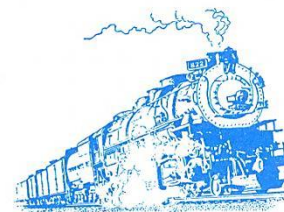


The Semaphore

South Shore Model Railway Club

NEWSLETTER

Home of the "East Coast Lines" since 1938



APRIL 25, 2022 ■■■■■■■■■■ VOLUME 42 ■■■■■■■■■■ NUMBER 4



HAPPY 51st BIRTHDAY AMTRAK!



The Semaphore

David N. Clinton, Editor-in-Chief



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The Semaphore is the monthly (except July) newsletter of the South Shore Model Railway Club & Museum (SSMRC) and any opinions found herein are those of the authors thereof and of the Editors and do not necessarily reflect any policies of this organization. The SSMRC, as a non-profit organization, does not endorse any position. Your comments are welcome! Please address all correspondence regarding this publication to: *The Semaphore*, 11 Hancock Rd., Hingham, MA 02043. ©2022
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VOLUME 42 ■■■■■ NUMBER 4 ■■■■■ APRIL 2022

CLUB OFFICERS

President.....	Jack Foley
Vice President.....	Rich Herlihy
Treasurer.....	Will Baker
Secretary.....	Eric Mercer
Chief Engineer.....	Fred Lockhart
Directors.....	Bryan Miller ('22)
	Bob England ('22)
	Roger St. Peter ('23)
	Gary Mangelinkx ('23)

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ON THE COVER: Amtrak’s Vermonter along Rte. 2 near Middlebury, VT in June 1998. For the first ten years of its life, the train had a special baggage car at Palmer. (DNC photos) Amtrak’s newest locomotive in the latest Phase VII paint. ([Railway Age](http://RailwayAge.com))

FORM 19 ORDERS

APRIL B.O.D. MEETING

Monday, April 25th 8 p.m.

MAY BUSINESS MEETING

Monday, May 2nd 8 p.m.

Celebrating Amtrak's 51st Anniversary

DCC & EQUIPMENT TUNE-UP CLINIC

Thursday, May 12th 8 p.m.

MAY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Sunday, May 21st

MAY B.O.D. MEETING

Thursday, June 2nd 8 p.m.

CONTESTS

Congratulations to **Dan Peterson** on winning this month's "50-50 Raffle!"



For the May Business Meeting, and to celebrate Amtrak's 51st birthday, please answer this question: Because of Amtrak mismanagement on several fronts, six long-distance trains remain on a 5-day/week schedule and one is still discontinued entirely, running into the busy summer season. **Name those seven trains.** Use answer forms in train room, email or any piece of paper and don't forget your name!

NOMINATING COMMITTEE CANDIDATES

President: Jack Foley
Vice President: Rich Herlihy
Secretary:
Treasurer:
Chief Engineer: Fred Lockhart
Director: Dave Galbraith
Director:

Nominations from the floor will be accepted at the May Business Meeting.

Doug Buchanan, Chairman, Nominations Committee

CHIEF'S CORNER

Fred Lockhart

This past month we have been working on several items: first, Bob England and I have done some tweaking on the reverse section next to the Boston yard. Most of the time, trains approach it by traveling by Great lakes yard and around the loops, but we also tested it in both directions with several different trains and locomotives and have found it now seems to operate as it should, with one member reporting to me that his train with lighted passenger cars ran through it without any problems. If anyone does experience any problems with either reverse section or any other problems with the railroad, please put a note in my mailbox. I check that every time I arrive at the club--no notes, no problems. We have started the last section of the new industrial area. Because of the existing railroad, we knew it would need to be built in place. I have started the sub-roadbed for the track that passes under the bridge, and comes upgrade to the mainline. There will be one short siding for a team track close to the mainline and that's all we can get in there. Due to the space needed to blend scenery from the end of Bryant City, which is higher up, and the need to have room to make the slopes of the land forms to look realistic and not use sheer cliffs everywhere. John Sheridan reports he has moved the power supplies for power district one to the new shelf below the district, which is part of West Middleton, he has also removed a lot of the obsolete wire that ran from under the old power supply locations under Hudson Falls all the way to W. Middleton. In the process he found and fixed another wiring problem.



Going forward, when the track work is done and wired as mentioned above, the Scenery Committee will work on applying scenery around the rear bridge abutment on both sides, a short distance each side so after the bridge is installed they don't have to get so close that they might damage the bridge.

Reminder to members running trains: please clear any turnouts that you throw in the course of running trains. It is frustrating to the next member

that runs after you to run into an open switch. It is also a club rule!

Well that is it for this month. Any questions or comments are always welcome.

Fred Lockhart
Chief Engineer

Semaphore Memories

APRIL 2017 (5 years ago)

- Siemens' new "Charger" locomotive begins testing in Western states and Florida.
- New LED tubes replace Fluorescents in train room.
- "Fast Clocks" installed on outside wall by Middleton.
- Steel mill area up-dated with new buildings & lighting.
- Florida East Coast Railway to be sold to Ferromex, Mexico's largest railroad by mileage.
- MBTA turns to outside contractors for repair of locomotives, due to "urgent need" for motive power.
- Allearth Rail spends \$4-million to buy 12 used RDC-1s for eventual commuter service in Northwestern Vermont.
- MBTA signs contract with China Railroad Rolling Stock Corp. for 134 additional Red Line subway cars, to be built at their new plant in Springfield, Mass.
- Brand-new British Steam loco "Tornado" undergoes inspection with 100-MPH test runs.
- Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus "Red Unit train" makes last trip to New England cities and is pulled by the classy Pan Am Railways FP9 cab units, while on ex-B&M trackage.
- MassDOT receives 20 new remote-control, steel ballast cars from FreightCar America.

APRIL 2012 (10 Years Ago)

- Yard tracks being laid in Cedar Hill.
- Third leg tied into layout, after temporary removed.
- Norfolk Southern releases "heritage" units decorated in NKP, Pennsy and Interstate RR.
- CPR's *Canadian* train featured on Canada's new \$10 bill, produced using new polymer material instead of paper.
- Amtrak floats in and opens new bascule lift spa over Niantic River in East Lyme, Conn., replacing 104-year-old span.
- VIA Rail Canada donates last F unit to NRHS in British Columbia. FP9 #6300 was built for CNR in 1957 as 6524
- MBTA Commuter Rail service begins to Wickford Jct., RI, stopping at T.F. Green Airport station.
- City of Roanoke donates N&W Class J 4-8-4 #611 and Class A 2-6-6-4 #1218 to Virginia Museum of Transport.
- Vermont Railway named Railway Age "Shortline of the Year".

APRIL 2007 (15 years ago)

- "Hobbytown of Boston" closes door; owner retires.
- French electric train with 25,000 HP locomotive breaks World speed record @ 357.2 MPH.
- Loco Programming Cart completed.

- Member Jack Bryant (D) awarded Congressional Gold Medal for service in WWII, as part of "Tuskegee Airmen".
- First "hybrid" freight car rolls off assembly line: from FreightCar America, the "BethGon II" made of Aluminum and Stainless Steel.

APRIL 2002 (20 Years Ago)

- State signs \$252-million contract with construction team to restore Greenbush Line.
- Scituate is last town to sign agreement with MBTA on Greenbush Line.
- P2K introduces "Heritage: 0-6-0 steam locomotive.
- State puts MassCentral trackage out to bid.
- Strasburg RR ships four "Thomas the Tank" engines it has built for various tourist lines.
- Amtrak and Guilford fight over 79-MPH proposed speed for Boston-Portland *Downeaster*.
- RailAmerica files to abandon Cape Breton & Central Nova Scotia on Cape Breton Island.
- CV roundhouse in New London, Conn. destroyed by fire.
- MBTA buys financially-troubled "Harbor Express" ferry service, which operated from Quincy to Boston.
- VMW Paducahbuilt files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.
- UP launches first advertising campaign in 20 years.
- First "Pot-Luck Supper" at SSMRC.

APRIL 1997 (25 Years Ago)

- Attendance at Show: 1,823—highest since 1991.
- Amtrak takes delivery of last of 50-car "Viewliner" sleeping car order.
- First MBTA GP40MC locomotive (ex-CN) arrives.
- "Buck" Dumaine, Jr., ex-New Haven president and ex-BAR president, dies.
- Amtrak discontinues *Desert Wind* and *Pioneer* trains.
- Bordon Foods closes Prince Spaghetti factory in Lowell, a large customer of the B&M.
- Green Mtn. RR agrees to buyout by Vermont Railway.
- Amtrak orders 21 new F59PH locomotives from EMD for West Coast service.
- Former member Kevin Linagen purchases Conrail (ex-Pennsy) caboose for work in the Quincy shipyard, where he is employed, and completes restoration and repaint.

APRIL 1992 (30 Years Ago)

- "Ye Ed" conducts first "clinic" on constant, directional lighting for locomotives.
 - CV abandons Richford Branch from Sheldon Jct., VT.
 - First passenger cars built in U.S. in five years roll of M-K assembly line in ex-EL shop in Hornell, NY.
 - All 20 of Amtrak's GE-built P32BH "Pepsi can" locomotives delivered.
 - "Mountain Division RR" defers planned startup to 1993, due to lack of funds. Looks to obtain "Flying Yankee" train from Edaville to run through Crawford Notch in New Hampshire.
 - Canton Jct. loses its operator to remote-control from South Station.
 - Amtrak awards M-K \$300-million contract to begin installing wires from New Haven to Boston.
- #### APRIL 1987 (35 Years Ago)
- State transportation officials announce they are "scaling down" restoration of Old Colony lines by scrapping Greenbush Line.

- CV promotes building new auto terminal facility in Belchertown, Mass.
 - Alaska RR orders first brand-new passenger equipment in its history.
 - Valley RR in Essex, Conn., becomes “agent” to import new Chinese steam locomotives still being produced.
 - New Orange Line relocation to “Southwest Corridor” opens.
 - 58 new Red Line cars from CanCar of Thunder Bay, Ontario, are assembled at former Mazda auto parts distribution center in Mansfield.
 - Conrail has record \$1.65-billion Initial Stock Offering, with \$28 shares selling for \$31 the first day.
- APRIL 1982** (40 Years Ago)
- Owner of the Cape Cod & Hyannis RR announces runs to/from Falmouth and Buzzards Bay, as well as from Hyannis.
 - “Ribbon-cutting ceremony” held for new “Cedar Hill Yard” in the South Division of SSMRC in Weymouth.
 - Conrail posts first profitable year, since formed in '76.
 - 30-car MEC freight plows into snow slide in Crawford Notch and gets stuck for several days.

POTPOURRI

AS CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES on the South Coast Rail restoration project outside of Boston, there is some doubt that the return to rail will be worth it. Fall River, New Bedford, and Taunton are the last cities within 60 miles of Boston to see rail make a comeback. The line was closed in 1959, forcing commuters to find other forms of travel. However, the new line might not be the best version of itself. State transportation planners moved the project to a slower and cheaper route due to the Hockomock swamp, the largest wetland in Massachusetts (16,950-acres-Ed). An environmental group threatened to sue if the MBTA attempted to build over the wetlands (Old Colony RR did for over 100 years-Ed). The trip from New Bedford to Boston will be 20 minutes longer due to the switch. Trains also will now have to manipulate through the tightest choke point in MBTA’s commuter rail system, which is a single track starting in Braintree. The MBTA estimates the trip to New Bedford to Boston will be about 90 minutes, which is longer than taking the route by car. Furthermore, no stops will be made at any of the downtown stops of South Coast cities, and there might not be any weekend service. The line is scheduled to open in late 2023. A second phase of the project is supposedly in the works, but MBTA did not include it in the agency’s five-year capital plan. (RA)

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THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT began taking steps during February to implement Positive Train Control in the country. Enhanced Train Control (ETC) is what PTC is being called in Canada. Due to the cross-border operations of U.S. and Canadian railways, both countries want to harmonize rail safety rules and protocols that complement each other, as both CN and CP already utilize PTC in their U.S. operations. (RP)

●●●●●

AMTRAK ON MARCH 31 PROVIDED a look inside its new Acela trainsets from Alstom that it said will now enter Northeast Corridor service in fall 2023—another delay. The 28 trainsets, ordered in 2016, were originally slated to enter revenue service in fall 2021, but combined COVID-19-related supply chain problems and technical glitches pushed their release until early spring 2022. When asked by *Railway Age* to explain the new 2023 service date, Amtrak said: “We want our customers to experience these new trainsets as soon as possible, but at Amtrak, we will never compromise safety and testing. Alstom needs to complete extensive computer modeling and simulation tests and ensure they meet FRA’s safety requirements with this latest generation of high speed technology. The fact is these are the first trainsets built under FRA’s Tier III rule, which sets new design specifications to allow for operation at the highest speeds and on shared corridors. We hope this will be the first of many trains built under this new framework and that the lessons learned here will benefit those efforts.” Each trainset will consist of two power cars (one at each end), seven Business Class coaches, one First Class coach and a café car.



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JIM WRINN, who aspired since his youth to be the editor of *Trains* magazine and served in the role for more than 17 years, died at home on March 30,

2022, after a valiant 14-month battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 61. Wrinn's longevity in the editor's role was second only to that of the legendary David P. Morgan, who led the magazine for more than 33 years and died in 1990 at age 62. Morgan's editorship and writings deeply influenced Wrinn, who began reading *Trains* in 1967 at age 6. History left it to Wrinn to preside over a challenging, transitional era for *Trains*, which Kalmbach Media predecessor Kalmbach Publishing Co. launched in November 1940. As editor-in-chief, Wrinn was fortunate to serve generations of readers who grew up on the print magazine, while at the same time broadening the magazine's appeal to a new digitally oriented audience. Becoming the editor of *Trains* was an idea planted by Wrinn's first college advisor, who in 1979 asked the young journalism student what his dream job would be. Wrinn's parents had already encouraged his railroad journalism by giving him a 35mm camera in 1977 and supporting numerous trips to see, ride, and photograph railroads. James G. Wrinn was born March 21, 1961, in the mountain town of Franklin, N.C., and spent his childhood there. He studied journalism at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where he worked for the college newspaper, the *Daily Tar Heel*. After graduating he worked at daily newspapers in Gastonia, N.C., and Fayetteville, N.C., before joining the staff at *The Charlotte Observer*, one of the South's leading newspapers, where he worked 1986-2004 in roles ranging from regional reporter to weekend city desk editor. He also wrote or co-authored five railroad books, including "Steam's Camelot," a definitive history of the steam programs of the Southern Railway and successor Norfolk Southern, published in September 2000 by TLC Publishing. Wrinn's first photo in *Trains* was published in the October 1982 issue. His first byline appeared in December 1989, a news story about the effects of Hurricane Hugo on Southeastern railroads the previous September. He went on to write numerous features before joining the staff on Oct. 27, 2004. (TN)

●●●●●●
MBTA BLUE LINE service will be suspended for a number of days to help accelerate work in the harbor tunnel and on a pedestrian bridge. The work schedule change will save between \$2-3 million in tunnel activities alone. Service will be paused from April 25 to May 8 between Airport and Bowdoin stations and May 12 to May 29 between Wonderland and Orient Heights stations. At the harbor tunnel site, crews will speed up track replacement work and other infrastructure improvements between April 25 and May 8. There will be 1,800 ft of full depth track replacement at a cost of \$5 million. The 14-day work acceleration will

be done instead of one year of work during nights and weekends. The move will cut costs involved in moving equipment and crews each time during the night and weekend closure approach. (RA)

●●●●●●
BRITISH CONTAINER FREIGHT operator GB Railfreight has outshopped a locomotive specially painted to honor the people of Ukraine. The Class 66 locomotive, named "Glory to Ukraine," is shown at the Arlington Fleet Services shop near Southampton in Southern England. The dual-cab locomotive was built at EMD's General Motors Diesel factory in London, Ontario, in 2002. GB Railfreight said in a press release it "stands with Ukraine and this newly painted locomotive honors the people affected by the conflict as they continue to courageously defend their homeland." (TN)



●●●●●●
LONGTIME EDAVILLE family theme park owner Jon Delli Priscoli says he plans to sell the 75-year-old park and scenic railroad. Generations of families have visited Edaville and he wants it to continue to be a destination for people of all ages. Delli Priscoli, 65, said the decision to sell was a tough one. "It's time for new energy", he said...it needs new energy, new vision". Since 2001, Delli Priscoli has been sole owner of the amusement park and scenic railroad, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. Edaville was closed from 1992 until 1999, when Delli Priscoli and two partners leased the park from the Atwood family. Ellis D. Atwood founded Edaville in 1947, when he built a 5-mile, narrow-gauge railroad around his cranberry plantation, creating one of the world's first tourist railroads. Over the past 21 years, Delli Priscoli has invested more than \$25 million in upgrades and expanded it into a full-scale park, with the addition of rides, indoor attractions, play areas and inter-active shows, as well as the creation of "Dino and" and "Thomas Land", featuring Thomas the Tank Engine. The park

closed due to the pandemic, and except for the return of the annual Christmas Festival of Lights last year, it has remained closed. He is exploring an expansion referred to as “Edaville 2.0”, a year-round facility with indoor and outdoor shopping, dining and entertainment. He said he will try to use a portion of the land not part of the park for residential development. While he hopes to have a new owner in place this summer, Delli Priscoli said he is planning to reopen it himself one last time. (PL)

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VIA RAIL CANADA has announced plans to restore most service by June, ending suspensions triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the previously announced return of two weekly round trips for the flagship, Toronto-Vancouver Canadian, plans announced last week will see three weekly round trips for the Montreal-Halifax Ocean, tentatively beginning June 3. Also returning to three weekly round trips will be services between Jasper, Alberta, and Prince Rupert, B.C., as of June 10; Sudbury and White River, Ontario, as of July 14; Montreal and Senneterre, Quebec, as of June 29; and Montreal and Jonquière, Que., as of June 29. (TN)

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AMTRAK HAS UNVEILED the new paint scheme to be worn by the remainder of its fleet of Siemens ALC42 locomotives, a two-tone blue design with a splash of red and white trim. The “Phase VII” scheme — the seventh standard design in Amtrak’s



50-year history — debuts on Charger No. 309, the 10th of the 75 locomotives on order. The white portions of the design are reflective for added visibility and safety, Amtrak says, with the white arcs separating the red and blue segments echoing the current Amtrak logo. Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner says that the new look “reflects the transformation underway at Amtrak as we welcome back our loyal customers while introducing new generations to rail travel.” (TN)

●●●●●●

THE FORMER PACIFIC Harbor Line engineer who intentionally derailed his train at the Port of Los

Angeles in 2020 was sentenced last week to three years in prison. Eduardo Moreno, 46, had pleaded guilty in December to committing a terrorist attack and other violence against railroad carriers and mass transportation systems for the March 31, 2020, incident when he ran his train off the track at high speed. At the time of his arrest, Moreno told police he had acted because he believed the U.S. hospital ship Mercy, docked in the harbor at the time, was part of a government conspiracy and wanted to bring attention to the situation. (TN) Whew... “they’re out there”...kind of scary!-Ed.

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A TRAINSET OF VIA RAIL CANADA’S new Siemens-built equipment made a circuit of corridor stations in Ontario stations April 13-14, 2022, testing track geometry and passenger loading and unloading. Running as special train No. 649, the Charger locomotive and full set of Venture cars stopped at all station between Ottawa, Brockville, Ont., and Toronto. It then ran to VIA’s Toronto Maintenance Centre for a unique “emergency rescue test” coordinated by VIA and Ontario transit agency Metrolinx. (TN)



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FEDERAL REGULATORS April 14th gave the green light to CSX Transportation’s acquisition of New England regional Pan Am Railways. The Surface Transportation Board’s unanimous, 75-page decision approving the merger becomes effective on May 14. But CSX said it planned to close on the transaction on June 1st. Regulators largely agreed with CSX’s arguments that the merger will result in much-needed capital improvements to the worn-out Pan Am system while improving service and safety. CSX has pledged to spend more than \$100 million to improve Pan Am’s tracks, bridges, and yards as well as its aging and failure-prone locomotive fleet, over the next three years. “After a searching review of the well-developed record in this proceeding, which included a two-day public hearing before the full Board, the Board concluded that this transaction satisfies the statutory criteria based on CSX’s representations to the Board. I look forward to improvements in the rail network with respect to

reliable service and competitive transportation options in New England and beyond,” STB Chairman Martin J. Oberman said. CSX, already the dominant freight railroad in the region, will extend its reach into Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, as well as to Saint John, New Brunswick, via Pan Am’s haulage rights agreement with Irving-owned short lines. (TN)

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METROLINK PUBLICLY shared its switch to renewable fuel, on April 13, 2022, making the agency the first in the nation to completely power all its locomotives by the cleaner burning alternative. The agency began using only renewable fuel in February. “It’s a proud achievement to be the first rail agency in the nation to use renewable fuel to move people around Southern California,” Metrolink Board Chair Ara Najarian says. “We are committed to continue working toward better air quality in our region and lessening our effect on climate change for the planet.” The renewable product is made of recycled natural fats and vegetable oils. It contains no petroleum fossil fuels and thus burns cleaner reducing harmful pollutants and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions of carbon dioxide by up to 80%.Metrolink is Southern California’s regional passenger rail service with 538 miles of track across Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties. (TN)

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THE

READING & NORTHERN Railroad reported that its T-1 steam locomotive, no. 2102, has successfully completed its test runs following its extensive five-year rebuild. The locomotive made a homecoming on April 6, stopping briefly at Reading Outer Station with hundreds of people looking on. 2102, a 4-8-4 Northern type built by the Reading Company in its Reading, Pa., shops in 1945, had been out of service since October 1991, and has been undergoing a \$2.4 million complete restoration over the past five years. Upon completion on April 4,

Andy Muller Jr., Owner/CEO of Reading & Northern, lit its firebox. (TN) The loco was one of three made famous by the Reading’s “Iron Horse Rambles” of the late ‘50s-early ‘60s. Savery and I were on some of those trips and I bet we’d both love to go again!-Ed.

●●●●●

EXECUTIVES FROM THE BIG four U.S. railroads — BNSF Railway, CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern, and Union Pacific — will take turns in the hot seat this week during two days of Surface Transportation Board hearings on widespread service problems. Federal regulators, fed up with ongoing shipper complaints, will want to know how and when the railroads will get their service out of the ditch. Average train speed is down an average of 9% over the past four weeks compared to a year ago, while terminal dwell is up 12%. And the number of trains held per day for lack of crews and power remains stubbornly high. This comes despite traffic volume being 4% lower than last year. Nearly two dozen shipper associations and individual shippers are scheduled to air their complaints during the April 26-27 hearings at the STB’s headquarters. They’ll be joined by officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Federal Maritime Commission, U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, as well as representatives from five railroad labor unions. (TN) All due to the Wall Street hedge funds and PSR, in my opinion.-Ed.

●●●●●

VIA Rail Canada wants about 90% of its proposed High Frequency Rail route between Toronto and Quebec City to be electrified. VIA CEO Cynthia Garneau said the 90% figure “is not a written goal” but that the company will aim to electrify as much of the route is possible. Portions of the route near city centers, using routes owned by other companies, might not be electrified. VIA unveiled the High Frequency Rail project, which would provide separate, passenger-only rights-of-way on parts of the corridor, in 2015. It remains largely conceptual, however, as the Canadian government has funded various studies but has yet to make a financial commitment to a project that could cost C\$12 billion or more. In its latest move, the government said it would seek private-sector involvement in the project, a process that will continue through fall 2024. (TN)

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FOUR OF THE SEVEN Amtrak long-distance trains currently operating five days per week will return to daily schedules the week of May 23rd. Two others will continue to run on the five-day-per-week schedule, while cancellation of *Silver*

Meteor service to and from Florida will continue until Sept. 11. "Bolstered by demand for both business and leisure travel, Amtrak will restore additional train frequencies for summer travel," Amtrak said in a statement. "Providing customers with increased travel options, the new summer schedule features additional Acela and Northeast Regional frequencies as well as some long distance routes." Returning to daily operation will be the *Lake Shore Limited*, *Southwest Chief*, *California Zephyr*, and *Empire Builder*, while the *Crescent* and *City of New Orleans* will remain at their current five-day-per-week frequencies. (TN)

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TESTOR PAINTS is evidently going out of business--probably not making enough money for corporate owner, Rustoleum. (Internet)

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A METRO-NORTH/CONNECTICUT Department of Transportation Kawasaki M8 electric multiple-unit trainset passes through Westbrook, Conn., on Saturday, April 23, during training runs for Amtrak crews to operate the equipment. The qualifying runs between New Haven and Old Saybrook, Conn., are reportedly in preparation for use of the M8s on Connecticut's Shore Line East commuter line between New Haven and New London, Conn. Amtrak provides the crews for the Shore Line East service. The M8s will replace current locomotive-hauled passenger cars. (TN)



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I ENJOYED THESE ARTICLES in this month's RR magazines and can suggest them to you:

TRAINS

King me!

51-story office building above South Station

Gulf Coast Showdown

Freaks, Frankensteins, and Fragments from Others

MODEL RAILROADER

Scenery Tips You Can Count On

A Module Designed for Photography

Trains of Thought

Paving the Way

DCC Currents

Wiring Block Detectors

RAILROAD MODEL CRAFTSMAN (March)

Taking Out the Trash

Diverging Points

The Forest Through the Trees

RAILROAD MODEL CRAFTSMAN

Modeling Illecillewaet Dam

Burlington Northern Trough Train

Diverging Points

Multi-Deck Layouts: Pros and Cons

CLASSIC TRAINS (Spring 2022)

Suburban Stalwarts

Steam tank locos—B&A style

The Best Day Ever

Train Time in Townsend

The Way it Was

Honorary Steam Locomotive

News sources: Boston Globe, Boston Herald, Trains "Newswire", Railway Age, Railpace Newsmagazine, RRE "Callboy", "The 470", Patriot Ledger, Rail Passenger Assoc.

LIBRARY CORNER
Dave Clinton. Librarian

New books will be displayed on the table in the Break Room for a month and can be checked out, by using the check-out sheet on the Break Room counter. They will be filed alphabetically in the Library afterwards.

This month's new book is Canadian Railways Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment Vol 1. This book by John Riddell covers regional and short line railroads in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritime Provinces. Published by Morningsickness Books and is in the usual all-color, 128-page, hardcover format, that this publisher is known to produce. So many never-before heard of railways! And some unusual paint schemes to boot. (Donated by Ye Ed.)

Don't forget we have a great DVD collection in the mailroom. Filed alphabetically. No need to sign out but please return to the book return tray in the Break Room when you're done. Happy reading and viewing!

DCC & EQUIPMENT TUNE-UP CLINIC

Four members attended this month's clinic—all with different projects.

Chris Barlow brought his Bachmann B&O EM1, a giant 2-8-8-4 to install a Tsunami sound decoder. Luckily, the loco came with a 21-pin receptacle for the decoder, so that part was simple and there is plenty of room inside the boiler for the speaker. The hardest part was converting the tender coupler to

Kadee. The factory coupler box is too thin and he had to file the coupler shaft to fit! Leave it to "Bochmann"!

Ed Bulman brought three New Haven RS-3s from Athearn R-T-R. He wanted to install DCC. Another good loco, with a 9-pin plug and "tray" over the rear truck to conveniently accept the Digitrax DH126 decoder. Pull out the "dummy plug" and insert the decoder without wires and tuck it into the tray. The hardest part is getting the shell back on, with the tray coming off the chassis. A good trick is to glue the tray to the chassis, then tuck the light wires above the motor assembly and carefully lower the body. The two screws under the cab must be removed, along with the couplers and their pockets. Definitely replace the crap Athearn plastic couplers!

Applicant **Jeffry Griesemer** brought his new Amtrak F40 by Kato, which included factory sound. He also brought his new DT602D Throttle and Paul Cutler III introduced him to addressing his locomotive and using his new throttle, so he was able to practice what he learned by running his locomotive around the layout several times.

Paul Cutler III brought his five new EP5 locomotives from Rapido to address and "adjust". Bought by the New Haven in the early '50s, they were known as "Jets", because of the tremendous noise from their cooling motors. Rapido has captured this, along with operating pantographs! He didn't like the way one of the pantographs didn't fully-seat, so he removed the shell and found the miniature, camera-style motor and adjusted the linkage, so that the pan went completely down. Interestingly, before all the locos were painted at GE, one was painted with a yellow mid-stripe and another with the red-orange stripe. The RR president's wife, Lucille, accompanied him to view the two locomotives in Erie and she chose the red-orange version. So, the yellow one was rolled back into the plant and never left the factory or pulled a train in that paint! Yet, this version was the most popular of all the numbers offered by Rapido...reason...it's unique!

Thanks to **Paul III** for setting up the Shop before the clinic and for assisting attendees in my absence.

The next clinic will be Thursday, May 12th. In order to reserve a spot at the clinic, please email, call, text or see me and let me know what you want to work on (such as "Atlas GP38") and what you want to do with it (such as

"install decoder"). I will confirm all requests. For reservations--email me at: daveclinton@verizon.net .

Please feel free to email or speak to me with any questions about the clinics and what they offer.

EDITOR'S NOTES

1. The article "King Me!" in this month's *Trains* is about the 51-story building being constructed over the **South Station** tracks behind the station "head house". A recent visit to South Station was not a good experience. What a mess! Most of the concessions are gone, the glass wall and number of doors have been cut in half. There's water dripping everywhere in the area where 10 of the tracks have been cut back by about 200' each. It's sickening what is going on and reminded me of my 1972 trip to Boston, arriving at a dingy, pigeon-infested South Station. Yes, the pigeons are back! ☹️
2. **Nominations next month** and then elections in June for our 2023 FY are fast-approaching. Here's an opportunity for those who have been members but never served on the Board to step up and donate that extra evening a month of their time setting the Club in the proper directions. It is so important in any organization to get "new blood" in the management and not depend on the "same old, same old" philosophies, because you "don't want to get involved in politics"...or other excuses. Please consider having a friend nominate you for an office next month. It's for the good, and future, of our wonderful club!

.....*David N. Clinton*

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:4)

MEMBER NEWS

Congratulations to **Pete** and **Janice Palica** on celebrating their Golden Anniversary (one year late) with a ride on Amtrak's *AutoTrain* to Florida! They are meeting their children and grandchildren and staying at a large home in Margaritaville for the

celebration. You both deserve it and hope you have a wonderful time...safe and happy journeys!

(Here's Janice and Peter on the platform at Lorton, Virginia, about to board their sleeper--after their car got on its autorack boxcar! The *AutoTrain* is the longest passenger train in the World!)



(Note: The "Health & Welfare Committee", Ye Ed, would like to hear of any member who is ill, hospitalized or special occasion news, so we can keep the membership advised of these happenings.)

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The following members have made it through another year and deserve congratulations on their special day:

Brendan Sheehan.....May 9th
 John SheridanMay 11th
 Paul Cutler, Jr.....May 18th
 Doug Buchanan.....May 22nd
 Jim O'Brien (H).....May 27th
 Steve Peers.....May 30th



PROJECTS

Chip Mullen: "Bob Farrenkopf came across an article about a new decal company who was offering a set of decals for Canadian Pacific's new "heritage" ES44AC painted in Hapag Lloyd colors, celebrating their new transcontinental partnership originating out of the Port of Saint John, New Brunswick. Since I am a former employee of both Canadian Pacific, (CP Ships), and Hapag Lloyd, (which acquired CP Ships), I was inspired to try my hand at replicating this engine for my intermodal train. I started with a Kato AC4400 which is nearly identical to an ES44AC. That engine has been sitting on the White Elephant table for several years. I totally stripped the Union Pacific colors, using a bath of 91% alcohol. I then found an



orange Craft Smart acrylic paint at Michaels (\$.98), that is an exact match for Hapag Lloyd's "Cognac Orange", which I applied with an airbrush. The decals from CMR were extremely thin and difficult to apply to the engine without balling up into an unworkable mush. Fortunately I bought two sets so I was able to recover from early mistakes. The good news was that because the decals are so thin, once they were top coated with Dulcoat the clear film became virtually invisible so the decals give a truly "painted on" appearance to the lettering. Throwing in a 21 pin Econami on a Decoder Buddy motherboard and some 402 SMD LEDs and the end result was very satisfactory. I'm going to happily pull my Ex/Im-Port intermodal train with a pretty unique Hapag Lloyd/Canadian Pacific lash-up." (Nice job, Chip. Always a smart idea to buy two sets of decals for a project, as so many things can happen with decals!-Ed)

Kurt Kramke: "I finished my 40-year-old project of converting AHM Y6bs to other classes. I have also been working on old PFM shays and climaxes to run with DCC. I went down to Tichy on the 9th for a tour and then purchased another crane, work caboose, and detail parts. It was interesting. I'm still looking for a brass Hiesler."



Dan Peterson: Purchased an 89'-long flatcar with Pipe Load by Atlas and when he got it home and opened, found that it was a kit! Anyone else seen anything like this from Atlas; I never had. Anyway, he got it together, with all the strapping over the pipes and all 89' of it runs on the East Coast Lines just fine!



Roger St. Peter: "Hi all. Just finished a wall rebuild at my daughters...started last fall, widened their driveway by removing wall and rebuilding it 8' over and adding steps with blue granite treads. Now they need some loam and grass seed and have driveway paved...long project...weather permitting...at times too cold...glad



it's done...and a lil' help from grandson...lol.”



RUNNING EXTRA

Has the Railroads' 'Get Up and Go' Spirit 'Got Up and Gone'?

Written by David Peter Alan, [Railway Age](#) Contributing Editor 4/8/22

While the STB Gulf Coast hearings are often dull, they are also fascinating in an unusual way. As a lawyer, I am interested in how the case is being presented, since it is a case of first impression. As a reporter on the passenger beat, I have never had occasion to cover a “Surf Board” hearing before. I’m impressed so far, especially with Chair Martin Oberman. He is keeping the hearing going and standing his ground when necessary. He asks probing questions, good for eliciting the information that he and his colleagues need. The other Board members have asked good questions and made thought-provoking comments.

All of us who are rendering our opinions come from different backgrounds regarding the railroads. While my professional background is legal, my interest in rail comes from extensive riding, on Amtrak and elsewhere. I rode the Gulf Coast line at issue before Hurricane Katrina killed the plodding, tri-weekly Gulf Coast segment of the *Sunset Limited* in 2005. Amtrak has officially listed it as “suspended” since then, but I can’t imagine it coming back. CSX doesn’t want it, and Amtrak won’t force the issue. If we aren’t getting a passenger train from the Crescent City all the way to Jacksonville and beyond, at least the current plan makes sense. It allows riders from New Orleans to visit Mobile or any of four places in Mississippi. It also allows folks from those places to visit the Crescent City or go somewhere else from there.

As we all know, it’s not that simple a matter to get passenger trains rolling on a host freight railroad. CSX owns the line from Gentilly Yard in New Orleans to Mobile and beyond. Norfolk Southern owns the Back Belt, a line within New Orleans that would take a train to the northwest from the station and then to the east, to the handover point to CSX. The trains would use only a little more than three miles of it, but NS says that without a lot of new infrastructure before the Mobile trains run, its freight service would be severely compromised. CSX says something similar about its entire New Orleans and

Mobile (NO&M) route, which the proposed trains would also use. Personally, I don’t know the combination of the passenger and freight sides of the railroad like Bill Vantuono, or freight economics like Jim Blaze, or the ins-and-outs of the Washington politics like Frank Wilner. But I do know that, while I generally enjoy rail travel, I don’t like to sit on an Amtrak train stuck in a siding, wishing I were on my way to my destination instead of being delayed on some other company’s railroad. While I am used to delays like that, even I was shocked by what appeared to be the main theme struck by the executives from CSX and NS.

I’m sure that many people my age (I’m in my 70s) remember the “can do” attitude of the railroads from our youth, so many decades ago. Today, two of the nation’s seven Class I railroads (soon to be six, most likely) whine and complain about how two round trips on a run of 145 miles each way is about to turn their systems almost into inoperable mush. Railroads once meant *power*. Railroads once meant *motion*. Railroads once meant *delivering shipments on time*. Railroads once meant *going places and getting there on time*, too.

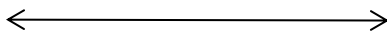
As I listened to one “this will hurt us” story after another from CSX and NS, it struck me that one characteristic cited of our railroad network is *fragility*. I find it difficult to believe that two giant corporations that have built their networks by combining many great railroads of the past have become capacity-constrained and fragile, but they say it often enough that few may be willing or able to question them. Sure, there are passing sidings, but not enough of them, and under the PSR operating model, they’re too short. At 8,500 feet long, they can’t accommodate the 10,000-foot or longer PSR behemoths that make every train going the other way take the siding, or maybe even sit in the hole. Is that any way to run a railroad? It can even be argued that reduced network velocity is a waste of a precious asset.

NS points out that Amtrak’s *Crescent* is “performance challenged,” but who created the challenges? This train runs on NS all the way from Alexandria to the Crescent City, so there does not appear to be anyone else to blame. Is the problem that there will be four more daily moves along the Back Belt in New Orleans, or is the problem further up the line? The current schedule for that train was lengthened by two hours recently, but mostly on the Amtrak-owned Northeast Corridor. Some freight railroads seem to wear fragility and vulnerability as some sort of badge, perhaps out of solidarity. Perhaps they are victims of the nation’s misguided history of building, with taxpayer dollars, the interstate highways that truckers use. But the arrogant “my way or the highway” attitude that some of the railroad executives have displayed during the STB hearings and elsewhere is not gaining the railroads any friends. Whose fault is that?

What can we do about it? Being more willing to work with Amtrak, government officials, the American public and anybody else concerned would be a good start for the railroads. The attitude that many perceive as “we’ll let you on our railroad after you finish building new infrastructure” smacks of the sort of corporate

indifference that many have come to despise. I don't dispute that the carriers are making arguments in which they believe, but folks who are not well-informed could mistake these arguments for greed. Progress sometimes starts with new attitudes. Chair Oberman and the other members of the STB are asking the right questions and otherwise making it clear that they will do what they can to protect freight railroading, passenger railroading and the public interest generally. It's a step in the right direction.

CSX, NS, the Port of Mobile and Amtrak continue their squabbling. The STB continues to gather the information needed to render a decision. The Board members have the most difficult job: coming up with a solution that will not only open the Gulf Coast line for passenger service soon, but also setting the sort of precedent that can get the dozens of projects in Amtrak's 2035 plan going. Maybe someday, it will even be possible for Amtrak's 14-train National Network to expand. A strong, robust, well-operated freight rail line should have room for passenger trains. The freight carriers need to play their part in the return of passenger rail.



(These next two letters written to the STB seem genuine, "from the heart" of the two authors and I thought most interesting for a different view of railroad practices from those closer than we are. -Ed.)

'The Game Has Changed'



Written by [Michael Paul Lindsey II](#), Locomotive Engineer, Union Pacific 4/18/22

Editor's Note: [The Surface Transportation Board is conducting an in-person hearing April 26-27 \(EP 770, Urgent Issues in Freight Rail Service\) with the CEOs of the "Big Four" Class I railroads—BNSF, CSX, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific—on service problems.](#) Union Pacific Locomotive Engineer Michael Paul Lindsey II sent this letter to STB Chairman Marty Oberman on April 18 as commentary for the hearing. It was entered into the Public Record by the STB Office of Proceedings on April 18. It is reproduced here in its entirety, with only minor edits for punctuation. The opinions expressed here are those of Mr. Lindsey, and not of Railway Age. - William C. Vantuono

Dear Chairman Oberman,

As a UP engineer with 17 years of service, I would like to add my two cents to the actual reasons behind labor shortages, which have become a huge topic among the industry, railroaders, and the unions alike. I believe that there are little bits of truth floating around, but neither the unions nor the railroads seem to get it, and I don't see a good resolution coming out of this any time soon. Let me start with an anecdotal saying that I heard from an old Southern Pacific hand during one of my first shifts on the job in Roseville all those years ago. "Kid, do you know why we are paid so well?" I shrugged my shoulders in response. "We are paid to be available on call, and for

the inconvenience of our time." This saying has been there in the back of my mind ever since, and today it lies at the root of the manpower shortage the railroads currently find themselves in. Railroads, it seems, have lost sight of this altogether in a world of "competitive" salaries, which really is just business school lingo for manipulating people out of what they really should be paid.

Could anyone do this job?

I have heard this from railroad management for years, and the short answer is yes. Technically, anyone can be a conductor or an engineer. It does *not* require a specialized degree from an Ivy League school. There is however an immense amount of knowledge, experience, and skillset that goes into how to operate a train effectively or switch cars in a yard, or effectively manage industry switching on a local, and some people just never quite can get it. There is an immense amount of book knowledge and muscle memory that goes into doing the job effectively, but technically, yes, anyone could do it. There are plenty of careers that require no degree, but significant specialized knowledge and skillsets, and many of them pay far less than the railroad does. This is what the railroad means when they say they want to pay a more "competitive" salary.

Are railroaders all uneducated high school grads that can't do anything else?

This is another one of those gas-lighting techniques that the carriers love to throw out there in their propaganda meetings about how "the crews are screwing them." They love to say that we are overpaid high school grads. This is simply not true. I personally have a four-year business degree and manage my own rental properties and keep up-to-date balance sheets, income statements, and accounting records. Several of my coworkers have degrees and a few of them hold advanced degrees. Many of my coworkers are retired from the military, serving 20 years and discharging at very high ranks before beginning a career at the railroad. Others were small business owners, commercial farmers, or experts in fields such as welding and metal fabrication. They left for the promise of a good retirement, excellent pay, and excellent health insurance. The only thing they needed to do is to learn the job, be available for call, and allow their time to be inconvenienced by the railroad, just as that old-head SP conductor once told me.

But the game has changed.

We are no longer paid for the inconvenience of our time. There once was a time when railroaders were paid exceedingly well for the inconvenience of their time. In real purchasing power, they made salaries that were among the highest in the middle class. This is no longer the case and hasn't been for a long time. Our salaries are "competitive," as they would say in the business world; however, our work conditions are not competitive at all with the employee that works 9-5 with weekends off. This is completely understandable. It's the transportation industry. We will never get a 9-5 schedule with weekends off as long as crews have to travel out of town to keep the economy rolling. We know and accept that. With that fact in mind, we need to be compensated

in a way that once again acknowledges that we are not normal office workers. So many railroad executives claim that our rate of pay is “outside the norm” for workers of a similar skill set. I would argue that this is misleading at best and a downright lie at worst. Let me explain.

A round trip takes me 40 hours on average; I gross around \$1,000 over these couple days, which sounds like a lot. We are paid a flat rate of pay per mile, no overtime, which is fair. If the trip takes 12 hours each way, which is common, then I sit in the hotel for 16 hours without pay. This comes to an hourly rate of \$27 before taxes. We have away-from-home meal expenses, which I will discuss later, and this time is effectively lost to us as we do not resume pay again until we have been at the away-from-home terminal for at least 16 hours. We are federally licensed and certified employees with years of experience under our belts. According to Google, the average rate of pay per hour for a plumber is between \$45 and \$200 per hour. Electricians are between \$40 and \$100. Even jobs in fast food begin at \$15 or more per hour these days, and all of those employees are taxed at a lower rate than railroaders. The railroad is no longer an upper-middle-class place to work unless you work around 6 trips per paycheck, which is on average, 120 hours per week. Sounds nice, doesn't it?

We pay higher taxes.

Many non-railroaders love to comment on our “excellent” retirement plan, without realizing that it's just Social Security under a different name. Yes, Railroad Retirement seems to be “safer” and it pays more, but most railroaders never even see it if they work as many years as it takes to actually collect it. You cannot retire until you're 60 years old regardless of years worked. So, if you were hired on at 19 years old, you would have to work more than 40 years to get this retirement. With our lifestyle, which sadly often leads to divorce, poor health, obesity, alcoholism, diabetes, etc., many railroaders die only a few short years after they retire. In addition, Railroad Retirement isn't free. We pay tier two tax on top of the tier one tax that most people pay every check through Social Security. Between Railroad Retirement taxes and Medicare tax, we pay a whopping 15% of our income, automatically before even one penny is spent on Federal or State taxes, and long before any of it actually hits our account so that we can buy the things we need to support our families (and pay taxes on that too, of course.) This additional Railroad Retirement tax means that a non-railroad employee grossing \$92,500 is actually making the same as a railroader that grossed \$100,000 per year, but was never home. Plus, we are in the higher tax bracket for longer with no benefit as we cannot write off Railroad Retirement taxes against our federal and state income. This means that between Railroad Retirement, Federal, State, and Sales tax, the average unmarried railroader pays 50% of their income above \$40,526 per year. Married railroaders pay 50% tax on income over \$81,051, as these are the brackets where the 22% federal tax rate kicks in. With that much taken in taxes, and the rapid rate of inflation in housing, food, and nearly everything else, the railroad is rapidly

becoming just another job that requires both parents to work just to make ends meet. That, by the way, was always one of the appeals to the railroad life, and what encouraged many employees to stay. The railroad was always a job that, regardless of work conditions, could ensure that the mother did not have to work so that at least she could take care of the kids. This benefit is gone for most railroaders now, especially in the more expensive regions.

What about away-from-home meals?

Away-from-home meals used to be a lucrative tax write-off to offset some of our horrible tax burdens. The tax changes a few years ago eliminated all of that for us. Everyone received double the standard deduction, so now hardly anyone has enough deductions to itemize on their tax return. We lost our ability to count up how many days we were out of town for the year (usually 150 or more) and write off that amount against our taxes. The “tax cuts” were a tax increase for railroaders as we now have the exact same write-off as our 9-5, weekend-off counterparts.

Our union contract has been expired for several years now, but because of the Railway Labor Act, we cannot strike. No matter what the issue being discussed, the government always sides with the railroads in ruling even the most major dispute, such as taxes being improperly calculated, as “minor,” so that it must be settled via arbitration. We simply must continue working under our old contract until the eventual day that the next contract is crammed down our throats, losing ground to inflation. This contract will be big too. The unions and the carriers are at an impasse. They want one-man crews, they want us to have “competitive” health care plans, and they want us to have “competitive” pay (remember what that means from earlier). Additionally, they arbitrarily change the attendance policy whenever they want to punish those of us that still haven't quit. Then they gaslight us by blaming us for taking too much time off under the previous attendance policy. Then they call us several times a night to step up off our assignment because of the endless “manpower shortages.” This has very real, very major effects on our lives, health, and families. But since they claim this is just company “policy” and not an agreement, we have no actual say over our lives. Meanwhile, we worked faithfully and nonstop through their COVID fiasco, and through endless quarters of record profits, share buybacks, unprecedented operating ratio success, and countless leaps and bounds in technology and efficiency advancements. We don't deserve to be left out in the cold while the railroad industry thrives on technological advancements, longer trains, and easy-money Fed policies to prop up their share prices.

Yet, the saying goes, “more with less.”

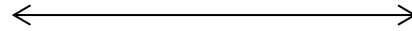
It seems to be the slogan in all industries, not just the railroads. People of all industries are done giving any credibility to this abusive phrase. We are done with any company claiming to own our lives. We are done being told what we need to inject into our own bodies and we are done being thrown out with the garbage every time

the railroad sees an opportunity to furlough. This time, the furloughs were different. There once was a time long ago when the railroad furlough agreements were written, when jobs were plentiful for the most part. It was still worthwhile, however, to wait for the day when your seniority was good enough to return to the railroad. Today the conditions have changed. Seniority really never gets better anymore. The promise and security is no longer there. The railroads pay an average salary and expect you to live a worse-than-an-average lifestyle to earn it. The people that were furloughed during PSR for what seemed like an eternity all were rational humans beings acting in their own rational self-interest when they quit. And that interest told them that the railroad doesn't want them here. They do not want to negotiate on contracts as the law requires. In real purchasing power, they don't pay very well anymore, they don't care about your life or family and they actively lie and accuse the employees of being the cause of all of their problems. They are also openly on the record as wanting to gut our health care plan. Meanwhile, when you are working for the railroad, you pay higher taxes and ruin your health, social, and family life. The additional money that you pay into Railroad Retirement versus Social Security could be better spent on personal investments, and the opportunity cost of Railroad Retirement is just simply not worth the hype that it is given. It was a natural and rational conclusion to quit and not come back when CMS started calling to recall furloughs. Bottom line, the railroad went too far this time and caused such a deep-rooted resentment among us that it may never go away, in its employees, in the communities they serve, and among the regulators in the industry. Word gets out, and that's why they can't seem to hire anyone anymore. Everyone in those railroad communities across the country knows their game now.

They know without any doubt that the railroad industry is controlled by Wall Street hedge funds and it becomes even more abundantly clear each and every day.

Even in my time at the railroad, the company is unrecognizable, and I could never in good conscience recommend it as a good place to work, nor lower myself to go into management, even though I had wanted to several years ago. Now, even I, a train lover, a railroad history enthusiast for life, am counting my days and expanding my investment opportunities into other fields so that I can pull the pin early and leave the railroad to burn. Sadly though, even that is an end that I know is not going to be a reality. Companies such as the railroad no longer crash and burn when management cuts to the bone and runs their operation into the ground. They are too big to fail. They run themselves into the ground, and then they get a big taxpayer bailout as a reward. And that in itself is just another reason why American railroad workers have lost their loyalty and drive to work to support the industry and their employers. We all know now that in the end, we are expendable and are allowed to fail. The railroad has made that perfectly clear.

*Sincerely, Michael Paul Lindsey II, Locomotive Engineer,
Pocatello, Idaho*



'At What Point is This Not Worth It?'

Written by [Alex L. Kosanda](#)

Editor's Note: The Surface Transportation Board is conducting an [in-person hearing April 26-27 \(EP 770, Urgent Issues in Freight Rail Service\) with the CEOs of the "Big Four" Class I railroads—BNSF, CSX, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific—on service problems.](#) Alex L. Kosanda, the wife of a BNSF locomotive engineer, sent this letter to STB Chairman Marty Oberman on April 21 as commentary for the hearing. It was entered into the Public Record by the STB Office of Proceedings on April 21. It is reproduced here in its entirety, with only minor edits for punctuation. The opinions expressed here are those of Mrs. Kosanda, and not of Railway Age. – William C. Vantuono

Dear Chairman Oberman;

I am writing in response to the Surface Transportation Board's inquiry into Class I railroads. As the spouse of an engineer, I would like to specifically speak to issues of recruiting and retaining employees.

My husband was hired 10 years ago. At that time and up until Feb. 1, 2022, he was afforded five (5) weekdays and two (2) weekend days [off] per month. He did not have scheduled days off or a schedule to know when he was going to go to work. While this arrangement is unconventional for most, we were able to live a life where my husband could be an active participant. We would plan ahead for birthdays, parent/teacher conferences, appointments, or a mid-week outing with our children. When BNSF came out with the "High Impact Day" policy, we shifted our planning and hoped that maybe he would hit RISA, an allocation for a vacation or PL (Personal Leave) day may be available, and he avoided taking off most days identified as "High Impact." Again, this isn't conventional, but when my husband was hired, we knew that he would miss some events, and we created our own traditions.

Since Feb. 1, the new attendance policy has become so restrictive and demoralizing that it feels like my husband is not part of our lives. During a town hall meeting, prior to implementation, employees were told to "save points for when you really need them." How is one to know when you will "really" need them? It takes 14 days of being available, without using FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act), union business, PL or vacation days, to earn back 4 points. If one "High Impact Day" were used, it would take an employee 8 weeks to make up for the loss of 15 points.

The week before this policy started, I tested positive for COVID-19. The day that I was to return to work, our 6 year old tested positive. Instead of being able to share in the care of our child, my husband continued working. If he had laid off to care for our child, while I went back to work M-F, he would have used 35 points—35 points for caring for his child. Based on that amount, he would have been past his lifetime allotment of 30 points, had a 10 day unpaid suspension, been given 15 additional points, but 5 would be deducted from the time he laid off for our child. He did the calculation as soon as the

school nurse informed us of the positive test. Instead of thinking of our child he thought about work. Could he lay off to help care for our child? How many points would it cost? What if there is an emergency and he doesn't have any points left?

You ask why Class I railroads are having difficulty hiring and retaining labor—this is why. TY&E employees are unable to care for their own children, spouses, other family members or themselves. Accuracy of call predictions have not improved, resulting in increased fatigue and concern of safety. Attendance policies have become so restrictive that employees have no work/life balance. This has always been an unconventional job, but when you are unable to be a spouse, parent, or take care of your own health needs, then at what point is this not worth it? Due to unpredictable schedules and lack of a predictable sleep schedule, railroad employees have increased risks of chronic fatigue, divorce, addiction, obesity, heart disease, and the list goes on and on.

New conductors get 3 PL days, 1 week of vacation, and are expected to be available at least 90% of their lives, as opposed to 75% prior to Feb 1. Being on call does not mean that you can plan to attend family events, and it does not mean you can make an appointment to address chronic or acute health issues. In rural areas; it also means you need to stay where you have reception and be at the terminal within 1.5 hours; this can be a very small radius. Being available means that unless you are lucky enough to have a PL day or vacation day and there is an allocation, you will likely need to reschedule appointments multiple times due to the unpredictability and inaccuracy of lineups. This results in not addressing physical and/or mental health, incurring cancellation fees, and possibly having to move to different providers based on their office policies. Furthermore, the rate of pay has not increased to incentivize people to take this line of work; at this time there are jobs that pay similar hourly rates and have predictable schedules, two things that are important when attracting new employees and retaining current ones.

For decades, Class I railroads have cut their labor force in an effort to increase profits for shareholders. With the strain of a global pandemic, a more restrictive attendance policy was implemented. Since then, approximately 1,000 TY&E employees have resigned. Class I railroads have created this labor shortage themselves, which negatively impacts the supply chain. This is not a new issue; this is the direct result of years of implementing PSR and trying to cut every bit of fat from their companies, and now they are cutting the muscle. Now, Class I railroads wonder why current employees, who had every intention of staying for 30 years, are leaving, and there aren't people lining up to take their place. There is not a shortage of people willing to work; there is a shortage of people willing to work for companies that do not care for and about their employees. Mental health matters, fatigue and rest

matter, customer service matters, the safety of crews and communities matter.

Sincerely, Alex L. Kosanda

Editor's Comment: There is a Beltway saying that Congress knows the difference between "Astroturf" and "grassroots." When letters, all similar in structure and content, start arriving in volume, it is considered Astroturf—generated by a trade association or front group or labor union, for example, and not taken as seriously as, for example, handwritten letters that are unique and detailed. The increasing number of comments being filed with the STB by rail employees suggests some coordination or urging by the BLET and SMART-TD, but they are not form letters and read like individualized assessments, making them more grassroots than Astroturf. Are the railroads going to have some difficulty explaining themselves if one or more Board members picks up on these letters, which, again, are in the Public Record?
— William C. Vantuono

