

POTOMAC RAIL NEWS

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

MAY 2024



UNION PACIFIC TESTS FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND HYBRID LOCOMOTIVES. Photo from Union Pacific Railroad via Railfan & Railroad

PROGRAM: An interesting variety of images from several western states will be presented in-person by Bill Kalkman. The images were taken on several trips to Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, Minnesota, Nevada, and Arizona from the mid-1980s to 1990. Included are scenes of Burlington Northern, Union Pacific, SOO Line, Santa Fe, D&RGW, Amtrak, MKT, C&NW and Mountain Diesel.

MEETING: May 21, 2024 at 8PM. The in-person meeting will be held in the Lecture Hall of the [Stella Werner Council Office Building](#), 100 Maryland Ave, Rockville, MD. Those unable to attend may view the program via Zoom video conference. ZOOM LOGIN LINK ON PAGE 2.

NEXT MEETING DATE: June 18, 2024

DEADLINE FOR JUNE ISSUE: May 25, 2024. 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
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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

ZOOM TOPIC: POTOMAC CHAPTER MARCH MEMBERSHIP MEETING:

Time: May 21, 2024 08:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

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

Meeting ID: 816 7262 5788

Passcode: 547873

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RAIL NEWS

UNION PACIFIC UNVEILES THE FIRST OF SIX HYBRID BATTERY-ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES THE WEEK OF MAY 3rd. Union Pacific has begun testing new hybrid battery-electric locomotives, the first of six sets that will be built along with its partner, rail technology company ZTR.

The locomotive sets, which are built from a pair of SD40-2s, have the ability to run on both diesel and batteries – much like today's plug-in hybrid cars. The remaining five hybrid locomotive sets are expected to be ready for testing next year. The locomotives are being built at UP's shop in North Little Rock, Ark.

"This is an incredibly exciting pilot project with great potential to improve the fuel efficiency of our locomotive fleet," said Beth Whited, President of Union Pacific Railroad. "It underscores our strong commitment to exploring and developing alternative energy sources while reducing our carbon footprint and advancing our sustainability goals."

Union Pacific worked closely with ZTR on the project: ZTR designed the hybrid propulsion technology, while Union Pacific built the prototype.

"We are excited about the ground-breaking hybrid technology built in partnership with Union Pacific. UP is serious about reaching their sustainability goals and they have been an outstanding partner in this project," said Sam Hassan, CEO and President of ZTR. "The development of the ZTR BLU Technology platform is one of the most significant projects for ZTR to date and will be the basis for further advancements in sustainable solutions, including emission-free locomotives."

The hybrid locomotives will operate as "mother-slug" units, with one locomotive running on diesel and an accessory or "slug" unit providing battery power. The batteries will have multiple charging options, including wayside charging and onboard self-charging capabilities. The engineless slug design increases the number of traction motors available, enhancing the locomotive's pulling and braking power for yard switching.

Depending on the mode of operation, these hybrid switchers are expected to consume as much as 80% percent less fuel – reducing associated greenhouse gas and criteria pollutants. Additional benefits include reduced maintenance expense and noise compared to traditional diesel units. (Railfan & Railroad)

KALMBACH RAIL MAGAZINES, TRAINS.COM SOLD TO FIRECROWN MEDIA. Trains Magazine, the company's other rail magazines, and Trains.com are among assets that have been sold by Kalmbach Media to Chattanooga, Tenn.-based Firecrown Media, the two companies have announced on May 1.

Other Kalmbach titles involved in the transaction are Classic Trains, Model Railroader, Classic Toy Trains, FineScale Modeler, and Astronomy, as well as Kalmbach's online stores. The publications involved will continue to be based in Wisconsin.

Firecrown Media owns a wide range of transportation brands including Flying, Plane & Pilot, Boating, Yachting, and the supply chain site FreightWaves.

Kalmbach employees were informed of the sale on May 1 and told that most employees working on the brands will be offered positions with Firecrown after screening. Kalmbach CEO Dan Hickey called it "a difficult day in our storied history" in an email announcing the sale.

Firecrown CEO Craig Fuller said in a press release that "The rail titles fit perfectly into the Firecrown portfolio and the breadth of experience of our staff ... Kalmbach has deep ties in the railroad community, having published magazines and books about railroads and model trains for over 90 years. There isn't a deeper connection in the rail enthusiast community than the one that Kalmbach built. The Firecrown staff will work diligently to continue and build on that connection moving forward.

"Additionally, the rail and aviation communities have a great deal in common. Besides the obvious - both being transportation modes and having similarities in business models - the enthusiast audience is vast in both categories. We believe that 'railfans' and 'avgeeks' are kindred spirits.

"With the acquisition, Firecrown plans to invest significantly in Trains' business editorial coverage, increasing the cadence and depth of coverage of the rail industry. FreightWaves, one of Firecrown's brands, provides a playbook to help achieve this."

Fuller and other members of the Firecrown staff met with staff members who will be making the transition to the new ownership on the afternoon of May 1. A 60-day transition period is planned for the magazines and other properties. More information on Firecrown's plans and what they mean for employees and readers will be forthcoming. (Trains News Wire - www.trains.com)

UNION PACIFIC STEAM CLUB UPDATE NO. 32 - APRIL 10, 2024. Big Boy No. 4014's Westward Bound Tour Coming this Summer!

Union Pacific's famed Big Boy No. 4014, the world's largest operating steam locomotive, will return to the rails this summer with a scenic tour across mountain ranges and high desert vistas in four western states: Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and California.

Big Boy will journey from its home base in Cheyenne, Wyoming on Sunday, June 30, en route to Roseville, California, before returning to Wyoming by the end of July. It will make numerous whistle-stops in communities along the way, with public display stops scheduled in:

- July 12-13: Roseville, California
- July 20-21: Ogden, Utah

Additional route details and approximate times for whistle-stops will be shared closer to the tour. A route map can be found on www.UPsteam.com.

During the tour, the Union Pacific Museum will host a special passenger trip. The unique experience is the annual gala fundraiser for the nonprofit organization and provides a rare opportunity to travel on this historic heritage equipment. More information on the specifics will appear at www.UPtrainTix.com when they become available.

This is one of two public tours planned for Big Boy in 2024, with a second tour planned later this fall with stops in Texas, Arkansas, Kansas, and Illinois,

among other states. Details of the second tour will be released later this spring.

The month-long "Westward Bound" tour will honor Union Pacific's rich railroad legacy and celebrate the railroad's employees and communities it serves. For part of its journey, the Big Boy's consist will include an assortment of rail cars giving spectators a glimpse into what the locomotive looked like pulling freight in its heyday.

"The Big Boy locomotive symbolizes the pivotal role railroads played in shaping our nation's history, and the technological advances we have witnessed within our industry," said Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena. "We are thrilled to share this living piece of history with our employees and the public, and we love seeing the enthusiasm this locomotive generates wherever its whistle blows."

But What About the Pacific Northwest? Last fall, we had anticipated including Boise, Idaho, and Portland, Oregon on the Westward Bound tour. As planning continued, we determined that the network capacity on our northern corridor could not accommodate Big Boy No. 4014 along with anticipated demand on a single track. Our goal is to share the Big Boy with as many rail fans as possible across our network, and we look forward to seeing everyone track side - 25 feet back this summer and fall. That's all for now. Until next time, stay safe! - Union Pacific Steam Club

UNION PACIFIC STEAM CLUB UPDATE NO. 33 - MAY 9, 2024

BIG BOY NO. 4014'S WESTWARD BOUND TOUR SCHEDULE IS OUT! Union Pacific's legendary Big Boy No. 4014, the world's largest operating steam locomotive built to conquer mountains, will make 19 whistle-stops in five states this summer during its 2024 Westward Bound Tour from Wyoming to California.

In addition, this mighty steam locomotive will be on public display for two days each in Roseville, California, July 12-13, and Ogden, Utah, July 20-21.

Big Boy will leave its home base in Cheyenne, Wyoming, on Sunday, June 30, traveling across Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, California and Idaho during July. Display days in Roseville and Ogden offer an up-close look at the 1.1-million-pound marvel along with the "Experience the Union Pacific" rail car, a captivating walk-through exhibition that provides a unique glimpse into the rich history of railroading.

Scheduled whistle-stops: Sunday, June 30: Laramie, Wyoming; Monday, July 1; Wamsutter, Wyoming; Wednesday, July 3: Green River, Wyoming; Thursday, July 4: Morgan, Utah; Saturday, July 6: Wells, Nevada; Monday, July 8: Carlin, Nevada and Battle Mountain, Nevada; Tuesday, July 9: Gerlach, Nevada; Thursday, July 11: Oroville, California; Sunday, July 14: Colfax, California and Truckee, California; Tuesday, July 16: Lovelock, Nevada; Wednesday, July 17: Carlin, Nevada; Friday, July 19: Montello, Nevada; Monday, July 22: Brigham City, Utah, and Soda Springs, Idaho; Tuesday, July 23: Kemmerer, Wyoming; Thursday, July 25: Point of Rocks, Wyoming; Friday, July 26: Medicine Bow, Wyoming

Check out the official steam schedule at www.UPsteam.com!

Next week, special Big Boy tour merchandise will begin to arrive at our online store so you'll be able to place your orders in time for the upcoming tour! Check out the online store link that will be posted on www.UPsteam.com next week .

During the tour, the Union Pacific Museum will host a special passenger trip. The unique experience is the annual gala fundraiser for the nonprofit organization and provides a rare opportunity to travel on this historic heritage equipment. More information on the specifics will appear at www.UPtrainTix.org when they become available.

Locations where the Big Boy stops overnight are closed to the public due to safety and security reasons, unless otherwise noted on the schedule. Non-employees who access these locations without permission will be treated as

trespassers. To check out No. 4014, please visit one of the listed public whistle-stops.

Union Pacific reminds all rail fans to keep safety top of mind and stay 25 feet back from the tracks when taking a picture or viewing this mammoth machine. That means never take a picture or video standing on the track or the ballast and never climb on the locomotive or equipment. Remember, railroad tracks, trestles, yards, and right-of-way are private property - do not trespass. If you are following the Big Boy, be a safe and courteous driver - do not pace the train. REMEMBERING THE GREAT RACE TO OGDEN! Five years ago today, Union Pacific celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, complete with the Big Boy No. 4014 meeting up with the Living Legend No. 844 in Ogden to recreate the historic driving of the Golden Spike in Utah. Relive this historic day that also celebrated the restoration of No. 4014 back into service in this video! That's all for now. Until next time, stay safe! - Union Pacific Steam Club

CPKC'S FINAL SPIKE ANNIVERSARY STEAM TOUR ENTERS THE U.S. "THE EMPRESS" ENTERS THE STAGE. On April 29, 2024, Canadian Pacific steam locomotive No. 2816 crossed into the United States at Portal, N.D., for the first time in over a decade. The engine is powering a tour covering three countries to celebrate the anniversary of the Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern becoming the new CPKC Corporation.

Canadian Pacific H-1b 4-6-4 No. 2816 was built by the Montreal Locomotive Works in 1930. The engine ended service on Montreal area commuter trains in 1960, and was subsequently acquired by F. Nelson Blount for his Steamtown collection. In 1998, Canadian Pacific under CEO Robert Ritchie, reacquired the engine from Steamtown National Historic Site and sent the engine to Vancouver, British Columbia, for a restoration to operational service.

The engine returned to steam in 2001. Dubbed "The Empress," the 2816 initiated the new Canadian Pacific steam program. The engine toured the CP system including a few visits to the United States for ten years until a change in Canadian Pacific leadership brought CEO E. Hunter Harrison on board, and the 2816 was retired and stored in Calgary's Ogden Shops.

A change in fortunes for the 2816 occurred in 2020 with the appointment of new CEO Keith Creel. With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the country, the company decided to host a virtual Holiday Train, and the 2816 was fired-up and operated around the Ogden shops area for filming purposes. Shortly thereafter, plans were set in motion for the eventual Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern merger to form the CPKC system. The 2816 was put in the shops for a full rebuild to bring the engine up to current FRA specifications. With this, additional work converted the engine from grease lubrication to an oil-fed lubrication system based on Southern Pacific practices, and PTC was added. No. 2816 returned to operational service in 2023, and several test runs ironed out the expected teething issues.

With the merger approved, CPKC announced a Final Spike tour would operate with the 2816 leading a passenger train from Calgary, Alberta, across Canada, into the United States, and down to Mexico City, scheduled for three months between April and June 2024. Subsequently, CPKC posted a list of display stops and a tour schedule with a live tracker on a special webpage for the tour at Final Spike 2816 Steam Train.

TRAIN OF THE HOUR. On April 24, the railroad opened the Ogden Shops in Calgary to the public with the 2816 under steam, along with various tents for the railroad along with Operation Lifesaver.

Two days later, the No. 2816 departed Calgary with FP9s Nos. 1401 and 4107, along with new hydrogen fuel-cell diesel No. 1001, two water tanks, a boxcar, and

14 passenger cars. The 1001 was dropped at the first day's destination of Medicine Hat, Alberta, and the 2816 and F-units continued on the following morning for the run to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. After a display date in Moose Jaw, the Final Spike tour turned south and crossed into the United States at Portal, N.D. to end the day in Minot on April 29. April 30 found the 2816 on display in Minot, and the engine departed on May 1 headed for Minneapolis, Chicago, Kansas City, and points south.

Railfans were able to continue to follow Trains Magazine and www.Trains.com for continuing coverage of the Final Spike tour with live-stream events from display sites. The Final Spike Anniversary Steam Tour was also filmed for a DVD covering the history of the Canadian Pacific, Kansas City Southern, the new CPKC System, and the No. 2816 to be released for the holidays. (Trains News Wire) Note: If you go to the www.trains.com website's News Wire section, this article by Kevin Gilliam includes Kevin's photo coverage of the Steam Tour.

CITING CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINT, NEIGHBORS PUSH BACK ON AMTRAK'S NEW BALTIMORE TUNNEL: 'WE'RE TAKING IT TO A WAR'. Amtrak presented plans for a new tunnel through working-class black neighborhoods as a foregone conclusion on May 8th.

An elementary school auditorium full of Baltimoreans wasn't so sure. "Since your plans don't want to meet us on our grounds, we're going to meet you on another ground. You chose the battle, and we're taking it to a war," West Baltimore resident Deborah Morris told Amtrak officials.

At the first in-person meeting hosted by Amtrak, a coalition of neighbors filed a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Transportation to halt the construction of the Frederick Douglass Tunnel citing residents concerns about pollution and structural racism.

The Reservoir Hill Association is represented by New York University School of Law's Civil Rights and Racial Justice Clinic in the complaint under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which allows Federal agencies to block the recipients of Federal funding from implementing programs that have an "unjustified discriminatory impact."

The new \$6 billion tunnel would be 3.7 miles and head northwest and west out of Penn Station through the Reservoir Hill, Penn North, Sandtown-Winchester, Bridgeview/Greenlawn, Midtown-Edmondson and Penrose/Fayette neighborhoods before meeting existing tracks west of Maryland Route 1.

Earlier this year, Amtrak filed lawsuits in Federal court to acquire a handful of residential and commercial properties in the 2000 block of West Lanvale Street through eminent domain, near where the proposed tunnel would exit. Work on tracks and drainage started last year, tunnel boring is planned to start in 2026, and the project is scheduled to be finished in 2035, according to Amtrak.

According to a "record of decision" from 2017, when the Federal Railroad Administration signed-off on the project, a "no-build" option to use the site of the existing tunnel was dismissed for not reducing travel time. The three finalist routes Amtrak considered all curved north to pass through the Reservoir Hill, Penn North, Sandtown-Winchester, Bridgeview/Greenlawn, Midtown-Edmondson and Penrose/Fayette neighborhoods.

On the night of May 8th, residents questioned why a more direct route was not selected. "The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. That route that is going through our neighborhoods is inequitable," Reservoir Hill resident Angel St. Jean said at the meeting.

According to the document, the selected route "would have substantial beneficial impacts on transportation that outweigh the physical impacts of constructing the [route]".

The civil rights complaint claims that construction would disproportionately harm Black and low-income communities and that Amtrak has not done enough to

gather community feedback.

At Mount Royal Elementary School in Bolton Hill on Wednesday night, May 8, Amtrak officials spent most of the two-hour meeting talking about the windows, landscaping and other aesthetics of three new ventilation facilities.

Odessa Phillip, a contracted spokesperson who ran the meeting for Amtrak, asked attendees to download a smartphone app and vote on different color choices or other exterior details.

"If you prefer the bay window option, the color preference choices would be black charcoal, cream or olive green," Phillip said to increasingly gasps and groans over an hour into the meeting. Residents pushed back, raising concerns about pollution from the ventilation systems as well as freight trains running below their homes carrying hazardous materials.

"It feels as though our voices are being muzzled," St. Jean told Phillip during a question-and-answer session. "We're going through these designs and being asked to weigh in on designs when our actual concerns are not being addressed. I don't care about the windows."

Residents are especially concerned about a ventilation facility directly across from Dorothy I. Height Elementary School in Reservoir Hill. An Amtrak consultant said Wednesday night that the facility would be operated only during an emergency such as a fire. "We're talking about an emergency that will never happen," an Amtrak consultant said at the meeting. "Oh, it will happen," said Joan Pullian, a 20-year resident of Reservoir Hill said.

According to Amtrak, emissions associated with the ventilation facilities will not violate air quality standards established by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Amtrak officials reiterated Wednesday that the Frederick Douglass Tunnel is for electrified passenger trains. The current Baltimore & Potomac Tunnel does handle freight from Norfolk Southern, and according to the record-of-decision document signed by a Federal Railroad Administration associate administrator, freight is not out of the question for the new tunnel. "The Project has been designed not to preclude freight traffic through the tunnels, including double-stack freight," the document reads.

"One, we would like a commitment of no freight under our home. Two, we don't want a ventilation facility across the street from a school, and three, we would rather have a more equitable route for the tunnel," St. Jean said.

Amtrak is hosting meetings about the project bimonthly. The next virtual meeting is scheduled for July 1 and the next in-person one is July 10.

The existing 150-year-old Baltimore & Potomac Tunnel is about 1.4 miles long, consists of three small tunnels connected by short openings, and runs southwest and west out of Penn Station through the Bolton Hill, Madison Park, Sandtown-Winchester and Upton neighborhoods. According to Amtrak, the tunnel has water damage and a sinking floor, and forces trains to slow to no more than 30 mph, causing frequent delays. (Baltimore Sun)

NORFOLK SOUTHERN REACHES \$600 MILLION SETTLEMENT TO SETTLE EAST PALESTINE DERAILMENT SUIT.

Norfolk Southern has reached a \$600 million settlement that, if approved by a court, will resolve all lawsuits covering thousands of residents within 20 miles of the 2023 East Palestine, Ohio, derailment that spilled more than a million pounds of hazardous chemicals into the soil, water, and air. NS said the settlement is intended to offset costs related to the spill that sent a plume of toxic smoke into the air and displaced many residents and businesses. But NS didn't admit to any liability or wrongdoing as a result of the settlement.

"Individuals and businesses will be able to use compensation from the settlement in any manner they see fit to address potential adverse impacts from the derailment," NS said in a statement. "This could include healthcare needs

and medical monitoring, property restoration and diminution, and compensation for any net business loss."

The settlement of the class-action lawsuit, which subsumed 31 separate cases, also allows residents within 10 miles of the derailment to receive additional compensation.

In an April 9 court filing, the plaintiffs said they expected to file a motion for the judge to approve the settlement within 10 days. Attorneys representing the claimants said they hope to make the claims process easy and efficient and to begin sending out payments by the end of 2024.

"We believe this is a fair, reasonable and adequate result for the community on a number of levels, not the least of which is the speed of the resolution, and the overall amount of the awards residents can expect, which will be significant for those most impacted by the derailment," said Seth Katz of Burg Simpson Eldredge Hersh & Jardine, M. Elizabeth Graham of Grant & Eisenhofer, Jayne Conroy of Simmons Hanly Conroy and T. Michael Morgan of Morgan & Morgan, in a combined statement.

Following the February 3, 2023, NS freight train derailment, residents were ordered to evacuate temporarily. State and Federal environmental officials say testing shows the air and water in the town is now safe, but some residents still complain of health problems, including burning sensations in their eyes, tingling in their lips, heaviness in their chest and swelling of lymph nodes in their necks and groins.

Since then, NS says it has spent \$104 million in community assistance to East Palestine and the surrounding areas, \$4.3 million to upgrade the area's drinking water infrastructure and \$500,000 for economic development, among other contributions. East Palestine has a population of 5,000.

But several class-action lawsuits say the company hasn't done enough to remediate the toxic chemicals released into the area. They also blamed NS for negligence.

The EPA's latest update on the aftermath of the derailment notes that among several changes in the region's environment, "deceased fish were observed by response staff in a sulfur run during routine stream monitoring" on April 5. The investigation determined that the fish were killed when swimming through pumps that are diverting water out of the sulfur run, and the EPA required NS to remediate the stream and determine a better plan.

Among the questionable decisions NS made was a massive, controlled burn that released toxic chemicals into the air three days after the derailment. NS said there was an imminent risk of an uncontrolled explosion if the chemicals were not released and burned off. The officials on the ground who authorized the controlled burn were told they had only minutes to make the decision before an explosion. But the chair of the National Transportation Safety Board testified last month at a Senate hearing that the controlled burn was unnecessary. (CNN)

NS VS. ANCORA: PROXY BATTLE FOR CONTROL OF CLASS I ARRIVES. After months of buildup, the battle for control of Norfolk Southern has arrived. On May 9th, NS shareholders will have their say during the railroad's annual shareholder meeting. On one side of the battle is CEO Alan Shaw, who is hoping to keep the job that he has held for just two years. On the other is Ancora Holdings, a major shareholder that is offering up its own board nominees and executive leadership team on the belief that they can squeeze more profit out of the Class I railroad.

In the weeks leading up to the May 9th vote, shippers, unions, and regulators have all had their say about who they believe is best fit to lead the railroad.

At the core of Ancora's critique of Shaw is that the CEO kept too many additional resources on hand during a traffic downturn and that he made missteps following last year's fiery train wreck in East Palestine, Ohio. Ancora would

like to bring in former UPS Chief Operating Officer Jim Barber as NS' new CEO and former CSX executive Jamie Boychuk as the new Chief Operating Officer. Ultimately the shareholders' group wants NS to implement Precision Scheduled Railroading, which is known to squeeze maximum profit out of railroads at a more rapid pace.

Ancora's attempt to oust Shaw began earlier this year and they have taken every opportunity to criticize him. In March, after a derailment in Pennsylvania, Ancora called for the CEO's resignation. Ancora has been able to line up some support for its bid, including from major shippers like steel producer Cleveland-Cliffs. It also got the support of two unions, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees. But documents published by a competing union suggest that BLET is trying to get a better deal for its members by supporting new management.

For his part, Shaw said the railroad is getting back on track after the fallout from East Palestine and that shareholders should stay the course. "The choice really couldn't be any more clear for our shareholders," Shaw told the Associated Press. "We make promises and we've continued to keep our promises, and we will continue to deliver. And we've got a long-term vision for Norfolk Southern where shareholders win, as opposed to the activists who've got a short-term and erratic approach where shareholders lose."

Among Shaw's defenders is retiring U.S. Surface Transportation Board Chair Martin Obermann, who has been heavily critical of the push to PSR. "It's not my position to urge shareholders how to vote in this election," he said at a shipper's conference. "It is my responsibility to call out serious threats to the national rail network." He went on to say that running a railroad with the bare minimum of people and equipment might work when "the sun is shining" but not when problems arise, as history has shown. "We are now confronting a situation where one group is either completely ignorant of these recent past lessons or has willfully chosen to ignore them in an effort to make a quick buck," he said. (Railfan & Railroad News)

A NEW \$16 BILLION RAIL TUNNEL WILL CONNECT NEW JERSEY AND NEW YORK CITY.

Construction on a new rail tunnel connecting New Jersey and New York is underway. The \$16 billion Hudson Tunnel Project is expected to boost the regional economy.

Stephen Sigmund, Chief of Public Outreach for the Gateway Development Commission, said right now the Northeast Corridor line, which carries NJ Transit and Amtrak trains, has only one track in and out of New York City. The new tunnel will add "two new tracks, new tubes, under the Hudson River to connect New York and New Jersey on that critical choke point."

The Gateway Development Commission was created as a special purpose entity representing New Jersey, New York, and Amtrak to develop and facilitate the tunnel project.

Sigmund said the existing tunnel, built in 1910, is also being renovated. "It is very prone to delays and water incursion and cracking and all sorts of things that happen when you're 114 years old," he said.

WHAT THE TUNNEL MEANS FOR THE REGIONAL ECONOMY. James Hughes, Professor and Dean Emeritus of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, said the current Northeast Corridor rail line is not up to the standards of high-speed rail travel in Europe, but it carries more passengers between New York and Washington, D.C. than airlines.

"It is critical for moving people up and down the corridor," he said. "So it is extraordinarily important to the regional economy; the regional economy is the largest part of the U.S. economy." He said the tunnel will allow for more mobility and convenience for commuters and "is vitally, vitally important."

A report released at the beginning of May by the Regional Plan Association

finds that the Hudson Tunnel Project will generate \$19.6 billion in economic activity and create approximately 95,000 jobs during its construction.

Hughes noted the specific impact of the number of jobs created and the amount of economic activity generated is always hard to predict, "but certainly it will be one of the largest infrastructure construction projects, perhaps ever." Sigmund agrees the project is vital because it gives Jersey residents easy access to "quality, reliable rail transportation, because so many people use it to get to and from their jobs and to and from entertainment."

Work is also underway on the Westside of Manhattan to allow the new tunnel to connect to Penn Station.

THE PROJECT'S TIMELINE Sigmund said work on the Hudson Tunnel began on both sides of the river last November, and that the Hudson River ground stabilization project will begin this summer. "Where the tunnel comes up, as it gets towards Manhattan, the bottom of the Hudson River has a sort of chocolate pudding consistency there," he said. "And it needs to be hardened with a combination of soil and water and concrete so that the tunnel-boring machines can get through."

He said the new tunnels should be completed in 2034. As part of the project, construction workers are renovating the two existing tubes one at a time. The whole project, along with renovations, should be done in 2038.

WHO IS FUNDING THE HUDSON TUNNEL PROJECT? Sigmund said \$12 billion is coming in as Federal investment. "It's really an unprecedented amount of Federal money towards a mass transit project, but it's necessary because this is a critical link," he said.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, along with New York and New Jersey, is investing \$4 billion, with Jersey responsible for \$300 million.

The Garden State is already paying \$1.6 billion to build a new Portal North Bridge, a few miles from where the Northeast Corridor line moves underground and goes under the Hudson River.

When completed, the new rail tubes will stretch a total of nine miles, from North Bergen, New Jersey, to Penn Station, New York. (WHYY PBS)

NEW HAVEN'S 'ROGER WILLIAMS' RUNS AGAIN AT BERKSHIRE SCENIC - ONE-THIRD OF THE HISTORIC RDC TRAIN RAN FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 30 YEARS. Part of the Roger Williams, an experimental high-speed train introduced by the New York, New Haven & Hartford in the mid-20th Century, ran for the first time in more than 30 years on April 27. The historic RDC car is owned by the non-profit Budd RDC Foundation and is being leased to the Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum in Massachusetts.

Introduced in 1956, the train used existing RDC propulsion technology, and could also draw power off third-rail for operation into Grand Central Terminal in New York City. The train continued to operate into the Amtrak era until the surviving cars were sold into private ownership in the mid-1980s. The train eventually ended up at New Hampshire's Hobo Railroad (now the Granite State Scenic).

Last year, the three cars of the Roger Williams and two other RDCs (former New Haven RDC-1 41 and former Baltimore & Ohio RDC-2 1960) were moved to BSRM. The cars had been cosmetically restored but still needed some mechanical work to run. Enough of that work was completed recently to allow the lead unit (NH 140) to operate on its own power. Officials said more work is needed to be done "but for now, a piece of history came back to life today." (Railfan & Railroad News)

STB RELEASES FINAL 'RECIPROCAL SWITCHING' RULE. The U.S. Surface Transportation Board announced on April 30, that shippers will soon have an easier time requesting service from another Class I in terminal areas when the railroad they normally ship with is not providing adequate service, a practice known as "reciprocal switching."

"Reciprocal Switching" is what happens when a customer that is only served by one railroad arranges for another nearby railroad to move its traffic. However, the practice is rare in modern railroading. While shippers and trade groups have long said it would increase competition, Class I railroads (through their lobbying group, the Association of American Railroads) have said it would wreak havoc on the rail network by letting multiple railroads operate on one line (although that isn't unusual elsewhere in the world).

According to the STB, no rail customer has succeeded in obtaining a reciprocal switching order in the last 40 years. In fact, because of the perceived challenges of getting such an order, no customer has even attempted to request one since 1990. In 2016, the STB announced that it was going to make it easier for customers to gain access to multiple railroads, an idea that was quickly denounced by the industry.

Last year, the Board proposed uniform standards that the Class Is would have to maintain in order to avoid having the STB issue a reciprocal switching order to a customer. The hope is that the Class Is will ensure that their service does not drop below a certain level so that they never have to face a potential service order.

The standards include "Service Reliability," "Service Consistency" and "Inadequate Local Service." Service Reliability, for example, means that a railroad ensures shipments get to their destination when promised the ("original estimated time of arrival" or OETA) at least 70 percent of the time over the course of 12 weeks (the proposal from last year initially called for just 60 percent of the time).

The STB would also consider if service issues were the result of natural disasters out of a railroad's control before issuing a service order.

While shippers have lobbied for a reciprocal switching rule for years, the STB finally felt it needed to act during the service crisis a few years ago. (Justin Franz - Railfan & Railroad)

REVIEW OF AN APRIL 17 2024 TALK BY WESLEY HEINZ WMSR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WHO GAVE A VERY INFORMATIVE TALK TO AN INTERESTED AUDIENCE IN CUMBERLAND MD. His presentation highlighted the 2024 season for the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad and its new Georges Creek Division, between Barton and Westernport along the historic Georges Creek coal-mining area, which should be operating by Christmas.

CSX will be helping to position railroad equipment near Westernport. Two GP9 units, 25 and 39, will be providing motive power for the Georges Creek Division. A third unit may be a Navy 80-ton center-cab unit or perhaps another GP9 unit. Three or four passenger coaches will be transferred to Barton or Westernport.

Allegany County government would like the Georges Creek Division to be the common carrier freight line for the Luke mill site whatever the future operations there.

Heinz reported on the yearly increase of passengers riding the WMSR. In 2021, the scenic railroad had 47,000 passengers; in 2022, there were 62,000 passengers; and last year in 2023, it had 75,000 passengers, including 37,000 passengers riding the Polar Express trains during the Christmas season.

The WMSR has had a \$17 million impact on the local community. It has been a platinum sponsor for UPMC Western Maryland, which provides healthcare services for residents in Allegany and Garrett Counties in Maryland and surrounding counties in West Virginia and Pennsylvania, and has sponsored Levitt Music performances on the stage at Canal Place festival grounds in Cumberland. (The Automatic Block - Western Maryland Chapter, NRHS)

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FIRST CLASS