

THE FLATWHEEL

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



January 2015

January 2015 Meeting

Monday, January 12th at 7:00 PM
Central Florida RR Museum
101 S. Boyd St., Winter Garden, FL
Program: Florida's Ports & Railroad Ferries
By: Ken Murdock
Refreshments: David Rhea

February 2015 Meeting

Monday, February 9th at 7:00 PM
Central Florida RR Museum
101 S. Boyd St., Winter Garden, FL
Program: Florida's Seaports With Rail Service
By: Ken Murdock
Refreshments: Irv Lipscomb

Central Florida Railway Historical Society, Inc.

Central Florida RR Museum Host Duty Schedule — January 2015

DAY	DATE	HOURS	MUSEUM HOST
Saturday	1/3/15	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Jarrod Reynolds
Sunday	1/4/15	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Frank Milmore
Saturday	1/10/15	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Lloyd & Sylvia Brown
Sunday	1/11/15	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Gary Dettman
Saturday	1/17/15	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Dan & Janet Crusie
Sunday	1/18/15	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Phil Baker
Saturday	1/24/15	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Irv Lipscomb
Sunday	1/25/15	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Clarence Hurt
Saturday	1/31/15	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	Jerry & Ginger Honetor
Sunday	N/A	1 P.M. – 5 P.M.	N/A

January Birthdays

Patricia Ryan 1/6
Bob Grenier 1/12
Bill Dusenbury 1/17
Irv Lipscomb 1/18
Randall Thornton 1/31
Al Weber 1/31

Congratulations!!!

Ginger Honetor is the Winter Garden Heritage Foundation's Central Florida Railroad Museum Volunteer of the Year for 2014.

Phil Cross is the recipient of the Glad Hand Award for 2014.

**January 2015
Museum Work Session
Saturday, January 17, 2015
8:30 AM to 3:30 PM
Please come out and help
with the many chores
that need to be done!!!!**

**HAPPY
NEW
YEAR**

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 Seaboard Air Line caboose 5342 with logo "Look Around Getting Down". It was photographed in Tavares at the Tavares & Gulf RR's engine shed, indicating that it was leased to the T&G. The SAL had a large roster of these low cupola, wooden cars built to their standard plans by various manufacturers plus many built in their own shops. This car was built by American Car & Foundry in 1926. Plywood sides were applied in later years giving it the appearance of being a steel car. Wood cars were assigned to local branch line work after steel cars came on line. – Clayton Bishop photo



This is Seaboard Air Line steel caboose 5628 with logo "Hold Tight Till Footing's Right". It was also photographed in Tavares at the T&G engine shed. These were SAL's first steel cabs, purchased from International Car Company beginning in 1949. The unusual window arrangement was due to the car having bunk beds. After the SCL merger, these cars were rebuilt to look similar in appearance to ACL's very common M5 cabs. – Clayton Bishop photo



This is former SAL extended vision steel cab 5719 with logo "Rules Obeyed Lives Saved". Still in SAL livery 12 years after the SCL merger, it was photographed north bound thru Winter Park in June, 1979. These cars were built for SAL by International Car Co. in 1963 and were considered the "state of the art" in caboose design at that time. They proved to be very popular among a number of roads. – Ken Murdock photo

December 2014 Museum Report

By Ken Murdock, Museum Curator

We had 3 inventory workdays during the month of December besides the monthly workday on Saturday, December 13th. The History Center vacated the Roper Building in early December, leaving behind a few items that we can possibly use once we complete the renovations to the space. Some of the items included a desk which can be used in the library, a small bookshelf and a small filing cabinet.

As I mentioned last month, we acquired a large collection from member Jim Garner of Jacksonville, some by purchase and some by donation. Before these items can go on display, they have to be inventoried. Fortunately, Al Sharp is back from North Carolina and has already pitched in to help accomplish this effort. We hit a little bump in the road, however, with no computer access to the network due to the move by the History Center. They are switching over to Bright House for phones and internet. That won't be completed until January, but once it is set up, we will be able to access Past Perfect from home! That will be a major improvement.

I have had about four workdays at home restoring some of the items donated by Jim Garner. One really nice item that I restored was a Monon RR oak, ticket case. The case had boards that had come unglued and its roll-top front was in many pieces due to the fabric backing having rotted due to age. I purchased new fabric and installed it with Scotch spray adhesive. I also found a roll-top desk lock which fit perfectly into cut-outs made for the original lock that had been removed prior to us receiving it. This is now a very nice addition to our collection. I also spent most of another day repairing the legs on the depot bench in the Meeting Room. The two front legs were very loose and were about to collapse, possibly sending some of our most distinguished members hurling to the floor.

The Glad Hand award for outstanding service was presented to Phil Cross at our annual banquet at the City Grille in Clermont on December 6, 2012. Phil had contributed 407 volunteer hours in the past 12 months ending in November. I also recognized our members who had contributed over 100 volunteer hours during that period and they included Jerry Honeter (510.5), Ginger Honeter (384.25), David Rhea (260), Jarrod Reynolds (241.25), Al Sharp (231.5), Irv Lipscomb (161.5) and Roger Wilson (104.25). All of our members combined contributed 3,573.5 volunteer hours to the society during the past 12 months ending in November. This is an outstanding record of achievement and shows your dedication to our organization. Thank you!!!

To add to the achievements of our members, Ginger Honeter was named railroad museum volunteer of the year by Winter Garden Heritage Foundation. Ginger hosted as a volunteer almost every Wednesday since Greg Fox's departure. She was recognized at their annual volunteer appreciation event in their new History Center on Sunday, December 14, 2014. Congratulations Ginger!!!

We had a museum workday on Saturday, December 13, 2014, with Phil Cross, Lloyd Brown, Al Sharp, Irv Lipscomb, Jerry and Ginger Honeter, Jarrod Reynolds and me participating. We took care of the housekeeping chores in the museum first and then began to work in the Roper Building. We vacuumed the space vacated by the History Center and then began moving some of our items that were in storage into the west end of the space. The first phase of construction will be the library and work shop on the east end, so we kept that area clear. We now have the flat files set up and usable so that we can begin cataloguing and filing large format items such as posters, maps, calendars, prints and etc. **Continued on Page 3.**

Upcoming Events

January 10 & 11, 2015 — Deland, FL — 50th Florida Rail Fair, Volusia County Fairgrounds, 3150 East New York Avenue, 9 am – 4 pm and 10 am– 3:30 pm. Contact: Charles Miller, 386-736-8185, rrshows@aol.com. Website: <http://www.gserr.com>.

January 12, 2015 — 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.

February 7 – 15, 2015 — Winter Live Steam Meet at the Big Boots & Western Railroad in Candler, FL.

February 9, 2015 — 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.

February 14, 2015 — Jacksonville, FL — 37th Jacksonville Rail Fair, Railroadiana and Model Train Show, 9:00 to 5:00. Prime Osborn Convention Center, 1000 Water Street (former Jacksonville Terminal). Details: Charlie Miller, (703) 536-2954, rrshows@aol.com. Website: <http://www.gserr.com>.

February 18-21, 2015 — Florida Flywheelers Antique Engine Club's 22nd Annual Antique Engine & Tractor Show, 7000 Avon Park Cutoff Road, Ft. Meade, FL, 33841. Call 863-285-9121. Website: <http://www.floridaflywheelers.org>.

March 9, 2015 — 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.

April 11, 2015 — Deland, FL — 51st 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>.

April 11, 2015 — Folkston, GA — Annual Railwatch Event — Train watching activities at the Train Watching Platform at the Folkston Funnel in downtown Folkston, GA. Details at <http://www.folkston.com/trains/trains.htm>

April 13, 2015 — 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.

May 11, 2015 — 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.

June 8, 2015 — 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 2014 Museum Report

(Continued From Page 2)

By moving book shelves and filing cabinets into the vacated space, we have now regained access to our old work shop area and our stored railroad memorabilia. This will now allow us to inventory these stored items which had been completely inaccessible for several years. Thanks to the good turnout by our members, we had plenty of help moving many very heavy items.

Jerry Honetor continued his work on inventorying the library. Bob Rapalje, son of our late member John, brought by two boxes of miscellaneous items from his father's collection. Included was a Pullman white hand towel over stamped ATSF and another white hand towel marked Pullman. Ginger helped with the housekeeping chores and hosted in the afternoon.

We also had a surprise visit by one of our most distinguished, senior members, Clarence Hurt. Clarence has been homebound with a broken foot, but he was able to come by and join us for lunch, thanks to his wife, Sherry, chauffeuring him. Clarence, it was really enjoyable to visit with you and see you getting around once again.

Without access to Past Perfect, we spent two Wednesdays working on other things in the museum. One big project was to move all large format items, many rolled-up in tubes, into the now usable flat files. The rolled-up items were unrolled and weighted down in the drawers to help them return to a flat position for easier viewing. We were all amazed by the number of items we had which had been rolled-up and basically inaccessible. Jarrod Reynolds was out of school for the Holidays and was able to help with this project. Ginger Honetor hosted on the first three Wednesdays of the month.

The Program Committee is looking for programs and refreshments hosts for 2015. If you would like to provide refreshments between April and July, September, or October or a program between March and November, please let Jerry Honetor (JerryHonetor@yahoo.com), Phil Cross (Crossrails@earthlink.net) or Irv Lipscomb (ilipscomb@cfl.rr.com) know by e-mail. Your continued support of our Society is appreciated.

CENTRAL FLORIDA RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

2014 ACTIVITIES HISTORY

- **Bill Dusenbury – President**
 - Society meetings held at the Central Florida RR Museum.
 - Society continued as Partner in Education with Lakeville Elementary School.
 - Society membership for the year totaled 71 Century, Regular, Family and Friend members.
 - The Central Florida Railroad Museum had a record attendance of 8,188 visitors.
 - Society members donated a total of 3,422 hours for the operation and maintenance of the Central Florida Railroad Museum.
 - Monthly work sessions were held at the Central Florida Railroad Museum.
 - The Central Florida Railroad Museum is operated under a cooperative agreement between the City of Winter Garden, the Winter Garden Heritage Foundation, Inc. and the Central Florida Railway Historical Society, Inc.
- Apr. 5 - 6 The Central Florida Railroad Museum was open for the 14th Annual Bloom & Grow *Spring Fever in the Garden* event in downtown Winter Garden. The Museum was open seven hours on Saturday and five hours on Sunday. Society members Ken Murdock, Jarred Reynolds and Phil Cross manned the Museum on Saturday and Society members Laura Ansell and Phil Cross manned the Museum on Sunday. The Orange Lego Users Group (Orange LUG) set up and manned the large Lego display of downtown Winter Garden in the Museum Meeting Room both days. Three members manned the display on Saturday and two members manned the display on Sunday. The Tavares, Eustis & Gulf Railroad operated the Orange Blossom Cannonball out of Winter Garden to Ocoee and back both days. Five trips were operated on Saturday and four trips were operated on Sunday. All trips were sold out. Several society members assisted with the train operation both days. Society Member Warren McFarland set up and manned a great telegraph display in the Museum Meeting Room on Saturday and Sunday. The Museum, the Cannonball, the telegraph display and the Lego display were a big hit with the attendees.
- Apr. 26 The Florida Chapter of the Morse Telegraph Club held its Annual Morse Day Celebration at the Central Florida Railroad Museum in celebration of the birthday of Samuel B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph and Morse Code. Club members displayed and demonstrated antique and replica telegraph instruments and equipment. Using modern technology and the Internet, telegraphic greetings were exchanged with other Morse Telegraph Club chapters throughout the U.S. and Canada. A computer program allowed the content of the telegraphic transmissions to be displayed on the Museum's 55-Inch TV set so that non-telegraphers were able to follow along. Society members Jerry and Ginger Honetor hosted the event.
- May 8 Several Society members attended the grand opening of the Winter Park History Museum's *Whistles in the Distance* exhibit celebrating *The Trains of Winter Park Since 1882*. The Society also loaned a number of items from the Central Florida Railroad Museum for display. The exhibit will be up for one year. At the end of the exhibit period, the replica of the 4-4-0 UP 119 will be on permanent loan to the Central Florida Railroad Museum for display.
- May 12 Society Members Irv Lipscomb and Joe Lehmann, Jr. assisted the Winter Garden Heritage Foundation with their annual golf tournament at the West Orange Country Club.
- Oct. 10-12 Society members manned the Museum the evening of the 10th, all day on the 11th and the afternoon of the 12th in conjunction with the Winter Garden Heritage Foundation's 9th Annual Music Fest. The Museum was open 4 hours on Friday evening, 9 hours on Saturday and 4 hours on Sunday. Three Society members (Frank Milmore, Roger Wilson and Phil Cross) manned the Museum on Friday, four Society members (Jerry & Ginger Honetor, Irv Lipscomb and Phil Cross) manned the Museum on Saturday, and two Society members (Mike Kelly and Phil Cross) manned the Museum on Sunday. Estimated attendance was over 85 for Friday evening, over 250 for Saturday and over 125 for Sunday. The Orange Lego Users Group (OLUG) set up and manned a nice Lego display of downtown Winter Garden (including both depots) in the Museum Meeting Room on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Society Member Warren McFarland set up and manned a great telegraph display in the Museum Meeting Room on Saturday. The Museum, Lego display and telegraph display were a big hit with the attendees.
- Nov. 7-9 The North American Rail Car Operators Association (NARCOA) sponsored their annual motor car excursions on the Florida Central RR (Friday, November 7th and Saturday, November 8th) and Florida Northern RR (Sunday, November 9th). Friday's excursion was roundtrip from Eustis to Umatilla and return and Eustis to Mt. Dora and return. Saturday's excursion was roundtrip from Eustis to Winter Garden and return. There were 16 motor cars and 4 hi-railers. Attendees enjoyed lunch in downtown Winter Garden and some visited the CFRR Museum. Sunday's excursion was from downtown Ocala south to Candler, north to Lowell, and then return to Ocala.
- Dec. 6 The 2014 Society Annual Banquet was held at the 801 City Grille in downtown Clermont. A total of 22 members, spouses and guests attended and enjoyed the evening's activities and entertainment. Entertainment was provided by pianist Armando Velasquez. After dinner, the Central Florida Railway Historical Society, Inc. Officers for 2015 were sworn in by Lloyd Brown. Ken Murdock presented the Ken Murdock Glad Hand Award for 2014 to Phil Cross who had contributed 407 volunteer hours over the past 12 months ending in November attending museum work sessions, performing museum maintenance and producing *The Flatwheel*. Ken also recognized members who had contributed over 100 volunteer hours during that period and they included Jerry Honetor (510.5), Ginger Honetor (384.25), David Rhea (260), Jarrod Reynolds (241.25), Al Sharp (231.5), Irv Lipscomb (161.5) and Roger Wilson (104.25). Society members contributed a total of 3,573.5 volunteer hours to the Society during the past 12 months ending in November.
- Dec. 14 The Winter Garden Heritage Foundation held their Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event in their new History Center. The Foundation selected and announced Ginger Honetor as the Railroad Museum Volunteer of the Year for 2014.

'Twas the Night Before Christmas (For Every Train Lover!)

Author Unknown

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through my pike,
Not a steamer was stirring, not even a Mike.
My yard tracks invitingly empty and bare,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.
The diesels were nestled all snug in their sheds,
While visions of DCC danced in their heads.
While I, in my blue-and-white engineer's cap,
Had just settled down for a long winter's nap.

When down in the train room, there rose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the basement I flew like an ace,
Tripped over the cat and fell flat on my face.

I stifled a curse meant for Chessie (the cat),
And I muttered to no one, "I meant to do that,"
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a Large-scale sleigh and eight reindeer.

With an engineer driving, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than GG-1's, onward they came,
And he blew a steam whistle and called them by name:
"On Weaver! On Overland, Bachmann and Walthers!
On Atlas, All-Nation, Lionel and others!
To the top of the mountains of Hydrocal plaster,
Now dash away, dash away, dash away faster!"

As dry leaves that behind a new Genesis fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So in through the window the coursers they flew
With the sleigh full of trains, and St. Nicholas too.
And then, on my roundhouse, I saw on the roof
The prints in the dust of each Large-scale hoof.

As I drew a deep breath, and was turning around,
From beneath the bench work, St. Nick came with a bound.
He was dressed like an engineer from head to foot,
And his clothes had that fine smell of ashes and soot;
A bundle of trains he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

His eyes-just like marker lights! Dimples, how merry!
His cheeks like a Warbonnet, nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And his beard was so white, it would please Phoebe Snow.

He puffed on a pipe as he refilled its bowl,
And the smoke, it smelled just like bituminous coal.
He had a broad face and a belly (I found)
That shook like a tank car with wheels out-of-round.

He was chubby and plump, and I wanted to shout,
"Yes! The man's got a route the UP can't buy out!"
A wink of his eye as he passed near the door
Soon gave me to know I'd have freight cars galore.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work.
He filled all my yard tracks; then turned with a jerk,
And leaving an airbrush he'd found on eBay,
And giving a nod, he returned to his sleigh.

He pumped up the brakes, blew two blasts on his whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
"HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!
KEEP `EM ROLLING!
GOOD-NIGHT!"

2015 CFRHS Membership Statistics

Society Members	34
Society Century Members	11
Ward Britt	
Phil Cross	
Ann Cross	
Bill Dusenbury	
Chuck Hanus	
Andy Healy	
Jerry Honetor	
Frank Milmore	
Ken Murdock	
Al Sharp	
Jim Shoemaker	
Society Friends	11
Society Family Members	15
Society Student Members	0
Total Members	71

**January 2015 Museum
Work Session**
Saturday, January 17, 2015
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*, *Rail Group News* and AAR Web Sites

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

Proposed Rail Tank Car Rule Could Cost Economy Billions Report Says

By Nick Snow
December 2, 2014

WASHINGTON, DC - The US Pipeline & Hazardous Materials Administration's proposed rail tank car rule could cost the US economy as much as \$60 billion, a report commissioned by the Railway Supply Institute found. The high economic cost is largely due to expenses associated with modal shifts from rail to highways, potential modifications to tank cars, early retirement of existing tank cars, and lost service time for tank cars under modification or awaiting modification, according to the report by The Brattle Group, an economic research firm. "The numbers show that almost two thirds of rail tank cars will need to be idled for some period of time during the proposed modification program," said Kevin Neels, a Brattle Group principal and a co-author of the report. "Almost 1 million tank car years of capacity could be lost due to early retirement and idle time associated with cars awaiting modification," he said. The report said modal shifts to trucks could result in 65,000 of them carrying 1.4 million loads in 2018 alone, resulting in 11 million additional annual tons of carbon dioxide. It added that it is not clear if a modal shift of this magnitude is either operationally or economically feasible. If it is not, up to 300 million bbl of crude oil and 100 million bbl of ethanol could be stranded or their production levels reduced, the report suggested. Analyzed fleet data Brattle conducted research for the report from September through November with support from RSI's Committee on Tank Cars. It analyzed data on the current and proposed North American rail tank car fleet, and concluded that PHMSA underestimated the overall costs that would likely occur should the US Department of Transportation agency's fleet modifications timeline is implemented as proposed. RSI's tank cars committee wants to help create a comprehensive industry response that will enhance safe transportation of crude and ethanol by rail, Tom Simpson, the group's president, said. "Our experts have submitted a tank car-related proposal to PHMSA that will do just that," he said. "We have been calling on DOT since 2011 to identify tank car standards that can be efficiently and rapidly implemented." The group said its Feb. 28 proposal to PHMSA supports nearly all of the elements of the prescribed requirements set forth in Option 3 of the proposed regulations as the modification requirements for existing tank cars. Specifically, modifications would include jackets (if not already present), full-height, ½-in. head shields, the reconfigured bottom outlet valve handle, a reclosing pressure relief valve, and a thermal protection system that meets the 100-min pool fire requirement, RSI said. It said its proposal's timeline realistically accounts for the shop capacity available to carry out the required modification work and avoids many of the penalties, inefficiencies, and capacity shortages associated with an overly aggressive timeline. Under the RSI tank car committee's proposal, modifications would be prioritized to address tank cars which would benefit most from the modifications first. This would allow for a more efficient use of the available and incremental tank car modification capacity, RSI said.

CSX CFO REAFFIRMS FOURTH-QUARTER OUTLOOK AND LONGER-TERM PERFORMANCE

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - December 3, 2014 - CSX (NYSE: CSX) is on track to deliver fourth-quarter financial results similar to the levels achieved in the third quarter, as service remains stable in the midst of the fall peak and the beginning of strong winter weather conditions in the Northeast, Chief Financial Officer Fredrik Eliasson told investors and analysts at the Credit Suisse Global Industrials Conference today in New York.

"Fourth-quarter volume is tracking at the level we expected, and we are seeing strength across nearly all markets we serve," Eliasson said. "Longer term, we remain focused on the three key levers that deliver superior shareholder value: pricing above inflation, driving ever more efficient operations and growing our merchandise and intermodal businesses faster than the economy by developing new customers on our network, investing in our intermodal business and leveraging the benefits of the new energy environment."

Service excellence for customers is the foundation of CSX's ability to leverage those key drivers, Eliasson said, which is why CSX is making critical resource investments to restore service to previous record levels and position the company to capitalize on the long-term growth opportunities that exist across nearly the company's entire business mix. The company continues to expect to produce double-digit earnings growth and margin expansion in 2015 as it progresses toward a mid-60s operating ratio.

Short Line Opens Machinery Distribution Hub

Written by Douglas John Bowen
Wednesday, November 26, 2014

Greenville, S.C.-based Greenville & Western Railway Co. (GRLW) has opened its Big Creek Machinery Distribution Hub, located in Williamston, S.C., President and CEO Steven C. Hawkins says.

The short line, a wholly owned subsidiary of Western Carolina Railway Service Corp., has partnered with CSX Transportation, BNSF Railway, and BNSF Logistics to offer "a customizable turnkey solution for heavy machinery manufacturers and dealers to move their equipment door to door from origin point of import/manufacture in the Southeastern United States to destination point of export/domestic distribution anywhere on the North American rail network."

The facility also provides more than three acres of on-site storage/staging in a secure, well-lit environment "not just for finished machinery, but also large components such as buckets and beds and other optional machinery implements and accessories," GRLW says.

"We are excited to offer the heavy machinery market a rail transportation solution that can provide a 25%-to-30% cost savings over truck," said Hawkins. "We look forward to working with our marketing partners to grow the business and expand the scope of services offered as we develop the site. Opening this facility creates two immediate job opportunities for the Williamston community."

Greenville & Western, which began operations in 2006, was named the Railway Age 2010 Short Line of the Year.

NCRR Commits More Than \$13 Million in Rail Improvements

Tuesday, November 25, 2014

The North Carolina Railroad Company (NCRR) is moving forward with more than \$13 million in economic development investments across the state, which will expand rail access, improve safety and sustain rail projects spanning from Mecklenburg County northeast to Durham County and from Durham County southeast to Wake and Craven Counties.

Unanimously approved, these investments will ensure the benefits of a healthy rail line to industries and people from the piedmont down to the coast.

"Our mission is to enable freight to grow business, expand rail to move people and invest in North Carolina," said NCRR President Scott Saylor. "We're committed to working with local, state and private partners in planning for freight and passenger rail mobility now and in the future. 2015 will bring even more investment forward to attract much-needed capital intensive employers to our state."

In 2013, the NCRR enhanced its commitment to economic development and progress across the state with the adoption of a new strategic plan, which focuses on job creation and retention.

"The strategic plan is a proactive roadmap that focuses on freight traffic, both on the corridor and off-line, to drive economic development and create jobs," said Franklin Rouse, chairman of the NCRR Board of Directors.

"Access to rail-served sites attracts businesses like ours, helps us grow and creates jobs in our state," said Argyle Campbell, chief executive officer of California-based Cambro Manufacturing. "We chose to expand our operations here in North Carolina for many reasons, but chief among them was a strong, efficient transportation system."

Projects in Lenoir and Jones Counties will look to improve drainage systems around the railroad to mitigate risk and sustain the roadbed for heavier railcars. Approved budget is \$174,000.

In Craven County, NCRR will partner with Norfolk Southern to invest in further rehabilitation of the Trent River Swing Bridge. The bridge enables key rail business to move from Cherry Point, Camp Lejune, and the Port of Morehead City through the county. Approved budget: is \$240,000.

NCRR is partnering with the city of High Point and Norfolk Southern to improve the slopes and drainage in the railroad corridor through the downtown High Point area. The project will also enhance the appearance of the area of the city that is home to the International Furniture Market while also improving the vital railroad mainline. Budget is not yet decided.

Discussions and negotiations for grade crossing improvement in Durham are also included in the board-approved investments. NCRR is working with the city officials and others to further develop plans to ensure pedestrian safety in Bull City. Approved budget is \$200,000.

Investments in Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties will improve lead tracks and sidings along the mainline to improve service for the approximately 2,000 annual carloads of freight handled for businesses in the area. Total cost is estimated at \$5,350,000.

NCRR is working to partner with the town of Morrisville and other parties in the construction of a replacement for the Crabtree Creek Bridge, built in 1927, that will accommodate a pedestrian walkway. This will also provide for future two mainline railroad tracks that could possibly be required to maintain freight and passenger rail service. Budget is not yet decided.

Also included in the group of investments are the capital resources for an in-depth study into the infrastructure needs for future tracks for both freight and passenger trains across the line from Charlotte to Morehead City, including Concord, Kannapolis,

Salisbury, Lexington, High Point, Greensboro, Selma, Goldsboro, Kinston, Newport and Morehead City. This project will work to identify significant infrastructure features and costs, provide guidance to North Carolina Department of Transportation, transit agencies and municipal governments planning construction projects, maximize the rail corridor for freight and passenger service.

Steamtown Fires Up Former Baldwin 0-6-0

By Justin Franz
December 5, 2014

SCRANTON, Pa – After a two-year hiatus, the National Park Service has put the “steam” back in Steamtown. This week, Steamtown National Historic Site fired up its Baldwin Locomotive Works 0-6-0 No. 26 for the first time in 15 years, and park officials say they expect to have the engine operational for the 2015 season.

No. 26 was fired up on Dec. 2 and the test revealed a few condensation issues. However the engine steamed flawlessly the following day.

“The staff at Steamtown National Historic Site are excited that the Baldwin No. 26 is nearing completion,” Steamtown Superintendent Deborah Conway tells Trains News Wire. “The engine is back in the shop for final assembly and adjustments, painting and finishing work. We look forward to having the engine operating next summer on our yard shuttles.”

The locomotive was built by Baldwin in 1926 and was used as a shop switcher there and for the Jackson Iron & Steel Co. The engine came to Steamtown in January 1990.

While Steamtown once had three steam locomotives in service in the late 1990s, it has since become known for having more operating diesels than steam locomotives. The last time the park had an operational engine was in 2012 when Canadian National 2-8-2 No. 3254 was taken out of service for its 15-year overhaul. Two years before that, Canadian Pacific 4-6-2 No. 2317 was also removed from service. It is unclear if and when either locomotive will return to the rails. In fact, the next large engine to return to steam may be Boston & Maine 4-6-2 No. 3713, which has been under restoration for a number of years.

FRA Issues Notice of Intent to Grant 'Buy America' Waiver for CHSRA, Amtrak

December 3, 2014

WASHINGTON – The Federal Railroad Administration says that it intends to grant Amtrak and California High-Speed Rail Authority waivers from its "Buy America" requirement for the non-domestic final assembly of up to four prototype Tier III high speed rail train sets. The trains are part of the procurement of new high-speed train sets for each operator. The agency is accepting public comment on the matter through Dec. 17.

The waivers apply only to the final assembly of up to two prototype high-speed train sets each for Amtrak and California. Before issuing a "Notice To Proceed" to any selected supplier, Amtrak and California each must certify and provide support to FRA that its selected supplier still has not established domestic manufacturing facilities capable of assembling the prototypes and delivering them within a reasonable time. All components used in the prototypes must still be domestically manufactured or separate waivers for components requested and granted before assembly of the prototypes can commence.

The agency's Buy America requirement for rolling stock, including high-speed train sets, requires domestic final assembly of the train sets and that all of the components be manufactured in the U.S.

"(The) FRA believes a waiver is appropriate ... because domestically-produced HSR trainsets meeting the specific technical, design, and schedule needs of Amtrak and the Authority are not currently available in the United States," the agency says in its notice. "There is no assembly or testing facility for HSR trainsets operating at speeds greater than 160 mph in the United States. Moreover, FRA estimates that it could take HSR trainset manufacturers a minimum of one-and-a-half to two years to establish the required facilities to support a domestic HSR trainset assembly capability."

On March 14, 2014, the FRA published a public notice of the waiver requests. The agency received 13 online comments and one mailed response. None of the commenters identified a domestic source for high-speed train sets. Of the 14 comments, 10 indicated they were against granting the waiver while four were in favor granting the waiver.

However, of the 10 comments against the waivers, four were not responsive to the notice. Of the six remaining dissenters, they mainly disagreed with the applicants' argument that high speed rail train sets cannot be delivered in a reasonable time because Amtrak and California could simply wait for domestic assembly to be available.

Historical Society to Display Restored Clinchfield Office Car No. 100

December 3, 2014

JONESBOROUGH, Tenn. – The Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum will display former Clinchfield Railroad office car No. 100 in Jonesborough Dec. 6 and 13. The car was used on the Clinchfield Santa Train for nearly 30 years between Elkhorn City, Ky., and Kingsport, Tenn., and will once again host Santa Claus during the display. The event will run from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Dec. 6 and from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Dec. 13, prior to the annual Jonesborough Christmas Parade.

Santa will greet guests from the car platform before visitors tour the car. Refreshments will be served.

"Many children have never been on a railroad car and this is the perfect opportunity," says Mike Tilley of the Society. The car has not been open to the public in the Jonesborough area for nearly 30 years.

Pullman built the car in 1914 as a coach for the Atlantic Coast Line. In the 1930s it was rebuilt by Atlantic Coast Line into a dining car and named *Orlando*. In 1951, the Clinchfield purchased it and rebuilt the diner into a business car. In 2013, the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum purchased the car and restored it for special events.



FEC Touts Inaugural Run of New GE Locomotives

December 1, 2014

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The Florida East Coast Railway is celebrating the inaugural run of its first two new ES44C4 locomotives. The company will receive a total of 24 of the units from GE Transportation before the end of the year.

Nos. 803 and 804 successfully pulled train No. 101, the company's hottest through freight, transporting automotive, carload, and intermodal freight from Jacksonville to Miami on Nov. 21.

Railroad employees worked to prepare the locomotives for the first run, ensuring smooth operations for the historic inaugural trip. According to Locomotive Superintendent David Kobryn, "Within days of these units arriving in Jacksonville, our mechanical team had completed standard service procedures, equipped the units with WiTonix, and they were ready for service."

The new locomotives also got positive reviews from the FEC operations team. "The new locomotives are quiet and comfortable in the cab. Overall I was impressed by the way they handled," says engineer Donald Wolff.

Conductor Mark Baker adds, "The new GE locomotives are quieter with a comfortable ride and loud horn. The radio on the conductor side of the cab is a definite plus and good to have for emergencies."

"As we continue to grow and expand, it is critical that we have dependable and efficient horsepower to support the transportation of intermodal, carload, auto, and port business. With these new Tier 3 locomotives, we are well positioned to handle current and future customer needs," says President and CEO James R. Hertwig.



Two new FEC GE locomotives lead train No. 101 south from Jacksonville to Miami on Nov. 21. Eric Hendrickson Photo.

New Flue Sheet Installed in Norfolk & Western 4-8-4 No. 611

December 1, 2014

SPENCER, N.C. – The installation of a new flue sheet in Norfolk & Western J-Class 4-8-4 No. 611 has been completed. The locomotive is undergoing restoration to operating condition at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer.

With the new flue sheet installed, the restoration crew is now preparing for flue and tube installation. Workers from the Age of Steam Roundhouse in Sugar Creek, Ohio, assisted in the flue sheet installation, and servicing and testing No. 611's lubricators.

Also being readied for service with No. 611 is tool car No. 9647. It is being prepared for a new coat of N&W Tuscan red paint to match the locomotive. The car was built by National Steel Car Co. in January 1957 for Canadian National and was acquired by NS in 1987 for use with N&W 2-6-6-4 No. 1218, and later donated to the Virginia Museum of Transportation, No. 611's owner.

No. 611 was constructed by N&W's Roanoke Shops in 1950 and retired in 1959. It was restored and operated on NS steam excursions from 1982 to 1994. Norfolk Southern says it will operate No. 611 as part of its 21st Century Steam excursion program. It is expected the locomotive will run on NS excursions in 2015.

The Oil Party Hasn't Ended

Posted by Fred Frailey
Saturday, November 29, 2014

One thing I've learned about crude oil on railroads is that the long term is the middle of next month. What's here today can be gone before you know it. Decisions made in Riyadh yesterday or events in the Ukraine today can turn the economics of oil transportation on its head tomorrow.

With that said, I've been looking . . . and looking . . . for signs that this new line of business has topped off. All I come up with is evidence that the business, if anything, is booming.

Let's start with North Dakota, by far the biggest source of oil for railroads. Through September production was almost 1.2 million barrels a day (closer to 1.3 million if you include eastern Montana), and the North Dakota Pipeline Authority estimates that BNSF Railway and Canadian Pacific Railway handled just over 801,000 of those barrels, give or take 30,000 barrels. This amounts to roughly 11 unit trains every 24 hours.

The numbers ebb and flow month to month. In November 2013 rail takeaway topped off at 799,000 barrels a day and fell every month thereafter until reaching 700,000 in May. Then the rail numbers rebounded strongly each month since. Oil production in the Bakken region rose steadily all year, so I'm left to wonder why the rail numbers fell those six months. I suspect BNSF and CP were simply unable to move product fast enough early in 2014—they had this winter weather thing, you may recall. At any rate, these snapshots at the rail takeaway provide some perspective:

September 2010	90,000 barrels
September 2011	94,000 barrels
September 2012	437,000 barrels
September 2013	671,000 barrels
September 2014	801,000 barrels

One side note: Rail capacity in North Dakota stands at 1.3 million barrels a day, so about two-thirds of it is being used. Pipeline capacity, according to NDPA, is about 775,000 barrels, and my seat-of-the-pants estimate is that only about 250,000 barrels of that capacity was being used in September.

Where is the oil going? BNSF has been loading eight or nine trains a day of Bakken shale oil and Canadian Pacific two or three. I looked at BNSF loading data for a four-week period ending in mid-October. It showed that about four trains per day go through Chicago en route to refineries or distributors in the Philadelphia area, Delaware City, Del.; Yorktown, Va., and Albany, N.Y., on CSX Transportation or Norfolk Southern. Two to three trains head to the west coast, primarily Washington (precisely two trains in this 28-day period went to California). Three trains a day are destined to places in the Midwest or Gulf Coast (the biggest destination by far is the distribution hub in St. James, La., on Union Pacific).

CP occasionally routes a train to the Gulf Coast via UP or Kansas City Southern. Most of its oil loaded in North Dakota interchanges with CSX or NS in Chicago or stays with CP for Albany, N.Y., or to Irving Oil in St. John, N.B., via either the U.S. or Canada. (BNSF supplies Irving, too, via CSX to Albany, N.Y., and then barges).

BNSF is also loading almost two trains per day at places like Tampa, Colo.; Cheyenne, Douglas, Fort Laramie and Pronghorn, Wyo., and Carlsbad, N.M. These unit trains all made their way east or south.

Getting back to underutilization of pipelines: From North Dakota, pipelines tend to head toward the Gulf Coast, and that is where the light sweet crude from Bakken shale is being squeezed out by similar oil produced in the Eagle Ford field in South Texas. To state it another way, I don't think there is too much demand for Bakken crude in Texas and Louisiana.

Perhaps someone should build pipelines to the east and west coast refineries. To date, nobody has, and until such time there should continue to be robust demand for railroad transportation of crude in those two directions from North Dakota. In fact, the west coast refiners in Washington and California are fertile ground for crude by rail not just from North Dakota, but at some point also from new production in Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah. To date, however, those refiners have often met their match from environmental groups opposed to permits being issued for rail unloading terminals.

None of what I've just written reflects the decline in crude oil prices. With OPEC in disarray, prices are in freefall, dipping Friday to \$66.15 a barrel for benchmark U.S. oil, the lowest in half a decade. Does this portend a drop in production in the Bakken region? I don't know, but at some point, if prices continue to drift down, of course. A panel of experts convened by analyst Jason Seidl of Cowen & Company predicted the pace of drilling in the U.S. can be maintained unless prices fall below \$55 a barrel, and some producers can make money at even \$40. It is another matter altogether in Canada. Coaxing bitumen, the heavy tar sands oil, from the earth is expensive, and I've read that a world price of \$85 a barrel is necessary to make this extraction profitable. If so, then the producers in Alberta must be suffering. In any event, not an awful lot of bitumen is moving by rail, although rail has the potential to move raw bitumen, whereas pipelines require that it be diluted about 30 percent. I'll conclude by enumerating some things that threaten to spoil the party. First, a further decline in oil prices. Second, continued pipeline construction; by definition, rail gets a chance from producers in new fields where pipelines aren't well developed. But what happens when the pipelines are there in abundance? Third, competition from U.S. ships at Philadelphia and Delaware refineries; at a conference in Houston a few weeks ago, I was told that 30,000 barrels a day head for the East Coast from Corpus Christi, Tex. Fourth, continued narrow discounts for U.S. oil versus that from overseas. When spreads are greater than \$10 or \$12 a barrel, producers can pay the higher cost of getting oil by rail to the east or west coasts and still underbid suppliers from Africa, South America, or the Middle East; right now, however spreads are in the \$4 range. Finally, new tank car regulations that will make rail an even more expensive option and that could conceivably price it out of the market. Yes, there are lots of things to worry about. But today there are even more things about railroads and crude oil to celebrate.

Two Transcons, By the Numbers

Posted by Fred Frailey
Sunday, November 30, 2014

Ever wonder what just how many trains are out there at any one time on BNSF Railway's two transcontinental routes, the ones from Chicago to Los Angeles and Chicago to Seattle? Now you are going to know.

Someone sent me snapshots of the trains occupying those two routes on mid-afternoon of a recent day. So let's begin with the southern Transcon. Are you ready? There were 252 trains roaming that corridor, or about one for every nine miles of that 2,232-mile line. Of these, 44 (17 percent) were manifest trains, 131 (52 percent) intermodal trains and the rest everything else. Breaking down the intermodal segment, 36 were expedited Z trains, 54 were domestic Q trains, and 41 were international S trains.

Chicago to Seattle had a far more diverse lineup, with this glaring absence: BNSF has resymbolized its expedited Z trains to instead become Q trains (not as swift) and for now punted most if not all of the United Parcel Service and less-than-truckload trailers to either Union Pacific or the interstate highways. When it achieves a disciplined, scheduled operation, most of that traffic will come back.

The northern Transcom head count was 199 trains, or one train every 11 miles. I counted 22 passenger trains (there are commuter zones west of Chicago and Minneapolis), 43 manifest trains, 30 intermodal trains, 23 grain trains, and 30 oil trains. Four of those oil trains were eastbounds stashed in sidings between Aurora and Savanna, Ill., waiting to be staged to eastern railroads. Not included in this counts were trains between Fargo and Minot, N.D., via Grand Forks, or those west of Spokane toward Portland.

If you ever wondered, now you don't have to.

Museum Fires Up Historic Two-Foot Gauge Steamer for the First Time Since 1933

By Justin Franz
November 26, 2014

WISCASSET, Maine – In a year dominated with news of big steam restorations – from the legendary Norfolk & Western 4-8-4 No. 611 to the granddaddy of them all, Union Pacific 4-8-8-4 Big Boy No. 4014 – in the end, 2014 may actually go down in history as the year of the little guys.

For the second time in a week, a narrow gauge locomotive that has not steamed for the better part of a century has been fired up. This time it is Wiscasset, Waterville & Farmington Railway Museum 0-4-4T No. 9, a locomotive that could possibly fit inside the tender of a Big Boy. The engine's test steam on Nov. 25 came just six days after the Nevada State Railroad Museum test steamed its three-foot gauge 2-6-0 for the first time since the 1920s.

"After five plus years of work, the steam test went very well with most of the equipment working as designed," Wiscasset, Waterville & Farmington volunteer Stewart Rhine tells Trains News Wire. "It's a big mile post, steaming the locomotive 81 years after she last ran on the WW&F."

While the physical restoration of No. 9 started in the 2000s, the efforts leading up to this week's steam test go back decades, according to the museum.

On Nov. 25, the locomotive was rolled outside of the engine house at Sheepscot Station in Alna and fired up for the first time since Franklin D. Roosevelt was in the White House. The steam test enabled volunteers to check a variety of things, including the injectors, vacuum brake control valve, the blower, the blow down valve and slide valves. Volunteers say there will be additional steam tests in the coming months and over the winter the wood cab will be completed and the engine will be reassembled.

"We hope to have her pulling trains sometime next year," Rhine says.

No. 9 was built in 1891 by the Portland Co. for the Sandy River Railroad as it's No. 5 and is the only surviving locomotive from three different Maine two-footers. The Sandy River later became the Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes Railroad, the largest of the five Maine two-footers, and in 1923 it sold the locomotive, then No. 6, to the Kennebec Central. The Kennebec Central, which ran from Randolph to Togus, re-numbered the engine to No. 4 and it worked until 1929. A few years later the Kennebec Central's entire roster of two steam locomotives were sold to the WW&F and No. 4 became No. 9. Its time on the WW&F would be short however and just a few months after it arrived the railroad shutdown for good on June 15, 1933.

Soon after the railroad was shuttered, locomotive No. 9, a flatcar and a boxcar were sold to a group of Connecticut railfans, including a man named Frank Ramsdell, and stored on a farm in West Thompson. The equipment was later inherited by Ramsdell's daughter, Alice, who kept firm grip on it despite a numerous offers to buy the collection. Finally, in the early 1990s, Ramsdell allowed Harry Percival, founder of the WW&F museum, to bring the flatcar back to Maine. When Alice Ramsdell died in 1994, the group made an agreement with the family to bring the engine back north and it arrived just hours before the museum celebrated the centennial of regularly scheduled passenger service on the railroad.

In 2000, the museum board of directors reached a long-term lease agreement with the family, enabling it to finally begin an operational restoration. In the mid-2000s, the Boothbay Railway Museum began building a new boiler for No. 9 and it was completed in 2009. Once the boiler was completed, the museum's shop crew went to work on a new frame, refurbished cylinders, tender and new cab, among other things.

Locomotive No. 9 is not the only narrow gauge steamer to come back from the dead in 2014. On Nov. 19, the Nevada State Railroad Museum fired up Carson & Tahoe Lumber & Fluming Co. locomotive No. 1, the *Glenbrook*. Built in 1875, the locomotive has been under restoration since 2009. And earlier this year, the Colorado Railroad Museum completed the restoration of Denver & Rio Grande Western 2-8-2 K-37 No. 491, which last ran in 1963.



Museum staff fires up No. 9 on Nov. 25. Stewart Rhine Photo.



Museum staff fires up No. 9 on Nov. 25. Stephen Hussar Photo.

Holiday Crunch Has Amtrak Trains Bulging

By Bob Johnston
November 26, 2014

WASHINGTON – A Trains News Wire analysis of Amtrak Wednesday and Sunday patronage, before and after the Thanksgiving holiday reveals that there are a handful of seats available on both days on most corridors, though usually at the highest fare.

The big exception is between New York and Boston, where *Northeast Regional* and *Acela Express* trains are sold-out both days in both directions. (A few late-night arrivals are available Wednesday into Thursday morning.) Even before a heavy snow-rain mix was set to bombard the Northeast Wednesday, no seats remained on the 21 trains into New York from Boston on Sunday, Nov. 30, compared with the 14 that usually run on that day of the week.

Sunday space is still available from New York to Washington on Sunday, where Amtrak is again using borrowed MARC and NJ Transit commuter equipment to field 42 departures, compared with the normal 29. Inventory has also been opened in some through trains to and from southern destinations that are normally only “receive only” southbound or “discharge only” northbound. Midday New York-Harrisburg *Keystone Corridor* trains which normally are unreserved west of Philadelphia are also sold-out on Sunday.

In the Midwest, extra trains added in Michigan and Illinois are helping to avoid complete day-long sell-outs in and out of Chicago on both Wednesday and Sunday, but space is now only available at the highest prices. The southbound *City of New Orleans* Sunday night will again have extra Superliner coaches added to accommodate the college-bound crowds on the Chicago-Carbondale, Ill., corridor.

Service has resumed in the Pacific Northwest after another mudslide north of Seattle closed the line south of Everett, Wash., on Monday. But again despite additional departures added between Seattle and Portland, only one of the six northbound trains had seats on Sunday. In California, space is still available except for sporadic sell-outs.

Most long-distance trains also have unavailable segments, because with few exceptions, the company does not have enough equipment to appreciably increase capacity to meet demand.

While most TV stations schedule the obligatory “live shots” at the local airport, Amtrak passenger trains have become increasingly relevant in corridors where more frequency translates to higher ridership.

New York Subway Looks Back to Celebrate 2014 Holiday Season

By Joseph M. Calisi
November 24, 2014

NEW YORK – To help celebrate the year-end holiday season, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority is once again offering “shoppers’ specials” with rides on vintage buses and subway trains.

Beginning Nov. 25, New York City Transit’s 1930s IND R-1, R-4, R-7, and R-9 subway fleet will operate on Sundays from 10 a.m. through 5 p.m. along the current M route between Queens Plaza and Second Avenue in Manhattan. The cars feature the traditional wicker seat, porcelain grab handles, and ceiling fans. There is no additional fare to ride the historic cars. The special trains run through Dec. 30.

Frequently, models have been known to have photo-ops with their photographers in period costume on board and other riders have been known to dress in unique holiday fare.

“Holiday shoppers, tourists and those who just remember a bygone era will have the opportunity to experience a ride on a subway train from yesteryear, says MTA New York City Transit President Carmen Bianco. “With a little bit of luck and good timing, riders will be able to catch a ride on this classic subway train at stations along the M line between Queens Plaza and Second Avenue.”

The vintage subway fleet includes:

- R-1 No. 100 – Manufactured by American Car and Foundry, this car was the first car in the initial order of 300 cars placed in service for the opening of the IND subway.
- R-4 No. 401 – Manufactured by American Car & Foundry and the first New York subway cars built with factory installed windshield wipers.
- R-4 No. 484 – Part of a 500-car order of R-4 cars manufactured by American Car & Foundry. In 1946, this car received a retrofit of bulls-eye lighting and the first on-board public address system.
- R-7 No. 1575 – Originally manufactured as an R-7, and rebuilt by American Car & Foundry after a 1946 wreck as the prototype of the next generation R-10 and R-12 subway cars.
- R-9 No. 1802 – The last R-9 car manufactured, built in 1940.

Riders should note that nostalgia trains operate weather permitting and can be canceled if weather dictates storing the historic fleet underground.

Amtrak Reports Lowest Operating Loss in 40 Years

November 25, 2014

WASHINGTON – Amtrak reports that unaudited record revenue totaling about \$3.2 billion for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2014, represents the fifth consecutive year of revenue growth, and the eighth out of the past nine years.

In FY 2014, Amtrak covered 93 percent of its operating costs with ticket sales and other revenues, up from 89 percent the year before. In addition, Amtrak's unaudited federally funded operating loss of approximately \$227 million was the lowest level since 1973, representing a 37 percent decrease from the prior year and 52 percent lower than in FY 2007.

As a result of the company's operating performance, long-term debt reductions of about 61 percent over the past seven years to \$1.3 billion, and other contributing factors, Moody's Investor Service confirmed Amtrak's A1/Stable debt rating on Nov. 12, 2014.

"Our financial performance over the past year is the clearest indication yet that Amtrak's investments, operating efficiencies and focus on its customers is paying off," says Amtrak Chairman Tony Coscia. "Under the leadership of Amtrak's Board and management, the company is transforming how it does business. We are delighted with our latest financial results and committed to making further progress in the years ahead. As we continue to make improvements in our operating and financial performance, we call upon the federal government and our stakeholders to support the capital investments necessary to keep moving Amtrak forward."

Corporate restructuring has resulted in a strong emphasis on increased financial transparency, a de-leveraged balance sheet, and providing an improved product to its existing customer base while attracting new passengers, Amtrak says. This has resulted in consistently strong ridership and revenue growth, and less reliance on federal operating grant support.

Those Misleading Amtrak Numbers

Posted by Fred Frailey

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

The *Wall Street Journal* really needs to assign a reporter to railroads. Since Trains Magazine contributor Dan Machalaba left the paper in 2008, nobody on the staff seems to have gotten his or her hands around this industry. A pity, because the story in yesterday's Journal concerning Amtrak's financial results could have been a lot more informative.

Amtrak had given the Journal an early look at its press release, which said that the corporation's federally funded operating loss had shrunk by 37 percent from fiscal 2013 (fiscal year's end in September) and at \$227 million was the lowest since 1973. Dan Machalaba would have read this, picked up the phone, and begun asking people at Amtrak just how this miracle had been achieved. Amtrak's press release gave not a clue. And the Journal reporter, whose name we shall keep to ourselves because this blog is not really about him, apparently didn't ask.

The most cursory look at Amtrak's Monthly Performance Report for September, the last month of fiscal 2014, would have explained what happened. So would any experience or background knowledge by the reporter, for that matter. He would remember that starting in fiscal 2014 state governments had to pony up for substantially all deficits of short-distance trains going through their states (except for the Northeast Corridor). And pages C-1 and C-2 of the monthly report would have revealed that the fully allocated losses of these short-distance trains, whose routes are less than 750 miles, had indeed fallen by \$98 million due to much higher payments by the states.

But that wasn't mentioned.

Amtrak's real loss, by the way, was \$1.1 billion, down about \$190 million from fiscal 2013. That federally funded operating loss of \$227 million is arrived at by subtracting from the \$1.1 billion loss depreciation (\$737 million) and other (I guess) non-cash items amounting to \$122 million.

It's also worth noting (see the monthly report) that capital spending by Amtrak was \$238 million under budget, due to "timing of progress payments on new electric locomotives and delayed infrastructure work." Had that budgeted money been spent, the loss would have been in the area of \$1.3 billion.

But that wasn't mentioned, either.

Finally there was this true but misleading statement in the Journal: "The Northeast Corridor, which includes the railroad's Acela and Northeast Regional services, saw an operating surplus of \$496.7 million in fiscal 2014, up from \$390.1 million the previous year, Amtrak said." Golly, the trains made gobs of money, readers must have thought. Not included in the operating profit is the capital spending need of the NEC, which is voracious. The NEC Master Plan Working Group said in 2010 that the corridor would require \$52 billion in capital by 2030, and since then Amtrak has only fallen further behind. Have you ridden the NEC lately? The track is horrible.

These were a very challenging 12 months for Amtrak. Its long distance trains were savaged by winter weather and congestion of many of the main freight corridors. A lot got done, including the introduction of a new generation of electric locomotives on the NEC and planning for a new generation of high-speed trains, hopefully to be ordered in fiscal 2015. But the true state of affairs you'd never have guessed reading yesterday's *Wall Street Journal*.

A New Look at Chicago

Posted by Fred Frailey
Wednesday, November 26, 2014

Independent railroad analyst Anthony Hatch reports some interesting news came out of the RailTrends conference he put on last week in New York City, in conjunction with Progressive Railroading magazine. Tony says that BNSF Railway, Canadian Pacific Railway and unnamed others had created a Chicago Policy Study Committee of retired operating executives. The group is to report back early in 2015 with recommendations for improving traffic flow through (or maybe around) Chicago. Says Tony: "This would turn out to be a very big deal."

Maybe, and maybe not. If Knight Kiplinger were to call me tonight to ask that I come in and help fix some nasty problems at Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine, where I labored more than two decades, I'd thank him and politely decline. I left the editor's desk six years ago and would be no help now. That's kind of how I feel about the CPSC. Tony mentions three names: Art Shoener (Union Pacific, Kansas City Southern), Gordon Trafton (Canadian National) and Ed Harris (CN and CP). There are undoubtedly others. These are smart dudes. But do they still retain the intimate knowledge of what goes on in Chicago that will allow them to make recommendations the railroads haven't already considered? One western railroad executive cautions me not to expect too much.

But consider these pluses: These men are beholden to nobody but themselves. Hatch says Hunter Harrison, the chief executive of CP, is enthusiastic about the idea, which is good because Hunter usually doesn't play well with others. Any anything this informal group can do to help focus attention on the problems in Chicago and encourage the often-warring railroad CEOs to come together and do the right thing is to be applauded.

Good luck, guys!

North Dakota: Treat Bakken Crude for Transport

Written by Douglas John Bowen
Wednesday, December 10, 2014

North Dakota has ordered producers of oil from the Bakken shale field to begin removing flammable natural gas liquids from the product before crude-by-rail (CBR) transport to other locations.

The state, announcing the move Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2014, has come under criticism from environmentalists for being lax in its oversight of the Bakken production process, including regulation of rail transport, most notably by BNSF.

The new regulations, ordered by the North Dakota Industrial Commission, will require CBR product to be processed through mandated pressures and temperatures to aid in removing butane, propane, and other flammable liquids, according to *The New York Times*.

If the plan proves successful, CBR transported products will have roughly an equivalent volatility to that of automotive gasoline products, which would reduce the hazardous effects of an accident, state regulators said.

"The North Dakota Industrial Commission reiterates the importance of making Bakken crude oil as safe as possible for transportation," said the commission and North Dakota Gov. Jack Dalrymple in a joint statement. "this order will bring every barrel of Bakken crude within standards to improve the safety of oil for transport."

The new procedure does not directly address the issue of tank car safety, particularly older DOT-111 tank cars, observers noted.

Cheap Crude and Oil Trains

Posted by Fred Frailey
Friday, December 05, 2014

Oil producers in North Dakota are feeling the pain today. And so, within the year, might BNSF and Canadian Pacific railways, which carry most North Dakota oil to refineries.

The collapse of crude oil prices began last summer and accelerated last week after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries decided not to curtail production. And look what is happening to oil prices in North Dakota: At the peak, in June, prices for North Dakota crude averaged \$92 a barrel, reports Plains Marketing LP. Thursday morning buyers offered \$50. That's a \$12-a-barrel discount to the benchmark West Texas Intermediate price and reflects the cost of moving the Bakken shale oil to refiners, most of them located along the three U.S. coasts.

The paradox is that predictions far and wide are for more U.S. oil output in 2015 rather than less. Says energy economist Philip Verleger: "Production will likely be higher in 2015 even if prices average \$40 or \$50 in the field, which implies a Brent [world benchmark] price of around \$60." But Verleger adds that if the shakeout continues, the Brent price could sink to \$50 per barrel by the end of next year. That translates to \$35 a barrel for a North Dakota oil driller. Talk about a boom and bust business, with emphasis on bust . . .

Facing this kind of future, how can production not just hold its own but increase? Part of the answer is sheer momentum. For shale output to begin falling in North Dakota and Texas, capital budgets would have to be slashed 50 percent, says analyst Mark

Hanson at Morningstar. As he puts it: "When prices collapse, you concentrate on your best stuff." Indeed, some shale wells can be drilled profitably if crude goes as low as \$25 a barrel, according to Manuj Nikhanj of ITG Investment Research. Plus, once you've drilled the well, your costs go way down.

So in this dismal pricing environment, Continental Resources still expects its oil production, primarily in North Dakota, to rise between 23 and 29 percent in 2015, thanks to a capital budget unchanged from 2014 and 350 new wells. Continental is the biggest driller in North Dakota. Bloomberg reports that Continental's cost of production once a well is drilled is \$5.50 a barrel, and a cool 99 cents in what is known as the South Central Oklahoma Oil Play (aka SCOOP). So it seems the pattern across the Bakken formation is for drillers to concentrate on their best, most prolific bets and try to ride out the storm. But this won't last forever. Verleger expects the frequency of oil trains leaving North Dakota to top off in nine to 12 months and begin trending down. "Many producers are hedged," he says. "Their cash flow is guaranteed for six to nine months. Then they have to start worrying."

In the meantime, what is the pace of oil train originations? For the four-week period encompassing almost all of November, BNSF dispatched 223 oil trains from North Dakota, or 7.4 per day. That is down from a pace of 8.3 trains per day in the four weeks ending in mid October. Half (49 percent) were destined to the East Coast, whereas 20 percent headed to West Coast refiners and 31 percent to the Midwest and Gulf Coast. Canadian Pacific is believed to originate about two trains per day in North Dakota, most destined for the East Coast.

In the past 15 months, deliveries of BNSF unit oil trains to the East Coast refiners have about doubled. West Coast oil train deliveries have risen about 20 percent. Deliveries to the Midwest and Gulf Coast, which used to comprise half of the oil trains, have essentially stood still, reflecting greater pipeline capacity to the Gulf from North Dakota as well as cheaper light sweet crude coming to the Texas and Louisiana refineries from close-in South Texas.

Genesee & Wyoming Reports Increased Traffic for November 2014

December 11, 2014

DARIEN, Conn. – Genesee & Wyoming Inc. is reporting increased traffic volumes for November 2014.

G&W's traffic in November 2014 was 160,669 carloads, an increase of 8,361 carloads, or 5.5 percent, compared with November 2013. G&W's same-railroad traffic in November 2014 was 155,582 carloads, an increase of 3,274 carloads, or 2.1 percent, compared with November 2013.

Recent start-up Rapid City, Pierre & Eastern contributed 3,190 carloads of agricultural products traffic, 1,123 carloads of minerals & stone traffic, 619 carloads of chemicals & plastics traffic, and 155 carloads from all other commodities. The railroad began operations in South Dakota and Wyoming in June 2014.

Overall North American traffic increased 4,833 carloads, or 3.6 percent, primarily due to increased coal & coke and minerals & stone traffic, as well as increased overhead Class I railroad shipments, partially offset by decreased petroleum products traffic. Australian traffic decreased 1,559 carloads, or 7.9 percent, primarily due to decreased agricultural products and intermodal traffic, partially offset by increased minerals & stone traffic.

Coal and coke traffic increased 3,462 carloads, or 12.6 percent, primarily due to increased steam coal shipments in G&W's Ohio Valley and Midwest regions.

G&W's "Other commodity" group traffic increased 3,325 carloads, or 78.4 percent, primarily due to overhead Class I railroad shipments. Minerals & stone traffic increased 2,794 carloads, or 17.5 percent, primarily due to increased shipments in G&W's Australia, Ohio Valley, and Northeast regions.

Agricultural products traffic decreased 3,069 carloads, or 14.8 percent, primarily due to decreased shipments in G&W's Australia and Ohio Valley regions.

Petroleum products traffic decreased 1,624 carloads, or 18.1 percent, primarily due to decreased crude oil shipments in G&W's Pacific, Canada, and Southern regions.

Intermodal traffic decreased 1,043 carloads, or 15.4 percent, primarily due to a 712 carload decrease in G&W's Australia and Canada regions.

SEPTA Prepares to Bid Farewell to the Token

By Joseph M. Calisi
December 11, 2014

PHILADELPHIA – One of the last transit agencies in North America to use fare tokens will soon adopt a modern fare payment system. In less than a year, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority will say goodbye to tokens used with mechanical turnstiles and embrace an electronic "smart card" system to collect fares. The new system will be known as SEPTA Key.

The rollout will begin in 2015 and officials expect it to be completed by 2017. The agency has not given an "expiration date" for its tokens. The transition from tokens and tickets to the new SEPTA Key card system is a gradual process. Commuters will need to learn to use validators, fare kiosks, and SEPTA Key cards as many have around the country and the world already have.

To date, 31 fare kiosks, 48 turnstiles, 10 ADA accessible gates, and more than 200 validators have been installed on regional rail, the Norristown High Speed line, buses, paratransit, and trolley cars. They are part of a \$130 million contract awarded in 2011.

The goal is to offer seamless travel with flexibility and travel options across SEPTA's complex service area, the sixth largest in the U.S., by introducing a modern fare collection program system wide.

In early December, SEPTA began testing of the new equipment and software. The agency is performing a great deal of planning, advanced equipment testing, and preparation to ensure that everything performs flawlessly.

For decades, SEPTA commuters have used non-refillable weekly and monthly passes for use at turnstiles and fare boxes that cannot be renewed. The SEPTA Key card, on the other hand, is renewable with debit and credit cards at kiosks. Select bankcards and a cell phone app can also be used to pay a fare.

Philadelphia is one of the last cities in North America to still use tokens as fare payment media. Chicago token use ended in 1999, New York switched to the MetroCard in 2003, and Boston went to the CharlieCard in 2006.

Steamtown Offers Nine Entrance Fee-Free Days in 2015

December 11, 2014

SCRANTON, Pa. – Steamtown National Historic Site will waive its daily entrance fees for nine events in 2015. Those dates are:

- Jan. 19 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Feb. 14-16 – Presidents Day weekend
- April 18-19 – opening weekend of National Park Week
- Aug. 25 – National Park Service's 99th birthday
- Sept. 26 – National Public Lands Day
- Nov. 11 – Veterans Day

The site features a visitor orientation center with exhibits showing how the former Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Scranton Yards evolved from 1850 to present, along with a 250-seat digital surround-sound theater showing the park movie, "Steel and Steam," throughout the day. Visitors may also take part in a scheduled locomotive shop tour. For a small fee – \$5 for all ages 6 and older – visitors may also enjoy the a short train ride inside the railroad yards on entrance fee-free days that the seasonal train also operates.

Supreme Court to Decide Two Rail Issues in 2015

December 10, 2014

WASHINGTON – This week, the U.S. Supreme Court is hearing arguments in two cases involving railroads with national implications.

One case will settle a dispute between CSX Transportation and the state of Alabama regarding diesel tax rates. The state imposes a 4 percent sales tax on railroad purchases and a 19-cents-per-gallon tax on highway users, which CSX calls unfair, USA Today reports.

"It makes sense only to strike down a tax if they actually are suffering some real-world practical disadvantage, and that's something that they never showed in this case," Alabama Solicitor General Andrew Brasher testifies.

CSX says the state has oversimplified the matter. "Alabama wants to do it in a very simpleminded way: How much are you paying today and how much are they paying today, and if it's close enough, that's good enough for government work," says Carter Phillips, representing the railroad.

The court heard arguments on Tuesday.

The decision will set a precedent for all states, and neighbor Tennessee is leading a coalition of 15 states that side with Alabama.

"Tennessee's experience ... demonstrates that the tax burden on railroads cannot be adjusted to the railroads' satisfaction," Tennessee Attorney General Robert Cooper Jr. writes in court papers.

On Monday, the court heard arguments regarding Amtrak's role in regulating the rail industry. At issue is the passenger carrier's authority to aid regulators in crafting laws to help with passenger trains' timekeeping, ABC News reports.

The Association of American Railroads says the arrangement is unfair to the freight carriers who host many of Amtrak's intercity passenger trains.

Chief Justice John Roberts says the existing arrangement seems to constitute "significant regulatory impact," because poor passenger train performance can trigger a Surface Transportation Board investigation and potential fines for the freight carriers.

However, Justice Stephen Breyer notes that this ruling could result in changes for other industries that set compliance standards, according to the report. "Once we go down that road, there is no stopping place," Breyer says.

The court is expected to rule in the Amtrak case in June.

CSX Completes Fossilized Oyster Shell Moves to Maryland

December 16, 2014

CSX Transportation recently moved the 22nd and final train filled with fossilized oyster shells from Florida to Chesapeake Bay, ending a year-long project carried out through a partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF).

Over the past 12 months, CSX has transported about 100,000 tons of the fossilized shells to help rebuild a habitat in two Maryland oyster sanctuaries. Trains carried the shells every 10 to 14 days to CSX's Curtis Bay export pier in Baltimore, where they were transferred to barges for trips to the eastern shore sanctuaries. The NFWF negotiated an agreement with CSX to transport the shells at cost.

"Oysters have been central to the Maryland way of life for centuries, and restoring the Chesapeake Bay's oyster beds is critical for this region's environment and the economy," said CSX Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer Michael Ward in a press release. "CSX is proud to be a part of this unique public-private partnership in helping to restore one of our nation's greatest natural assets."

The state of Maryland has planted more than 1 billion oysters in the Harris Creek Sanctuary since 2011, helping to boost the number of oysters per square meter by 25-fold.

CSX Opens Montreal Intermodal Terminal

Written by William C. Vantuono
Wednesday, December 17, 2014

CSX has opened its new Valleyfield Intermodal Terminal in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield near Montreal, Quebec, expanding the railroad's intermodal network capacity and offering Canadian customers domestic and international service that connects with the its 21,000 mile U.S. network.

The \$100 million, 100,000-load-capacity terminal, which spans 89 acres, includes three state-of-the-art rubber-tire gantry cranes, the first of their kind at an Eastern Canadian intermodal facility. Trains serving Valleyfield will connect through the Northwest Ohio intermodal hub, "offering efficient access to markets across the U.S. and Canada," CSX said. "Valleyfield terminal is an important addition to our unique intermodal network, which offers both point-to-point corridor service and a hub-and-spoke model that allows it to reach into small- and medium-sized markets, to capitalize on the growing demand for intermodal transport."

Valleyfield's construction also incorporated environmentally sustainable innovations in the areas of noise abatement and protection of downstream waterways," CSX noted.

"We continue to invest in our intermodal business as a key growth driver and we look for long-term opportunities, such as increased north-south trade access outlined by the North American Free Trade Agreement," said CSX Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer Clarence Gooden. "Opening a terminal near Montreal creates an opportunity to build relationships with new customers on our network, expand access to new markets, and improve the efficiency of the North American supply chain."

CMQ Completes Million-Dollar Infrastructure Investment; Receives Green Light from Transport Canada

Wednesday, December 17, 2014

Following months of work, a multitude of inspections and an additional CA\$10 million (US\$8.6 million) investment, Central Maine & Quebec Railway (CMQ) got the go-ahead from Transport Canada.

On December 5, CMQ received the official revocation of a series of notices and orders, confirming immediate threats no longer exist on CMQ railway. The notices and orders were transferred to CMQ following its purchase of bankrupt Montreal Maine & Atlantic.

CMQ has spent the past four months installing more than 32,000 new crossties, 110,000 linear feet of rail and 25,000 tons of ballast, upgrading bridges, culverts and crossings, completing surfacing work and removing more than 300 in-track rail defects from its main tracks and sidings. The Sherbrooke subdivision is the 125-mile backbone of CMQ's Quebec rail line and stretches from Lac-Mégantic to Brookport just east of Farnham.

"We had to make this investment. The line was covered in snow last February and March when we were finally able to begin our diligence, but we made a commitment to Lac-Mégantic Mayor Laroche and citizens, as well as many regulators, that we would address the years of neglect," said CMQ President and Chief Executive Officer John Giles. "It was an extremely tough undertaking. We had industry peers questioning the amount of work that we signed up for with such a short construction season. I knew we were in good hands with Ron Marshall, general manager of engineering, leading this project with his team."

When asked about the scope of project, Marshall commented, "This is one of the most challenging construction seasons I've ever been involved in. But I knew from my experience working with this team at RailAmerica that I would have the support I needed. This investment demonstrates our team's commitment to operating the railway in a safe and responsible fashion."

CMQ considers Phase 1 of its transformation now largely completed.

"Not to say we don't have a lot more track and infrastructure work to do next spring, but we have already started Phase II, which focuses on growth, customers and interline partners," said Giles.

Amtrak's Coscia to Congress: Rail Requires a Trust Fund

Written by William C. Vantuono
Thursday, December 11, 2014

In order to fund long-term capital investments in intercity rail service, Congress "should focus on . . . providing predictable, dedicated funding to develop and implement capital investments for the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and other rail corridors between America's major metropolitan areas," Amtrak Board of Directors Chairman Anthony R. Coscia testified Dec. 10, 2014 before a U.S. Senate committee.

Coscia said that when the new Congress convenes in January 2015, it should consider approving the creation of a Transportation Trust Fund that recognizes the importance of intercity passenger rail in the nation's transportation landscape, along with other modes of transportation. He noted that the U.S. transportation system "is at a crossroads, as the investments that brought our nation into modernity in the past century reach the ends of their useful lives. A multi-year funding mechanism would enable Amtrak to build major capital projects that would enable faster, more reliable rail travel between city pairs, contributing significantly to the nation's economic growth."

"Amtrak's growth over the past ten years, especially on intercity corridors between 100 and 500 miles, hints at the tremendous opportunity of developing a robust, nationwide passenger rail system focused on city pairs," Coscia said. "In such corridors throughout the globe, high-speed and higher-speed trains are not only an essential mode of transportation, but also a significant driver of local development and economic growth. America should fully embrace investments in passenger rail as a tool to strengthen our economy and improve the quality of our lives.

"Despite the extraordinary growth in passenger rail demand in recent years, there is an unmet demand for high-quality rail service, and the Federal government has declined to establish a dedicated, long-term funding mechanism for rail comparable to the funding programs that have supported other modes of transportation. The key is capital investment—not just to sustain the legacy transportation systems that helped deliver our nation's economic success during the 20th century, but those that will help us to sustain America's transportation needs in the decades ahead," he said.

How Rail Fares in Spending Bill

Written by Mischa Wanek-Libman
Thursday, December 11, 2014

The House and Senate's effort to keep the federal government operating through the end of fiscal year 2015 was revealed late Tuesday in the form of a trillion-dollar-plus spending bill, Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015.

Update: As of Sunday, Dec. 14, the omnibus spending bill has passed both houses of Congress and now heads to the desk of President Obama for a signature.

The \$1.01-trillion bill provides a total of \$53.77 billion in discretionary budget authority for Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and related agencies for FY15.

According to the summary by of the bill, it "includes funding for a broad range of transportation infrastructure, including roads and bridges, railroads and transit systems. The bill ensures that Amtrak continues to deliver passenger rail transportation throughout the country, a system on which both urban and rural communities depend."

Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants will see a \$100 million reduction from FY14 numbers in the current spending bill with \$500 million available. The amount is well below the president's requested \$1.25 billion for the program, but is \$400 million above what the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee approved for the program in May 2014.

Amtrak's \$1.39 billion in funding in FY15 will remain level with FY14 levels. According to the bill's summary, "this level of funding will allow Amtrak to make investments in the state-of-good repair infrastructure projects and to operate a safe and reliable passenger rail network for the nation. The agreement provides \$1 billion less than the budget request, which assumed the mandatory funding would be provided through new legislation authorizing surface transportation programs instead of the appropriations process."

Transit investments will fare well should the bill pass both houses of Congress with a total of \$10.9 billion available for transit programs, which is \$141 million more than FY14 levels. The bill includes \$8.6 billion for formula grants, \$37.5 million for research and technical assistance and \$150 million to continue modernizing the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. In addition, it provides \$2.12 billion for the transit capital investment grants, to help build new rail and bus rapid transit capacity

in California, Maryland (\$100 million for Purple Line; \$100 million for Baltimore Red Line), North Carolina, Colorado, Florida, Texas and other states.

The bill also provides \$10 million in grants for railroad grade crossing and track improvements on routes that transport energy products.

The bill's summary makes special note of an initiative to protect the safety of crude oil shipments saying, "the sharp increase in domestic energy production has also meant a rapid increase in oil shipments by rail instead of ocean tankers. This change in the shipment of crude oil poses new challenges for USDOT as it works to ensure the safety of our railroads and the communities close to their tracks."

The bill provides USDOT with funds "to deliver a comprehensive prevention, mitigation and response safety strategy for the shipment of energy products."

These targeted investments include 15 additional Federal Railroad Administration inspectors; \$3 million to expand the use of automated track inspections and the bill supports the establishment of a Short Line Safety Institute.

Additionally, funding is included for a web-based hazardous materials emergency response training curriculum to train public sector emergency response personnel based on or near rail lines that transport a significant amount of high-risk energy products or toxic inhalation hazards.

On the mechanical side, the bill directs the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration to finalize new tank car design standards by January 15, 2015. The bill also includes funding for testing shale crude oil to determine the most appropriate criteria, sampling methods and testing procedures for energy products.

CSX Re-Opens Chicago Locomotive Shop

Written by William C. Vantuono
Thursday, December 18, 2014

CSX on Dec. 18, 2014 celebrated the re-opening of the Chicago Locomotive Shop at Barr Yard in Riverdale, Ill. The historic facility, which had been shut down in 1992, reopened in November 2104 following significant upgrades and will be fully operational in February 2015. CSX said it "will improve operational efficiency throughout the western and northern segments of our network."

Through a \$4.5 million investment, CSX renovated the existing facility with a fully refurbished turntable, a new drop table, and new Jib and H-Beam cranes, and installed a camera system to provide complete visibility around the facility grounds and an AEI system to track locomotive moment.

The Chicago Locomotive Shop will support the maintenance and repair of 120 locomotives per month, enabling CSX to service units locally rather than transferring them to repair shops at Selkirk, N.Y., or Cumberland, Md. Shop employees will also be able to diagnose and repair locomotives in line-of-road service that operate through the Chicago gateway. "These expanded capabilities will create significant time and cost savings," CSX said.

The Chicago Locomotive Shop brings more than 20 new jobs to CSX's local workforce. Today, CSX employs 185 employees at Barr Yard and more than 1,000 employees across the greater Chicago area. When fully operational, the shop will have a staff of 23.

"The grand opening of the Chicago Locomotive Shop marks a historic day for CSX in Chicago, as we open a new facility dedicated to one of the most important resources we have on the railroad," said CSX Vice President of Mechanical Gery Williams. "Demand for freight rail across the Chicago region has grown by leaps and bounds during recent years, and this facility is essential to helping us continue to serve customers safely, reliably, and efficiently."

"Beyond the modern features and state-of-the-art technology, the new facility is equipped with a strong team of CSX employees, made up of both CSX veterans and newcomers to the company who are eager to contribute," said CSX Superintendent-Chicago Dan Maze. "Expanding our team has allowed us to design our workflow for maximum efficiency and productivity."

'Claus Conspiracy' Campaign Spreads Holiday Cheer for CSX

By Chase Gunnoe
December 19, 2014

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – CSX is spreading holiday cheer this winter through a social media initiative that highlights the railroad's business imperatives through holiday humor. The "Claus Conspiracy" campaign launched in 2013 has resurfaced this holiday season, gaining popularity through social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter.

The Claus Conspiracy campaign, a collaborative effort between CSX and fictional "conspiracy theorist" Craig Waarheid looks at hidden clues in how CSX and Santa Claus work together to deliver Christmas presents across the nation through not-so coincidental evidence obtained by Waarheid. The campaign, which is promoted through online social media outlets including Facebook and Twitter, helps spread the company's value proposition that most things in our lives travel on trains, while also reaching out to key audiences such as customers, the public, and fans of the railroad.

“We wanted people to connect to our brand during holidays in a fun way that also kept us aligned to our core values. Humor was the best way,” says CSX Director of Brand & Digital Media John Claybrooks. “Our goal is to engage our fans and those who do not know about railroading, and help them understand the important role freight rail plays in delivering everyday products.”

The tongue-in-cheek program looks at humorous evidence obtained by Waarheid that includes suspected reindeer droppings at the railroad's headquarters in Jacksonville, photos of what appears to be Santa Claus riding CSX trains across the system, and hidden messages within the railroad's corporate name. Using the railroad's Twitter and Facebook accounts, officials acknowledge Waarheid's accusations with witty one-liner responses. The campaign has gained in popularity with customers and employees, and has also extended into rail enthusiasts and the general public.

Further evidence in the Claus Conspiracy is available online at www.clausconspiracy.com.

White House Christmas Ornament Features Steam Locomotive, Passenger Car

December 19, 2014

WASHINGTON – The White House Historical Association's 2014 White House Christmas ornament honors the administration of Warren G. Harding and features a steam locomotive and passenger car. Harding served as the 29th President of the United States from 1921 to 1923. As a boy, Harding dreamed of being a locomotive engineer – a wish that came true for 51 minutes when, as President, he operated a steam locomotive on the Alaska Railroad on his ill-fated transcontinental trip in 1923. Harding's speaking and sightseeing tour was dubbed the “Voyage of Understanding.” The Presidential Special that carried President Harding west at the outset of his trip and that would tragically carry his casket back east following his sudden death two months later is the inspiration for the 2014 ornament.

The 33rd annual White House Christmas Ornament is the first to be comprised of two pieces, which can be hung as two separate ornaments or linked together. The locomotive is a detailed miniature of one of several steam locomotives that pulled the Presidential Special. The other miniature car is the Superb, the president's private heavyweight Pullman car. The last car on the Special, the Superb was outfitted with a public address system. President Harding made appearances and delivered speeches at stops across the country from its platform. The last known photograph of Harding is an image of him on the Superb shortly before his death in a San Francisco hotel on Aug. 2, 1923. On Aug. 3, President Harding's casket was placed on board the Superb and began a return trip to Washington, during which an estimated 3 million people paid their last respects.

The White House Historical Association is a nonprofit organization, chartered in 1961, to enhance understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the historic White House. Income from the sale of the ornament is returned and used for publications to acquire historical furnishings and memorabilia for the White House.

For more information, or to order the ornaments, go to shop.whitehousehistory.org.

Durango & Silverton to Run Winter Photo Train

December 18, 2014

DURANGO, Colo. – The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad will operate a special winter photo train on Feb. 15, 2015. Passengers will be able to detrain in Animas Canyon to photograph the train in locations accessible only by rail. There will also be a night photo session in Durango limited to 20 participants and available only to photo train passengers.

The railroad is finalizing details for the event, but is adding names to a wait list and will contact individuals as soon as details are finalized. In the past winter photo trains have been pulled by one of the railroad's ex-Denver & Rio Grande Western K-36 class 2-8-2s and operated between Durango and Cascade Canyon with at least six run-bys.

To be put on the wait list call 888-872-4607. For more information, go to www.durangotrain.com.

Passenger Information Improvements Completed at Washington Union Station

December 17, 2014

WASHINGTON – Amtrak and the Maryland Transit Administration have completed a project to expand and improve the public address and electronic passenger information display systems at Washington Union Station. The \$2.2 million project was primarily funded under an MTA-Amtrak Joint Benefit Program.

For the public address system, more than 290 speakers and 44 LED signs were installed on the station platforms used by Amtrak, MARC, and Virginia Railway Express trains.

The public address and electronic passenger information display systems are ADA-compliant, and were installed in the station and on the platforms. They communicate real-time train status, boarding and station announcements, and safety and security messages in both audible and visual formats.

Other improvements in recent years at Washington Union Station include installation of a train information board in the Main Hall, which was jointly funded by Amtrak and MTA. Amtrak also installed ADA-compliant audio inductive loop technology at

designated ticket counters and at the customer service desk for passengers with hearing loss and to improve communication with Amtrak customer service representatives.

Washington Union Station, which includes a large retail component, serves more than 32 million passengers and visitors annually.

Locomotive Builders Race to Finish 2014 Orders

December 16, 2014

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – As the clock ticks down on the final days of 2014, both major locomotive builders are scrambling to finish orders before the end of the year. With the upcoming Tier 4 locomotive emission requirement taking effect Jan. 1, 2015, locomotive builders must finish all current orders before the end of the year. Failure to do so will render any locomotives not finished unable to operate in the U.S.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency states that both builders must be able to complete locomotives to a point where they have undergone final assembly by Dec. 31 to be able to achieve Tier 3 emission certification. Both General Electric and Electro-Motive Diesel have been accelerating production to meet the deadline.

Both are also contracting out various projects towards the end of locomotive construction to third parties in order to keep their own production lines moving. GE has shipped a number of Kansas City Southern and Florida East Coast locomotives to Mid America Car in Kansas City, Mo., for painting prior to delivery. EMD also has sent KCS SD70ACes, built at its Muncie, Ind., plant, to Mid America for paint.

EMD has sent a number of painted SD70ACes being constructed for Norfolk Southern at Muncie to the railroad's Altoona, Pa., shops for final testing.

Bombardier Transportation's Sahagun, Mexico, plant, which constructs locomotives for EMD, has also released a number of painted Union Pacific SD70ACes early for completion at the railroad's own North Platte, Neb., shop.

CSX Investigates Kentucky Coal Train Derailment

December 16, 2014

PARIS, Ky. – Officials with CSX Transportation are investigating a Monday derailment near Paris that has left a number of loaded coal gondolas in a nearby waterway.

The train derailed four of its 100 cars about 3:30 a.m. Monday at Paris on the railroad's CC Subdivision, which runs between Corbin and Cincinnati. The incident occurred near the confluence of Stoner Creek and the South Fork of the Licking River. The train was operating between Toledo, Ohio, and Virginia.

Paris is located about 18 miles northeast of Lexington. The area has seen heavy rains in recent days.

CSX crews and contractors are currently onsite working to safely and efficiently clear the area. Limited rail traffic has resumed through the derailment site.

All of the derailed cars have been removed from the river and staged nearby for permanent removal. Cleanup efforts are underway. Booms have been placed in the river to contain the spilled coal and debris from the accident. Additionally, CSX's specialized team of trained environmental experts are onsite working to minimize any potential environmental impacts.

"We appreciate the quick response of the local first responders including the Bourbon Co. Emergency Management and Sheriff's Department and the Paris Fire and Police Departments," CSX spokeswoman Kristin Seay says. "Safety is CSX's highest priority, and we thank the community for their patience as we work through our recovery efforts as swiftly and safely as possible."

The derailment occurred on a section of single track. CSX runs a mix of traffic over the former Louisville & Nashville line, including intermodal, manifest freight, grain, and coal.

FEC Touts On-Dock Rail Capabilities at Port Miami

December 15, 2014

MIAMI – The recent launch of Florida East Coast Railway's new, on-dock intermodal rail facility at Port Miami is enabling Seaboard Marine, an ocean transportation provider, to handle cargo more efficiently and better meet the needs of its customers. By using FEC's on-dock intermodal rail at Port Miami, Seaboard Marine can seamlessly transfer cargo between ship and rail.

"The location of the new Port Miami Intermodal Container Transfer Facility is near our marine terminal and although we have only been using the on-dock intermodal rail for a few weeks, it is resulting in improved cargo handling," says Edward Gonzalez, president and CEO of Seaboard Marine.

The company provides fixed-day schedules that make it convenient for customers to coordinate manufacturing schedules and maintain inventories at cost-efficient levels. This level of service means that all of Seaboard Marine's service providers must be reliable and committed to on-time performance.

"The FEC team and its partners have been very responsive in helping us efficiently match services to benefit our time sensitive customers. We look forward to continuing to work with FEC and to greater usage of these new on-dock capabilities," Gonzalez adds.

FEC's on-dock intermodal rail facility at Port Miami is the next step in the company's ongoing efforts to promote multi-modal shipping and support global trade into and out of South Florida.

"FEC is committed to providing innovative solutions that support the efficient and reliable flow of goods. Our strategic partnership with Port Miami and Seaboard Marine offers supply chain enhancements, and everyone benefits from reduced carbon emissions and less congestion on the nation's highways," said FEC President and CEO James R. Hertwig.

Established in 1983, Seaboard Marine is an ocean transportation company that provides direct, regular service between the U.S. and the Caribbean Basin, Central America, and South America. It serves 40 locations.

CANADIAN PACIFIC'S HUNTER HARRISON NAMED RAILROADER OF THE YEAR

December 22, 2014

E. Hunter Harrison, Chief Executive Officer of Canadian Pacific (CP), has been named 2015 Railroader of the Year.

"Hunter Harrison, regarded as one of the best all-time operating executives in railroading, came out of retirement to lead a remarkable turnaround at CP, which up to that point had been lagging well behind its six North American Class I contemporaries in performance. "Under his highly disciplined, focused leadership, CP has produced record revenues and earnings, a record-low operating ratio, and the stock price has more than tripled. The railroad, with aggressive long-term growth prospects, has become one of Wall Street's most favored investments in the rail sector."

"I am honored and humbled by the award as it is a reflection of the remarkable team at CP and the transformation we have undergone," said Mr. Harrison. "The railroaders of CP are the reason for our success and, while our focus on growth and cost control continues, it's important to pause and recognize that this award is as much theirs as it is mine."

Hunter Harrison Railroader of the Year and the second CP recipient (preceded by Robert J. Ritchie in 2004). This is the second time he has been so-honored; the first time was in 2002, when he was chief operating officer of the then-recently combined Canadian National/Illinois Central system. Harrison joins rail industry icons Stuart T. Saunders, L. Stanley Crane and David R. Goode as a two-time recipient. He will be honored on March 10, 2015, at Chicago's Union League Club.

About CP

Canadian Pacific is a transcontinental railway in Canada and the United States with direct links to eight major ports, including Vancouver and Montreal, providing North American customers a competitive rail service with access to key markets in every corner of the globe. CP is growing with its customers, offering a suite of freight transportation services, logistics solutions and supply chain expertise.

NCDOT Issues State Rail Plan Executive Summary

Written by Mischa Wanek-Libman

Monday, December 22, 2014

In anticipation of the January 2015 release of the Draft North Carolina Comprehensive State Rail Plan, the N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has issued the Plan's Executive Summary.

The Plan is the passenger and freight rail implementation portion of the governor's 25-Year Vision Plan and feeds directly into the Draft State Transportation Improvement Plan, which was released on Dec. 4.

NCDOT said the release of the Executive Summary will give the public an opportunity to preview:

- The vision for the state's rail system and supporting goals and policies to improve the rail network;
- The programs managed by NCDOT and how they work with other government and private sector programs to deliver a comprehensive set of rail services;
- An inventory of the state's rail system and an identification of trends, markets, and needs;
- The prioritization of passenger and freight rail corridors; and
- Future improvements and investments and an assessment of funding options.

Freight and passenger rail contribute approximately \$1.84 billion to the state's economy, annually.

Class 1 project needs identified in the Executive Summary include a new Norfolk Southern Thoroughbred Bulk Terminal Facility in Charlotte; a 10,000-foot siding extension for CSX at Stouts in Union County and upgrading the rail line along US 52 to allow for freight movement.

Shortline project needs identified in the Executive Summary include bridge, rail, tie and surfacing, rail yard and transload facilities, as well as the relocation of the Aberdeen Carolina & Western Railway in Mecklenburg County; reactivating the rail line between Andrews and Murphy in Cherokee County and two grade separations at the Port of Wilmington.

On the passenger side of the state's rail plan, the executive summary identified major projects such as the full implementation of the Southeast Corridor; adding new connecting rail service between Salisbury and Asheville and extending southeastern passenger service between Raleigh to Wilmington.

The public draft of the Comprehensive State Rail Plan will be released in late January 2015. Once the draft Plan is released, a 30-day public comment period will follow. Once the public comment period ends, NCDOT will review all comments, address them accordingly and make revisions to the Plan. The final approval of the Plan is scheduled for June 2015.

Amtrak Vermonter Makes Inaugural Run on Knowledge Corridor

Tuesday, December 23, 2014

Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick joined Reps. Richard Neal (D-MA-1) and James McGovern (D-MA-3), Massachusetts Department of Transportation Acting Secretary and Chief Executive Officer Frank DePaola, local elected officials and community members Dec. 22 for the inaugural run of Amtrak's Vermonter service on the Knowledge Corridor.

The restored rail line will allow for more and efficient passenger service and will allow the commonwealth to maintain and enhance freight service, which will take trucks off the roads, reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

"I am thrilled to see this critical project completed, restoring faster service along the historic Knowledge Corridor," said Gov. Patrick.

Monday's inaugural run left Springfield at Union Station and made stops along the new service route in Holyoke, Northampton and Greenfield. Amtrak passenger service along the new Knowledge Corridor will officially begin on December 29. The Knowledge Corridor project returns Vermonter train service to the historic passenger route between Springfield and East Northfield, providing a more direct route, eventual faster service and restored access to the cities of Greenfield and Northampton.

As an important cultural and economic backbone for New England, the Knowledge Corridor/Restore Vermonter project is part of the vision for a New England High-Speed and Intercity Rail Network that will provide a foundation for economic competitiveness and promote livable communities from major and smaller cities to rural areas.

The restoration work along approximately 49 track miles includes the replacement of about 95,000 ties; installation of new continuously welded rail; new active warning signals and crossing gates at 23 public grade crossings and four private crossings; upgrades to six bridges and the first phase of a new signal installation. Restoration work began in August 2012 and will continue through 2016. Following the start of service on December 29, work will continue outside of operating hours to complete adjacent freight sidings to allow freight and passenger service to run simultaneously along with culvert and bridge repairs. The final completion of the Knowledge Corridor project is expected to reduce trip times by approximately 25 minutes.

The \$131-million project is funded by approximately \$80 million in federal grant funds, including a Federal Railroad Administration grant through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, along with state funds.

STB: Massachusetts Can Buy Short Line Assets

Written by Douglas John Bowen

Wednesday, December 24, 2014

The Surface Transportation Board on Wednesday, Dec. 24, 2014 gave preliminary approval to Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to acquire "certain physical railroad assets" from Canaan, Conn.-based short line Housatonic Railroad Co., Inc.

The Board split its decision, for now, on prospective status of freight rail operations, which it deemed secure, and potential passenger operations over the right-of-way, of which STB remains somewhat uncertain.

STB, in Docket No. FD 35866, approved its initial clearance "because under the proposed transaction, HRRC would retain the legal obligation to provide freight rail service and MassDOT would not be able to interfere unreasonably with that service.

"However, the Board requires additional information in order rule on the motion to dismiss with respect to MassDOT's proposed acquisition of passenger rights and whether MRC is a necessary party to this proceeding. MassDOT is directed to submit the additional information the Board describes in this decision within 30 days of the service date of this decision," STB said.

Massachusetts seeks ownership of Housatonic's current right-of-way between Sheffield, Mass, on the Massachusetts-Connecticut border, and Pittsfield, Mass., the short line's northern terminus, where it interfaces with CSX.

"MassDOT states that the acquisition of the Railroad Assets is intended to facilitate the Commonwealth's long-term plans to restore regional passenger service linking the New York City metropolitan area, and the Northeast Corridor megalopolis generally, with the Berkshire region of western Massachusetts, STB noted.

Charleston, S.C., Area Groups Seek Streetcars

Written by Douglas John Bowen
Wednesday, December 24, 2014

Add Charleston, S.C., to the list of U.S. cities pondering reinstallation of streetcar service, at least on an unofficial level.

Proposals for streetcars have floated and died during the past decade, but a recent tour for transit activists, at a meeting last September aboard the Lowcountry Loop Trolley service utilizing rubber-tired tourist "trolleys," has revived the idea again.

An advocacy group, Best Friends of Lowcountry Transit, announced its founding on Dec. 17, 2014, in part to pursue rail transit options. The group is an offshoot of another group, Hungryneck Straphangers, which has existed for five years.

Both groups plan to work to persuade Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA), the regional public transit authority, to consider the idea.

Streetcar service in Charleston ended in February 1938.

Atlanta Streetcar Debuts Before Year's End

Written by Douglas John Bowen
Tuesday, December 30, 2014

Just beating a deadline vowed last April by Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, the 2.7-mile Atlanta Streetcar began passenger operations Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2014, fulfilling a pledge to begin service before the end of the year.

Initially targeting a spring 2014 debut, the streetcar's opening day slipped repeatedly throughout the year, pushed back to November, then Dec. 6, before making its actual appearance on the rails.

Atlanta becomes the second U.S. city to initiate streetcar service in 2014, joining Tucson, Ariz.'s Sun Link, which began operations last July. With the year drawing to a close, streetcar advocates were resigned to a third new line, along H Street in Washington, D.C., not opening before 2015 began.

Service on the line will be free of charge for the first three months of operation, while Mayor Reed noted in a statement that children under 10 years of age will "always ride free."

The City of Atlanta will share direct operating responsibility of the new line with Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), which agreed last spring to act as a partner in the effort. Protected by four Siemens S70 streetcars, the line includes 12 stops, and offers direct connections to MARTA rapid rail service at Peachtree Center Station.

Steam to Return to Cheat Bridge as art of Cass Railfan Weekend 2015

December 23, 2014

CASS, W.Va. – As part of a new partnership between the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad and the Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association, steam will return to Cheat Bridge for two days next spring as part of the Association's annual three-day Cass Railfan Weekend.

The three-day steam and diesel weekend tradition, catered for photographers and railroad enthusiasts will take place in Cass on May 15-17, 2015, featuring photo runbys with Cass' geared Shay locomotives to popular locations such as Whittaker, Spruce, and Bald Knob. A new partnership between the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad and the non-profit association of the Cass Railroad will allow for a unique two-day rare mileage excursion across West Virginia Central trackage between Spruce and Cheat Bridge.

"This will be the first time steam has returned to Shavers Fork of the Cheat River since 2008," says Joe Gonzalez, a 48-year veteran and co-chairman to the annual Railfan Weekend. "This unique opportunity, attributed to a new partnership between railroad management of the D&GVRR and our association will allow us to offer something new and exciting to our patrons in 2015."

The D&GVRR operates several seasonal tourist trains between Cheat Bridge and Spruce, such as the Cheat Mountain Salamander. Each of the railroad's trains, however, are powered by restored Western Maryland and Chesapeake & Ohio diesels.

The excursion will feature Cass Heisler No. 6, a former Meadow River Lumber Co. three-truck Heisler built in 1929. The Heisler is preferred because of its ability to perform at greater speeds over longer routes, as opposed to its Shay cousins. The 36-mile roundtrip excursion will operate on Friday May 15th and again on Saturday May 16. Simultaneously, Cass Shay locomotives will power excursions toward Bald Knob from Cass.

Due to limited seating capacity, patrons are being split into two groups throughout the weekend. Group 'A' will ride and photograph the rare mileage excursion out of Cheat Bridge on Friday, while Group 'B' will depart from Cass, ascending through the switchbacks for an afternoon trip to Bald Knob. On Saturday, Group 'B' will then ride the rare mileage excursion from Cheat Bridge, with Group 'A' departing from Cass. This ticketing system, part of the association's all-inclusive Railfan Weekend package, ensures that all photographers will be able to experience both trips.

“Not only is this a rare mileage excursion for steam and diesel powered trains, but it is a train designed for rail photographers with several runby stops planned along the mountain between Cheat Bridge and Spruce,” says Association President Paul Rujak. “We are grateful for this opportunity to work with the D&GVRR personnel to offer something innovative for our patrons next year.”

For more information on Cass Railfan Weekend, go to www.msrlha.org.

Trains' Top 10 Railroad Stories for 2014, Part 1

December 22, 2014

10. The once-mighty National Railway Historical Society appears to be running out of steam. A hotly contested election and a failed reorganization plan brought attention to the venerable organization, but in the end the status quo remains and the national group still struggles to find relevance in the Internet Age. In 2013, the NRHS had 11,573 members, about half the number it had in 1994 when the group reached an all-time high of 21,842. Without a change, the organization's last chapter may have to dump the fire.

9. American passenger service is making progress, and it's not just the government making a push. Surprising many of its critics, Florida East Coast Industries, through its All Aboard Florida subsidiary, is continuing to build out its new passenger service between Miami and Orlando, even as the costs and timeline continue to expand. The trains are expected to roll, between Miami and West Palm Beach at least, by the end of 2016 and over the entire route in the first half of 2017, at an estimated cost of \$3 billion. Elsewhere, Iowa Pacific is busy promoting popup passenger services in Oklahoma and Wisconsin, and Indiana and Connecticut (at least) are seeking new private operators for their state-subsidized trains. With government spending questioned more than ever, this may be the future of passenger rail expansion in the U.S.

8. One of the biggest changes of 2014 didn't even come from a railroad regulator. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's regulations for diesel exhaust may have exhausted long-time locomotive builder Electro-Motive Diesel, which will not have a compliant locomotive model to offer come Jan. 1. In the weeks and days leading up to the new year, EMD and rival General Electric worked overtime, figuratively and literally, to produce as many Tier 3-compliant locomotives as possible before the new regulations took effect. Now the industry must wait for EMD's return to the domestic locomotive market, which is expected in 2017.

7. The year marked more controversy for Canadian Pacific. The railroad's leadership made headlines throughout the second half of the year, first suggesting it alone could solve the Chicago terminal puzzle, then trying to find a merger partner in CSX Transportation to make it so. The Florida-based Class I railroad was unwilling, which was likely a good thing for Chicago area railroaders: Such a combination would have had controlling interest in the Indiana Harbor Belt, potentially reducing the road's neutrality.

6. It could be said that North American steam has not had such a banner year since a Roosevelt occupied the White House. The year saw two articulated steam locomotives in transit toward promised restorations, Union Pacific 4-8-8-4 No. 4014 and Chesapeake & Ohio 2-6-6-2 No. 1309; continued progress on fan favorite Norfolk & Western 4-8-4 J Class No. 611; a number of moderate-sized locomotives under steam once again; and the presentation of the annual Trains Magazine preservation award to Santa Fe 4-8-4 No. 2926 for a modern 26L brake stand. The steam and preservation community eagerly awaits what progress 2015 will bring.

Trains' Top 10 Railroad Stories for 2014, Part 2

December 23, 2014

5. One-person crews have become a proverbial flash point for North American railroads. A summer proposal by BNSF Railway to use one-person crews, with a new operating position called “master conductors,” drew much criticism from railroad labor throughout the industry. And yet, with the implementation of positive train control on the horizon, railroads are in as good a position as ever to push for the crew size reduction. Labor appears to have won the battle this year, but the war is far from over.

4. The struggle between America's railroad builders and the Native Americans played out more than a century ago and was romanticized in spaghetti Westerns more than two generation agos. Or did it? The industry revealed in April that it might not make the federal mandate for the implementation of positive train control by the end of 2015 due to the need to place some PTC antennas within Native American reservations. Such work needs approval by the Federal Communications Commission, which suspended installations until environmental and historic surveys could be undertaken. Railroads are still working — and spending — to meet the deadline, but new legislation may be needed yet to extend it in light of the FCC's move.

3. Just how much grief can one derailment cause for an entire industry? If that derailment is the deadly July 2013 derailment and fire in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, the answer is a lot. Not since Ricky L. Gates took 16 lives in a 1987 derailment in Maryland has the entire industry needed to stop and take note. Still under the resulting scrutiny — and sometimes new regulation — in 2014 are tank cars, operating practices, one-person crews, and the chemical composition of the crude oil itself. One bright spot: The new Central Maine & Quebec Railway, lead by industry veteran John Giles, has taken over the besieged Montreal, Maine & Atlantic's property and is poised for a turnaround.

2. There's no shortage of business on the railroads these days, and the railroads are spending like it. BNSF Railway has itself set consecutive records for single-year capital spending, with an outlay of \$5.5 billion in 2014 and a planned \$6 billion in 2015. That tops the collective spending of all Class I railroads just a decade earlier. The new ties, new yards, new rails, new signals,

new tracks, new locomotives, and new bridges are all going to support the rapid growth railroads have seen in recent years. Some is spurred by legislation, such as the need to install positive train control by the end of 2015, but much is driven by the immense increase in traffic that has come to the railroads.

1. North America's Class I railroads may have finally found too much of a good thing, and they can't spend fast enough to make a smoother ride. For decades railroad seemed content to be the invisible cog in the country's industrial machine, but 2014 has brought the rail network to the forefront in the minds of regulators, legislators, industries, and even consumers. The first half of the year saw widespread and serious service failures: trains parked for lack of crews, power, and space. Farmers complained their record harvest wasn't making it to market. Utilities complained they couldn't keep the lights on without more coal. Passengers sat on delayed trains, or were left out in the cold when they were canceled outright. Railroads blamed the extreme winter, the so-called "Polar Vortex" in the Midwest that brought sub-zero temperatures to the all important Chicago gateway for weeks at a time. Shippers blamed crude oil for gumming up the railroads' already delicate networks with more trains, which seemingly received preferential treatment to theirs. Even Amtrak piled on, filing a complaint with the Surface Transportation Board over the handling of the Capitol Limited and Lake Shore Limited, trains that operate on oil-heavy routes in the East. Only time will tell if the problems have been fixed, and railroads know they are under the gun to perform better in the coming year.

Amtrak's New Look

By Fred Frailey
Thursday, December 18, 2014

You won't have the same old Amtrak to kick around anymore, starting as soon as tomorrow. That's when the first 18 Viewliner baggage cars arrive in Hialeah, Fla., near the Miami Airport, for inspection and acceptance. Hialeah is where the single-level long-distance car fleet is maintained. The baggage cars were built by the Spanish company CAF USA in Elmira Heights, N.Y., and are making their way down the East Coast as I write this. CSX Transportation has the special train P93718 scheduled to leave Washington Union Station at 9:05 p.m. tonight, passing Charleston S.C., at 6:05 a.m. Friday, Savannah 7:50 a.m., Jacksonville 10 a.m. and Orlando 1 p.m. The special train, with specially painted P42 locomotive 42 on the front and Amtrak business cars 10001 and 10000 on the rear out of Washington, makes quite a sight.

Back to this subject in a minute, because there's bigger news to report: Amtrak is downsizing practically every one of its long-distance trains, between January 12 and February 28 and in some instances longer. This is what railroads routinely did in pre-Amtrak days, in those times of the year when business drops off.

Several people have sent me the preliminary changes, and of course it's subject to change and even cancellation. But here is the plan, as of last week:

Southwest Chief and **California Zephyr**: Each train loses its baggage car, crew sleeper, and one of the two full coaches; baggage will be handled in the combination baggage-coach. The new lineup will be two sleepers, diner, Sightseer Lounge, baggage-coach and coach. From March 1 to April 15 the baggage and crew sleeper return to the Zephyr but the coach stays off.

Empire Builder: Loses one of the two Seattle sleepers and the Seattle baggage-coach; the Portland section is unchanged. Coast Starlight: The crew sleeper, one of three sleeping cars, the Pacific Parlour lounge and two of the four coaches get a rest through February. The Pacific Parlour and one of the coaches return starting March 1. The crew sleeper is back April 1. The former consist presumably is in place starting April 16.

Capitol Limited: It becomes a five-car train through February, minus the baggage car, crew sleeper, lounge and one of two full coaches. The new lineup will be two sleepers, Cross Country Cafe (diner-lounge), baggage-coach and coach. Crescent, Silver Star and Silver Meteor: Each single-level train drops one of its four coaches. Lake Shore Limited: Both the Boston and New York section drop an Amfleet coach, leaving the Boston part with one and the New York section with three.

Cardinal: Instead of three Amfleet II coaches, it will make do with two.

Palmetto: One of its four coaches gets a rest. Possibly the same fate awaits the **Pennsylvanian**.

No changes are planned for the **City of New Orleans**, **Sunset Limited** and **Texas Eagle**.

This seems to me to be a good idea. It saves crew costs, equipment maintenance costs, allows preventative maintenance to be performed (according to Vice President of Operations D. J. Stadler), and inconveniences few customers. Those trains losing their crew sleepers this winter will find six or seven sleeping car rooms blocked from sale, for use by on-board staff. My luck will probably be to try riding each of these trains and find no space available.

As for the Viewliner deliveries, about time! The 130-car order was placed in mid-2010 and initial deliveries were scheduled more than two years ago. And at that, the baggage cars are by far the easiest to build. The full order: 25 sleeping cars, 25 dining cars, 10 baggage-dormitories, and 70 baggage cars.

I can't wait to see the new diners. I've eaten several times in the prototype Viewliner diner, 8400, and loved its ambience. The second, high bank of windows gives it an airy, bistro-like feel. Maybe the food even tasted better.

So after a long spell of nothing seeming to change in the look and feel of long-distance trains, things are about to happen. My wish list for Amtrak in 2015 has only two elements: A big shot of capital for the Northeast Corridor to begin to modernize, because so much begs to be done but so little happens, and a really honest accounting of NEC operating costs, because I am

convinced (but cannot prove) that the rest of the system is paying for a lot of the Corridor's costs. Interestingly, the Amtrak reauthorization legislation that the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved this year tried to do both of these things. I expect it to be reintroduced in the new Congress and approved. It's not the ideal solution, which would be for the NEC infrastructure to be separately managed and accounted for, but it's all we presently have.