposal conference or site visit."

High demand, combined with spotty and sometimes slow response time, have generated criticism of Amtrak WiFi offerings on the Northeast Corridor, with service gaps occurring at relatively remote locations along NEC right-of-way.

Amtrak seeks to redress this by building its own wireless network, at first offering Internet speed as fast as 25 Mbps per car, improving to 100 Mbps by 2019, according to the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP).

More information on the RFP can be found here.

Late last year Amtrak launched an effort to provide AmtrakConnect® cellular-based 4G Wi-Fi service to its Chicago Hub Services trains in the Midwest.

Senate Moves to Restore Amtrak Funding Cut by House

Published: June 6, 2014

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan coalition on the Senate Appropriations Committee has moved to roll back House GOP-backed cuts to Amtrak, transportation projects, and other spending, the Washington Post reports.

House Republicans targeted the transportation and housing bill for \$1.8 billion in cuts relative to current program levels. The Senate measure is about \$2.4 billion above the House measure and more than \$600 million above current spending.

The additional money — made available through bookkeeping maneuvers by Senate panel chair Barbara Mikulski, D-Md. — maintains funding for the \$550 million transportation TIGER grant program and allows new resources to address the risks of shipping crude oil by rail.

Senator Susan Collins, R-Maine, praised funding for "much-needed investments in our nation's transportation network," like TIGER Grants awarded for major transportation projects.

But the relatively small increases allowed by the Senate measures are possible because Mikulski is using accounting tricks to create more headroom under tight spending "caps" imposed by a December budget pact between House and Senate Budget Committee chairmen Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash. Republicans oppose Mikulski's bookkeeping moves, and the cuts are likely to be at least partially restored in negotiations with the GOP House later this year, according to the report.

Even if the House were to pass the Senate transportation bill, the National Association of Railroad Passengers, a passenger train lobbying organization, says it is not enough. NARP says the Senate would allocate \$1.39 billion for Amtrak, freezing investment at 2014 levels, but that \$1.39 billion is not enough money to address the capital investment backlog America's passenger rail system faces.

"Amtrak will need more to upgrade critical infrastructure and order new passenger cars the national network requires," NARP says. "While Senate policy makers might congratulate themselves for being better than their House counterparts, they are only slightly less guilty in perpetuating the slow-motion physical degradation afflicting our rails, roads, and airports."

Freight Traffic Shows Increase in May

Published: June 6, 2014

WASHINGTON — U.S. freight shipments showed an increase last week and throughout the month of May compared to last year, the Association of American Railroads reports.

U.S. Class I railroads originated 110,164 carloads of crude oil in the first quarter of 2014, an increase of 1.4 percent more than the fourth quarter of 2013 and the most carloads ever recorded in any quarter by 1,559 carloads. Intermodal traffic in May totaled 1,045,880 containers and trailers, up 8 percent and the 54th consecutive year-over-year monthly increase.

Seventeen of the 20 commodity categories tracked by the AAR each month saw year-over-year carload increases last month. The most significant increase in commodity carloads included grain shipments, up 18,612 carloads, or 29.7 percent; crushed stone, sand, and gravel, up 12,256 carloads, or 14.6 percent and surprisingly coal, up 12,196 carloads, or 2.8 percent.

Remarkably, this is the first time 17 of the 20 commodity categories have shown an increase in carloads since the spring of 2010.

"If you're looking for a sign that the economy is shaking off its first quarter lethargy, rail traffic in May could be that sign" says AAR Senior Vice President John T. Gray.

Commodity categories with a decline in carloads last month included food products, down 3.7 percent; coke down 4.3 percent; and nonmetallic minerals, down approximately 2.1 percent.

Counties' Officials Oppose Florida Passenger Service

Published: June 5, 2014

MIAMI – The Martin and St. Lucie county boards of commissioners are moving ahead with plans to oppose the proposed All Aboard Florida high-speed rail service, the Orlando Sentinel reported.

Martin County board members approved a resolution outlining its opposition to the train that would run between Miami and Orlando. St. Lucie County board members asked their county's attorney to draw up both a similar resolution as well as a second seeking 90 days of public input after an expected Federal Environmental Impact Statement is released later this year.

Opposition to the proposed train service, that would see 16 passenger trains passing through the area at speeds up to 110 mph, is centered on issues of noise, public safety, and economic impact. The trains would not stop but pass through St. Lucie, Martin, Indian River, and Brevard counties on their way to Orlando.

St. Lucie board members are expected to hear the two resolutions at their June 16 meeting.

China's Next High-Speed Passenger Line Begins Testing

Published: June 5, 2014

URUMQI, China – Test runs began this week for the first high-speed railway in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Regular operations are expected to begin by the end of the year, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

A CRH2-061C high-speed train ran on the Urumqi–Shanshan line in extreme northwest China at speeds of 100 to 170 miles per hour. The design speed for the line is 155 miles per hour, but trains slow down when passing through windy areas.

The train is part of the Lanxin Railway, which links Lanzhou City in northwestern Gansu Province and Urumqi. The 1,103-mile line crosses a vast expanse of the Gobi Desert and will be Xinjiang's first high-speed railway when it begins operation by the end of 2014. With the new railway, travel time between Lanzhou and Urumqi will be cut from the current 21 hours to 8 hours or less.

The trial run included tests on the rails, communications, and aerodynamics on the train. Test results were within safety limits, says Fu Lianzhu, chief engineer on the line's trial run. Engineers built a 287-mile wind shield to protect the train from wind damage in the area through which it passes.

The Lanxin Railway is currently the only railway connecting Xinjiang with other provincial regions. The new line takes a slightly different route, winding into neighboring Qinghai Province before re-entering Gansu and picking up the old route that heads northwest toward Xinjiang.

Operation of the new line will complement the current rail network and serve more of the population, says Erkin Tuniyaz, vice chairman of the regional government. The line will greatly improve Xinjiang's transport capabilities to Central Asian and European countries and strengthen its role as the transportation hub along a newly proposed economic corridor, he said.

In a speech in Kazakhstan last September, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the construction of a "Silk Road Economic Belt" as a way of developing political and economic ties with China's neighbors and accelerating the development of China's western regions.

High winds knock-over 52 cars on UP train in Kansas

Published: June 5, 2014

WILLIS, Kan. -- High winds derailed 52 cars of a Union Pacific freight train, the railroad confirms Thursday afternoon.

No one was injured when the cars were blown off the track early Wednesday morning during a heavy storm. The 134-car train stopped when the railroad's dispatching center told the crew about a tornado warning in the area.

The Arkansas to Wyoming train was already stopped, UP spokesman Mark Davis says, when an emergency brake application on the train occurred, indicating a derailment. After the storm had passed, the conductor checked the train and found the derailed cars.

There was no track damage, and the line was reopened to traffic by noon Wednesday.

Florida East Coast Intermodal Facility to Host Grand Opening July 14

Published: June 4, 2014

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Florida East Coast Railway will open its new Intermodal Container Transfer Facility adjacent to Port Everglades, with a grand opening ceremony on July 14.

The 43-acre facility increases FEC's available intermodal capacity from 100,000 to 450,000 lifts a year and the near-dock location will improve the transfer of both domestic and international containers between ships and rail, the railroad says. Currently such containers must be drayed off-port to rail terminals such as Andrews Avenue in Fort Lauderdale or to Hialeah in Miami-Dade County.

Additionally, having empty 53-foot domestic containers and trailers adjacent to the port provides more opportunities to transload imported cargo from ocean containers to domestic containers for inland rail transport. This results in more domestic containers moving north as loads instead of empties.

Joe Szabo's Yada Yada Yada Problem

By Fred Frailey
Wednesday, June 4, 2014

Google invaded my turf of Washington, D.C., this week with its self-driving car. DC traffic is the ultimate test of automated driving. If Google's sensor-topped creation can navigate the tortuous traffic of this town, it can succeed anywhere. Google's Chris Urmson, director of this project, told Politico's Jessica Meyers: "We still have lots of problems to solve. But thousands of situations on city streets that would have stumped us two years ago can now be navigated autonomously."

In case you haven't realized it, this is the future. I confess I can't quite trust a driverless vehicle to get me from suburban Virginia to Union Station in Washington with my bones still unbroken, my skin unspereed by foreign objects, and the car's sheet metal uncrinkled by collisions. But from what I read, it's not that hard to do, and several automobile makers are feverishly working on this, in addition to Google. An AAA official noticed Google's Lexus RX 450H on his way to work yesterday. He told Politico: "They took it on [Capitol] Hill. If you ever want to avoid a crash or fender bender, this is the place to avoid going."

When automation takes the driving out of driving a car, then it can surely do the same for the trucking business. Imagine, please, what this will do the economics of truck transportation. It's already happening with airlines. Did you know that most airport landings are fully automated operations? In fact, it's when you take control of a landing away from a computer that you invite disaster. Just such a scenario caused the South Korean jetliner coming into San Francisco International last July to crash, killing three people and injuring 181 others. The Wall Street Journal's Holman W. Jenkins Jr. predicts that "someday, all planes will be drones," with a pilot aboard to comfort the passengers, because in this manner we'll eliminate the possibility of human error. We humans can be our own worst enemies.

What's this got to do with railroads, you may be wondering? I'm getting there. Railroads, like it or not, are spending billions on positive train control, a technology that will eliminate the vast majority of human errors that cause trains to collide or derail. If a train doesn't slow down approaching a red signal or even a temporary slow order, PTC will step in and apply the brakes. Going past a red signal without permission will be theoretically impossible. PTC itself

won't make possible engineerless trains. But it's a big step toward that, or something much like it. Railroads are beginning to understand this, too. It's no secret that, as a start, they want collective bargaining agreements that require only an engineer, and not a conductor, on over-the-road trains. Many short lines and regional railroads, in fact, have negotiated such agreements with the United Transportation Union and Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

Now, enter Joe Szabo, administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration. He has vowed to propose a rule this summer that would not just shut the door on engineerless trains but require two people in the locomotive cab of most mainline freight and passenger trains. What an interesting idea. Let's examine it. First, as Frank N. Wilner of Railway Age has pointed out, there's not a scintilla of evidence that this would improve the already admirable safety record of railroads — none whatever. Even the National Transportation Safety Board doesn't oppose one-person crews once PTC is in place. I can assure you that Amtrak and the commuter railroads, which almost always have but one person aboard locomotives, are totally opposed to this proposal because it would balloon their losses. But guess what? Szabo's FRA is holding out the prospect of exceptions for such operations. Gosh, how politically convenient! The trains that carry all of the people, as opposed to the freight, would still have just an engineer in the cab. But isn't this rule supposed to save lives? To follow FRA's logic, this rule still puts us all at risk.

I don't get it, and you probably don't, either. So why is this happening? Apparently it's happening because Joe Szabo wants it to. First, his FRA established a Railroad Safety Advisory Committee working group on crew size. This labor-management group was supposed to recommend two-person crews in locomotives but did not. So FRA decided to propose the rule anyway. As Szabo explained in a press release: "We believe that safety is enhanced with the use of a multiple person crew—safety dictates that you never allow a single point of failure. Ensuring that trains are adequately staffed for the type of service operated is critically important to ensure safety redundancy." I read that and say to myself, yada yada yada, sound without substance.

Here's some substance: Joe was once a railroad conductor (Illinois Central), then mayor of Riverdale, Ill., Illinois legislative director of the UTU and employed in UTU's Washington office before being appointed to the FRA job by President Obama in 2009. I am not accusing him of bias toward his former employer, the UTU, and against railroads, although on the face of it you would be right to be suspicious. I am suggesting — predicting, actually — that unless FRA comes forth with some solid justification for this rule and not just more yada yada yada, that the railroad industry will have an easy time getting the rule thrown out by the courts, because it will have no substance behind it.

This should be fun to watch. On the one hand, Google and the automakers point the way to driverless cars and trucks. On the other, FRA points the way to two people in every locomotive, except when it is politically inconvenient. Trucking costs go down, railroad costs stay the same or go up. In the end, would the two-person rule create more unionized railroad jobs or destroy them? We all know the answer to that.

BNSF Railway Operates First Unit Train for New TransCold Express

On June 4, the first BNSF Railway Co. unit train departed from Wilmington, Ill., to officially launch the TransCold Express.

A hub-to-hub refrigerated box-car service provided by McKay TransCold and operated by BNSF, TransCold Express targets produce growers and meat and dairy producers moving refrigerated cargo bi-directionally between Wilmington and Selma, Calif.

Fresh and frozen cargo is transferred from trucks to box cars at a new 49,000-square-foot refrigerated building operated by National Logistics and Cold Storage in the Ridge Port Logistics Center, a 1,500-acre industrial park located 40 miles southwest of Chicago. The logistics center also is situated three miles from BNSF Logistics Park-Chicago in Elwood, Ill., and accesses a BNSF mainline running along the park's western boundary and Interstate 55.

TransCold Express will transport such products as vegetables, fruit, cheese and butter from California to the Midwest, and meat, eggs, cheese, butter, finished goods and dairy creamers from Illinois westbound. The service takes about four days to reach the Midwest from California.

Rail Summit Rallies Rail Executives, Decision Makers in Chicago

Tuesday, June 10, 2014

The second annual Rail Summit, held in Chicago, Ill., proved to be another success, rallying some 300 rail executives and decision makers to discuss this year's theme of economic opportunities resulting from the surge in energy and intermodal growth.

At the event, Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo touted the GROW AMERICA Act, the Obama Administration's four-year \$302-billion reauthorization bill now before Congress, which will provide \$19 billion for rail, including \$2.3 billion to help passenger rail lines deploy and implement PTC systems.

"When you take a look at transportation policy, when you take a look at transportation challenges that our nation faces, passenger and freight rail will have to grow significantly in order to help up meet those challenges" noted Szabo. "It really does have to be about the transportation system it's about the network, it's about how these modes interact and connect with each other. Whether you're moving people or goods, that it can be safely, reliably and efficiently over the course of the entire journey using a mode that happens to be the most efficient for that particular part of that journey. In so many cases that is rail."

During his presentation, he highlighted the Local Rail Facilities and Safety funding line, which he said would greatly benefit shortlines.

"This line would fund grants to communities for projects like rail line relocation, grade crossing importance and looking for opportunities to seal corridors," explained Szabo. "The safest grade crossing is one that doesn't exist. Where do we have these opportunities to much more aggressively eliminate grade crossings and strategically place grade crossings and undercrossings?"

The event was filled with many breakout sessions, including one from Georgetown Rail Equipment Company entitled "Moving into a New Generation of Railroad Problem Solving," where Gregory Grissom, PE, vice president of engineering at the company glanced at industry trends, including traffic, energy movement, risk mitigation, turnover of experienced railroaders and capital spending and offered up predictions for the future in those areas.

House Approves Fiscal Year 2015 THUD Bill

Written by Mischa Wanek-Libman

Wednesday, June 11, 2014

The U.S. House of Representatives approved the fiscal year 2015 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) funding bill on a vote of 229-192. The legislation includes funding for the Department of Transportation, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other related agencies.

In total, the bill reflects an allocation of \$52 billion in discretionary spending – an increase of \$1.2 billion above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level and a decrease of \$7.8 billion below the president's budget request. However, given the reduction in offsets caused by a decline in Federal Housing Administration receipts, the program level within the bill is more accurately \$1.8 billion below the current level.

Several transportation amendments included in the bill were passed including Rep. Karen Bass' (D-California) amendment that allows transit agencies that receive federal funds to prioritize hiring local residents for projects; Rep. Jeff Denham's (R-California) amendment to prohibit any appropriated funds from being used for high-speed rail in the state of California and an amendment from Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas) that eliminates funding for the Amtrak's Sunset Limited, which runs from New Orleans, La., to Los Angeles.

Three other amendments, two from Rep. Paul Broun (R-Georgia) and one from Rep. Sessions, that would further limit Amtrak funding were defeated.

The Federal Railroad Administration is funded at \$1.4 billion, a reduction of \$193 million below current levels. Amtrak operations is budgeted at \$340 million, \$850 million is planned for capital grants and, as expected, no money was allocated for high-speed rail.

The bill also continues policy reforms for Amtrak, such as requiring overtime limits on Amtrak employees and prohibiting federal funding for routes where Amtrak offers a discount of 50 percent or more off normal, peak fares.

In addition, rail safety and research programs are funded at \$220.5 million, \$750,000 over the fiscal year 2014 enacted level to fund inspectors and training.

The bill provides for \$10.5 billion for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – \$253 million below the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. Transit formula grants are funded at \$8.6 billion, consistent with 2014 and the final year of

MAP-21 authorization legislation. This funding is contingent on the enactment of new transportation authorization legislation, as the current authorization expires this year.

FTA's Capital Investment Grants (New Starts) is provided \$1.7 billion of the transit allocation for all current "Full Funding Grant Agreement" transit projects, and full funding for all state and local "Small Starts" projects that will begin in fiscal year 2015.

The bill cuts the seventh round of Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants by \$500 million, allocating only \$100 million, which is \$1.15-billion below the administration's request. In the first five rounds of the TIGER program the Department of Transportation received 5,200 applications requesting more than \$114 billion for projects.

"This is sensible, balanced bill that prioritizes funding on important transportation programs that will help to boost our economy and improve our quality of life, while also providing housing options to those Americans most in need," House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers said. "This is a critically important, fiscally accountable piece of legislation, and I am pleased that the House today gave it our stamp of approval."

The White House was not so warm on the bill issuing a "Statement of Administration Policy" on June 9 that read, "The bill fails to make needed investments in our nation's infrastructure...The administration looks forward to working with the Congress on an orderly appropriations process that supports economic growth, opportunity, and our national security while avoiding unnecessary fiscal crises that hold the nation's economy back."

A Senate version of the FY 15 THUD Bill was approved by the Senate Committee on Appropriations on June 5 and has been sent to the Senate floor for discussion.

FRA, MDOT, Amtrak Partner to Further Study to Improve Civil War-Era Tunnel

Thursday, June 12, 2014

Working to improve rail service, reliability and address a longstanding bottleneck along Amtrak's busy Northeast Corridor (NEC), the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Amtrak are advancing an engineering and environmental study to examine various improvements to the 141-year-old Baltimore and Potomac (B&P) Tunnel in Baltimore, Md.

"We're taking the first step toward upgrading rail traffic through this Civil War-era tunnel, which will improve passenger rail service along the entire East Coast," said Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley. "Working together to enhance transit service and reliability will increase ridership and create a sustainable, more competitive future for Maryland. I want to thank U.S. Sens. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Ben Cardin (D-MD), Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD-07) and Maryland's entire congressional delegation for their hard work and support for federal funding to advance this much-needed study."

The two-track tunnel, which opened in 1873, is located between the West Baltimore MARC Station and Baltimore Penn Station and is used by Amtrak, Maryland's MARC commuter rail trains and Norfolk Southern. The existing track geometry and outdated tunnel design significantly impedes rail movement along the busy NEC, creating a low-speed bottleneck impacting approximately 85 Amtrak trains, 57 MARC trains and one to two freight trains each day. The \$60-million federally-funded study, which began last fall, is moving into a new phase with expanded public outreach and opportunities for residents and commuters to learn more about the project's purpose and need.

"This is good news for Baltimore and the entire Northeast Corridor," said Sen. Mikulski. "Replacing the B&P Tunnel is on the must-do list for Baltimore's aging infrastructure. The B&P Tunnel is critical to keeping Maryland's economy rolling, carrying all passenger and freight rail traffic on the Northeast Corridor through Baltimore. Years of operation have left it deteriorating to the point of being operationally outdated. This is an important step in the right direction for safety and the modernization of our railroad."

The study, which will be complete in mid 2017, will include development and evaluation of various alternatives based on the need to enhance rail safety and to improve capacity, reliability and travel time for commuter, freight and intercity passenger rail service on the NEC. Alternatives will include the No Action Alternative, as well as a full array of Build Alternatives, such as rehabilitation of the existing tunnel and a new tunnel on new alignment.

The study also involves development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The project also will be subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 and other applicable environmental laws and regulations. FRA is leading development of the EIS in close coordination with MDOT and other stakeholders.

California Braces for Explosion of Oil by Rail Shipments

By Lauren McCauley

Published on Wednesday, June 11, 2014

The mountains and cities of California are about to see an explosion in the number of trains carrying fracked Bakken crude oil through the state. And according to a report (pdf) released on Tuesday, both the federal government and industry have done little to protect citizens from the "potentially serious risks" of such oil transport.

Further, despite requests from state energy officials, railway companies have provided "limited data" to the state and have "vehemently resisted" sharing information regarding oil shipments with the public, claiming that such knowledge is a "trade secret," the *Sacramento Bee* reported on Monday.

The amount of crude oil by rail imported to California's refineries is set to increase from 1 percent of total imports in 2013 to 25 percent, or 150 million barrels, by 2016, according to state energy officials.

This unprecedented rise reflects a growing national trend which has been fueled by the application of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, in the Bakken oil shale as well as by President Obama's "all of the above" energy strategy—which has increased fossil fuel development across North America, including from unconventional sources.

Highlighting the risks posed by this boom, a report by the California Interagency Rail Safety Working Group, commissioned by Governor Jerry Brown, has found that "current regulations and industry practices are not adequate" to protect citizens in light of the push from both the fossil fuel industry and federal and state governments.

As the number of shipments has increased, so has the number of accidents. According to the government task force, more crude oil by volume was spilled in rail incidents in 2013 than was spilled in the nearly four decades prior. And those incidents involving Bakken crude have been "particularly devastating," notes the report—particularly the July 2013 accident in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, where 63 tank cars exploded in the town center killing 47 people.

A recent report by the watchdog group Oil Change International highlights the dangers inherent in the expansion of the crude-by-rail industry. The report notes, however, that as crude-by-rail has become an increasingly dangerous option, transport by pipeline is equally fraught and that the false debate between the two ought to be shelved in order to make room for more sustainable energy development.

In California, trains transporting Bakken crude are expected to bisect some of the state's most densely populated areas, as well as some of the most ecologically sensitive areas, traveling along the Feather River or Donner Pass to the Bay Area, the Tehachapi Pass to Bakersfield, or into Los Angeles.

The California task force's report concludes that federal initiatives do not "go far enough to address the risks of increased oil by rail transport," and it recommends strengthening federal requirements, expediting the industry's tank car upgrades, and planning for better emergency response.

"This is what the 'All of the Above Energy Strategy' looks like," said Lorne Stockman, research director of Oil Change International and author of their report, "a runaway train headed straight for North American communities."

OmniTRAX Lands Texas Short Line, Site Work

Written by Douglas John Bowen

Friday, June 13, 2014

OmniTRAX said Thursday, June 12, 2014, it will manage the Brownsville & Rio Grande International Railroad, a short line railway based in Brownsville, Tex. As well, OmniTRAX will also develop a large-scale industrial park on land owned by the Brownsville Navigation District (BND) of Cameron County, the parent governmental body of the Port of Brownsville.

The short line will continue to be led by President & COO Norma Torres, and OmniTRAX said it also expects to retain all personnel. The strategic partnership between the BND and OmniTRAX covers a 30-year period and will deliver significant economic development for the Rio Grande Valley.

"This is a great opportunity for OmniTRAX, the Brownsville & Rio Grande International Railroad and the people of Brownsville to bring in new industries, create new jobs, increase the tax base and boost the local economy. We are honored to be selected for the project by the Brownsville Navigation District and look forward to working with Norma Torres and the team at the railroad, the port and all other parties to reach these goals," said OmniTRAX CEO Kevin Shuba.

The Brownsville & Rio Grande International Railroad runs through 45 miles of the Brownsville Navigation District and five miles into the city of Brownsville itself, providing the port and its customers with access to two Class I railroads, Union Pacific and BNSF. The short line also has an intermediate connection via UP to Kansas City Southern de Mexico routes across the Rio Grande.

"The Port of Brownsville currently has about 40,000 acres of land available for development. OmniTRAX will work with the BND to develop 1,200 acres for a world-class industrial park. The land is considered well-suited for light and heavy manufacturing, logistics, energy services, technology development, and export/import warehousing, OmniTRAX said.

"With recent energy reforms in Mexico, the anticipated development of the Burgos Basin just south of Brownsville and the energy expertise of OmniTRAX affiliate The Broe Group, we expect to take advantage of related opportunities for the Brownsville & Rio Grande International Railroad and the Port of Brownsville," said OmniTRAX Chairman Brad Skinner.

Southton Rail Yard in Texas Celebrates Grand Opening

Friday, June 13, 2014

Southton Rail Yard, a 300-acre dual rail-serve facility in San Antonio, Texas, designed for transloading energy-related products, celebrated its grand opening June 11.

The Southton Rail Yard officially opened for business and announced plans for phase two of the facility. The second phase of the facility calls for 6,000 feet of additional rail and six new, on-site storage silos.

"We are proud to celebrate the grand opening of the Southton Rail Yard and announce our facility's expansion. In just a few months of operation, we have seen a high demand for rail to truck transloading and will be expanding our facility to include six brand new silos and expansion of our rail tracks," said Kevin Bowen, chief executive officer of Southton Rail Yard.

The Southton Rail Yard features 25,000 linear feet of rail, offers easy access to Interstate 410, Interstate 37, Interstate 35, Interstate 10, U.S. Highway 281, Texas State Highway Loop 1604 and has capacity for more than 160 direct rail-to-truck car locations. It is also dual rail-served by both Union Pacific and BNSF and was designed with the needs of the energy sector in mind.

The facility employs approximately 50 San Antonio-area residents and is operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week by Arrow Material Services, which has managed material transportation logistics since 1954 and currently operates more than 30 rail transloading locations in the United States.

Genesee & Wyoming Says May Traffic Is Up

Published: June 13, 2014

DARIEN, Conn. – Shortline railroad operator Genesee & Wyoming Inc. recently announced its total traffic volumes for May 2014, citing an increase of nearly 2.3 percent compared with May 2013, or an increase of 3,864 carloads. The second quarter 2014 report as of May was 341,904 carloads, an increase of 16,682 carloads, or 5.1 percent compared with last year's second quarter through May.

The railroad says that its North American traffic increased nearly 4.1 percent due to increased Class I shipments of coal, agricultural products, and metals traffic when compared to May 2013 figures. The railroad company also says coal and coke shipments increased by 6.7 percent, pulp and paper shipments by 8.2 percent, and food products increased approximately 17.6 percent.

Autos and auto parts shipments were down 1,113 carloads, or 30.7 percent compared to last year's numbers. Petroleum products were down approximately 1,243 carloads, or 12.8 percent as a result of decreased shipments of crude oil in the railroad's Southern, Pacific, and Canada regions.

The railroad's second quarter numbers through May when compared to last year showed an increase of 20,916 carloads, or 7.4 percent in North American shipments. Australian traffic decreased 4,234 carloads, or 9.9 percent as a result of fewer shipments of gypsum as well as the closure of a customer facility. Agricultural shipments through Australia also showed a decrease.

CSX, Virginia Sign Crude Oil Non-Disclosure Agreement

Published: June 12, 2014

LYNCHBURG, Va. – CSX Transportation has signed a non-disclosure agreement with the state of Virginia regarding a federal order to release crude oil routings to states, WSET-TV reports. The railroad, citing security concerns if crude oil shipment information is leaked to the public, has distributed non-disclosure documents to 13 affected states that terminate oil trains.

Jeffrey Stern, the Virginia Emergency Management Coordinator signed the agreement with CSX this week.

“Any area that’s having hazardous materials transported through it should have some knowledge of what’s going through their community and how to deal with it,” says Kimball Payne, Lynchburg’s city manager. Payne says that he is happy with the CSX disclosure as is, adding that too much information seems unnecessary.

The railroad has notified 13 states of the weekly estimated number of crude oil shipments along with their routing information, and emergency response information, a requirement by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The information will be kept confidential by local emergency management agencies.

Anti-Amtrak Amendments Advance in House

Published: June 12, 2014

WASHINGTON – In after-hours activity, the U.S. House of Representatives tacked on several anti-Amtrak amendments to the House Transportation Appropriations bill earlier this week.

One amendment offered by Rep. Pete Sessions, R-Texas, to kill six long distance routes was defeated, but late in the evening three anti-Amtrak amendments were tacked on just before the bill was passed.

- Rep. Jeff Denham, R-Calif., proposed an amendment prohibiting any funds in the Act from being used during fiscal year 2015 for the California high-speed rail project. It adopted by a vote of 227 yeas and 186 nays.
- Rep. Phil Gingrey, R-Ga., proposed an amendment prohibiting any funds in the Act from being used during fiscal year 2015 to subsidize Amtrak food and beverage service. It was adopted by voice vote.
- Rep. Sessions proposed another amendment prohibiting any funds in the Act from being used during fiscal year 2015 to support the Amtrak route with the highest per-passenger subsidy, the Sunset Limited. It was adopted by a voice vote.

Action now moves to the Senate, which is unlikely to accept the amendments, although in the legislative process, anything can – and does – happen.

Report: Majority of Coal Shipments Still Go By Rail

Published: June 12, 2014

WASHINGTON – In 2013, electric power generators consumed 858 million tons of coal, accounting for 93 percent of all coal consumed in the nation. Two-thirds of the coal consumed was shipped either completely or in part by rail. The data comes from a report issued by the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The majority of the coal transportation network is concentrated in the eastern portion of the country, an area that consists of primarily relatively small mines, coal-fired power plants, and rail infrastructure. The primary method in which a power plant receives its coal is largely dependent on its location in relation to the rail system, the report says. While river barge is the most cost-effective method of transporting large quantities of coal over long distances, having few navigable waterways limits options.

Transporting coal by rail is a more expensive option, but an extensive rail system enables access to many of the nation’s coal mining facilities, a huge contributor in rail transport’s dominant market share of transportation.

While the coal industry continues to fluctuate as a result of plant operators’ coal supply requirements, environmental mandates, and costs, rail continues to serve as the most important transportation method of coal in the U.S.

Producers Group: Canada Oil by Rail to Triple in Next Two Years

Published: June 12, 2014

CALGARY – Shipments of oil by rail from Western Canada are expected to more than triple in the next two years, as the sector heads into a severe shortage of pipeline capacity by next year, according to a new forecast by the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

Oil transportation by rail is expected to jump to about 700,000 barrels per day by 2016 from 200,000 barrels per day in late 2013 the association predicted this week in its annual crude oil forecast.

Oil supplies in Western Canada from the oil sands and from new shale plays continue to increase, while four major pipeline projects – Keystone XL, the TransMountain expansion, Northern Gateway and Energy East – await regulatory approval and construction.

Rail “is not a complete replacement yet, but it has become a new factor over the last year quite rapidly,” Greg Stringham, vice-president for oil sands and markets at CAPP tells the Canadian Financial Post. If pipelines are built, rail could become a transporter of oil to smaller and unique markets. If not, “you will see an acceleration to the mainstream.”

The existing rail network allows oil to reach all the desired markets once capital investments in both loading and unloading facilities are made, the CAPP report says. The flexibility of rail to deliver to multiple destinations is a key component for its long-term viability.

The CAPP forecast says rail-loading capacity is expanding to more than a million barrels per day by the end of 2015. If several additional facilities move ahead, capacity could expand further to 1.4 million barrels per day.

Hamberger: Railroads Take Steps to Advance Crude-By-Rail Safety

Published: June 12, 2014

WASHINGTON — Association of American Railroads President and CEO Edward R. Hamberger says the many steps freight railroads are taking to boost the safety of moving crude oil by rail, while reiterating the industry’s call for the federal government to increase tank car standards. Speaking before a rail industry event on crude-by-rail issues this week, Hamberger talked about how railroads have conducted a top-to-bottom review of their operations and have updated aspects of their operations in light of the increased volumes moving on their lines.

“In any discussion of crude by rail, safety and reliability are key factors in understanding how important rail has become to North America’s push for energy independence,” Hamberger says. “A strong safety culture is embedded in the railroads, and has long been a core attribute of the railroading industry – from planning, training, prevention and preparedness. Railroads’ reliability comes from a demonstrated track record of investing billions of dollars back into the rail network year over year, enabling railroads to swiftly meet the rising demand to move domestic energy resources our economy relies upon.”

Hamberger also notes the importance of increasing the safety of tank cars used to move crude oil, as well as ensuring shippers properly classify the oil being generated from domestic fracking operations.

“Railroads are taking multiple steps to further increase the safety of transporting crude oil, but more can be done when it comes to the tank cars used to haul it,” Hamberger says. “Railroads believe that federal tank car standards should be raised to ensure crude oil and other flammable liquids are moving in the safest car possible based on the product they are moving. The industry also wants the existing crude oil fleet upgraded through retrofits, or older cars to be phased out as quickly as possible.”

The rail industry has also stepped up its efforts to communicate and coordinate with communities and first responders, and railroads are dedicating tremendous resources to prevent and prepare for emergency situations all along their lines, Hamberger notes.

“Railroads are working with state and local emergency response officials to ensure those who need to know what is moving through their area are informed and trained to respond to an emergency situation,” Hamberger says. “The industry has also taken the lead in designing new training programs focused specifically on emergency response incidents involving crude oil to make sure first responders have the skills and training they need.”

Governor: No State Money for All Aboard Florida

Published: June 11, 2014

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – In a letter this week from Florida Gov. Rick Scott to All Aboard Florida President Michael Reininger, Scott said that \$10 million in the state’s budget this year would go to local governments to pay for safety upgrades at train crossings, not All Aboard Florida. Lawmakers approved the money to allow for quiet zones at crossings, which must be matched by requesting municipalities, the Palm Beach Post reports.

“I want to be clear on a critical point: the All Aboard Florida proposal is a private sector venture to construct, operate and maintain a passenger rail system,” Scott writes. “There will be no state subsidies for this project.”

All Aboard Florida is proposing to run 16 round-trips per day from Miami to Orlando on Florida East Coast Railway and new trackage, with stops in Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. The trains would travel between 79 mph and 110 mph from Miami to Cocoa and up to 125 mph to Orlando.

Some residents of northern Palm Beach County and the Treasure Coast are opposing the project, citing concerns with safety, noise, traffic backups and waterway congestion if aging bridges that need to be lowered for additional trains block boats for longer periods of time.

All Aboard Florida says that it is working with the Federal Railroad Administration and the Coast Guard to “determine the impact and mitigation measures that will allow rail traffic and the marine industries” to coexist.

All Aboard Florida says it does not expect any public subsidies from the state, but is aware of misinformation and “erroneous assumptions” that have led to specific concerns not based in fact.

One concern has been the idea that money was given to All Aboard Florida for a stop at the Orlando International Airport. About \$214 million is earmarked for the construction of an intermodal center at the airport, but the center has been in the works for more than a decade and would be built regardless of whether All Aboard Florida opens, the Florida Department of Transportation says.

All Aboard Florida has applied for a \$1.5 billion Federal Railroad Administration loan, which requires an environmental impact study be completed. The study could be released as early as this month.

The FRA has agreed to extend the public comment period following release of the study from 45 days to 75 days. But with the project running through eight counties, some community leaders are pushing for 90 days, which All Aboard Florida supports.

Prep Work Begins to Move C&O No. 1309

Published: June 9, 2014

BALTIMORE, Md. – On Monday afternoon, Chesapeake & Ohio Class H-6 Mallet type 2-6-6-2 No. 1309 was moved from its long-time location at the back of the B&O Railroad Museum roundhouse to inside the Museum’s shop building for additional evaluation and prep work for its anticipated move to the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad in Cumberland, Md., this summer. Once moved, the railroad’s shop forces will begin minor prep and inspection work before its transport to the railroad’s Cumberland headquarters at a later date.

It was the last steam locomotive built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works for domestic use and became an iconic piece of C&O steam era infrastructure. The locomotive will be transported to Cumberland later this summer via CSX rails on heavy-duty flat cars. Restoration will begin on the locomotive once it arrives at the railroad’s Ridgley shops. The completion of 1309's restoration is scheduled for the beginning of the 2016 season.

For more information on this exciting restoration, check out the link to official foundation for the railroad at: <http://www.movingfullsteamahead.com>.

Why Your Next Trip Will Induce Heartburn

By Fred Frailey
Friday, June 13 2014

I’ve said before that any train I’m on can be as late as you like. I believe my exact words were “more train-riding pleasure for the same low price.”

Well, forget that. I’ve changed my mind. Even idiots like me have their limit, and mine has been breached. Any train more than an hour and a half behind its schedule is a bummer to me. Unfortunately, present trends suggest I am going to be bummed out quite often in months to come.

First, for me, there was the eastbound Canadian that got to Toronto 15 hours late in early February. That cost me more than \$700 in airline, hotel, and meal expenses I hadn’t expected and left me with a sour aftertaste. That same month, I rode a four-hours-late Cardinal from Chicago to Washington, D.C., had my Pullman Rail Journeys trip from Chicago to New Orleans cancelled two days in a row by Amtrak and headed home on a six-hours-late Lake Shore Limited. I won’t bore you with March and April, but they were more of the same on the long distance trains. Late last month, my Lake Shore Limited was four hours late getting to Chicago, and I was saved from having to fly to St. Louis to catch up with the Texas Eagle only because Amtrak held the Eagle for connecting passengers. This week, again on the Lake Shore, we were two hours late into Chicago, and two hours late again on the Capitol Limited reaching Washington.

The problem I'm having with late trains is both practical and psychological. You can't plan a life if you don't know when you'll get there; that's pretty self-evident. What I've come to realize lately is that it's just plain depressing to creep along hours after you expected to be doing something else.

Now comes the bad news. This, my friends, is the new normal for Amtrak, at least for the next couple of months. Late trains don't just happen. They're caused, sometimes by Amtrak (that Capitol Limited I rode this week waited an hour in Chicago for passengers from a four-hours-late California Zephyr) but more often by the host railroads, whose own freight trains are in great disarray right now.

These numbers for the latest week for the four biggest U.S. railroads, plus Canadian host Canadian National Railway, pretty well tell the story:

BNSF

Train speed—Down 14.8% vs. same week last year; Terminal dwell time—Up 14.9% vs. same week last year.

CSX

Total volume—Up 4.7% vs. same week last year; Train speed—Down 16.7%; Terminal dwell time—Up 17.1%.

Norfolk Southern

Total volume—Up 9.8%; Train speed—Down 8.5%; Terminal dwell time—Up 11.8%.

Union Pacific

Total volume—Up 7.3%; Train speed—Down 5.8%; Terminal dwell time—Up 11.0%.

Canadian National

Total volume—Up 6.8%; Train speed—Down 6.8%; Terminal dwell time—Up 3.5%.

Get the picture? Business has never been better, the result being congestion both in the terminals and over the road. (BNSF Railway does not report weekly traffic numbers, but I am told it is setting records.) While I was in Chicago this week, CSX had at least five freight trains parked, unmanned, on its Garrett Subdivision for lack of room in Barr Yard. Coming home on the Capitol, we met and overtook an unbelievable number — dozens — of CSX trains between Pittsburgh and the outskirts of Washington. The Lake Shore has been late into Chicago every day this month; taking into account recovery time in its schedule west of Elkhart, Ind., it is delayed more than an hour a day between Elkhart and the Windy City by the crush of Norfolk Southern and Canadian Pacific freights. The best dispatching in the world can't do a lot for Amtrak trains in situations like this. It's not much comfort to say we'll just have to grin and bear it. But it's that, or don't ride the long distance trains until the freight railroads settle down, and I'm not sure when that will come about.

The Tough New Rules of Oil by Rail?

By Fred Frailey
Friday, June 13 2014

Railroads came to Washington this week to make the case at the White House against what could be tough new rules being drawn up by the U.S. Department of Transportation for handling crude oil. The proposals, which have not yet been made public, may involve slowing crude oil trains to a top speed of 30 mph, requiring such trains to never be left unattended, and ordering them equipped with electronically controlled pneumatic (ECP) brakes. The news service Politico revealed the June 10 meeting in a story published Friday. While DOT won't discuss the substance of the proposed rules, documents made public by OMB disclose what railroads believe may in the forthcoming regulations. OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs reviews all proposed federal regulations, focusing on (among other things) costs versus benefits they entail. The meeting was held at the request of the Association of American Railroads and the American Short Line & Regional Railroad Association, and was attended by 16 railroad executives and 10 government officials.

One rail executive admits that attendees from the industry were "shooting arrows in the dark" because the DOT proposal remains shrouded in secrecy. But he says that increasingly DOT officials in conversations talk of a "crude by rail regulatory package" which would include operational measures. What would those be? Based on documents brought to the meeting by the railroaders, they might include:

Imposing speed restrictions. BNSF Railway's Rollin Bredenberg, vice president of capacity planning and operations research, presented the impact of a mandated 30 mph speed limit for crude oil trains on his railroad's Northern Transcon, between Aurora, Ill., and Spokane, Wash. This line would lose 7% of its capacity, and BNSF would require \$800 million in additional capital to regain that capacity. That, or Amtrak's Empire Builder would need its schedule lengthened 2.2 hours, while intermodal freights would require 2.8 additional hours to get over the road and manifest trains 6.1 hours. "This is essentially an unfunded investment mandate," Bredenberg's white paper

states. He goes on to say BNSF would need to spend an additional \$2 billion to recover lost capacity on other parts of its railroad, should a 30-mph speed limit be imposed on oil trains. Railroads have already agreed to cap oil train speeds at 40 mph through most urban areas.

Mandating electronic brakes. John Rimer, chief mechanical officer of CSX Transportation, put the cost of converting from airbrakes to electronic (ECP) brakes at somewhere between \$8,000 and \$15,000 per car and \$25,000-\$50,000 per locomotive. A paper he presented says that neither ECP brakes nor distributed power (locomotives placed amid or at the rear of a train that are controlled by the engineer at the front) would have any impact on preventing accidents and minimal effect on the distance required to stop a train.

Attending trains. Chris Brasher, Norfolk Southern's assistant vice president for operating rules, explained why trains are sometimes left unattended (route impassible, terminals at capacity, maintenance windows, crew shortages) and why this shouldn't be worrisome (communication with dispatchers, inspections after firefighters have boarded a train, locking the controlling locomotive and removing the reverser and so forth). What the railroads are saying is that the practice is safe when rules are obeyed and that babysitting trains is not without costs.

How this all sorts out, I've no idea. Why even guess? The rail exec I spoke to said all these issues have been raised as potential regulations by DOT people. I do confess that I was off the mark when I said a few weeks ago (go here) that railroads have surrendered the dialogue about crude oil by rail to the environmental know-nothings and their political allies. There is, in fact, a lot going on, and the events of this week appear to prove the point. So I stand corrected. On the other hand, will someone please tell me how many people have been either injured or killed this year or last by oil train derailments in this country? The answer, so far as I know, is zero and zero. Yes, Lac-Mégantic (47 dead in a Quebec oil-train disaster last year) is unforgettable. But let's retain our perspective.

FEIS Issued for CSX Virginia Avenue Tunnel Reconstruction

Written by William C. Vantuono
Monday, June 16, 2014

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Washington, D.C. District Department of Transportation (DDOT) have released a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the proposed reconstruction of CSX's Virginia Avenue Tunnel.

The FEIS incorporates feedback from the community and identifies "Alternative 3: Two New Tunnels" as the Preferred Alternative for construction.

Under the process prescribed by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the agencies considered the alternatives outlined in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), released in July 2013, and determined that Alternative 3 "best meets the project's purpose and need while addressing community concerns and minimizing impacts to the tunnel's neighbors."

Alternative 3, the agencies said, "has the shortest construction timeframe of the build alternatives considered—approximately 30 to 42 months. It addresses community concerns about moving trains through an open trench during construction by operating trains in an enclosed tunnel at all times in front of residences. It also maintains access for residents and emergency responders to all homes and cross-streets during the entire construction process."

CSX said that it "applauds the FHWA and DDOT for advancing the reconstruction of the Virginia Avenue Tunnel in a way that responds to community concerns in the project's design and construction plan. CSX is proposing to spend hundreds of millions of company dollars to reconstruct this 110-year old tunnel, to move people and goods more efficiently for the benefit of commuters and businesses in the District and throughout the region. The release of the FEIS is a critical step forward to modernize the country's aging infrastructure in a way that promotes the safety and well-being of local neighbors."

"The preferred alternative is the direct result of years of community input during the environmental review process," said CSX Vice President Strategic Infrastructure Initiatives Louis Renjel. "It addresses community concerns and prioritizes neighborhood safety and security during construction. Under this plan, construction is expected to take approximately 30 to 42 months and trains will run in an enclosed tunnel in front of residences. This means that CSX and the Virginia Avenue community can focus our ongoing discussions on a single potential construction plan, discuss the potential impacts of that plan, and share information about the many things CSX would do to minimize those impacts."

CSX said its efforts to minimize the impact of construction would include "actions that would be naturally a part of the construction plan; additional actions CSX would take during construction to minimize impacts; and actions CSX would take after construction to help enhance the Virginia Avenue neighborhood."

Under Alternative 3, CSX would be required to take certain actions to reduce the impact from construction, including limiting construction hours; controlling dust at the construction site to maintain air quality; reducing construction noise and vibration by creating physical barriers, choosing less noisy construction techniques, and doing noise and vibration monitoring; working with DDOT to monitor and maintain traffic flow around the construction site as necessary to reduce impact; and providing compensation to the residents who are impacted the most (residents directly next to the project) and to Virginia Avenue Tunnel neighborhood organizations, to minimize construction impacts as the residents and organizations choose.

CSX would also make enhancements to the new streetscape to complement the other development in the neighborhood. That effort would include reconstructing Virginia Avenue and other affected areas, including Virginia Avenue Park and the Marine Corps Recreation Facility, "to a standard higher than before construction." In addition, the FEIS requires significant actions and investments by CSX, including improving access to Garfield Park for wheelchair-dependent individuals; building a continuous bike path between 2nd and 9th Streets connecting Garfield Park and Virginia Avenue Park; straightening the alignment of Virginia Avenue SE within the 400 block to be consistent with the original L'Enfant Plan; improving the traffic lane configuration between 5th/6th and 8th Streets to provide safer and calmer traffic conditions; and installing landscaping and improved street lighting, traffic signals, and crosswalks.

"CSX has a strong track record of working in a way that respects our neighbors," said Renjel. "We look forward to continuing to talk with the Virginia Avenue community and public officials as we fulfill our commitments to make safety our top priority during and after construction; to minimize the impacts of construction on local residents and businesses; and to collaborate with the community on enhancements that help make a great neighborhood even better."

The FEIS is available for review for 30 days before an official decision is released, and can be downloaded from www.virginiaavenuetunnel.com. A public meeting will also be held on July 1, 2014, at the Capitol Skyline Hotel, 10 Eye Street SW, Washington, DC 20024. The meeting will include a presentation on the details about construction and will include time to ask questions of the project team.

Amtrak Viewliner II Baggage Car Field Testing

Written by William C. Vantuono
Tuesday, June 17, 2014

The first of Amtrak's 55 new Viewliner II baggage cars, no. 61000—one of four Viewliner II series long-distance car types—is undergoing field testing.

The new baggage cars will be used on all 15 long-distance routes across the Amtrak national system. "The updated design provides for improved reliability and maintenance, and better baggage loading/unloading procedures," Amtrak said. "Also, the new built-in luggage racks can secure unboxed bicycles to support the growing demand by passengers to bring their bikes onboard an expanding number of routes."

The field testing program has several elements, including compatibility tests to ensure the baggage car couples cleanly, and can operate through a curve without interference, with numerous types of Amtrak cars and locomotives. In addition, there are tests for speed, stability, braking, noise, wheelset/rail interaction, as well as actual baggage handling. Field testing will continue through October with the baggage car traveling on the Northeast Corridor and on routes to Chicago, New Orleans, and Miami. Amtrak expects these cars to begin entering revenue service by the end of 2014.

The baggage cars are part of a larger order for 130 single-level, long-distance Viewliner II passenger cars, which also include diners, sleepers, and baggage-crew dormitory cars. CAF USA of Elmira, N.Y., is building the cars. "All four car types will modernize the Amtrak fleet, improve reliability and maintenance, upgrade passenger amenities, travel at speeds up to 125 mph, and replace units built as far back as the 1940s and 1950s," Amtrak said. "The diner, sleeper and baggage-dorm cars will be used on eastern long-distance routes, with the first units of each expected to begin field testing this summer."

"It is clear that Americans want a national system of intercity passenger rail, and Amtrak is moving ahead to build new equipment to meet customer demand," said President and CEO Joe Boardman. "Long-distance trains form the backbone of the Amtrak national system, connect small towns to major cities, support local economic development, deliver passengers to state-supported corridor trains, and conduct interstate trade and commerce. Their principal mission is connectivity, and it is an increasingly important one to communities that have been losing their bus and air connections at a steady pace over the past decade. Since 1998, Amtrak long-distance ridership has grown by roughly 20%, without the introduction of any new services, frequencies, or equipment. In FY 2013, long-distance

ridership reached its highest point in 20 years, with 4.8 million passengers. In addition, long-distance trains are, on average, as full on the peak leg of their trips as are the premium *Acela Express* services on the Northeast Corridor.”

According to Amtrak spokesman Steve Kulm, “With the launch of the Viewliner II, Amtrak is also launching *Amtrak America*, a brand that will encompass all that is great about Amtrak’s long-haul trains, including those with sleeper class service. Amtrak’s route brands will continue, and this brand will make overall service offerings clear to our customers and stakeholders. *Amtrak America* will utilize our Phase Three striping on the Viewliner IIs as a tribute to our heritage. The first cars released from production will also carry Amtrak’s historic logo in honor of our past.”

STB to Class I’s: File Grain Order Plans

Written by Douglas John Bowen
Monday, June 23, 2014

The Surface Transportation Board is requiring Canadian Pacific and BNSF “to publicly file their plans to timely resolve their backlogs of grain car orders, as well as weekly status reports pertaining to grain car service.”

STB’s decision, Docket No. EP 724 (Sub-No. 2), issued June 20, 2014, is “based on concerns raised before and after the public hearing on this matter,” STB said.

Said STB: “It is ordered:

“1. CP is directed to report to the Board, by June 27, 2014, its plan to resolve the backlog of grain car orders on its United States network, including its timeline for doing so, and its plan for ensuring a fluid and reliable interchange of loaded and empty grain cars with RCP&E.

“2. BNSF is directed to report to the Board, by June 27, 2014, an updated plan to resolve the backlog of grain car orders on its network, including its timeline for doing so.

“3. CP and BNSF are directed to provide weekly status reports, beginning June 27, 2014, regarding the transportation of grain on their networks (for CP, on its United States network). As part of these status reports, CP and BNSF shall provide, by state, the running total of outstanding grain car orders at the end of the week, the total number of new orders for the week, the total number of orders filled for the week, the number of orders cancelled by shippers for the week, the number of orders cancelled by CP or BNSF for the week, and the average number of days late for all outstanding grain car orders. CP and BNSF shall also report the number of cars allocated to grain car service each week, including the number of private cars in service. CP’s report shall include the number of grain cars requested by RCP&E and the number of cars furnished by CP on a weekly basis. These reports will be required for each carrier until it resolves its backlog of unfilled grain car orders.”

In commenting, STB noted, “Although the data submitted by both railroads indicates some initial progress toward reducing their grain car order backlogs and grain car delays, the Board remains very concerned about the limited time period until the next harvest, the large quantities of grain yet to be moved, and the railroads’ paths toward meeting their respective commitments.”

How Ford, Railroad Industry Created Innovative Way to Ship New Transit Cargo Vans

Posted by: Dennis Parejko
Monday, June 23, 2014

DEARBORN, MI -- Ford Motor Company is taking a new approach to shipping its all-new full-size Transit cargo vans and wagons to Ford dealerships across North America.

The high-roof Transit measures 110.1 inches tall and offers best-in-class interior cargo height when properly equipped, enabling customers as tall as 6 feet 4 inches looking to stand upright in their vehicles, but it also challenged Ford engineers to develop an innovative vehicle shipping solution.

Ford ships vehicles from its assembly plants to dealerships using a mix of railcars and trucks. The new medium- and high-roof Transit vehicles are too tall to fit in the common two-story railcars used by auto manufacturers, so Ford engineers worked with railroads and railcar manufacturers to design an innovative railcar that accommodates all the roof-height variations of the new Transit.

“Use of these modified railcars helps us to efficiently ship these large vehicles from our assembly plant, deliver them to our dealers and get them into the hands of our customers faster and more cost effectively,” said Chris Lemmink, Ford vehicle logistics manager.

The innovation allows Ford to ship Transit vehicles through the right mix of rail and truck transport to help reduce delivery time and cost. The company evaluated using trucks only, but determined that it could deliver Transit vehicles more efficiently and for less cost by designing modified railcars and incorporating them into the shipping network.

The optimized balance of rail and truck transport also supports Ford's Blueprint for Sustainability by using resources responsibly and minimizing environmental impact.

Ford plans to transport Transit vehicles by truck to its dealers within a 500-mile radius of the Kansas City Assembly Plant in Claycomo, Missouri, where Transit is produced. Shipments traveling longer than 500 miles will be transported by rail.

Ford worked with leading rail companies to modify Transit railcars by elevating its inner deck, enabling as many as seven medium- and high-roof Transit vehicles to be loaded on the lower deck and as many as seven smaller vehicles, like the Ford Fusion, on the shorter top deck, depending on the vehicle's length. The overall height of the railcar remains the same as traditional railcars, so as not to interfere with overpasses and tunnels.

Ford expects approximately 50 percent of Transit orders will be medium- and high-roof configurations.

Ford began working on the railcar project in 2010, coinciding with development of the all-new 2015 Transit.

First Train of Iron Ore Concentrates Heads to Indiana

Published: June 19, 2014

MINNEAPOLIS – Magnetation Inc. has loaded its first train of iron ore concentrate destined for a processing plant in Indiana. Magnetation, founded in 2006, uses new technology to extract iron ore concentrate from old mine waste sites on the western Mesabi Iron Range. The concentrate is trucked to the company's Jessie Load-Out terminal near Grand Rapids, Minn., where hoppers are filled using front-end loaders for movement by BNSF Railway.

In 2011, the company partnered with AK Steel, minority owner of Magnetation, to supply concentrates to its steel facilities. Magnetation broke ground in 2012 for a new pellet plant at Reynolds, Ind. that will supply AK Steel. The first 120-car train for Reynolds departed the Jessie Load-Out on June 18, with a traditional pine tree in the first car to celebrate shipment to a new plant. Magnetation is leasing 220 new open top hoppers, MGPX 101 to MGPX 220, from Caterpillar Financial Leases Corp. for the service.

Served by CSX Transportation, the Reynolds plant has a loop track and rotary dumper. CSX will move trains of finished pellets from Reynolds to AK Steel facilities in Ashland, Ky., and Middleton, Ohio.

General Electric Modifies Offer for Alstom

Published: June 19, 2014

FAIRFIELD, Conn. – General Electric has modified its offer to purchase French energy and transportation firm Alstom, Reuters reported. GE says Alstom management agreed with the changes and that it would create an "alliance," GE Chief Executive Jeff Immelt says.

"The alliance will retain and strengthen France's presence in the energy business and reinforce Alstom Transport. It creates jobs, establishes headquarters decision-making in France and ensures that the Alstom name will endure," says Immelt.

"Our discussions with the French government over the past seven weeks have been productive. As a result, we have reached agreements with Alstom's management that will create an alliance between our companies in both spirit and practice," Immelt says.

For the past two months, GE has been competing with Siemens and Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries for control of Alstom. Despite the restructuring of the offer, GE says its overall valuation for Alstom – estimated at 12.4 billion Euros – was unchanged.

GE says it had signed a memorandum of understanding with Alstom management to strengthen the transport activities of Alstom, manufacturer of the famous TGV high-speed trains. Under the plan, GE would sell its signaling business to Alstom and enter collaboration pacts for services, technology, manufacturing and support in the United States.

Price Tag for New Utah Oil Line: \$2 Billion

Published: June 18, 2014

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – A Utah Department of Transportation study estimates that a new 100-mile rail line to transport crude oil from the Uinta Basin southwest to Price, Utah would cost roughly \$2 billion, the Salt Lake City Tribune reports.

The study examines 26 possible routes, but determines that a routing that would go down Indian Canyon along U.S. 191 south from Duchesne to U.S. 6 near Price, which would require a 10-mile tunnel, was the only route that was feasible. It could connect with other rail lines near Price, and take oil to Wasatch Front refineries or elsewhere in the nation to expand Utah energy markets.

An earlier state study said that without the rail route or alternatives such as new pipelines or freeways, \$30 billion worth of oil and gas might remain undeveloped in the basin during the next 30 years because of transportation constraints. It said that could cost Utah's economy \$10 billion and prevent creation of nearly 27,000 jobs.

UDOT told the Utah Transportation Commission it now plans to begin a formal environmental impact statement to further evaluate the route. UDOT hopes to have a draft EIS in 2016 and a final version in 2017. Among the topics the EIS will evaluate is how the rail line could affect traffic on U.S. 40, which now has a steady stream of tank trucks 24 hours a day to Wasatch Front refineries.

TSB Grades Transport Canada on Lac-Mégantic Recommendations

Published: June 18, 2014

MONTREAL — The Transportation Safety Board of Canada has released its assessment of Transport Canada's response to the three recommendations made in January 2014 regarding the accident.

"There are risks to carrying more and more oil by rail and the Board's recommendations are aimed at bringing those risks down," says Wendy Tadros, chair of the TSB. "We are pleased with the strong first steps taken by [Transport Canada] and will be watching carefully for crucial follow-up action on Class 111 tank cars and route planning and analysis."

Vulnerability of Class 111 tank cars to sustain damage (R14-01):

The investigation finds that, even at lower speeds, the older unprotected Class 111 tank cars ruptured, releasing crude oil that fueled the fire. For this reason, the Board's first recommendation calls for better protection, to reduce the risk that these cars will be breached in an accident.

Transport Canada responded by immediately prohibiting the most unprotected Class 111 tanks cars and by requiring older Class 111 tank cars to be phased out or retrofitted within three years. "Canada is leading the way by aggressively phasing out older unprotected tanks cars," said Tadros. "Now we will be watching for tougher tank car standards – here and south of the border," added Tadros. The Board has assessed this response as "Satisfactory in Part."

Route planning and analysis for trains carrying dangerous goods (R14-02):

The Board's second recommendation called for strategic route planning and safer train operations for trains carrying dangerous goods in Canada. In the short term, Transport Canada will require railways to put in place minimum key operating practices including speed restrictions, expanded inspections and risk assessments for routes over which more than 10 000 car loads of dangerous goods are carried annually. In the long term, TC will require railways carrying dangerous goods to formulate and submit for approval new rules to improve their operating practices for the safe transportation of dangerous goods. "While there has been positive action, we are urging Transport Canada to look carefully at the threshold for lower volume routes to ensure dangerous goods will always be moved safely," Tadros says. The Board has assessed this response as "Satisfactory Intent."

Requirements for emergency response assistance plans (R14-03):

In its third recommendation, the TSB called for emergency response assistance plans along routes where large volumes of liquid hydrocarbons are being shipped. In response, Transport Canada issued a Protective Direction that ensures that there will be an approved plan in place for the shipment of higher-risk hydrocarbons and ethanol. "The Board is pleased with the immediate action taken on [the plans]. This is about making sure that, when something does go wrong, the right resources are in place," Tadros says. The Board has assessed this response as "Fully Satisfactory."

Corbin Railroad Museum Project Gets Fast Track

Published: June 18, 2014

CORBIN, Ky. – A partnership between the Corbin Tourism and Convention Commission and Eastern Kentucky University has put the development of a railroad museum in Corbin on a fast track that “will illuminate the region’s ties to the railroad industry,” the Whitley Republican reports. The museum will be located in the former Louisville & Nashville depot in downtown Corbin.

A \$10,000 grant from ECU’s Center for Appalachian Regional Engagement Stewardship will enable an ECU intern Jeff Cawood to work with the commission toward a goal of opening the museum by the summer of 2015.

“The Corbin Tourism and Convention Commission envisions the museum to be a premier, state-of-the-art facility containing highly specialized visual and audio components that promote interactivity while preserving and interpreting the history and heritage of the Kentucky railroad legacy,” says Maggy Kriebel, associate director of the organization.

Cawood will work with Kriebel to develop the museum. A detailed plan and timeline was already submitted as part of the grant process. Now, the two plan to hit the road to study other railroad museums to put together ideas for Corbin’s museum.

“We are evaluating the technology of a number of facilities and trying to mesh the technology that is available, and evaluate technologies that aren’t available, so that we can make this museum a premier destination for people to see,” Cawood says.

Kriebel says she wants to ensure that Corbin’s Railroad Museum is more than simple “pictures on a wall” or static exhibits that don’t inspire visitors. Instead, she wants interactive exhibits. “Our intent with this is to create a state-of-the-art facility for rail enthusiasts to preserve Kentucky’s railroad history,” she says.

Over the next year, plans call for Cawood to:

- Archive and catalogue railroad artifacts that are currently warehoused at the depot and in other municipal buildings.
- Establish partnerships with CSX, Norfolk Southern, R.J. Corman Group, and others such as the Kentucky Railway Museum, Bluegrass Railroad Museum, the Historic Rail Park and Museum, the Big South Fork Scenic Railway, National Park Service and L & N Historical Society, among others.
- Record and transcribe oral history that documents Corbin as a railroad town. The recordings will be preserved to educate museum visitors on Corbin’s railroad history and its place in the economic development of the region and nation.
- Identify possible grants and write proposals to acquire external support.
- Work to develop a series of potential tourism rail packages with other “rail towns” and other recreational and tourism opportunities throughout the region.
- Assist with the development of five- and 10-year plans.

Those interested in donating to the museum should contact the commission at 606-528-8860.

Locomotive Builder Introduces High-Visibility Cab Design

Published: June 17, 2014

GREENVILLE, S.C. — Motive Power & Equipment Solutions Inc. has introduced its “Hi-Vis” locomotive cab. The cab is designed to deliver an unprecedented 360 degree view and improved safety in industrial operations, the company says.

“We are always looking for ways to help our customers further improve site safety,” President and CEO David Wilkerson says. “Our industrial customers operate across complex sites with crossing traffic of both people and vehicles. Better visibility definitely helps the engineer become a safer operator.”

The Hi-Vis cab is a new design that was undertaken specifically to improve safety of operation in industrial sites. Typical switcher locomotives have adequate visibility but are challenged by older window technology and the blind spots of larger hood structures. The cab design has minimal structural interference and nearly 30 percent more total window area than a comparable switcher cab.

With a low profile hood design enabled by modern genset power, the cab sits higher over the hood, enabling longer windows and further enhancing visibility. The operator and other crew members have unobstructed views of all walkways to ensure the safety of others entering or exiting the unit.

The larger cab interior space accommodates a much wider range of operator interface layouts. The company achieved this major operational improvement while staying within all structural safety guidelines of AAR M-1003.

Trains News Wire is awaiting additional information from the company.

Amtrak Begins Field Testing New Viewliner II Cars

Published: June 17, 2014

WASHINGTON — Amtrak has started field testing the first of its new single-level Viewliner II long-distance cars. The first car type now in field testing is a baggage car.

The updated car design provides for improved reliability and maintenance, and better baggage loading/unloading procedures, the company says. Also, the new built-in luggage racks can secure unboxed bicycles to support the growing demand by passengers to bring their bikes onboard an expanding number of routes.

The field testing program has several elements, including compatibility tests to ensure the baggage car couples cleanly with, and can operate through a curve without interference with, numerous types of Amtrak cars and locomotives. In addition, there are tests for speed, stability, braking, noise, and interaction of the wheel sets with the rail, as well as actual baggage handling.

Field testing will continue through October with the baggage car traveling on the Northeast Corridor and on routes to Chicago, New Orleans, and Miami. The expectation is that new baggage cars will begin entering revenue service by the end of 2014.

The baggage cars are part of an order for 130 single-level long-distance passenger cars, including diner, sleeper and bag-dorm cars being built by CAF USA of Elmira, N.Y., and previously reported by Trains News Wire. All four car types will update the Amtrak fleet, improve reliability and maintenance, upgrade passenger amenities, travel at speeds up to 125 mph, and replace units built as far back as the 1940s.

The diner, sleeper and bag-dorm cars will be used on eastern long-distance routes with the first units of each expected to begin field testing later this summer. The new baggage cars will be used system-wide.

Final Environmental Impact Study Released for CSX Virginia Avenue Tunnel

Published: June 17, 2014

WASHINGTON – The Federal Highway Administration and the District Department of Transportation have released a final environmental impact study that identifies preferred alternatives for the reconstruction of CSX's Virginia Avenue Tunnel, a 110-year old tunnel in desperate need of reconstruction and upgrades.

The railroad is proposing to spend hundreds of millions of company dollars to reconstruct the tunnel in an effort to increase efficiency for the benefit of the businesses and commuters in the District and nearby region. The release of the final environmental impact study responds to community concerns in a way that modernizes the nation's aging infrastructure while promoting safety and the well being of local neighbors.

In an effort to minimize environmental impact from tunnel construction, alternative plans would require the railroad to take specific actions with the project including limiting construction hours, controlling and monitoring dust at the site to maintain air quality, reducing noise by creating physical barriers, and providing compensation to the residents who are most impacted, the study says.

The study also recommends the railroad to make enhancements to the nearby streetscape program, including the reconstruction of Virginia Avenue, Virginia Avenue Park, and the Marine Corps Recreation Facility.

A public meeting will be held on July 1, 2014, at the Capitol Skyline Hotel. The meeting will include a presentation on the specifications of the reconstruction, while allowing a brief time to ask questions about its impact and construction.

For more information on the project, go to www.virginiaavenuetunnel.com.

NRHS Details 12 Recipients of 2014 Railway Heritage Grants

Published: June 17, 2014

PHILADELPHIA — The National Railway Historical Society has announced 12 recipients of its annual National Railway Heritage Grants program. Spanning eleven states, the recipients include historical societies, museums, and an NRHS chapter.

Supported projects range from the restoration of rare locomotives, passenger cars, and trolleys to the preservation and care of historic rail images and artifact collections. Through these varied projects, NRHS funding will leverage hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours and in-kind matching donations—all in support of railroad preservation.

Since 1991 the society has provided nearly \$650,000 to rail preservation efforts, awarding matching grants for projects that preserve, research, educate, or publish railway history. Nearly 100 grants have been awarded to NRHS chapters, while more than 150 have gone to other organizations – many of them for projects endorsed and supported by NRHS chapters. Funding is provided by additional gifts to the society.

This year's grants total \$46,000 and include:

- \$5,000 to the Alaska Community Foundation in Anchorage for the restoration of Alaska Railroad steam locomotive No. 557, a 2-8-0 built in 1944. The grant will fund the purchase of boiler stay bolts, a vital step in the locomotive's restoration to operating condition. \$700 to the Arizona Railway Museum in Chandler to fund the purchase and construction of storage shelves for donated artifacts and collections.

- \$2,500 to the Brunswick Heritage Museum in Brunswick, Md., to preserve, catalog and protect the museum's vast photographic collection depicting life in a company railroad town. With images that span the 1870s to present-day, the collection serves as a priceless resource for historians and the public.
- \$5,000 to the Chehalis Centralia Railroad and Museum in Chehalis, Wash., to complete the rebuild and reconditioning of steam engine No. 15, a 2-8-2 Mikado built in 1916 for the Puget Sound & Cascade Railway. Restored by the museum in 1989, the engine needs an overhaul to ensure an additional 15 years of operations.
- \$5,000 to the Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society in Clifton Forge, Va., to restore a wood-side box car at the society's museum. Built in 1929, car No. 940157 was converted to maintenance-of-way use in the 1950s.
- \$5,000 to the Illinois Railway Museum in Union to inspect and repair the motors of the museum's Electroliner, one of two revolutionary streamlined electric trains that debuted on the North Shore Line in 1941. The train has been restored externally to its as-built design. Once repairs are completed, the train will operate on the museum's five-mile route.
- \$4,500 to the Klamath Rails to Trails Group in Klamath Falls, Ore., to restore the exterior of a 1941 Weyerhaeuser Snow Dozer Plow to its original condition. Once restored, the snow plow will be permanently attached to the railway along the Oregon California & Eastern State Line Trail, conveying the trail's OC&E heritage and the railroad's economic significance to the region.
- \$2,400 to the Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers Association in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, to replace the rock platform of its former Chicago, Burlington & Quincy depot with historic brick. The organization operates one of the last remaining electric railways in the state.
- \$5,000 to the Minnesota Streetcar Museum in Minneapolis to help build the museum's first library/archive room, part of an addition to the existing George K. Isaacs car barn. The library/archive will house the museum's extensive collection of Minnesota streetcar photos, company records, maps, drawings, small artifacts and books.
- \$2,400 to the Missouri Pacific Historical Society in Kirkwood, Mo., to purchase archival storage materials to preserve and catalog its collection that dates to the 1950s. The MPHS archives contains documents, photos, maps, books, slides, and more from predecessor railroads.
- \$3,500 to the Monterey, Tenn., NRHS chapter to help restore an original 1950s crew car that served the eastern route of the Tennessee Central Railroad. The Monterey Chapter has teamed up with the Monterey Depot Historical Society to restore the car, one of a few still in existence, and move it inside the depot museum.
- \$5,000 to the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad in Cumberland, Md., to repair and coat the roof of Pullman private car No. 204, built in 1917 as the *Winchester*. The car is being restored to operation and its appearance will reflect its time on the Western Maryland Railway between 1943 and 1964.

Insufficient Handbrakes Applied Prior to Lac-Mégantic Disaster

Published: June 16, 2014

MONTREAL — Recently released court documents indicate that an insufficient number of handbrakes were applied prior to the July 2013 Lac-Mégantic disaster, CBC News reports. The redacted police reports used to file criminal charges in connection with the incident indicate that only seven handbrakes were set prior to the runaway, and that none were set on the 72 tank cars.

None of these allegations have been heard in court, however.

Thomas Harding, the engineer who parked the train before it rolled into town; Jean Demaitre, a manager of train operations; and Richard Labrie, a dispatcher, were all arrested in May in connection with the incident which killed 47 people. The three have since posted bail.

Canada's Transportation Safety Board has yet to release its report on the incident.

Illinois Railway Museum Plans to Return Electroliner to Operation

By Steve Glischinski
Published: June 16, 2014

UNION, Ill. – The Illinois Railway Museum has raised \$111,000 toward its goal of \$150,000 to begin electric motor work on the museum's Chicago, North Shore & Milwaukee Electroliner cars Nos. 801-802. The museum is attempting to raise \$500,000 as part of its Campaign for the Electroliner, an effort to restore the Liner to operation by its 75th anniversary in 2016.

The museum's plans include motor work, new upholstery, and rehabbing most of the interior. The first milestone is to get the train to operate reliably under its own power and then move on to the heating and air conditioning system.

If the museum can obtain the \$150,000 for motor work, the eight motors can be removed and sent out to a contractor this summer, museum volunteer Tom Sharratt tells Trains News Wire. Over the weekend, the museum received confirmation of a \$5,000 National Railway Historical Society grant toward the restoration.

After the motors are repaired, the second phase of the project will involve replacement of the air conditioning system – essential to operation since the train is a sealed unit. This is estimated to cost \$75,000. IRM also wants to reinstall electric griddles in the tavern lounge where the famed "Electroburgers" were prepared. The estimated cost is \$10,000. The third phase involves reupholstering the seats, cleaning and painting as necessary. This will cost an estimated \$100,000. The museum is also

budgeting \$135,000 for unknown problems that might crop up in such areas as electrical wiring and control systems, the brake system, and plumbing.

The North Shore Line interurban operated between Chicago and Milwaukee. In 1939 it began a modernization program. The most significant component of the program was the purchase of two four-car articulated streamlined "Electroliner" trainsets from St. Louis Car Co. The two end units included operating cabs and smoking and non-smoking coach seating. There was also an additional coach and a tavern lounge. The Electroliners entered service on Feb. 9, 1941, with each trainset scheduled to run five one-way trips in Chicago-Milwaukee service every day at speeds up to 90 mph. The Electroliners continued in service until the end of the railroad on Jan. 21, 1963, and then saw service as "Liberty Liners" on the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority's Norristown High Speed Line from 1964 to 1980. Both trainsets were preserved.

To make a donation to the Campaign for the Electroliner go to www3.irm.org/store. Donations by mail may go to Illinois Railway Museum, P.O. Box 427, Union, IL 60180.

Help Mr. Big Save the Auto Train

By Fred Frailey
Tuesday, June 17, 2014

The alienation of *Auto Train* passengers continues unabated. It's now the only long-distance train (other than the *Cardinal*, which has neither kitchen nor dining car) on which you cannot be served a grilled flat iron steak, accompanied by a baked potato. This is what Amtrak calls its "signature steak." Now on the *Auto Train* you get a cheaper hunk of meat that's been braised for hours to shed its shoe-leather toughness and then is plopped atop mashed potatoes, which are probably cold by the time they reach you. Already I am barfing. The switch occurred May 1, but until this morning the online menu for the *Auto Train* sleeping car diner still showed the flat-iron steak. All this and more appears to be the doing of a Miami-based Amtrak manager with oversight of the *Auto Train*. His name is Mr. Big.

The mission of Mr. Big began with a berating of the *Auto Train* on-board service staff at a town hall meeting in Lorton, Va., in late winter. According to people who were there, he wasn't nice. Mr. Big told the folks that if they didn't like their jobs, to quit because plenty of people are there to replace them. And he told them to cease thinking themselves special for working aboard this unique train, because they are not; they are just hired help. This is a man beloved by Joe Boardman, Amtrak's president. Next it became the customers' turn to feel the tender kiss of Mr. Big's tough love. Amtrak removed the Sightseer Lounge car for sleeping car passengers in order to add a fifth bilevel coach (the train is held to 17 passenger cars due to limitations of head-end power). This itself was not a bad idea, because it significantly enhances revenue. But it became a part of a pattern that some might see as not such a good idea. To wit: The complimentary wine tasting ended, as did complimentary wine at dinner for first-class passengers. Out went the china, too, to be replaced by paper (some who rode the train recently say plastic) tableware. And now, as reported, the dinner itself is cheapened, too, inferior to that of all other long distance trains save the *Cardinal*. These cost cuts will improve the train's bottom line, unless, of course, passengers get driven away. But I'm confident passengers will like these changes. They are for our own good. We have Mr. Big's word for this.

Still, it's unfair to ask Mr. Big to do all this by himself. He is just one person. You readers of this blog are pretty savvy. Let's all band together to offer the fellow our best advice. Those of you who read but seldom post responses, don't be shy; don't hold back your ideas.

Here are a few ideas of my own for Mr. Big to consider:

- 1. The new-new dinner menu.** Boxes of KFC fried chicken delivered the morning of departure to your room or your seat. Choice of white or dark meat, plus mashed potatoes with gravy and slaw. Finger-lickin' good, folks! Simply run hot water in the toilet over the boxes to warm the food.
- 2. The new-new breakfast menu.** Bananas, all you can eat. But two per person, please. Now Mr. Big can take off both diners and add the sixth and seventh coaches. The dining car staffs will please the boss by joining the unemployed.
- 3. BYOB.** Lug aboard your cooler of beer and bottles of hooch and let the wet tee-shirt parties in the aisles begin! (Think: elder sex.) Wave goodbye to the other lounge car and its attendant and wave hello to the eighth coach.
- 4. People power.** Two P40 locomotives are one too many and waste fuel. The train's route is pretty flat, so make do with one. For those few hills that can't quite be topped, the sleeping car passengers can get off and walk, to lighten the load. Or they can push, if they're in such a rush. They're part of the 1%, anyway.
- 5. BYOB (bedding).** If passengers brought their sheets, blankets, and pillows, why, the *Auto Train* wouldn't need sleeping car attendants. So wave goodbye to them, too. But practice making beds before you board, so your feet don't poke out.

Okay, that's a start. I've got many other suggestions, but enough of me. Pick up where I left off. We must band together with Mr. Big to cut the *Auto Train* to profitability.

Recommended: “21st Century Limited”

By Fred Frailey
Wednesday, June 18, 2014

Novelist Kevin Baker’s report on the present state of the American passenger train, in the July issue of Harper’s Magazine that goes on sale next week, begins thusly: “We start in darkness. After fighting our way through the dingy, low-ceilinged, crowded waiting room that serves as New York City’s current Pennsylvania Station, we pull out through a graffitied tunnel that follows one of the oldest roadbeds in America. Freight trains once clattered along open tracks here, spewing smoke within a few dozen yards of the mansions along Riverside Drive and attracting one of the most dangerous hobo encampments in the country, before it was finally all buried beneath a graceful park in the 1930s. Today, we emerge into sunlight for the first time in Harlem, following a route up the glorious Hudson River, past Bear and Storm King Mountains, and the old ruined Bannerman castle on Pollepel Island.”

Do you want to read more? I sure did.

“21st Century Limited: The lost glory of America’s railroads” may confuse some readers. We are in the early stages of the second Age of Railroading, more glorious in many respects than the first. Railroads, in fact, appear to be the only mode of transportation in America today that work as intended. But the restored glory belongs wholly to the freight railroads, a distinction that Mr. Baker does not appear to fully grasp. But if you can get over this shortcoming, and a slew of factual errors, you will be wonderfully entertained by his account of traveling from one end of America to the other and back, on Amtrak. What Baker does best is capture what it is like to ride Amtrak’s long-distance trains. Such as this: “Once, railroad-dining-car chefs produced some of the best food in America at almost any time of the day or night, serving up regional specialties on real china, with glass, silver, and fine linen napkins. Today the food is prepackaged and warmed up, airline-style meals served mostly on hardened paper or plastic dishes. All across America the menus are the same: a choice of reasonably edible steak, hamburger, chicken, salmon, or pasta, accompanied by a couple of dinner rolls and an anemic salad. But the real attraction is the strangers you’re seated with.” Wow, dead on, Kevin! Introvert that I am, almost anyone can draw me out of my shell from across a dining car table. The first night in the dining car he meets Mark and Linda, two train lovers who “buy everything on their Amtrak credit cards in order to run up rewards point.” Does that sound familiar?

Or here is his take on a place I’ve entered dozens of times this year, the Metropolitan Lounge in Chicago Union Station: “Only Amtrak could turn a luxury lounge into a refugee center. Most of the passengers struggle and sway hauling their baggage down to the train, then up the twisting stairs inside the double-decker cars.” I laugh at “refugee center,” because his term for this rather ragged room that begs for renovation is so on target.

Lest you think this is just a critique of Amtrak, it is not. Throughout this long account it’s evident that Baker is enjoying himself. He says this about the Sightseer Lounge on the western trains: “Amtrak’s observation cars today are built with no equivalent sense of artistry—or any artistry at all—but they are comfortable, maybe the most agreeable means of travel aside from oceanliner staterooms.” And I would also agree with what he says about the on-board employees. “Amtrak’s long-distance dining and sleeper-car crews tend to be efficient and almost indefatigably friendly, despite the long trips and the relentless demands of their jobs.”

Harper’s core readership I would describe as politically liberal, and these readers will enjoy Baker’s accounts of the campaigns by conservative Republicans, starting with David Stockman during the Reagan presidency, to do away with Amtrak. Fair enough, I thought. But he is just as critical of Barack Obama for botching the rollout of his high-speed train initiative, so mishandled that high-speed trains are today politically toxic.

On and on he travels, enjoying most of all the Coast Starlight and its Pacific Parlour Car. Headed east from the Pacific coast, Baker unloosens this delightful paragraph: “The headlines on the bundles of USA Today brought aboard read, ‘House, Senate parry on Obamacare as shutdown looms.’ It’s not of much concern on the California Zephyr. At breakfast, I reminisce with Gene—a devout Nebraska Cornhuskers fan wearing a bright-red team jacket, on his way back to Lincoln, where he has been teaching mathematics for fifty-three years—over Johnny Rogers’s greatest game. At lunch, I talk to Leah and John, both of whom have their pilot’s licenses and have lived and worked all over the world in public health, about Mayor Dick Lee and his struggle with the Model Cities Program in New Haven, Conn. We speculate about a middle-aged couple who hold hands everywhere they go on the Zephyr, and whom everyone wonders about until we realize that the man is blind. I marvel anew at the range of conversations you can have on the train even as you’re being Archimediéd into collectivism.”

If I picked apart all of Kevin Baker’s factual errors, you would gain the wrong impression; forgive him and get over it, because the errors aren’t really that important. What is important is what he does right, which is describe the good and the bad of life aboard an Amtrak train crossing this country, with an affection and warmth that tugs at you.

Why You May Yet Read by Candlelight

By Fred Frailey
Thursday, June 19, 2014

The debate over the safety of handling crude oil by rail has become frustrating and almost pointless. Yes, tank cars that carry oil could be made more crashworthy, that is, if the Pipeline & Hazardous Materials Safety Administration would get off its duff and tell tank car owners what changes it wants. A year after the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic, Que., that killed 47 people, we’re still waiting. Yes, there are a couple of other measures that would make a marginal difference. But if you’re asking whether railroads will ever make their trains absolutely, totally safe and derailment-free, the answer is no, of course not. So what’s this all about?

Almost everything you do in life comes with risk. When you shave, you risk a cut. When you eat, you risk indigestion or worse. In 2012, 33,561 people died in roadway accidents, a number that to me seems horrifying. And I tense up every time a jetliner I'm in takes off and lands. Still, nobody suggests that you not shave or eat or drive or fly. Instead, we try to make all these activities safer. For instance, railroads are investing \$13 billion over a period of years to install positive train control, which will prevent trains from passing red signals or violating speed limits, even temporary slow orders.

But in the public debate, rational thought doesn't seem to matter. I hate to pick on Sara Foss, a columnist for the Daily Gazette of Schenectady, N.Y., because she had nice things to say about a feature story I wrote this year. On the other hand, in a blog of hers she so well illustrates the problem that I cannot help myself. First, she asks the wrong question: "Can transporting oil by rail ever truly be made safe?" Truly? It's the wrong question because absolute safety is just as impossible on a railroad as it is on the highway and in the air. Then for an answer to her pointless question, Sara goes, inexplicitly, to Sandy Steubing, a member of People of Albany United for Safe Energy, or PAUSE. It's like asking Barack Obama whether George W. Bush will go down as one of our greatest presidents. As if on cue, Steubing demands a moratorium on shipping crude oil via both rail and pipeline so that the U.S. can "aggressively switch to renewable forms of energy." And Sara agrees with him, perhaps mindless of the shortage of gasoline that will result.

Give Sandy Steubing credit for at least being honest. Too many others in the environmental movement are disingenuous. Told that absolute safety for crude by rail is unachievable, they say then just stop the activity. It's a mindset that if applied the same way to the other forms of transportation would have us all reduced to riding bicycles, living in caves, and reading by candlelight. The fact of the matter is that these people don't want the oil to come out of the ground, period. But they don't want to say that aloud.

It's not just the environmentalists, either. The oil industry denies against all evidence that there is anything unusually volatile about light sweet crude oil from North Dakota and says it's all a railroad problem. And the pipeline and environmental people talk right past each other, too (while railroads walk off with the business, I might add).

On that last note, here's another example of the mindlessness of it all. Reported the New York Times in early June: "If the Keystone XL pipeline is not built — and more oil from the Canadian oil sands is moved by rail — there could be hundreds more deaths and thousands more injuries than expected over the course of a decade, according to an updated State Department analysis." Specifically, State predicts 434 deaths and 2,947 injuries over a decade. The Times reporter got reactions from a TransCanada spokesman ("The safest, most environmentally responsible way to move oil to the markets where they are needed is a pipeline") and from an attorney for the National Wildlife Federation ("Today's correction further highlights the extreme dangers to people and wildlife posed by climate-disrupting tar sands oil."). But nobody from the Times sought comment from the railroad industry.

It took an enterprising young reporter for the McClatchy Newspapers, Curtis Tate, to reveal that State's estimates had nothing to do with the dangers of hauling crude oil by rail—nothing whatever. The stats were simply lifted from the Federal Railroad Administration web site and represent the casualties per million ton miles of freight of any kind handled during 2002-2012 and extrapolated over the next decade. Most of those casualties probably involved grade crossing accidents and incidents having to do with trespassers. On top of that, the rate of accidents and injuries on railroads has declined by almost half during the past decade, so even these statistics are exaggerated.

Let me present a few statistics of my own. A couple of months ago I did some back-of-envelope calculations, consulted FRA safety stats and concluded that over a year's time, we will probably have 11 crude oil train incidents per year — a statistical probability, in other words, at the rate that oil is being hauled by rail today. Only half would involve loaded trains, obviously. So are five or six derailments per year, minor or not minor (because who knows?), a risk this nation can take and work around? Before you answer no, let me remind you of two other statistics. They are the number of people in the U.S. killed and injured the past year in crude oil derailments. Those numbers are zero and zero.

So if I seem impatient with the public dialogue, at least you now know why.

Amtrak Viewliner II Baggage Car Field Testing

Posted by: "Dennis Parejko
Wednesday, June 18, 2014

The first of Amtrak's 55 new Viewliner II baggage cars, no. 61000—one of four Viewliner II series long-distance car types—is undergoing field testing.

The new baggage cars will be used on all 15 long-distance routes across the Amtrak national system. "The updated design provides for improved reliability and maintenance, and better baggage loading/unloading procedures," Amtrak said. "Also, the new built-in luggage racks can secure unboxed bicycles to support the growing demand by passengers to bring their bikes onboard an expanding number of routes."

The field testing program has several elements, including compatibility tests to ensure the baggage car couples cleanly, and can operate through a curve without interference, with numerous types of Amtrak cars and locomotives. In addition, there are tests for speed, stability, braking, noise, wheel set/rail interaction, as well as actual baggage handling. Field testing will continue through October with the baggage car traveling on the Northeast Corridor and on routes to Chicago, New Orleans, and Miami. Amtrak expects these cars to begin entering revenue service by the end of 2014.

The baggage cars are part of a larger order for 130 single-level, long-distance Viewliner II passenger cars, which also include diners, sleepers, and baggage-crew dormitory cars. CAF USA of Elmira, N.Y., is building the cars. "All four car types will modernize the Amtrak fleet, improve reliability and maintenance, upgrade passenger amenities, travel at speeds up to 125 mph, and replace units built as far back as the 1940s and 1950s," Amtrak said. "The diner, sleeper and baggage-dorm cars will be used on eastern long-distance routes, with the first units of each expected to begin field testing this summer."

"It is clear that Americans want a national system of intercity passenger rail, and Amtrak is moving ahead to build new equipment to meet customer demand," said President and CEO Joe Boardman. "Long-distance trains form the backbone of the Amtrak national system, connect small towns to major cities, support local economic development, deliver passengers to state-supported corridor trains, and conduct interstate trade and commerce. Their principal mission is connectivity, and it is an increasingly important one to communities that have been losing their bus and air connections at a steady pace over the past decade. Since 1998, Amtrak long-distance ridership has grown by roughly 20%, without the introduction of any new services, frequencies, or equipment. In FY 2013, long-distance ridership reached its highest point in 20 years, with 4.8 million passengers.

In addition, long-distance trains are, on average, as full on the peak leg of their trips as are the premium Acela Express services on the Northeast Corridor."

Amtrak Sees Delays Increase

Posted by: "Dennis Parejko
Wednesday, June 18, 2014

Even as airlines increasingly are getting to their destinations on time, the nation's passenger train system averaged only 73.1% on-time arrivals at endpoints in the six months ended in April. That's down from 85.8% in the same period a year earlier.

One particular Amtrak line, the Empire Builder, running between Chicago and Seattle, arrived within 30 minutes of schedule only 26% of the time in May, with delays averaging three to five hours.

"I think we're getting our doors kicked in on long-distance trains," said Amtrak CEO Joe Boardman. Over the past year, he admits, there's been "a huge drop for us."

Persistent problems such as breakdowns of aging equipment, bridges, tunnels and track continue to frustrate rail passengers, and some of those problems have gotten worse. Amtrak says much of the recent decline in on-time arrivals has come from long-distance trains getting slowed by more freight trains on tracks that are controlled by freight-railroad companies.

Blue Ridge Southern to Purchase Three NS Branch Lines

Thursday, June 26, 2014

Blue Ridge Southern Railroad (BLU), a subsidiary of Watco Transportation Services (WTS), has reached a definitive agreement with the Norfolk Southern to purchase three branch lines in North Carolina that feed into its terminal in Asheville. The lines are the T-Line, which runs west of Asheville; the W-Line, which runs south of Asheville and the TR-Line, which branches off the W-Line south of Asheville. BLU could begin operations by July 26, 2014.

BLU will operate 91.8 miles of track and will initially operate with 10 locomotives, seven SD40's and three GP39's.

"The Watco team is excited to go to work with our great partners Norfolk Southern to deliver quality service to our customers," said Watco Chief Executive Officer Rick Webb.

BLU will immediately begin the hiring process to ensure uninterrupted service to the rail customers. A series of meetings were held and are scheduled to continue for WTS and BLU leaders to brief current NS employees on the transaction and explain the process for them to apply to become members of the BLU Team.