

POTOMAC RAIL NEWS

POTOMAC CHAPTER, NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 235, KENSINGTON, MARYLAND 20895-0235

DECEMBER 2023



TURNING BACK THE CLOCK! Winchester and Western Railroad's "Sand Man" heads eastbound with 14 Chessie System covered hoppers containing high quality silica sand just west of Hayfield, VA, on May 11, 1985, en route to Winchester, VA. Accompanying Alex Mayes on this chase was long-time Potomac Chapter Member the late Martin Ozga. Photo by: Alex Mayes (see page 2 for more details)

PROGRAM & LOCATION: ANNUAL POTOMAC CHAPTER DECEMBER SOCIAL. December 18, 2023, Member Meeting, 7:30PM, Holiday Social, followed by Pub Quiz. Montgomery County Executive Office Building Cafeteria, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD. YES - THE MEETING IS MONDAY INSTEAD OF TUESDAY. Food donations are welcome. Sodas/punch provided. Pub Quiz - If you can't attend, you can participate via Zoom. A Zoom team will compete against the in-person teams. The quiz will begin at 8:15PM. If you want to join us, connect anytime between 8:00 and 8:15PM EST.

NEXT MEETING DATE: January 16, 2024.

DEADLINE FOR JANUARY ISSUE: December 31, 2023. Send news items to Clay Moritz, Editor, Potomac Rail News, at c.moritz@comcast.net

INFO ON CHAPTER ACTIVITIES: <http://potomacnrhs.org/>

ADDRESS MEMBERSHIP INQUIRIES TO: Rick Davidson, Membership Agent, 2908 Breezy Terrace, Alexandria, VA 22303-2401 rdavidsonjr2908@gmail.com

THE CHAPTER FAMILY

If you know of a Chapter Member who is sick, has lost a loved one, or has a new birth in the family, please contact the editor at: c.moritz@comcast.net

THIS MONTH'S COVER PHOTO: Winchester and Western Railroad's "Sand Man" originated at the 80+ year-old sand mine in Gore, VA, where its cars were loaded with high quality silica sand. The train terminated in 18 miles at Winchester, VA, where the cars were interchanged with CSX. The 14-car train was powered by a pair of ALCO S6s, Nos. 78 and 80, which were built in December 1955 for the Southern Pacific. While in service on the Southern Pacific their numbers were 1278 and 1280 respectively. These engines were scrapped a few years later. The silica mine at Gore is scheduled to be idled within a few months. This is the only customer on this line.

ZOOM TOPIC: POTOMAC CHAPTER DECEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING:

Time: Dec 18, 2023 08:15 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81672625788?pwd=MHptaXJpL1RUalhEcDFwZk5vaGREdz09>

Meeting ID: 816 7262 5788

Passcode: 547873

One tap mobile

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GARDEN RAILWAY - WASHINGTON - VIRGINIA - MARYLAND SOCIETY. GRANDPA'S HOLIDAY TRAIN GARDEN PAGE FOR 2023. Grandpa and Grandma have come off the road and settled down in south-central Pennsylvania. His grandsons are no longer train-crazy but he is still enamored with the Baltimore tradition of Christmas Train Gardens and continues to update this list of holiday train displays. The list is meant to be inclusive, in addition to the traditional Baltimore firehouse holiday train garden, any train display, open house, etc., whether holiday themed or not, is included, with a rather broad geographic coverage as well. Areas covered: Baltimore; Maryland-West; Northern Virginia; Washington DC & Maryland Suburbs; Maryland & Delaware-Eastern Shore; Southern Virginia; Maryland-North; Maryland-Western Shore; and Pennsylvania. This web page began in 2005.

Please help us by sending any corrections, additions, deletions, broken links, etc. to traingarden@wvmgrs.org (Last updated: 3 December 2023) Visit website: <http://wvmgrs.org/articles/traingardens/>

RAIL NEWS

SAND MINE IN GORE WILL BE IDLED IN 2024. Covia, an Ohio-based provider for energy and industrial markets, will cease operations in early 2024 at a sand mine in Gore that has been active for over 80 years, according to a company official. The sand mine, located at 334 Sand Mine Road in western Frederick County, has had several owners but was acquired by Unimin in the 1970s. Unimin merged with Fairmont-Santrol in 2018 to form Covia.

The mine will be idled indefinitely by February 29th, with Covia accepting orders through December 15th, according to an email from Amanda Meehan, Director

of Corporate Communications for the company. "As with all mines, operating costs for Gore have gone up as the mine has aged," Meehan wrote in an email in response to questions from The Star. "After completing an economic evaluation of Gore's on-going vitality and viability, we have made the decision to indefinitely idle Gore as we do not see a path for it to meet our economic thresholds for our operations network."

Sand mining is the extraction of sand, usually through an open pit mine or a sand pit. The sand that is mined is often used to make concrete, cement or glass. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, sand is the planet's most mined material, with some 50 billion tons extracted from lakes, riverbeds, coastlines and deltas each year, Reuters reported in 2021.

Thirty employees work at the sand mine in Gore, according to Meehan. Products made from material mined there include BESTSAND™, which is used at golf courses, GLASSIL® and UTILITYSAND™. Meehan wrote that Covia will be working with customers to fill orders and help them transition before the mine is idled.

In a 2010 article, The Star reported on how the Winchester & Western Railroad (W&W) hauled more than 100 tons of sand in multiple cars from Gore to Winchester three to five times a week. The W&W began doing business with the Unimin sand mine in Gore in the 1970s, according to the article.

Covia sold W&W to OmniTRAX, which is one of the largest privately held rail-centric transportation and transportation infrastructure holding companies in North America, in 2019. (The Winchester Star)

OMNITRAX DEPLOYS OHIO'S FIRST ALL-BATTERY ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE. OmniTRAX Inc. affiliate Newburgh & South Shore Railroad (NSR) has deployed its first all-battery electric locomotive and the first electric locomotive deployed by a short line in Ohio.

The new AMPS Traction G9 will be used on NSR's northern Ohio lines. The battery-electric switching locomotive is a 250,000-pound, Federal Railroad Administration-compliant unit that features technology designed to reduce fuel consumption by half and cut nitrous oxide and particulate matter emissions by 77%, according to a news release.

"Electric locomotives play an important role in our industry and AMPS Traction's innovative technology is the perfect addition to our fleet," said OmniTRAX President and Chief Operating Officer Sergio Sabatini. "We will continue to invest in technologies that help keep our communities clean and safe."

NSR obtained a grant for the locomotive through the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's \$75 million Diesel Mitigation Trust Fund, which provides grants for projects that help improve air quality.

OmniTRAX dedicated the new locomotive in the memory of Divisional Track Engineer Steve Ward, who died in 2021. The company's longest-serving employee, Ward oversaw the safety and maintenance of track throughout the OmniTRAX network for 27 years. (Progressive Railroading)

STB TO ESTABLISH PASSENGER RAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE. On November 13th, The Surface Transportation Board (STB) announced that it has determined it "necessary and in the public interest" to establish a Federal advisory committee on passenger rail service.

According to STB, the Passenger Rail Advisory Committee (PRAC) will provide advice and recommendations on a continuing basis to help the Board "fulfill its statutory responsibilities in overseeing certain aspects of passenger rail service." In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), a charter of the newly-created committee has been prepared and will be filed with STB's congressional oversight committees at least 15 days following the date of publication of this notice, after which STB will issue a decision seeking

nominations for individuals to serve on the PRAC.

The PRAC, which STB says "is essential to the conduct of agency business, as the Board's responsibilities and duties relating to passenger rail have expanded and become more defined in recent years," will provide a forum for STB and stakeholders to discuss passenger rail issues "in a manner that balances the interests of intercity and commuter rail passengers and operators, government entities, freight rail carriers and their customers, railway labor, and the general public."

The PRAC, STB adds, which will function as a discretionary advisory body and will comply with the provisions of FACA and its implementing regulations, would provide STB with valuable insight to help it better carry out these responsibilities and duties.

According to STB, the scope of the PRAC's activities will include providing information, advice, and recommendations to the Board on issues impacting the development and operation of railroad passenger services, including: improving efficiency on passenger rail routes; reducing disputes between passenger rail carriers and freight rail hosts regarding the use of freight rail carrier-owned facilities and infrastructure for passenger service, including passenger on-time performance issues; and improving regulatory processes related to intercity passenger rail to the benefit of the public, the communities served by passenger rail, and the environment.

STB says it is interested in engaging with passenger rail stakeholders, including Amtrak, other intercity passenger rail operators, commuter rail operators, states that fund passenger rail, freight railroads, passenger rail advocacy groups, and railway labor on these passenger rail-related issues.

The duties of the PRAC, STB says, are solely advisory and will entail only the submission of non-binding advice and recommendations to the Board. No determinations of fact or policy will be made by the PRAC, and the Committee will have no decision-making role or access to non-public Board information, including the Board's decision-making process or other confidential information.

The PRAC will consist of approximately 18 voting members consisting of a balanced representation of individuals knowledgeable regarding passenger rail transportation, freight rail transportation, commuter rail operations, and transportation public policy. The voting membership will include no fewer than:

- Two representatives from Amtrak.
- Two representatives from commuter rail operators whose operations use facilities owned and/or utilized by (i) Amtrak, (ii) other intercity passenger rail operators, or (iii) rail freight operators (for purposes of ensuring geographic diversity within PRAC's membership, these representatives cannot be from the same state as any of the state representatives described below and cannot be from the same state as each other).
- Two representatives from existing intercity passenger rail operators other than Amtrak, or developers of new intercity passenger rail lines other than Amtrak.
- One representative from a state that provides funding for intercity passenger rail (for purposes of ensuring geographic diversity within PRAC's membership, this representative cannot be from the same state as any of the representatives of the commuter rail operators described above, or the representative from a state in which the intercity passenger rail stations are served only by long-distance trains described below).
- One representative from a state in which the intercity passenger rail stations are served only by long-distance trains, i.e., passenger trains serving the entirety of routes of more than 750 miles between endpoints (for purposes of ensuring geographic diversity within PRAC's membership, this representative cannot be from the same state as any of the representatives of the commuter rail

operators described above or the representative from the state that provides funding for intercity passenger rail described above).

- Two representatives from Class I freight railroads.
- One representative from a Class II or Class III freight railroad.
- One representative from an organized rail labor association.
- Two representatives from rail passenger advocacy organizations.
- One representative from a rail shipper or customer advocacy organization or an individual shipper or customer.
- Three at-large representatives with relevant experience (including, but not limited to, individuals involved in the design or construction of passenger rail equipment or infrastructure, in the provision of passenger rail analytic or consulting services, in transportation planning, or in transportation-related public policy work).

According to STB, all voting members of the PRAC will serve on the Committee in a representative capacity on behalf of their respective industry or stakeholder group. The Members of the Board shall serve as ex officio (non-voting) members. The Chair of the Board may also invite representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to serve on the PRAC in an advisory capacity. These Federal governmental representatives will serve as ex officio (non-voting) members. The PRAC will meet at least twice a year, and meetings will be open to the public. (Railway Age)

AMTRAK-VIA RAIL MAY RETURN TO DETROIT RIVER TUNNEL. Canada's VIA Rail confirmed on November 14th that it is engaged with Amtrak and other rail operators in discussions aimed at extending Amtrak's existing Chicago-Detroit Wolverine service to Toronto's downtown Union Station. Amtrak confirmed the same day that "We are in conversations with local, state, and provincial officials about a proposed service." Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) for its part deferred to the two publicly owned passenger railroads for comment.

The scheme would see passenger trains returning to the 113-year-old Detroit River Tunnel owned by CPKC. A little remarked condition of the CPKC merger approval was that the merged railroad would open the tunnel to Amtrak, after years of frustrated efforts by Amtrak to revive direct Detroit-Toronto service. Amtrak last served Windsor, Ontario, from New York and Buffalo with Trains 63 and 64, the Niagara Rainbow, through to Detroit, until the end of 1979. This state-sponsored service stopped at the Canadian Pacific station in Windsor, which has since been demolished following a fire.

The CPKC merger was backed by Amtrak, which said the two railroads had been positive partners and would advance opportunities for new passenger services.

"We can confirm that VIA Rail is in private discussions with different partners, including Amtrak, to evaluate the possibility and estimate the potential costs of a project connecting Windsor to Detroit," the Canadian passenger railway told Railway Age.

"However, VIA Rail believes it is premature to be holding a discussion on this project in the public sphere. "At this time, VIA Rail has not committed to financing this project and no funding requests have been made."

Amtrak is more enthusiastic in describing prospects for the proposed service, stating that "improved frequency along the corridor, with connections to Toronto, will increase demand for rail travel and decrease traffic congestion. Improved passenger rail service and connectivity is critical to enabling further economic development in the Great Lakes region." (Railway Age)

VIRGINIA GETS FEDERAL BOOST FOR POTOMAC BRIDGE AND OTHER RAIL PROJECTS. Virginia has received \$729 million in Federal money that advances a plan to boost train capacity over the Potomac River and grow passenger rail operations within the

decade, members of the state's congressional delegation announced on December 7th.

The grant will support construction of a new Long Bridge, which is projected to cost nearly \$2.3 billion, according to the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority. The Federal aid is critical for filling a funding gap that officials had warned could put the project at risk for delays.

The existing 117-year-old, double-track span over the Potomac River, the main route for trains traveling south from Washington, is at 98% capacity during peak traffic times. Plans call for a new two-track span parallel to the current Long Bridge that would separate passenger and freight trains, boost commerce and meet demands for passenger trains along the Interstate 95 corridor.

"Long Bridge is the connection between the Northeast and the Southeast, and there's nothing that can really happen in terms of growing our rail usage both for passenger and freight if you don't deal with Long Bridge," Senator Tim Kaine (D-Va.) said as members of the Virginia's congressional delegation, along with Governor Glenn Youngkin, marked the award on Thursday in Arlington.

The new funding, through a passenger rail grant program as part of the Federal Infrastructure Law, was announced as part of a series of grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Transportation for major rail projects, including more than \$6 billion for high-speed rail, which includes \$3 billion for Brightline's Las Vegas-to-Southern California route and another \$3 billion to the California High-Speed Rail Authority for ongoing construction of a 500-mile project connecting Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The Federal money comes months after Virginia officials warned of delays if funding was not secured this year to close a \$729 million budget gap in Virginia's rail program.

The rail authority had applied for \$829 million in Federal grants through two programs to help pay for construction of the Long Bridge and other projects in Virginia's \$7.2 billion rail program. The new span and other upgrades just south of Washington aim to alleviate a growing East Coast bottleneck of passenger and freight trains at the Potomac River.

Senator Mark R. Warner (D-Va.) said the project will reduce congestion near L'Enfant Plaza, double Amtrak's capacity through the corridor and increase capacity for Virginia Railway Express trains. Warner credited the Federal Infrastructure Law with making the funding possible. "This is a great day for Virginia," he said. "A long time coming."

The Thursday, December 7th announcement came one day after Virginia's rail authority voted to approve a construction contract for the north section of the project. It selected construction engineering firm Skanska and Flatiron to lead the work that is planned from the northern banks of the Potomac to just south of the L'Enfant Plaza Virginia Railway Express Station in the District. A second contract is expected to be issued next year for the construction of the new span over the river.

Officials said the Skanska-Flatiron team will take the project from design, which is now about 30% complete, to construction. Early work will begin next year, while construction is expected to be complete in six years. The contractor selection is a major milestone in keeping the project's time-line on track for the span to open in 2030.

Also on Wednesday December 6th, the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority approved the selection of a construction team for an almost mile-long bypass just south of the Franconia-Springfield Metro station, which will allow Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express trains to cross over two freight rail tracks to reduce delays. The two-year construction project is expected to begin in the spring.

Rail Authority Executive Director DJ Stadtler said the selection of construction contractors for the Long Bridge's northern section and the Franconia-Springfield project is "a significant milestone in our plan to build

passenger rail infrastructure at a level not seen in generations." "We look forward to working with both teams in this important step toward making rail a viable transportation option and truly transforming rail in Virginia," he said.

In addition to the Long Bridge, the new funding will support plans for a third rail along existing track in Northern Virginia, including three miles in Prince William County, two miles in Stafford County, and four miles in Spotsylvania County.

The Long Bridge plan, conceived more than a decade ago, also calls for the addition of a pedestrian and bike bridge between Long Bridge Park in Arlington and East Potomac Park in the District.

CSX owns the Long Bridge, which is mostly in the District, as the new bridge will be. The new span, which will be owned by the state, is critical for Virginia to realize its ambitions to grow commuter and passenger train service, as well as handle projected increases in freight transportation because of growth at the Port of Virginia.

The additional capacity connecting the District's Southwest Waterfront to Crystal City will help Virginia separate passenger and freight trains, which officials say will improve service reliability, and let VRE introduce more service. The commuter rail line already is planning to introduce Saturday trips next year. (Washington Post)

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES LARGEST PASSENGER RAIL INVESTMENT SINCE AMTRAK CREATION. On December 8th, President Biden announced \$8.2 billion in new funding for 10 passenger rail projects nationwide, representing the largest Federal investment in passenger rail transportation since Amtrak was created in 1971.

The investment includes \$3 billion for the high-speed rail line from Las Vegas to the greater Los Angeles area. This is about a third of the total projected cost of the new Brightline West train line, which is projected to be finished before the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. The Brightline company touts the train on its website as the "first true high-speed passenger rail system in the nation."

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg told reporters the rail line is expected to carry 11 million passengers at its peak, and the total trip will take about two hours, which is about half the time it takes to drive.

Other passenger rail projects that will receive funding include a Los Angeles-San Francisco train that will reach 220 miles per hour, a rail expansion between Washington, D.C., and Richmond, Virginia, and other upgrades in Pennsylvania, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana and other states.

There is a years-long lag time between the projects' funding and their completion. But Biden Administration officials hope the President's spotlight, and resulting union jobs from the construction, will help boost public support for the Administration's economic policies. (CBS News)

BLET RATIFIES KEOLIS/VRE AGREEMENT. Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) have ratified a new five-year contract with Keolis Rail Services Virginia. The contract ratification vote took place in November.

The new agreement runs through 2025 and governs rates of pay and health care benefits for 11 locomotive engineers who operate commuter rail trains for Virginia Railway Express (VRE). Keolis has been operating VRE, which serves the Northern Virginia suburbs and downtown Washington, D.C., since 2010.

The agreement includes full retroactive payments dating to 2021, BLET reported December 1. It provides general wage increases compounded at 22.2% over the life of the agreement: 2% in 2021, 5% in 2022, 5% in 2023, 4% in 2024, and 4.5% in 2025.

Additionally, there are no work rule changes, and membership contributions

to health and welfare will be capped beginning in 2025.

The negotiating team comprised General Chairman Mark B. Kenny, Vice General Chairman Patrick W. Darcy Jr., and Division 14 Local Chairman Jamie Wooldridge. (Railway Age)

WESTERN MARYLAND LOCOMOTIVE TO BE REFURBISHED AND RECEIVE NEW PROTECTIVE STRUCTURE. The last surviving conventional Western Maryland Railway steam locomotive, Class K2 Pacific No. 202, will be repositioned in Hagerstown City Park, receive a new protective structure, and be refurbished, the Hagerstown Herald-Mail reports.

Hagerstown has hired Frederick, Maryland, firm Proffitt & Associates Architects to oversee the project. Senior Project Architect Kevin Kneer told the newspaper the work will proceed in two parts. First, the 103-foot-long, 402,300-pound locomotive and tender will be moved to a more visible display area. It will then be covered by a new Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant shelter that will cover and display the locomotive more effectively than the current structure, with a concrete wheelchair ramp built to allow better access.

Second, the locomotive will be restored, with replacement of the boiler jacket and missing parts, and removal of current paint and repainting, including historically accurate lettering. Altogether, the work is expected to cost about \$790,000, from the U.S. and Maryland departments of transportation (80%) and the City of Hagerstown (20%). Work is expected to begin spring 2024, and be completed by winter.

Western Maryland No. 202 was one of nine identical Class K2 4-6-2 locomotives built by Baldwin Locomotive Works in July and August of 1912 to power fast passenger trains all over the Western Maryland system. By 1938, all nine were upgraded to Walschaerts valve gear to replace the original Baker assemblies and, in 1947, four (Nos. 201, 202, 204, and 206) were converted to burn oil instead of coal, to comply with Baltimore city air-quality requirements.

Eventually, Nos. 204 and 205 were relegated to coal-hopper ice-melting duties at the railroad's Port Covington ship-loading facility, and 205 continued until 1955 or 1956. The others were retired by 1954; only No. 202 ultimately escaped the scrapper's torch. It was donated by the railroad to the City of Hagerstown in 1953, and has been displayed in the park for 70 years. No. 202 was added to the National Register of Historic Places on June 7, 1984.

One other former Western Maryland steam locomotive still exists: the second-largest Shay geared locomotive ever built, No. 6, which works for Cass Scenic Railroad, in Cass, W.Va. For more information about the Western Maryland Railway, visit the Western Maryland Railway Historical Society Website at <http://westernmarylandrhs.com/> (Hagerstown Herald-Mail/Trains News Wire)

NEWS FROM CASS WV. SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT! On this day before Thanksgiving 2023, we would like to say a heartfelt Thanks to all of those who have volunteered, donated, and served as directors and officers of the Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association over more than four decades. If it wasn't for so many of you literally greasing the gears of the organization, there is no way so many projects would have been completed to the extent that they were, or that railfan and interpretive events would have been enjoyed by so many.

With that said, today, we are mailing out Issue 137 to our members. Two things will be different this time: 1) we will be mailing it First Class-- hopefully ensuring everyone gets their copy during this time of postal uncertainty, and, more importantly, 2) it will have a heading scrolled across the top that many of us have dreaded for quite some time: Issue 137 will be THE LAST-EVER ISSUE of "The Log Train" after 41 years.

More than that, pending a final mail-in vote from our membership, MSR&LHA as

a whole will be winding down operations in early 2024, but in this case, there IS a silver lining to it all: Friends of Cass, which has operated as a committee of MSR&LHA since 2018, will officially be spinning-off into a new 501(c)(3), becoming Cass Scenic Railroad State Park's new non-profit of record, and continuing the MSR&LHA mission and legacy for many years to come, while also opening the door for new opportunities not under the purview of the original organization.

What will be noticeably different is the new organization's business model: there will be no members, and there will be no 'Log Train.' 'Friends' will have a much simpler 21st Century approach to reaching out and communicating with its supporters and volunteers. Friends of Cass will also be bringing its focus back home to the local community, with a strong group of local volunteers already growing rapidly, and new grants already being sought for planned projects within the historic town of Cass.

Those who would like to volunteer or contribute to the new organization can find more information on their website, www.friendsofcass.org.

MSR&LHA members who paid ahead for additional issues of "The Log Train" that will not be delivered, will receive a postcard with their final issue with more information on how to claim a refund, or to elect to donate their refund to Friends of Cass. While the mailing cards, which also include the dissolution poll, have a return date of December 15th, any refund request received by December 31st will be honored.

While it is sad to see the end of MSR&LHA, those of us sitting on the final Board of Directors consider ourselves fortunate and grateful to be able to plant the seed for the next generation of volunteers at Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, and we hope that our membership will feel the same way, welcoming new opportunities for interpreting and preserving not only West Virginia Railroad and Logging History, but also the Town of Cass itself.

As the Association is no longer accepting new members or renewals, a very limited number of copies of the final issue of "The Log Train" will be made available for purchase to the public soon. Please keep an eye on this page for more information.

We wish everyone a Happy and Blessed Thanksgiving and Holiday Season!
(Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association Facebook Page)

CSX CEO TO CHAIR B&O MUSEUM DRIVE. CSX President and CEO Joe Hinrichs will lead the \$30 million capital campaign to transform the campus of the B&O Railroad Museum as it prepares for the 2027 Bicentennial Celebration of American Railroading, the railroad announced recently. The November 14th announcement follows up a previous commitment by the railroad to kick-off the campaign with \$5 million to build a CSX Bicentennial Garden, an amphitheater and multi-use space that can host community gatherings.

"Joe is a visionary who understands the importance of preserving our past, while supporting the economic health of today's communities, and preparing our children for the future of American railroading technology - this project does it all," said B&O Railroad Museum Executive Director Kris Hoellen.

While the B&O Museum was not formally established until 1953, it began exhibiting some of its historic cars and locomotive much earlier, most notably at the 1893 Columbian Exhibition in Chicago and B&O's elaborate 1927 Centennial celebration, the two-week Fair of the Iron Horse in Halethorpe, MD, where many historic pieces remained until a 1935 hurricane devastated the site. A B&O publicist named Lawrence Sagle became an important figure in railroad preservation history when he arranged to transfer the historic equipment to an unused Baltimore roundhouse, narrowly averting plans to scrap it all. Sagle rescued the collection yet again when he learned of plans to demolish the Bailey

Wye roundhouse in 1953, arranging its transfer to the circular roundhouse at the Mt. Clare shops, which would become the Museum site.

Thanks to Sagle's persistence, the B&O Transportation Museum formally opened on July 2, 1953, with great fanfare by railroad officials and local politicians and Sagle as its first curator. It would remain under direct railroad management until becoming an independent non-profit in 1990. It gained affiliation with the Smithsonian Institution in 1999.

In addition to its collection of locomotives and rolling stock inside or near the 1884 roundhouse, the Museum's 40-acre campus includes the first mile of commercial track laid in the U.S., the 1851 Mt. Clare Station and portions of the original B&O yard and shops site. That includes the soon-to-be renovated South Passenger Car Works, built in 1869 and in use until it was deeded to the Museum in 1990 as the nation's oldest continuously serving railroad repair shop. The 33,000-square-foot structure will serve as the new main entrance to the Museum as part of the Museum renovation project. (Railfan & Railroad Magazine)

FORT WAYNE RAISING MONEY FOR 'GREAT STEEL FLEET.' A set of seven stainless steel Budd passenger cars that helped introduce streamlining on New York Central's Empire State Express are now in Indiana with the Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society and will eventually add hundreds of seats of capacity to the group's excursion trains. Though handled with care during nearly four decades with the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum, the cars need a variety of upgrades and repairs and thanks to a \$50,000 matching grant, any donation of \$250 or more made during December will be doubled. The group has set a goal of putting at least one of the cars in service in 2024.

The cars were officially acquired in 2022 from the Rochester Museum, which had deemed them surplus to its own collection.

"Rochester's care and stewardship in preserving this equipment through the years means the cars will be enjoyed by thousands of people every year," said FWRHS President Joe Knape.

Six of the fluted-side cars were part of an order for 16 luxury coaches built specifically for the new Empire State, while the seventh is a Railway Post Office car. The coaches included many modern conveniences of the era, such as air conditioning, and were originally accompanied by dining and parlor cars. Most are named in honor of past governors of New York State. They are RPO car NYC No. 5021, Alonzo B. Cornell; and coaches 2566; 2567; 2568; 2671, Hamilton Fish; 2572, David B. Hill; and 2578, Charles Whitman.

Billing the revamped Empire State Express in advertisements as "The World's Newest and Finest Streamliner," the railroad scheduled a Sunday debut for the gleaming cars and streamlined 4-6-4, thinking it would make the front page on a typically slow news day. Instead, news from Pearl Harbor completely overshadowed the train's unveiling on December 7, 1941.

The cars would long serve in Central's Great Steel Fleet, but were eventually rebuilt for commuter service, serving on Penn Central and subsequent New York area commuter trains until being purchased by the Rochester Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, progenitors of the current Museum.

For more details or to donate, visit www.greatsteelfleet.org. (Railfan & Railroad Magazine)

RICHMOND AND RALEIGH TO BE CONNECTED BY AMTRAK TRAIN RAIL IN 2026. Amtrak's Board of Directors, during its December 1st Board Meeting talked about its future plans, which includes connecting Raleigh, North Carolina, and Richmond, Virginia. From Richmond and Petersburg, you can connect to Hampton Roads.

"It creates a new higher speed, high frequency, high reliability and high safety route between these two systems," said Jason Orthner, North Carolina

Department of Transportation's Rail Division Director. "You can get multiple fast trips throughout the day that are unimpeded with significant freight traffic. "Last year, Amtrak added a third daily train leaving Norfolk heading to Petersburg, Richmond, Washington D.C., and further north. Amtrak also plans to add a third train to Newport News in 2026. Amtrak says its total ridership was up 24% this year with more than 28 million customer trips. (13News Now Staff)

METRO REPLACING WHEELS ON ALL 7000-SERIES RAILCARS. It's going to be a tedious, years-long process that will cost \$55 million. News4's Adam Tuss reports.

Metro says it started the process of replacing the wheels on all of its 7000-series railcars, and some returned to service on December 4th.

A 2021 derailment on the Blue Line grounded all of the 7000-series cars for months. The National Transportation Safety Board found that an issue with the wheels caused the train to derail and re-rail itself three times before finally coming to a complete stop outside the Arlington Cemetery Station. No one was seriously hurt in the derailment. The NTSB found in its investigation there needed to be more force to press the train wheels together to prevent them from moving outward. Metro said it developed a plan to press the wheels on the cars after the NTSB's report, and once the process ramps up, it expects to complete about 20 cars a month.

"Pressing the wheels is an exhaustive process that requires 72 hours of work for each pair of railcars. Unlike changing the tires on a car, the entire wheel assembly or truck, including the axle, frame and two wheels must be removed from the railcar, similar to removing the entire front end of a vehicle," Metro said in a release. "The wheels must be disassembled from the truck, and new wheels with a tighter fit installed at an increased force onto the axle before being reassembled onto the railcar." (NBC News4)

PROPOSED AMTRAK ROUTE LINKING CLEVELAND-COLUMBUS AND-CINCINNATI WINS KEY FEDERAL FUNDING FOR FUTURE PLANNING. Expanded Amtrak service linking Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati is a step closer to reality, with the awarding of Federal funding to study key metrics of the proposed route. The route is one of four in Ohio selected for key new funding from the Federal government for planning and development of expanded passenger rail throughout the United States.

New and expanded service between Cleveland, Toledo, and Detroit was also selected for the Federal Railroad Administration's new corridor development program, according to Senator Sherrod Brown's office, which was given advance notification of the funding winners.

Routes linking Columbus to Chicago and Pittsburgh and increased service from Cincinnati to New York City, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., also will be awarded \$500,000 each to put together a service development plan that will outline the expenses, potential ridership, travel times and other key factors involved in expanded service.

The initial funding is for the first of several stages of study for expanded service, a process that will take several years. If all goes well, Ohioans could see new passenger rail service in four or five years. The source of the funding for future passenger rail expansions is a new Federal initiative, the Corridor Identification and Development Program, part of \$66 billion in additional money for rail service included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, passed by Congress in late 2021.)

A spokesman for Ohio Governor Mike DeWine confirmed that the Governor would wait to see the results of the initial studies before committing state money. (www.cleveland.com)

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