

CN SD401's on the Grand Trunk at Battle Creek, MI. Photo by Bruce Bird 11-24-1997



## **DANVILLE JUNCTION CHAPTER**

**NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**P.O. Box 1013**

**DANVILLE IL 61834-1013**

**"THE DANVILLE FLYER"**

FIRST CLASS MAIL

# DANVILLE FLYER

**A PUBLICATION OF THE DANVILLE JUNCTION CHAPTER, INC, NRHS**

The *DANVILLE FLYER* is published monthly by the DANVILLE JUNCTION CHAPTER of the NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY for its members and other interested persons.

The DANVILLE JUNCTION CHAPTER, NRHS, is a not-for-profit corporation organized to preserve the history of railroading in Eastern Illinois and Western Indiana and operates a museum located in the former Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad depot on East Benton Street in Rossville, Illinois. The museum is open weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day and features many railroad displays plus a large operating HO model railroad.

Membership in the Chapter is open to anyone having an interest in any aspect of railroading. Dues per year are \$12.00 for Chapter membership in addition to \$17.00 for NRHS membership. Meetings are held on the third (3rd) Sunday of each month (except June, July, August and December) at the Pizza Inn Restaurant, Gilbert Street (Illinois Route 1) and Williams Street, next to Conrail, in Danville, IL, with lunch beginning at 1:00 PM Central Time followed by meeting and program.

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Number 3

## Coming Events

*March 15, 1998*

Monthly meeting at the Pizza Inn, Gilbert and Williams Street in Danville.

*March 28 & 29, 1998*

Urbana, Illinois - Lincoln Square Train Show, 10-6 and 11-5, no admission see flyer attached.

*April 25, 1998*

Chicago and Eastern Illinois Historical Society annual meeting - Danville Area Community College. Watch for details in next issue.

*April 25 & 26, 1998*

Monticello Railway Museum - throttle time on Wabash #1189 - contact the museum

*May 9 & 10, 1998*

Throw Momma from the Train - Monticello Railway Museum.

*July 8-12, 1997*

Syracuse, NY - NRHS National Convention - Plan now to attend as summer is on the way - really!!

*August 15 & 16, 1998*

Thomas the Tank Engine - special train this weekend and the following weekend - see future announcements for more details.

**Are you seeing red this issue - check out page 5 to see why.**

## Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Sunday, March 15, 1998, at the Pizza Inn Restaurant, Gilbert Street (Illinois Rt. 1) and Williams Street. Remember, new location - new day - new time. We will meet at 1:00 PM, have lunch first and then the meeting. Last month member Doug Butzow was scheduled to show his slides of Union Pacific country. Another commitment forced a change so Doug will be on tap for this month. Doug got shots of the Union Pacific in addition to the "parking lot" during his vacation. In April we are planning for Bruce Bird and Steve Hankel to show slides from their trip last year to Tennessee Pass.

We have another new member this month. Richard and Tammie Chambers, 1408 Ivanhoe Way, Urbana, Illinois joined at the last meeting. Richard is employed by the Union Pacific and works out of Villa Grove.



# NRHS Convention to Feature Diesel and Steam Trips

Vintage diesels, steam, and the return of passenger trains to old New York Central routes will highlight "Empire Heritage Rails '98," the national convention of the National Railway Historical Society, July 8-12 in Syracuse, N.Y. Host Central New York Chapter has announced the following tentative schedule:

- Wednesday, July 8: Diesel excursion on Tioga Scenic Railway out of Owego on ex-Lehigh Valley lines, featuring rare mileage on freight-only tracks. Optional trip: guided bus tour along abandoned Ontario & Western right-of-way, with several stops at restored O&W stations.

- Thursday, July 9: Convention buses to Utica for all-Alco-powered excursion on restored portion of NYC's Adirondack Division, featuring an RS3 and C420, both painted for NYC. Trip begins in Utica using short line Mohawk, Adirondack & Northern, then on Adirondack Scenic Railway.

- Friday, July 10. Morning RDC trip out of Syracuse on New York, Susquehanna & Western's "On-Track" line through the city. An all-day event for teenagers also is planned, including a photo contest. Friday evening banquet speaker is Walter Rich, chairman of Delaware Otsego Corp., parent company of NYS&W.

- Saturday, July 11: Syracuse-Binghamton excursion on NYS&W featuring Susquehanna's Chinese-built 2-8-2 No. 142.

- Sunday, July 12: Syracuse-Auburn excursion on freight-only ex-NYC Finger Lakes Railway, powered by Central New York Chapter's restored E8's painted as Delaware, Lackawanna & Western.

A special "pre-convention" event is planned for Tuesday, July 7, at the Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton, featuring doubleheaded steam along the ex-DL&W main line to Pocono Summit, including photo runbys and shop tours.

The headquarters for the convention is the Radisson Plaza/Hotel Syracuse in

downtown Syracuse. For more information, contact: Central New York Chapter, NRHS, P.O. 229, Marcellus, NY 13108; or visit the Chapter's website: [www.rrhistorical.com/cnynrhs](http://www.rrhistorical.com/cnynrhs).

*Via TRAINS On-Line*

## Canadian National to buy Illinois Central

Confirming what had been talked about for the better part of year, Canadian National Railway on February 11 announced that an agreement had been reached to acquire Illinois Central Railroad. Terms call for CN to pay \$39 per share for IC, or a total of \$2.4 billion for IC's 61.4 million outstanding shares. CN also agreed to assume \$560 million of IC's debt. The Canadian carrier, which became a publicly held company two years ago, plans to pay cash for three quarters of IC and stock for the balance. CN said it would soon begin a tender offer for 46.1 million shares of IC, and shares acquired would be placed in a voting trust pending regulatory review. The price paid for the balance of shares would be tied to CN's stock price later this year.

Acquisition of IC gives CN access to warm-water ports at New Orleans and Mobile, Ala., allowing for year-long movement of Canadian grain. In addition, the potential exists for a barge operation to shuttle railroad cars between New Orleans or Mobile and Mexico. With 17,000 miles of track, Montreal-based CN is Canada's largest railway with transcontinental routes from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Vancouver and Prince Rupert, British Columbia. En route, CN serves most major Canadian cities

including Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Edmonton. IC operates a 3450-mile network from Chicago south to New Orleans, plus the Chicago Central line west to Omaha. CN and IC share an intermodal terminal on IC property in south suburban Chicago. The combined system, fifth-largest in North America at almost 19,000 miles (assuming the breakup of Conrail), would form a giant "Y" with Chicago at the center. CN's Grand Trunk Western runs from Chicago through Michigan to Sarnia, Ontario, with two branches to Detroit. From Chicago to Duluth, Minn., CN trains operate on BNSF's former Burlington Northern via Minneapolis, with BNSF crews, a situation that may change in March as CN considers moving its trains to Wisconsin Central or Union Pacific through Wisconsin, avoiding Minneapolis and BNSF's congested Minneapolis-Duluth line.

The Surface Transportation Board must approve the merger, and STB already has two big cases before it: the proposed split of Conrail by purchasers Norfolk Southern and CSX, and the continuing operating problems on Union Pacific, which have resulted in calls for reopening the Southern Pacific merger case, which the brand-new STB approved in 1996. If completed, the CN-IC merger would be the fourth major rail consolidation since mid-1994, following Burlington Northern Santa Fe and UP acquiring Chicago & North Western and

then SP. CN and IC hope for regulatory approval in early 1999.

In 1997, IC earned \$150.2 million, or \$2.45 a share, on revenue of \$700 million. CN reported revenue

of C\$4.3 billion (\$3.0 billion U.S.) last year. Net income was C\$403 million (\$282 million) U.S., or C\$4.95 a share. Both carriers operate efficiently. IC has improved its operating ratio, i.e., expense to revenue, throughout the 1990's, and CN has trimmed its operating ratio to 78.6 percent for 1997 from nearly 95 percent just 5 years ago.

### *NKP 587 to run*

The Indiana Transportation Museum's NKP 587 will run from Indianapolis to Worthington, Indiana on May 2 and 3, 1998. For more information contact the museum at PO Box 83, Noblesville, IN 46060 or contact David Wilcox at 317-844-0659

Paul Tellier, president and chief executive of CN, would head the new company, while E. Hunter Harrison, president of IC, is in line to become chief operating officer of the merged company. CN plans to add two of IC's current directors to its board that would have 15 members after the merger is completed.

*Via TRAINS On-Line, Feb 11, 98*

## **Conrail - Abandonment Exemption - In Vermilion and Champaign Counties, IL**

*Decided: January 30, 1998*

On February 7, 1997, a decision and notice of interim trail use or abandonment (NITU) was served, authorizing a 180-day period for Champaign County Design and Conservation Foundation (CCDC Foundation) to negotiate an interim trail use/rail banking agreement with Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) for approximately 24.50 miles of its line of railroad known as the Pekin Secondary Track from approximately milepost 4.00 to approximately milepost 28.50, in Vermilion and Champaign Counties, IL. The 180-day period under the NITU was scheduled to expire on August 8, 1997, but was extended through February 4, 1998, by decision served August 1, 1998.(1)

On January 27, 1997, CCDC Foundation, with the consent of Conrail, filed a request for an extension of the negotiation period for an additional 180 days. CCDC Foundation states that it and Conrail have been negotiating in good faith and that it has signed a written agreement of



sale subject to appraisals, environmental and title work, but additional time is needed to complete the conditions and reports under the written agreement for interim trail use/rail banking with Conrail.

Because Conrail consents to the request for extension of the negotiating period, an extension will be granted until August 3, 1998. This extension of time will promote the establishment of trails and rail banking consistent with the National Trails System Act, 16 U.S.C. 1247(d) (Trails Act). The purpose of the Trails Act is to preserve rail corridors for possible reactivation of rail service by permitting and encouraging their interim use as recreational trails. See Policy Statement on Rails to Trails Conversions, Ex Parte No. 274 (Sub-No. 13B) (ICC served Feb. 5, 1990).

This decision will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

*It is ordered:*

- 1. The negotiating period under the NITU is extended to August 3, 1998.*
- 2. The decision is effective on its service date.*

Surface Transportation Board Decision - STB Docket No. AB-167 (Sub-No. 1161X) By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

## **UTU Backs Conrail Acquisition Plan**

The United Transportation Union in mid-January broke rail labor's solid opposition to the CSX-Norfolk Southern plan to acquire Conrail by agreeing to support the \$10.2 billion deal. The largest rail union with 76,000 members, UTU said that in exchange for dropping its opposition, it won strengthened job protection and certification commitments for members who would be harmed by the Conrail breakup. The

Board will vote on the Conrail split this summer.

In addition to boosting the already strong likelihood of STB approval, the UTU deal could become a blueprint for future agreements with other unions, the Journal of Commerce reported. UTU and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers are locked in a bitter fight over representation of train crew members. That battle began last week when UTU took steps to seek a vote by members of both unions on a plan that would create a single union for train crew members now represented by one of the two unions.

Rail labor has been united in opposition to the NS-CSX plan for nine months as union officials claimed the



Conrail breakup would reduce jobs, compromise safety, and damage service quality. NS and CSX dispute those allegations, saying that job losses would be modest; they have emphasized long-term plans to hire more train crews.

A UTU spokesman said that the agreement means that members know where they will be working after the sale, how much seniority they will have, and which collective bargaining agreement will apply to them.

The agreement with NS and CSX could become a political issue in the UTU vs. BLE battle, the Journal of Commerce said. By being the first to sign an agreement that touts enhanced job protection, UTU could bolster its claims that it would offer better member representation. BLE also is negotiating with NS and CSX, raising the prospect that it could reach the same agreement, a better deal, or break off talks and condemn the UTU's deal. Some observers believe both railroads have strong incentives to sign identical agreements with both unions to avoid any perception of bias or favoritism.

*Via TRAINS On-Line January 22.*

## **Big Steam in the Upper Midwest**

Gary Bensman's Diversified Rail Services is putting the finishing touches to their restoration job on Soo Line 4-6-2~2719 at Eau Claire, under contract to the Locomotive & Tower Preservation Fund, Ltd., as monitored by the Friends of the 2719. They will soon doing final work on the exterior plumbing, then replacing the boiler jacketing and lagging. A tire-up will take place in the spring, followed by test runs in April or May Dave Peterson, a spokesman for the Friends, foresees at least three 2719 operations in 1998, including short excursions in the Eau Claire area in late May, then special operations at Osceola in July in conjunction with the former Soo Line 2-8-2#1003, now operational, and former Northern Pacific 4-6-0 #328. operating over Wisconsin Central trackage.

Both the #2719 and the #1003 hope to be housed in the former C&NW roundhouse at Altoona. Wisconsin. to which the City of Altoona is seeking the title, so that the structure can be turned into an active historical monument. The Union Pacific C&NW yard and shops at Altoona are still active. Also later in 1998 will be the convention of the Soo Line Technical & Historical Society at Stevens Point, where #1003 and #2719 may be active. Also, during 1998. a special train will criss-cross the state as part of Wisconsin's 150th anniversary celebration, using UP, BNSF, Wis. Cent and other lines. It is possible the 1003 and the 2719 will also participate in this operation.

*Via Dayton Ties and Tracks*

## **Conrail Berea Answering, no more**

12:11 pm Sunday saw the last train to operate by the manned interlocking at Berea. TV10B had the honors. The best way to describe the final moments is with a time line.

The morning before the closing saw a flurry of activity, with trains TV10A, TV6,

and ELPI preceding 10B in the last half hour before closing. At 11 am the approach and resume boards were placed. Stop signs were readied, but not erected. A crew of about 30 orange vests mulled about the base of the tower until 11:40 when a crew meeting was called by what I would believe to be the signal superintendent in the area.

TV10B passed at 12:11, and at 12:14 an announcement by an unidentified supervisor announced to the crew below that the "plug was pulled", and they departed to their trucks to man their work areas, be it a switch machine or relay house. Stop signs were then also erected at all approached to the interlocking. No real fanfare on the behalf of Conrail. Quite a crowd of fans were present, and Kodak had a good day in the sunny warm (for Feb.1) weather. Norm, the tower operator departed his long time roost about 12:40. I believe he was stationed at CP197, manning the entrance signals to the work area.

No trains operated through in the hour after closing, but this afternoon was quite active. Trains must obtain a form D to operate through interlocking limits from the Dearborn Cleveland Line dispatcher, then the crews radio for clearance through the work area. Quite a lot of radio activity.

Saturday night was a bit sentimental, if there were any sentimental moments among the railroaders. I believe that the 2nd trick op was Johnny Newman, popular on CR with the crews, many wishing him well and asking where he was moving to. He said that he was waiting to see, but that he "would be in their way" somewhere. Somewhere in this area leaves only the drawbridge towers, Cleveland and Port Clinton, or perhaps Stanley tower in Toledo.

Alexis (Toledo) closed in the fall, as did Quaker (Cleveland). Both Quaker and Berea were similar structures erected as part of the Cleveland Union Terminal Project.

*Dave (via Internet News groups)*

(Editor: I pulled this off the net. Last fall I visited the Cleveland area for two of our projects and spent the late afternoon at Berea. Great place to watch trains and I am glad I got in a last visit before the interlocking was converted. Once Conrail is split by CSX and NS this area will see a different traffic pattern. At the present time Conrail trains sometimes take the Short Line from Chicago - this will probably cease as NS will run-through on their own line and CSX will be coming from Greenwich and going on the Short Line to Collinwood. Times - they do change.)

## **Helicopter Rescues Stranded CSX Crew in West Virginia**

A charter helicopter battling fog and rugged terrain plucked two CSX train crew

members from a remote

river gorge January 29 after snow and fallen trees had stranded them for more than a day. The incident came in the aftermath of a heavy Appalachian storm which dumped as much 4 feet of snow in places and left about 44,000 people in western North Carolina without heat or light as swollen waterways had

emergency officials

wary of flooding. Schools remained closed in many mountain counties, and in Tennessee, up to 90,000 customers were without power.

### ***Michigan freight decimates snowmobile "camp"***

A group of 10 Illinois snowmobilers watched in shock as an Escanaba & Lake Superior freight train ran over their eight parked snowmobiles near Sidnaw on Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The incident occurred about 11 p.m. on February 2. "They thought they had parked in a field," said a spokesman of the L'Anse Michigan State Police post. "It was actually the tracks covered with six inches of new snow." There were no injuries, but the machines were destroyed.

CSX tried to get its trains to safety before the unexpected snowfall peaked, halting 15 loaded trains and 7 empty ones at spots in West Virginia where crews could be removed, but one 90-car eastbound loaded coal train bound for Newport News, Va., with two crewmen aboard could not proceed because of trees across the tracks. It tied up at the CSX yard office at Quinnimont in West Virginia's New River Gorge, a valley with few access roads and 1500-foot mountains rising sharply on each side and the nearest road 2 miles away.

The snowstorm was followed by a warming the following day which created dense fog in the river valleys, especially along the New River. The heavy snowfall cut power lines, and the remote Quinnimont yard office lost light and heat, so the crewmen slept in their locomotive cab to keep warm. Now and then they would use the still-operable office telephone to speak with CSX people.

"What they were wanting was coffee and food," Chuck McBride, superintendent of operations for CSX Transportation in Huntington, told the Associated Press. The engineer, Jeff Lee, suffers from emphysema and asthma. He is required to take his medication with food, and the crew had gotten hungry since becoming stranded on Tuesday night. The conductor was Kenny Douglass.

The West Virginia National Guard was supposed to rescue the men on Wednesday afternoon, but the fog was too thick for a chopper to fly in and they cancelled any attempt by air, so the two crewmen spent a second night aboard their engine. Although they were getting hungry, they at all times were safe and warm.

On Wednesday afternoon CSX was finally able to get a helicopter for the next day in order to inspect the storm damage. Four bags of groceries were purchased in case food could be dropped to the hungry men if the snow were too deep to land the chopper. Quinnimont was fogged in, however. A CSX work train was clearing downed trees at the rate of 3 1/2 hours per mile and was about a mile from the stranded crewmen, and the National Guard was sending in troops on snowmobiles to effect their rescue when the fog lifted enough

for the the chopper to land, at 9:10.

The Bell Long Ranger helicopter touched down behind the yard office in an area where the warming snow had compacted to about a foot depth. The food was put inside the yard office, and the chopper took off at 10:20 with seven people aboard, including the two crewmen, who had been with their train for 46 hours. After a half hour ride to Charleston, some quick photos and interviews, the crewmen were driven home to the Russell (Ky.) area and the chopper was airborne again to check for possible damage east to Hinton.

*John B. Corns Via TRAINS On-Line*

## **Steam News**

#2776 at Washington Court House, Ohm: This locomotive is still on display in a city park where limited restoration work has already been done. Plans are being made by the restorers, Project 2776, Inc, to return the locomotive to full operation, hopefully for excursion use on the nearby Indiana & Ohio Railroad's former DT&I line, along which the project is looking for an appropriate site to build a locomotive shop.

They are working to make it all happen by raising the necessary funds from local corporations, and government and civic agencies. The 2-84 is reported to be in good condition and very restorable. However, a lot of shop work still needs to be done. For further information, contact Project 2776, c/o Paul Keller, 1018 S. North Street, Washington Court House OH, 43160.

#2789 at North Judson, Indiana: The locomotive stands on the property of the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum inside of their 60 ft x 100 ft dual track locomotive shop. Right now, all #2789's boiler tubes and flues have been removed and the shell is being cleaned for inspection for leaks, while new pipe is being cut for installation. Meanwhile, many staybolts have yet to be replaced.

The running gear is in good condition except that new tires are needed. The firebox appears to be in fair condition but no detailed inspection has yet been per-

formed. As for the appliances, all have been removed for rework, but here, the museum needs help from persons with experience doing these repairs. Contact the museum at P.O. Box 75, North Judson IN 46366.

*Via Dayton Ties & Tracks*

## **Private Car trip rescheduled**

The private car excursion that I previously told you about that was to run on Feb. 28th has been rescheduled for Saturday, March 14. The same schedule applies: leave Normal at 10:27 AM, arrive Chicago 1:30 PM, a five hour layover- leave Chicago 6:30 PM and arrive back in Normal at 8:50 PM. The trip includes lunch in the car on the way up and a big pasta dinner on the way back. During the layover guests will have passes to use the Chicago Trolley to go wherever they wish in the Loop. Again the cost is \$148.90 per person and if any are interested they should phone (405) 942-2222 and leave their name, address, and credit card number and state that they will be riding the *Bird Special*

*Via Bruce Bird.*

## **UP Proposes Joint Dispatching in Houston**

Omaha, February 6—Union Pacific Railroad has proposed to set up and operate with Burlington Northern Santa Fe a joint regional dispatching center to coordinate all train operations in the Houston area and along key lines serving the entire Gulf Coast corridor.

*Continued on Page 6*

*Are you seeing red on your label this issue? If so, this is the last issue you will receive.*

## Positive Train Control demonstration set for Illinois

The Federal Railroad Administration will conduct a Positive Train Control (PTC) demonstration for freight and passenger revenue service on a 123-mile segment of railroad north of Springfield, Ill., part of the Chicago-St. Louis Amtrak route, to roughly Gardner, Ill., near Joliet. The line is owned by Union Pacific; prior owners were Gulf, Mobile & Ohio (after 1947); Illinois Central Gulf; Chicago, Missouri & Western; and SPCSL, a subsidiary of Southern Pacific. UP acquired SP in 1996.

The four-year demonstration project involves the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Association of American Railroads (AAR), and the FRA. The major freight railroads and Amtrak, through the AAR board, have joined with FRA and IDOT to develop and demonstrate full Positive Train Control in revenue service and interoperability with other train control systems now being demonstrated.

The AAR board voted to invest \$20 million over the next four years. These funds will be combined with future appropriations and the \$15 million already available to FRA and IDOT. The project will ultimately include more efficient "flexible block" operation. The FRA funding for this project comes from the Next Generation High Speed Rail Program.

The PTC project will involve use of the Nationwide Differential Global Positioning System (NDGPS) to automatically locate each train,

computers on each locomotive, and a digital radio network to automatically link each locomotive to UP's Harriman Control Center in Omaha. The on-board computer is designed to automatically monitor the train's speed, assuring that locomotive engineers do not exceed permitted speeds, do not pass red signals, and do not operate the train beyond track limits



approved by the control center.

The PTC system is designed to provide enhanced protection to maintenance workers on the track. Highway-rail grade crossings also will be linked to the new system, which also is expected to enhance management's control of operations and maintenance, thus improving customer service and productivity in the railroad industry.

The ultimate target for this system is flexible block operation, in which the control center moves the maximum possible number of trains, safely, by permitting operations more closely spaced than permitted by the current wayside signal system.

Priority will be given to working out interoperability considerations with the Incremental Train Control System now being demonstrated under FRA sponsorship in Michigan, with the Amtrak Advanced Civil Speed Enforcement System being installed in the Northeast Corridor, and with the PTC system emerging from the Norfolk Southern-CSX-Conrail and other PTC projects.

FRA selected the Illinois project and provided initial funding because it will demonstrate full positive train control, in which information from each train is carried back

to control offices where central computers coordinate operations and then issue operating authorities over the digital radio network to each train. At the same time, FRA will support a joint effort with rail labor

organizations to assure training in these applications of new technology. The AAR will use this stretch of track as a PTC test bed to determine the validity of the proposed full PTC technology and to assess the potential safety and productivity gains offered by the new technology.

*Via TRAINS On-Line 2/18*

### *UP Dispatching continued*

The dispatching facility to be located at the current UP command center in Spring, Texas would improve coordination of all train movements along track running from Brownsville, Texas, through Houston to New Orleans.

Kansas City Southern, which owns the line from Beaumont, Texas to DeQuincy, Louisiana over which UP operates and which operates over UP on trackage rights into Houston, would also be invited to participate. The former SP line between Houston and New Orleans would be dispatched by joint UP/BNSF employees. The other lines in the region would be dispatched by employees of the owner railroads. Pending sign-off on the plan by BNSF and KCS, all dispatching would be coordinated at the same location and using the same computer system.

UP Corporation Chairman Dick Davidson said joint dispatching would provide both near and longer term relief to congestion problems in the Houston area through faster transit times and more consistent service. In a letter to BNSF Chairman Robert Krebs earlier this week, Davidson said "Joint dispatching is a win-win for all the railroads and would be a significant step forward in improving service in the Gulf area, which obviously would benefit our customers." Union Pacific and BNSF have met several times on the proposed plan and negotiations are continuing.

Under the UP plan, the new center would control operations on:

The UP and BNSF lines serving the greater Houston area.

The UP line between Houston and Lake Charles, Louisiana.

The BNSF line between Lake Charles and New Orleans.

The UP line between Brownsville and the Houston area.

The former SP line linking Houston and Bloomington, Texas.

KCS line between Beaumont, Texas and DeQuincy, Louisiana.

The UP line between DeQuincy and New Orleans via Livonia, Louisiana.

*Via UP Home Page Press Release*

## **January's Powder River Basin Coal Loadings All-Time High**

Omaha, February 2 — Union Pacific Railroad coal loadings in January from the Powder River Basin in Wyoming hit all-time highs for a single month because of increased velocity and improved cycle times. Union Pacific loaded 827 coal trains in January in the Powder River Basin for a daily average of 26.7 trains. The previous month highs came in May, 1996, when 793 trains were loaded and February, 1995 when an average of 26.1 trains a day were loaded.

“While our cycle times to some areas are still not where we would like them to be, our overall system cycle times have improved by as much as 20 percent since early fourth quarter of last year,” said Art Peters, senior vice president & general manager - energy.

In an effort to reduce cycle times of coal trains, Union Pacific has spent hundreds of millions of dollars over the last five years on capacity improvements in Wyoming, Nebraska and Kansas. UP's locomotive fleet and the use of distributive power in some coal train sets have helped improve cycle times and the ability to haul higher tonnages.

[UP News Release](#)

## **Amtrak Reaps Biggest Ridership Increase in 14 Years**

Amtrak ridership jumped nearly 7 percent for the first quarter of the passenger railroad's fiscal 1998 year—October through December 1997—the largest quarterly increase in 14 years. The 6.8 percent leap represents 5.3 million passengers for the quarter, vs. 4.96 million during the same period the previous year. Passenger revenue for the quarter increased 3.4 percent, totaling \$235 million, versus \$227 million for the same period in 1997.

Amtrak says the improved ridership and revenue are the result of actions taken under the company's strategic business plan, which include restoring daily service to several routes having the greatest growth potential, operating newer, more reliable equipment, better marketing practices, and increased state support for key state-funded routes.

The Oakland-based Amtrak West business unit, operating state-supported corridor services and the long-distance *Coast Starlight* in California, Oregon, and Washington, experienced a 12.2 percent increase in ridership and a 10.2 increase in revenue for the quarter. The *Coast Starlight* continues to post strong gains with a ridership gain of 23.7 percent for the quarter. The Oakland-Bakersfield San Joaquins rose 20 percent and the San Diego-Los Angeles-Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo San Diegans increased 5.7 percent.

The Philadelphia-based Northeast Corridor business unit, encompassing Amtrak service from New England to Virginia, achieved an 8 percent increase in ridership and a 3 percent increase in revenue for the quarter. Among the top ridership performers were the Empire Service in upstate New York, up 12.2 percent, and Northeast Direct Service between Boston, New York, Washington, Richmond, and Newport News, Va., up 7.2 percent.

The Chicago-based Amtrak Intercity business unit, which operates most of the corporation's long-distance trains as well as shorter distance service in the Midwest and Southeast, posted a 1.5 percent increase in ridership and a 2.7 percent increase in revenues for the quarter.

Routes that experienced significant ridership increases were the Chicago-Emeryville, Calif., *Zephyr* (up 77 percent), the Chicago-Seattle/Portland *Empire Builder* (up 28.5 percent), the Chicago-New Orleans *City of New Orleans* (up 27 percent), the Chicago-Carbondale *Illini* (up 25 percent), and the Kansas City-St. Louis corridor (up 22 percent). The *Zephyr* and *Empire Builder* were restored to daily service for their full routes in May 1997, while the *City of New Orleans* now operates with greater capacity than a year ago.

Those three services, along with short-distance services in the Midwest, reflect ridership increases attributed to improved route-specific marketing and service improvements.

For information on Amtrak service customers may see an authorized travel agent, call 1-800-USA-RAIL, or visit an Amtrak staffed station. Ticketing, service information, and the latest news from Amtrak are available on the World Wide Web at [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com).

## **UP also attacks Gulf Coast with capacity expansion**

Before the BNSF dispatching and shared-access agreements (item above) were reached, Union Pacific said it will spend more than \$570 million in Texas and Louisiana this year and in 1999 for capacity expansion, track upgrade, and new facilities. At the same time, UP is evaluating operations and infrastructure requirements along the entire 1200-mile portion of the Sunset Route and parallel UP lines between El Paso and New Orleans.

Outside operations and strategic consulting experts will join UP's project team, with the study expected to be completed by mid-year. “We are developing a strategy to cover the next three to five years that will align our railroad operations, route structure, and capacity investment with our customers' business plans,” said UP boss Dick Davidson.

Over half of UP's planned capital investment for 1998 is scheduled in Texas and for the lines linking Houston and New Orleans. This represents 20 percent of all UP capital spending for trackwork, capacity, and facilities across its entire 35,000-mile, 23-state system. Of this year's total, \$220 million will go to upgrade key routes, terminals, and industrial areas with new rail and ties, signals, and upgraded bridges. Another \$53 million will go toward capacity expansion, and \$13 million will be spent constructing and expanding facilities to meet specific customer needs.



Major projects this year in the Houston area include construction of receiving and departure tracks at Strang Yard and storage-in-transit tracks to support the chemical business in Spring. Additionally, storage-in-transit track construction and extension is scheduled for Longview. Meanwhile, the study is focused on further upgrading the condition and capacity of UP's operations infrastructure in order to keep pace with business growth primarily driven by current and anticipated chemical plant expansion along the Gulf Coast, as well as intermodal, automotive, industrial products, grain, and Mexico business. The scope of the project includes all terminal operations, yards, industrial complexes, joint operations, connecting routes, and Mexican gateways in the El Paso-New Orleans corridor.

To assist, UP has retained CANAC, headquartered in Montreal, a consulting firm in the fields of national and international railroad operations, capacity planning, and technology, and the Monitor Company of Cambridge, Mass., a worldwide industry analysis, logistics assessment, and competitive strategy consulting firm. CANAC, a subsidiary of Canadian National Railway, will have overall responsibility for the operations and infrastructure segment. The Monitor Group will work with UP's senior management to meet with major customers in the El Paso-New Orleans corridor.

*Via TRAINS On-Line 2/18*

## **Chicago Metra eyes new station on BNSF**

Talked about for at least seven years, a proposed Chicago Metra commuter station on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe line near Interstate 355, the North-South Tollway, came one step closer to reality last week, when the agency's board of directors approved the purchase of 5.5 vacant acres for \$1.66 million. The land, in Lisle, would house an access road to a new station between the current Lisle and Belmont stops. Tabbed a "cornfield" station by retired Metra public relations offi-

cial Chris Knapton, the stop would be similar to the recently opened Lake-Cook Road station on Metra's Milwaukee North District between Glenview and Northbrook. These types of stations serve auto drivers and bus transferees from a large area rather than residents of the immediate suburb or neighborhood. The land, located near Walnut Avenue adjacent to I-355, also would be used for storm-water retention. Metra already owns land on which a new station would be built, but officials said the project is still in the conceptual stage.

"This is a ways off," said Metra spokesman Tom Miller. "This has been talked about since '91, maybe before that. The proceedings just haven't gone very fast. We're still probably four or five years away from building a new station [there]. We think this is a great idea, but still a lot of work needs to be done."

A new station would take some of the burden off Naperville, Lisle, and the three Downers Grove stops, which are among the busiest on the Metra system. It would also provide easy access for those coming from the North-South Tollway. Naperville, with an estimated 3520 daily riders in 1997, is Metra's biggest single stop. Nearby Route 59, with 3322, ranked second, and Lisle was third with 2648, according to Metra figures released last week. All three gained riders since the last survey, conducted in 1995. Lisle replaced Arlington Heights on the UP Northwest Line, which dropped 261 riders from 1995 to an average of 2572 per day.

### ***Interest awakens for other Metra extensions***

Suburbs north of Chicago, and cities in southeastern Wisconsin, also have indicated interest in proposed Metra routes in recent days.

Officials in Gurnee, Wadsworth, and Waukegan are discussing with Metra the possibility of starting commuter service for their communities. The proposal calls for new stations to be built along Canadian Pacific's double track line used for freight and by Amtrak's Chicago-Milwaukee Hiawathas.

Metra's Milwaukee North District uses the line as far as Rondout, between the Lake Forest and Libertyville stops, where it veers west to Fox Lake. Metra could run a shuttle between Lake Forest and Wadsworth, allowing commuters to transfer at Lake Forest, or trains could go all the way from Chicago to Wadsworth. Of the three communities, only Waukegan has a commuter station, but that is downtown near Lake Michigan on the Union Pacific North line. The proposed station would be built on the city's west side, near Lakehurst Mall.

Gurnee's station could go near Kilbourne Road and U.S. Highway 41. Wadsworth has room near the center of the community, where there would also be room for a train storage yard. The proposed Metra extension was part of Lake County's master plan adopted in 1994, and Metra spokesman Frank Malone said that while talks have taken place between the railroad and municipal officials, and a tour of potential station locations took place last fall, a new round of talks has yet to be scheduled. Malone cautioned that the plan might sound appealing, but is far from fruition. Track owner Canadian Pacific will have a say in how Metra trains would affect the schedules of its 20 to 25 daily freights and Amtrak's 16 trains, and another obstacle is money. As Malone explained, communities along Metra's North Central line to Antioch had to pay for their own stations when service began in August 1996. The 10 stations, from Prospect Heights north to Antioch, cost a combined \$20 million, Malone said. Ridership on the North Central Service, which utilizes Wisconsin Central tracks, has grown 87 percent from its first full month, September 1996, and is averaging 4200 daily riders on its four rush-hour and one mid-day weekday trains.

Officials in Wisconsin and Illinois also are mulling a possible future extension of Metra's UP North Line from Kenosha, Wis., through Racine to Milwaukee, a line which hasn't had service since Amtrak's inception in 1971, when Amtrak chose to keep intercity trains on the Milwaukee Road line but cease it on the Chicago & North Western (now UP), which served

more populous towns. Metra serves Kenosha for operating convenience, with no subsidy from Wisconsin. The cost of resuscitating the service, including upgrading the UP line to Milwaukee, which has been reduced from double to single track and had signals removed, is estimated at \$141 million.

The Chicago Sun-Times says "there should be no doubt that public transportation has to play a greater role in the life of the suburbs. Traffic congestion is getting to be such a problem in the far north and northwest suburbs that some businesses say people cite it as one reason for turning down good jobs."

"A survey of 24 large companies said traffic congestion and lack of public transportation were among the top problems facing Lake County. Half of more than 400 businesses in another survey said transportation and affordable housing were important for them to compete. The lesson for businesses locating or expanding in the suburbs is a simple one: Is there a train station nearby?" the Sun-Times concluded.

## **Wheel Report**

**MONTICELLO RAILWAY MUSEUM** will be announcing a "new train" that will be operating this summer at the museum. This year in August, instead of caboose trains, the museum will be operating *Thomas the Tank Engine* during the weekend of August 15/16 and 22/23. The train will provide rides for kids each weekend and the museum expects a great crowd. They are asking for our help during that weekend since they expect an overflow crowd. With the popularity of the train on PBS - they will need assistance.

**CSX EMERGENCY SIGNS** have been installed at grade crossings around Danville. The reflective signs have been mounted on crossbucks and crossing signals at grade crossings. The railroad is in the process of installing 28,000 across the system. The CSX 800 number is listed and the intention of the program is to improve the emergency response to the crossing along with providing a phone number that citizens can contact the railroad should a

## **Cumberland Gap tunnel fire**

Smoke coming from a fire in the Cumberland Gap railroad tunnel was seen by people in the town of Cumberland Gap, Tennessee at 7:55 am. on 11 November 1997. The fire in the 3,900-foot tunnel was in an area about 400 feet long and was fueled by burning support timbers and railroad ties. Firefighters from Tennessee and Kentucky fought the blaze.

Hours after the discovery of the fire, fears of a collapse of the tunnel prompted officials to call in a special team from the Bell County (KY) mine that was; trained and equipped to combat fires. in coal mines. On 12 November 1997. it was still burning toward the Kentucky end of the tunnel. A team from the Federal Mine safety and Health Administration finally managed to fully extinguish the fire on 17 November 1997 after pumping approximately 1.3 million cubic feet of liquid nitrogen into the tunnel. The fire was believed to have been started by sparks from a welder.

*Via Whistle Stop*

*(Ed. My firm bid on designing this work about 2 years ago. NS is rehabilitating the inside of the tunnel, replacing timbers and grouting behind the existing supports. We made a high-rail trip through the tunnel in March. This was different than other high-rail trips I have made - fun but cold.)*

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vehicle stall upon the track (providing they have a cell phone). In addition, the number will provide contact point for systems that malfunction. NS has had similar information posted on each crossing for several years.

**UNION PACIFIC** has changed the frequency on the detectors in the St. Louis area. 161.220 is being used. During a trip along the UP in Nebraska we noted the detectors were not on the normal frequency - probably all being changed to this frequency to avoid overlap and cutting out of messages.

## **NS siding construction, and other projects**

NS let bids for sidings at Sloan, Catlin, Marshfield and Attica along with the connection at Sidney on March 6. Contractors are expected to be on the projects by April 1 and have all grading and sub-ballast completed by June. NS will begin trackwork at Ross Lane and Sloan first. All sidings are to be in service by September 1, Conrail acquisition day. In addition, NS is letting contracts for 5 sidings in Tennessee, the Brunswick siding in Missouri and 2 connections in Ohio.

In addition to the grading contractors O'Neil Brothers of Danville got the reconstruction of five bridges west of Catlin and a bridge and culvert west of Marshfield. The culvert extension at Attica will be handled by the grading contractor.

Elsewhere, we have two new projects for NS in Van Loon, IN and several for Conrail at Rush Run, Ashtabula, Ravenna and Youngstown, Ohio. Work continues on 8 other projects.

In Lafayette the contractor will be pouring bridge deck on Route 25 the end of March. The Route 52 project will start-up again by the end of the month with final grading of the fill and bridge completion. The city still hopes congress will come through with the funds to construct the last segment from Route 52 to Ninth Street. If not, funds will be available in 1999 and work will begin on that segment along with track construction.

*Rick*

**A private car excursion will run on Saturday, March 21. It leaves Normal at 10:27 AM, arrive Chicago 1:30 PM, a five hour layover-leave Chicago 6:30 PM and arrive back in Normal at 8:50 PM. The trip includes lunch in the car on the way up and a big pasta dinner on the way back. During the layover guests will have passes to use the Chicago Trolley to go wherever they wish in the Loop. The cost is \$148.90 per person, call (405) 942-2222 and leave your name, address, and credit card number and state that you will be riding the 'Bruce Bird Special'.**