

POTOMAC RAIL NEWS

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

NOVEMBER 2018



HERITAGE COLORS ON THE WESTERN MARYLAND! On August 12, 2018, Western Maryland Scenic Railroad's GP-30 No. 501 crosses Woodcock Hollow Road nine miles west of Cumberland, en route to Frostburg with a seven car lunch excursion train for NRHS conventioners. Photo by: Alex Mayes

PROGRAM: John King will present a digital program covering the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad between Baltimore and the Ohio River from the mid-1960s to the present. Scenes from the first 40 years of his presentation will be images scanned from his slides. The program will mostly cover the area between Baltimore and Grafton/Connellsville and may include a couple scenes from this fall to show how things have changed over the last 50 years.

MEETING: November 20, 2018. 8PM. Lobby Level Auditorium of the Montgomery County Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD.

NEXT MEETING DATE: December 18, 2018

DEADLINE FOR DECEMBER ISSUE: November 23, 2018. Send news items to Clay Moritz, Editor, Potomac Rail News, at c.moritz@comcast.net

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

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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 call the Chapter on (301) 251-9461.

IN MEMORIAM. With sadness we note the passing of long-time Potomac Chapter Member Nathaniel Johnson of Baltimore, MD. Nathaniel was born in Baltimore, MD, on August 24, 1968 and passed away there on June 7, 2018. Please remember Nataniel in your Thoughts and Prayers.

RAIL NEWS

UPDATE ON WESTERN MARYLAND #1309. From the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad's Blog post on October 25, 2018. Last year, 1309's wheels were sent to Chattanooga, TN, for turning and refurbishing. They will be arriving back in Cumberland within the next couple of weeks. All of this was made possible by supporters like you. Thank you for your encouragement support and continued donations. Donations can be made on the Scenic Railroad's website www.wmsr.com

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AMTRAK'S CAPITOL LIMITED STRIKES TRACTOR TRAILER AT GAITHERSBURG GRADE CROSSING.

One person was injured when Amtrak's train #29 collided with a tractor trailer stuck on the tracks the evening of November 5th at the grade crossing in downtown Gaithersburg, MD. Daniel Ogren, Acting Public Information Officer for Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service, reported the crash occurred near the intersection of Chestnut Street and East Diamond Avenue shortly before 5PM.

The train's 157 passengers were triaged and removed from the train. One passenger suffered nonlife-threatening injuries and was transported to a local hospital about 6:30PM, as reported by the fire and rescue service.

The red cab of the truck bore a sign for Paranormal Cirque, a traveling show featuring theater, cabaret and acrobatics that was scheduled to run from Thursday through Sunday at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds. The trailer and the equipment on the trailer came to rest just feet from a home next to the railroad tracks on Chestnut Street. Montgomery County Fire and Rescue said that pieces of debris damaged the home and pierced through the home's exterior walls, but no one was inside when it happened. MCFRS said there was an active diesel fuel leak in progress when crews arrived at the scene. It's estimated that 70 gallons of fuel spilled from the tractor trailer, and about 400 gallons spilled from the train.

Maryland Transit Administration reported both tracks were blocked as of 5:15 p.m. All train traffic, including MARC, CSX and Amtrak was shut down. Train #29 was traveling from Washington, D.C., to Chicago. Around 8PM, MCFRS spokesman Pete Piringer tweeted that MARC train service was resuming, single-tracking on the southbound main around the Amtrak train. The train's passengers, who had been sheltered at the Agricultural Center at the fairgrounds, were expected to reboard the train, with its one working engine, and head to Pittsburgh. (Bethesda Magazine www.bethesdamagazine.com & WJLA-TV/ABC7 www.wjla.com)

NS MOVES FORWARD WITH PLANS TO RELOCATE HQ TO ATLANTA. Norfolk Southern has provided an update on its impending headquarters move to Atlanta, GA, from Norfolk, VA, saying that it will spend \$575 million to build 750,000 square feet of office space in the lower part of midtown Atlanta, that it will create 850 jobs in the City, and retain 2,025 jobs already here.

The new HQ will be at West Peachtree Street at Ponce de Leon Avenue and Third Street. NS has long had a regional office in the Midtown district 12 to 14

blocks north of the proposed site. The new location will house its corporate staff and train operations staff. The company already has about 2,800 employees in the Atlanta area and more than 4,700 in Georgia.

The project is expected to generate \$811 million in economic benefits for the City, according to InvestAtlanta, Atlanta's economic development arm, which released a document containing the information. According to a published report, the document was made public after the Atlanta City Council voted on November 5th to approve up to \$1.9 billion in public financing to California developer CIM Group as part of a planned \$5 billion development project in a downtown area called the "Gulch" because it resembles a giant below-street-grade hole. The railroad owns 16 acres in the Gulch, and planned to sell it to CIM and put the proceeds into the new HQ project. NS made its relocation to Atlanta contingent upon consummation of the sale of the acreage.

Norfolk Southern has been based in Norfolk since it was formed in 1982 by the merger of the Norfolk & Western Railway and the Southern Railway. It has not disclosed any timetable for relocation. Real estate experts have told Freightwaves that the move continues a pattern of corporations leaving smaller venues where they may have a long history for larger locations with access to major airports. (FreightWaves www.freightwaves.com)

AMTRAK THRIVES IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE RETURN OF PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE TO ROANOKE. An Amtrak spokesperson said more than 54,000 people traveled to and from Roanoke, VA, in the first year. What's even more impressive is that ridership on the northeast route overall, running from Roanoke to Boston, is up nearly 10%. It's good news not just for Amtrak, but also for the Roanoke Valley.

"Everything is in walking distance to the platform, so people who are getting off the train have easy accessibility and it's really making an impact," Catherine Fox, Vice President of Public Affairs and Destination Development for Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge, said. The Hotel Roanoke is one of many businesses feeling the impact. "We have a lot of guests that come over into the hotel. They dine or they tell us they rode the train," Hotel Roanoke General Manager Brian Wells said. They've been working closely with Amtrak to offer special deals and bring more people to Roanoke via train. "Not having passenger railway in Roanoke for 35-plus years took away an element of travel experience so we were excited that people could get that great travel experience on a train, stop right here at the front door of the hotel," Wells said.

Rail service is pulling in people from Washington, D.C., in particular because of more business conventions and more tourists. "More people utilizing it to come here as a weekend getaway," Fox said. Now, some new businesses, like the boutique hotel going in the Liberty Trust Building, are moving downtown because of Amtrak. "That's an incredible opportunity for them and the guests that are going to be staying there," Fox said. Wells said an additional train is in the works in Lynchburg that would bring passengers to Roanoke in the middle of the day, instead of just late at night like it is now. He said while we've seen success so far, that would be a game-changer. (WSLS Channel 10, Roanoke)

TRAIN STOP COULD BE COMING TO BEDFORD. A train station could be coming to Plunkett Street in the town of Bedford, VA. "It's topographically as good a site (as) you can find in this part of the world. I mean, it's almost dead flat. We can get 90 to 100 spaces there," Brian McCrodden, a member of the Bedford-Franklin Regional Rail Initiative, said.

In an hour-long presentation on November 2nd, the Bedford-Franklin Regional Rail Initiative (BFRI) group informed community members why it believes it's time for Bedford to get its own train station. "It doesn't compete with either Roanoke or Lynchburg. It compliments them because people are becoming more and

more comfortable with this mode of transportation," said Vicki Gardner, the Executive Director of the Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Organizers said having a train stop will bring more people to Bedford's well-known attractions, such as Smith Mountain Lake. They said there is an economic benefit too, about \$1 million annually. We have benefit-cost ratios from about 1.8 to 3.6 for those two ridership estimates, even with only 2,800 riders, which we think is a very lowball estimate. It's going to make economic sense," McCrodden said. On November 19th, the group will meet with the Commonwealth's Secretary of Transportation about its finalized proposal. "She agreed to meet with us. So I have to take that as positive. We're going to give it our best shot to make the same compelling case to her," McCrodden said. (WSLS 10 News, Lynchburg VA)

THE FUTURE OF NC&STL STEAM GLOWS BRIGHTER. The Nashville Steam Preservation Society (NSPS) announced on October 11th that, thanks to the generosity of hundreds of donors from across the nation and the globe, it has surpassed its initial fund-raising goal of \$500,000. Achieving this milestone enables NSPS to relocate the famous Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis steam locomotive No. 576 from Nashville's Centennial Park to a nearby shop facility for a complete restoration to operation. This highly anticipated relocation of the locomotive is planned for late 2018 or early 2019.

No. 576 is the only remaining J3 Class 4-8-4 steam locomotive built for the NC&StL Railway. The locomotive was designed in the company's office building on Broadway in the heart of Nashville and manufactured by the American Locomotive Company in 1942. The locomotive, long associated with Nashville's Country Music Roots, has been on display in Nashville's Centennial Park since 1953. Fans of Johnny Cash will also recognize the locomotive from his 1969 Life Magazine cover.

As part of a 2016 lease agreement with Metro Nashville, owner of No. 576, NSPS was required to raise \$500k prior to relocating the locomotive to ensure sufficient funding was in place. Now that the initial goal has been met, the locomotive will be moved from Centennial Park to a live railroad track nearby. No. 576 will then be moved to the Tennessee Central Railway Museum about five miles away where the restoration is planned to take place. NSPS anticipates an additional \$2 million will need to be raised over the next 3-4 years to restore No. 576 to operation. Several funding opportunities as well as grant programs are being explored to help offset the costs. If you would like to donate, go to www.nashvillesteam.org/donate (Nashville Steam Preservation Society)

SOO LINE 2719 UPDATE. The Soo Line steam locomotive No. 2719 was first given to the City of Eau Claire, WI, back in 1960. It was eventually leased to the Lake Superior Railroad Museum in 2006 and the engine was sent to Duluth, MN. Now that the City has officially bought back the locomotive for \$4, questions still remain on how it will get to Eau Claire, where it will go, and how much it will cost.

City officials at a recent community input meeting presented five potential locations. A campaign selling a commemorative poster has now been launched to cover some costs, which are estimated anywhere between \$31,000 and \$100,000 total for transportation and a new shelter to protect the locomotive. Bid proposals for the transportation costs are expected shortly.

According to City documents, it would cost an estimated \$31,000 to move the train from Duluth to Eau Claire. This would be done on a flatbed rail car. Another \$59,500 or so is estimated to build a shelter to protect it and a track to place it on.

Locomotive No. 2719, a 4-6-2 Pacific Type, was built in 1923 by the American Locomotive Company. The locomotive pulled passenger trains between Minneapolis and Chicago until the late 1950s. This coal-powered locomotive was restored by

the Locomotive & Tower Preservation Fund. They ran it in excursion service until the early 2000s. It was later leased to the Lake Superior Railroad Museum in Duluth, which also ran it on excursions until a few years ago when it was sidelined because of the need for repairs. (Brooke Schwietens WEAU13 News)

AGE OF STEAM ROUNDHOUSE NEWS. After nearly a decade of discussions with the City of Canton, Ohio, the Age of Steam Roundhouse was happy to announce that it has purchased and received its latest locomotive, former Wheeling & Lake Erie 0-6-0 No. 3960. Displayed in Canton for 33-years but moved away during 1991, the 0-6-0's stripped carcass and tender had been sitting outdoors in Minerva since 2006 while ownership issues and plans for the engine's future were debated. The City of Canton had to offer the locomotive for sale to the highest bidder and the Age of Steam won the bid. Afterwards, No. 3960's boiler was separated from its frame, and along with its tender, were loaded onto four flatbed truck trailers and moved to the Age of Steam facilities in Sugarcreek, Ohio, on October 9, 2018.

Years ago, in order to save about \$7,000 per locomotive from the cost of commercially constructed locomotives, the W&LE from 1928-1930 built twenty 0-8-0 switchers and thirty 0-6-0 switchers in its well-equipped backshop in Brewster, Ohio. They proved very successful. The forlorn No. 3960 will eventually undergo a massive cosmetic restoration by Age of Steam Roundhouse to replace dozens of rusted, lost, and stolen parts. This seemingly endless saga will now have a happy ending in Sugarcreek. (Thanks to Wes Ross and Ken Borg)

KCS HOLIDAY EXPRESS READY TO ROLL. Kansas City Southern's 18th Annual Holiday Express will distribute \$171,756 in gift cards to The Salvation Army along its 27-stop journey through 22 communities in eight states. The gift cards are designated for the purchase of warm clothing and other necessities for children in need. Major sponsors who helped make this year's charitable contribution possible include APL Logistics Americas Ltd.; Bartlett Grain/Savage Enterprises; Deanne Porter and Patrick Ottensmeyer; Husch Blackwell LLP; Kansas City Southern Historical Society; Michael and Marlys Haverty Family Foundation; Precision Waste Solutions, L.L.C.; RailPros; Sirius; Cisco Systems, Inc.; The Kansas City Southern Charitable Fund; Wabtec Unitrac Railroad Materials and Watco Companies. Additional sponsors are listed on the KCS website.

Led by KCS' Southern Belle business train, the six-car Holiday Express includes a smiling tank car "Rudy"; a flatcar carrying Santa's sleigh, reindeer, and a miniature village; a gingerbread boxcar; an elves' workshop; the reindeer stable; and a little red caboose. Each car is dressed in lights.

The complete schedule is available on the KCS website. At each stop, visitors can board the train, visit with Santa and his elves and tour the inside of three cars. Each event is free and open to the public.

"The KCS Holiday Express was built on the tradition of the Santa Train, which ran on a segment of the network bought by KCS in 1997," KCS noted. "In 2000, a group of warm-hearted KCS employees noticed that the Santa Train was the only Christmas some kids had, and that some kids did not have essential items like coats, hats, and gloves, so they committed to elevating the project. In 2001, volunteers transformed a retired freight train to the experience that communities throughout KCS's U.S. service territory enjoy today." "KCS looks forward to bringing Santa and his elves on the Holiday Express train to communities throughout our U.S. service territory, and we are especially pleased to continue the tradition of charitable giving to each community where the train will stop," said KCS President and CEO Patrick J. Ottensmeyer. "This project brings people together, helps build relationships in the community and supports our corporate vision and values." (Railway Age)

CSX LOOKING TO SHED MORE THAN 1,100 MILES OF TRACK. CSX Corp. is making good on its pledge to trim surplus rail lines with more than 1,100 miles of track now up for grabs. In filings with the Surface Transportation Board, CSX targets 460 miles of track across 28 different lines. This is in addition to the 650 miles of track it solicited in June 2018. The lines that CSX is looking to sell, abandon, or discontinue service, are dispersed across a dozen states. Alabama stands to lose the most miles in CSX's STB filings at 180, but the 650 miles solicited in June, which are concentrated mostly in New York, are not broken down by miles.

At the railroad's investor conference in March, Mark Wallace, Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, forecasted \$500 million from selling rail lines, plus \$300 million in real estate sales, over the next three years. "If we don't need it, let's get rid of it," Wallace said during the conference. "Our team has been unleashed to generate revenue wherever we can find it."

The rail and real estate sales are part of a larger effort by CSX to right-size the company. It has reduced its workforce by thousands, sold or stored hundreds of locomotives and made other significant cuts to its asset base since the company adopted an efficiency-focused operating model called precision scheduled railroading in March 2017. (Jacksonville Business Journal)

DUE TO PTC COSTS VRE CONSIDERS FARE INCREASE. The Virginia Railway Express (VRE) is considering raising fares by 3% in its 2020 fiscal year, which begins July 1, 2019. The commuter railroad's operations board will consider the fare hike on December 14th when it reviews the proposed FY2020 budget.

"While we do all we can internally to control costs, there are factors beyond our control that will increase our costs year after year," VRE officials said in a post on the railroad's website. "These factors include the implementation of a Federally-mandated positive train control system, and contractual increases in track access and train operations."

VRE this month is hosting public hearings to gather feedback on the proposed fare hike. (Progressive Railroading)

WMSR ACQUIRES F40 TO BOLSTER DIESEL FLEET. The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad has acquired an F40PHR, rebuilt into an F40M-2F, No. 450, from Larry's Truck Electric in McDonald, Ohio. The unit will be placed in service to help GP30 No. 502 pull heavy passenger trains from Cumberland, MD, on the Western Maryland grade to Frostburg, MD. Western Maryland Scenic GP30 "No. 501 is down with multiple issues, and No. 502 cannot pull the mountain by itself," says Executive Director John Garner.

The unit started life as Amtrak No. 380, then Canadian American No. 450, before going to LTEX. Garner says the unit will get Western Maryland red and white circus colors, providing a provocative "what if" look for Western Maryland fans who might wonder what an F-unit scheme might look like on a more modern passenger unit. (Trains News Wire)

TAXING AUTHORITIES FILE APPEAL TO OVERTURN EXEMPT RULING FOR NS. Multiple taxing authorities in Central Pennsylvania have filed a joint appeal in court to fight a February 2018 ruling that railroad intermodal yards, in this case Norfolk Southern, are exempt from local taxes, the public utility realty tax (PURTA). The taxing authorities include: Dauphin County, Swatara Township, City of Harrisburg, and both Central Dauphin and Harrisburg School District.

They are fighting for \$2.14 million, which is what the taxing authorities say they will lose annually as a result of the finding. In September, the Dauphin County Board of Assessment Appeals granted exemption for NS' intermodal yard in Swatara Township and the City of Harrisburg. Because of this, Swatara

Township, specifically, was set to lose \$150,000 in tax revenue from NS and forced to refund the tax revenue it collected. Officials told FOX43 that the ruling was impacting the township fire department as well as school districts. "This big tax break for the railroad puts a heavy burden on taxpayers," said Commissioner George P. Hartwick, III, who oversees the County's Tax Assessment Office. "We intend to fight the railroad's claim to tax exemption under this archaic law, PURTA, that will leave the County and several taxing authorities, especially Harrisburg and Central Dauphin School Districts, with a revenue deficit." The following NS properties in the County have been deemed tax exempt based on the court's finding:

- 4250 Industrial Road in the City of Harrisburg, and
- Rutherford Yard, Milroy Road, 7750 Grayson Road, 7150 Grayson Road, and Derry Street L9 in Swatara Township.

"Norfolk Southern owns a great deal of property in Dauphin County," said County Board Chairman Jeff Haste, "and it's only right the railroad pay its fair share of taxes," said County Board Chairman Jeff Haste. "This loss of revenue is immediate and will be felt for years to come." (WPMT Fox 43 News, York PA)

LIRR GETTING A LEAF-MELTING LASER TO IMPROVE COMMUTE AND PROTECT TRAINS. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board has given the green light to a special "Laser Train" that will cruise the tracks and blast away slimy fallen leaves. The hope is that the mechanism will do away with a condition that officials call "slip-slide," which occurs when wheels hit a build up of pectin (a substance made from crushed leaves) on the rails. The slippery pectin can put flat spots on the wheels so they end up sliding along the rails, which tends to trigger the automatic brake, officials said.

The LIRR had to fix 3,390 wheel sets last fall and winter because of leaf residue and slip-side conditions. The "Laser Train" will ride the rails and blast them clean, according to the LIRR's plan. According to MTA documents, Laser Tribology BV, an Amsterdam-based company, got the \$370,000 contract to design and build a leaf-zapping train for a test in coming months.

As an additional precaution, the LIRR cut tree branches and other vegetation across 117 miles of track ahead of the leaf-peeping season. Railroad management also doubled the water pressure on two special trains that blast leaves and grime off the tracks. The leaf-lasering is all part of Long Island Rail Road President Phil Eng's effort to improve LIRR service as it struggles with poor on-time performance. In August, the LIRR's on-time rate was 87.4%, which is well below its goal of 94% of trains reaching their final stop within six minutes of schedule. Eng said he focused on repairing track switches, targeting 10 of them that accounted for 44% of delays. Five have been fixed, including one just west of the Jamaica, Queens, hub that had failed twice in a day. The work was completed June 26 and has yet to fail since then. Freddy Ferrer, Acting MTA Chairman, has praised Eng's efforts to turnaround LIRR service after a tough summer. "You're beginning to see the fruits of that, but it's gonna take some time," Ferrer said. (NY Daily News)

EVENTS

GRANDPA'S HOLIDAY TRAIN GARDEN PAGE FOR 2018. Grandpa has retired and left the Baltimore area to wander the country in a motor home with Grandma. His grandsons are no longer train-crazy but he is still enamored with the Baltimore tradition of Christmas Train Gardens. In collaboration with Chris Hancock of "Trainsrcool," he has compiled this list of train gardens. The list is meant to be inclusive, in addition to the traditional Baltimore firehouse holiday train gardens, any train display, open house, etc., whether holiday themed or not, is included, with a rather broad geographic coverage as well. Covered geographic areas include: Baltimore area, Washington DC and Maryland suburbs, Maryland - North, Maryland - West, Maryland & Delaware - Eastern Shore, Maryland - Western Shore, Northern Virginia, and Virginia - South. <http://www.wvmgrs.org/TrainGardens.htm>

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Website: <http://potomacnrhs.org/>

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