

DANVILLE FLYER

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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 \$20.00 for Chapter membership in addition to \$36.00 for NRHS membership. Rossville Depot Museum membership is \$20 per year. Meetings are held on the third (3rd) Sunday of each month (except June, July, August and December) at the Jocko's Depot Restaurant, Gilbert Street (Illinois Route 1) and Williams Street, next to CSX, in Danville, IL with lunch beginning at 1:00 PM Central Time followed by meeting and program.

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Visit our Chapter WWW Home Page On-Line - <http://www.danvillejct.org>



RJ Corman GP16, Guthrie, KY at engine facility, photo by Dick Brazda. Check the article this issue.

Coming Events

May 15, 2011

Danville, IL - Monthly meeting at Jocko's Pizza Depot, Williams and Gilbert Street, starting at 1:00 PM.

June 12, 2011

St. Charles, Ill. - 35th Annual Kane County Railroadiana Show & Sale, Kane County Frgds., 525 S. Randall Road. 10-3.

June 25-26, 2011

Galesburg, IL - 34th Annual Galesburg Railroad Days Trian Show. Carl Sandburg College, 2400 Tom L. Wilson Blvd. Sat 9-5; Sun 10-4.

July 30-31, 2011

Belleville, IL - The Great Train Expo. "Largest traveling model train show." Belle-Clair Fairgrounds Park. 10-4.

July 2, 2011

North Judson, IN - NKP 765 steams again. See Page 3 for a planned DJC trip to North Judson to ride, or watch, NKP 765 on the road.

July 21 - 24, 2011:

Rock Island Train Festival, Rock Island, IL Steam and Diesel rare mileage train trips, river boat Cruises and model train displays. For more information: <http://www.trainfestival2011.com/> Train Festival 2011 is being produced by Prestige Rail Marketing and sponsored by the Quad Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau and the City of Rock Island. Portions of the ticket sales will go to the Susan G. Komen Foundation for breast cancer research.

Check out the MRM steam schedule on the right

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held Sunday, May 15 at Jocko's Depot Restaurant, Williams and Gilbert Street, beginning at 1:00 PM.

The museum was contacted by a group for a tour, however, they never showed up but note in Dick's item the guys that did arrive on the 30th got a lot of work done inside the building. The outside still needs some cleanup and after the operating session that just occurred the layout needs to be setup for DC operation. Memorial Day weekend will be upon us before we know it.

As usual, there will not be a newsletter during the summer months as your editor and publishers take a break.

This month we will have a DVD featuring U.P. 844 & Centennial, N.P. 328 & Milwaukee 261 on BNSF. In addition Rick will have one that features IC (Champaign and central Illinois), NYC, NKP, PRR and Central of Georgia steam, in color, in the early 1950's.

UP Steam - the Little Rock Express

On Jan 18 it was announced that with more than 76,000 votes, the Little Rock Express won Union Pacific's Great Excursion Adventure - You Route the Steam! Today we're announcing that the Little Rock Express begins May 29 with the arrival of Union Pacific's steam locomotive No. 844 in Kansas City, Mo., and concludes June 9 in Little Rock, Ark. The route starts in Kansas City, heads east to St. Louis before turning south to Little Rock. Along the way the train will make overnight stops in KC, Jefferson City, St. Louis, Cape Girardeau, Bald Knob and North Little Rock. Check the UP web site for more details.



Monticello Railway Museum

2011 Steam Schedule

Southern 401, placed in service last year, will operate a number of times this year. The special rates for riding behind 401 are Adult \$12, Senior \$11 and Child \$9. Use of membership pass does not apply to this special move. The following are scheduled trips this year:

May 21-22 - Trains, Planes and Automobiles weekend

June 25-26

July - TBA

August 20-21

September 17-18 - Railroad Days

October 15-16

Summer?

Summer is finally getting here and as usual we will not have meetings in June, July and August. At the same time your editor will take a break and probably not publish a newsletter until late August or into September. With the Email system we have now if something does come up most of you will receive notice that way. Be sure to check out steam on the MRM.

The Pundit's Corner

The Second "End of North Yard"

I went back on my hard drive and found a file dated 8/16/94, named simply "YDEND.DOC". YD were the call letters for North Yard in C&EI Days. As an open office, North Yard was closed in July of 1992, when the then-new GRS VPI interlocking system was cut in to replace the old all-relay interlocking. My article back then talked about not only that transition, but also the efforts we made to preserve the old control panel and train order signal, both of which still reside at the Rossville Depot Museum.

So imagine how amusing it is to me to report that the VPI system itself was retired after only 19 years on the job. The week of April 4th saw this cutover take place, to a new GE Electro Logix system that is otherwise known as VLC, or "Vital Logic Controller". 19 years is not a very long time for a railroad signal system to be in service.

And not only was a new system installed, but all remnants of the former P&E in the "Danville Triangle" were finally expunged. Danville Junction, which was known as CSXT (or CR) Crossing on NS, finally had its signals and OS sections removed for the NS. Since January of 2006, those signals had protected nothing with the diamonds being pulled up. But they still had to be lined for every NS train, and lax maintenance caused for some interesting failures in the last 3-4 years.

At Cory, the CSX southbound signal was relocated southeast to be nearer the switch it governs movements over. No need to be up at Bowman Ave. with no other line crossing at the place once known as Danville Hill. All the old P&E signals came down, as well as every NS searchlight. And the temporary unidirectional intermediate signals north of Voorhees St. on CSX were also removed, since the northbound signal at Danville can show all the aspects needed to act as the distant signal for both tracks at RA Jct.

And the ultimate change is the very change in the name. Where CSX and NS cross, it's simply known as "Danville" now. NS crews are still calling it Danville Jct. Old habits die hard...

One good thing about the new system, NS can "see" everything that CSX is doing at this location. Their dispatcher at Decatur requests signals, so no more calling on the radio for every NS train that needs to run. That will keep the workload down on the boys at Calumet City, but will they be as responsive to blips on a screen? Time will tell.

I joked with another signal enthusiast that I should have tried to get the local control panel that was in the bungalow with the GRS system, and set it on top of the panel we have for North Yard with a sign saying: "Who Vanquished Who?"

In some future column, I'll discuss the folly of using a cantilever signal for the lower side of a grade. I seem to recall those being used when the elevation is higher for a train approaching it...

Doug

Remembering North Yard, or Danville Junction

In the late 1960's Facebook and Twitter were words we had never heard of, but those of us in the railroad hobby we knew the sound of the telegraph key. Like most railfans that visited Bob Barker, Bernice Schram or others at North Yard, the sound of the key was familiar but we had no idea what was being said. It seems like only yesterday that I visited with Bob and watched him line up on the board, now located at Rossville, for Wabash or C&EI trains. Later came the MoPac and L&N with the N&W taking over the Wabash. My friend Bob Shanks used to come to North Yard on the switcher from Tilton and sometimes I got to ride the caboose out to Tilton. We had rides on the C&EI switcher with Don Wright in North Yard and up #2 track and I rode the Wabash local back from Attica a couple of times with Bob Shanks. Those were the days when we could visit the operator, or if you saw a strange car in the parking area you turned around and left. Operators used to send the consist with the key to XN at Oaklawn. Orders were handed up to northbound trains. Now scanners do the job, interlocking controls are from Calumet City or Decatur and trains no longer pass with a wave to the operator.

I remember one hot summer day visiting with Bob and we went out side to watch the Wabash switcher head back to Tilton on the old interchange track. The crew was on the caboose, the 40-foot boxcars were rocking on the jointed rail and within a few moments the first one laid over right, the second left, the third right and as we pointed to the problem the crew bailed off the caboose, which ended up with the front off the tracks. I remember climbing over the pile of coal to get into the building one evening when the coal trains derailed and a car landed on top of a Corvette and a VW, not Bob's. There were some great memories of North Yard (and some we can't discuss here).

I still don't do Facebook or Twitter but I still watch trains and, just like Doug, remember the good times at North Yard. - Rick

Nickel Plate 765 Excursions

The Hoosier Valley RR Museum is running trips between North Judson and LaCrosse on Saturday, July 2. The chapter is considering a trip to take in the steam excursions with the Berkshire (2-8-4) from Fort Wayne. The trips operate at 10 am, 1 pm and 4 pm (all CDT) from North Judson, which is about 2 ¼ hours from Danville. Photo run-bys are advertised. Fares range from \$24 in commuter coaches, \$28 in comfortable coaches, \$32 in an open air car to \$36 in a lounge. Tickets will have to be ordered in advance for the event; it is likely to sell out.

A stop will also be made at the Monon Connection Museum for a visit and meal. This museum has an outstanding collection of RR related items inside, as well as a few exhibits outside. The restaurant is part of the museum. It is located a few miles north of Monon, IN. We would plan to leave from the Cooke Business Products parking lot in Danville.

Those interested in going should contact Dick Brazda, including information on number of people, trip desired and class of service desired. We will design the schedule around which trip is most popular. The deadline will be Monday, May 23. We will then attempt to get the tickets. Once they are secured, payments will be due for the 765 trip. The Monon museum fee (around \$5) and meal will be settled individually. Either e-mail me at hillcrest22@comcast.net or leave a message at (217) 446-5876.

Work Day at Rossville

Thanks to those who participated in the work day on April 30. Model T groups were never found, but a lot of cleaning and setup was accomplished.

Due to the talents of Bob Gallippi and Doug Butzow, the GP9 control stand is upright and bolted to the floor. Skylar Brown will work with a local shop to modify a pipe to attach the seat to the floor. This will then be a great new exhibit. Does anyone have a photo of the unit that we could display near the control stand?

Doug and Skylar, as well as Doug Nipper, Al McCoy and Allen Cooke participated in cleaning the building and displays. It is almost ready for the summer season. Thanks everyone!

Dick B.



Express Cold Train Expands

Launched last April, the Pacific Northwest-Chicagoland Express Cold Train is expanding service to meet rapidly growing demand. This year will see expansion to the Southwest market.

The refrigerated intermodal container service went into operation in partnership with the Port of Quincy Interposol Terminal



In December 2010, Cold Train was spun off from Rail Logistics of Overland Park, Kan. Chris Mnichowski, president of CTI Freight Systems, now the parent company of Cold Train Intermodal, said, "We needed to direct our time, talents, and resources to further build the Cold Train network and on acquiring additional assets to service growing customer demand."

Five days a week, the Cold Train containers depart the Port of Quincy in central Washington with fresh or frozen produce loaded in 53-foot refrigerated containers and brought to the Port of Quincy Intermodal Terminal. There, the containers are double-stacked onto trains for an expedited, nonstop move to Chicago. On arrival in Chicago, each container is carefully placed on a truck chassis for transport to its final destination.

Cold Train says its containers take less than four days to destination, faster than conventional refrigerated boxcar service and on a par with trucks.

Lawson, vice president of Intermodal for Cold Train, says eastbound shipments have doubled since the beginning of the year and continue to climb. Additionally, westbound shipments have increased.

"For the past couple of months, the Cold Train has been completely full of cargo going both east and west ... we fully believe this trend will continue which is why we are adding capacity," Lawson added.

"We expect 300% growth this year over the operation in 2010," stated Mnichowski. Mnichowski plans to start service from Quincy and Chicago into the Southeast U.S. market in 2011.

"As the Cold Train service continues to grow, we plan on providing service to areas such as Atlanta and Florida, and then pivoting to Northeast markets in the future and eventually to the California market," added Mnichowski

Via Railway Age 4-5-11



Before the Floods

By Dick Brazda

Rick Schroeder and I took a trip to Kentucky and Tennessee on April 13-15. While water was somewhat high in spots, we got out before the really high water and storms arrived.

On Wednesday, the 13th, good maps, a recent employee, a good scanner and consistent signal calling by crews on the radio resulted in seeing and photographing almost all of the trains along the CSX from Terre Haute to Amqui (Nashville). We got pictures at Sullivan, Carlisle, Oaktown, Vincennes, Alice, Wansford and Howell yard in Indiana. In Kentucky we found trains at Henderson, Sebree,

Milan, Humboldt, and South Brownsville. In addition, there was a Pictsweet SW in Bells.

Friday started with a storm and we caught up with Canadian National action at Rialto siding. However, since the CN crews do not call signals, it was much more difficult to pin down train locations. We did locate trains at Halls and Dyersburg, TN and Fulton, KY. The Tennken RR was also located in Dyersburg. North of Fulton to Carbondale the railroad was quiet (or hiding).

Overall, it was a good view of CSX operating a busy north-south line from Danville to Nashville. The line to Memphis has some bottlenecks on the west end without CTC. The CN seemed to have pinch

known individually as the Three Notch Railroad (THNR), the Wiregrass Central Railroad (WGCR) and the Conecuh Valley Railroad (COEH), are currently owned by affiliates of Gulf and Ohio Railways, Inc.

The Three Notch Railroad includes 35 miles of track connecting Georgiana and Andalusia, Ala.; the Wiregrass Central Railroad is a 20-mile railroad that runs between Waterford and Enterprise, Ala.; and the Conecuh Valley Railroad is a 15-mile railroad linking Troy and Goshen, Ala. Each of the three lines interchanges with CSX Transportation and serves customers shipping primarily agricultural and manufactured products. Collectively, the three lines hauled approximately 6,000 carloads of freight during the fiscal year ended 2010.



Q530 at Atwood, TN, 2 UP SD70M, 2 CSX SD70MAC, SD40-2 and road slug

Morton's Gap, Crofton, Latham (Hopkinsville), Casky, Trenton, and Guthrie. Also in Guthrie were two R. J. Corman units at their engine facility.

On Thursday we started the day with a ride on the Music City Star. This commuter operation travels the Nashville & Eastern trackage from Lebanon to Nashville. The inbound trip from Hemitage to Nashville Riverside was quite full (2 gallery cars). Following a few pictures at the N&E Shops yard in Nashville, we headed west along the CSX Bruceton and Memphis subdivisions. Again we were able to locate most of the trains on the line. However, the Bruceton sub was fairly quiet with activity only in New Johnsonville and Bruceton. However the South Central Tennessee RR was dropping off and picking up in the CSX Colesburg yard. The Memphis sub, which is only ABS, was much busier. Trains were found at Atwood,

points in Kentucky where there once was double track, similar to the Illinois situation. The short lines seemed to be working steadily and the Music City Star was a pleasant surprise.

RailAmerica acquires Alabama railroads

RailAmerica, Inc. has signed an agreement to acquire the assets of three short-line freight railroads in the state of Alabama for a total purchase price of \$12.7 million. The transaction is expected to close in the second quarter of 2011 and is subject to customary closing conditions including regulatory approvals. The three railroads,

RailAmerica President and CEO John Giles said, "We are pleased to add these high-quality assets to our existing Alabama rail franchise. Collectively, the railroads have a solid customer base as well as a number of opportunities for further growth. Additionally, the railroads are clustered in close proximity to our existing Alabama operations, which we expect to create significant operating efficiencies. We look forward to partnering with new and existing customers on the line and with the local community to continue growing business on these lines."

Giles added, "We continue to have a strong balance sheet to take advantage of acquisitions that complement our core business. We approach this process with a disciplined focus on investment criteria designed to generate attractive returns and operational synergies."

For the next twelve months, RailAmerica anticipates these railroads will generate approximately \$3.7 million in revenue, \$1.2 million in operating income and \$0.7 million in depreciation and amortization. RailAmerica intends to use cash on hand to finance the purchase.

Amtrak Taps Into Rail Fan Base To Boost Security

Baltimore - Amtrak is tapping into the rail fan community to help keep the nation's passenger railroad safe.

Through a new program dubbed Partners for Amtrak Safety and Security being launched April 19, Amtrak will recruit people who are already watching and riding trains to keep an eye out for suspicious activity on trains and around stations and tracks.

Passengers and rail fans can register online to participate in the "neighborhood watch style program." They'll be issued membership cards and learn more about what safety and security concerns they should look out for and how to report them.



Rail fans — or railfans” as they call themselves — are the candidates for

Monday. They're already out watching trains and tracks across the country every day and will notice if something is amiss.

"They know sometimes better than our employees," he said. "They know engine numbers and car numbers and time tables. They know better than the fisherman knows the tides."

The program grew out of a forum with Amtrak executives organized by Trains magazine last year. In the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, people who watched and photographed rail operations were sometimes viewed with suspicion and that led to tension between rail fans and railroads.

The forum was meant to help foster dialogue between rail fans and Amtrak, according to Trains associate editor Andy Cummings. Amtrak officials were impressed with the enthusiasm they saw and decided to create a program like this, O'Connor said. Rail fans will sign up for

PASS because they want formalize their relationship with the railroad, Cummings said.

"People want to feel connected to the railroad in some way," he said. "Up to now, the railfan's role and connection has been ambiguous. Generally, there have been some suspicions about what their motives are."

Amtrak's new initiative is based on Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway's Citizens for Rail Security program, which launched in 2006, O'Connor said. BNSF's security team recognized the value of supplementing the vigilance of railroad's 38,000 employees with the large, passionate group of train enthusiasts, according to BNSF spokesman Steve Forsberg. "We saw the railfans as potential allies," he said. "They have a shared interest with the railroad."

Since the program began, the more than 10,000 members CRS members have reported everything from potential suicides, trespassers, lost children, suspicious activity and stolen equipment, Forsberg said.

Steve Glischinski, a correspondent for Trains based in St. Paul, Minn., joined BNSF's program because he wanted to help and he has found staff to be very responsive when he reported broken gates at crossings and spotting a person on a gondola. "We like the railroad. Instead of them hassling us about being near the railroad, they were saying, 'Now, you can be our eyes and ears,'" he said.

Glischinski has traveled around the country to photograph trains in action, getting to know how the rail systems work in the process. "You can tell when something isn't right or if someone is where they aren't supposed to be," he said.

Amtrak's new initiative will help get past the antagonistic relationship between railroad and rail fans and take advantage of a valuable asset, Glischinski said. "The good news is that they are recognizing that we can help them, not hurt them," he said. "I hope other railroads follow suit."

Check Online at <http://pass.amtrak.com> to sign up for the identification.

Editor: I signed up for the BNSF program several years back but so far have not had the need to contact the railroad. Our company, since we work for several of the railroads, are required to have a background check and carry an eRAILSAFE card with us in addition to the Roadway Worker Training program we go through.

NS to start intermodal facility in Rossville - Tennessee that is

Norfolk Southern CEO Wick Moorman and Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam joined state and local dignitaries and business and community leaders Friday at the groundbreaking for the new Memphis Regional Intermodal Facility in Rossville, Tenn. The \$105 million facility is part of NS' multistate \$2.5 billion Crescent Corridor initiative, in cooperation with numerous states and the federal government.

The new facility, to be built on 380 acres in Fayette County, Tenn., is expected to open in late 2012. The groundbreaking is the second of four new Crescent Corridor intermodal terminals to be constructed or improved during the next two years.

The Memphis facility is expected to create or enhance 6,200 jobs in the Memphis region during the next 10 years, with capacity growing to handle 327,000 containers and trailers annually. The terminal will utilize the latest in gate and terminal automation technology, which shortens the waiting time for trucks entering the terminal, thereby reducing exhaust emissions and improving truck driver productivity. Additionally, NS said, state-of-the-art, low-emission cranes will operate within the terminal. NS also will construct the main administration building to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental

MEETING MINUTES – APRIL 17, 2011

PIZZA INN

Meeting opened at 1:57 P.M., President Dick Brazda presiding. Treasurer’s report read and approved. Current balances are \$2617.99 in checking and \$3467.80 in the CD for a total of \$6085.79 in assets. . . Secretary’s report as printed in the Flyer was approved, with the addendum of a work day being scheduled for April 30th at the depot.

OLDBUSINESS

Doug N. further explained the use of the Yahoo Group for the Chapter, where Flyer announcements will be made, and other discussions can take place. Those getting the “regular” e-mail notification of the newsletter will continue to do so, but everyone is welcome to join the new group. He also reported on the renewal of the Chapter’s domain name and DNS service for two years. Larry Prosser moved to reimburse Doug for this expense, and the motion was approved. . . Al McCoy will have more magnets to sell at the museum this summer. . . The Vermilion Valley Railroad does not appear to be moving much yet. . . The “clean up” day work session scheduled for April 30th will coincide with a Model T auto group that would like to tour the museum. Jess Bennett did not have a time for that group to arrive, but we will start at 9:00AM CDT.

NEWBUSINESS

Jim Hile wanted to know if the group would take another trip to Centralia in the fall, on a day without snow. . . Several other day trip options were discussed, including steam at MRM and North Judson IN, where NKP #765 is running this summer. July 1st there is the photo freight. All steam trips require reservations. We can stop at the Monon restaurant and museum if we go that way. Ticket prices range from \$24 to \$36 for steam trips. . . Doug N. reported on the signal changes at Danville the week of April 4th. More will be written about this in the next Flyer.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Dave mentioned that the Indiana NMRA group has layout tours in the Lafayette area on May 21st. . . On Dick and Rick’s recent trip to Nashville and other places down south, they found a hobby shop in Nashville that was more disorganized than Slot and Wing in Champaign! Didn’t think that was even possible.

Meeting adjourned at 2:28 P.M. Al McCoy presented a DVD of Larry Prosser’s of various steam operations. We would highly recommend it for cases of insomnia.

Design) Certification standards.

“The Memphis intermodal facility will be an anchor of Norfolk Southern’s Crescent Corridor rail route connecting the Northeast and Southeast with high-speed, reliable, truck-competitive intermodal services,” said CEO Moorman (pictured at right). “We thank Secretary LaHood and USDOT for their support of public-private partnerships to create jobs and economic development opportunities. We also commend Gov. Haslam, the Tennessee Department of Transportation, and Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development for their leadership in support of meaningful rail initiatives in Tennessee that will help solve our national transportation infrastructure crisis. We greatly appreciate the continued support of Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, Mississippi DOT, and the Marshall County Industrial Development Authority for their awareness of the benefits that the project will have for the surrounding region.”

Crescent Corridor projects currently planned for development include new independent intermodal facilities at Birmingham, Ala., Charlotte, N.C., and Greencastle, Pa.; the expansion of the Harrisburg, Pa., intermodal terminal; and the addition of freight rail capacity in Virginia and Mississippi. The program also includes significant investments in rail route improvements consisting of additional passing tracks, double track projects, improved signaling systems, and other track speed enhancements.

Via Railway Age 5-2

Traffic up on small and regional railroads

North America’s small and regional railroads are enjoying a surge in traffic so far in 2011, with overall volume up 9 percent and some important cargoes growing by double digits.

RMI’s RailConnect Index, which compiles freight levels for 338 short lines in the U.S. and Canada, said reporting carriers handled 1.56 million carloads and intermodal shipments in the 15 weeks through April 16, up from 1.43 million a year earlier. Since there are an estimated 550 short lines in the two countries, the RMI report captures most of them.

The traffic counts include an 11.5 percent gain in the largest short line category — chemical loadings — to 262,902 railcar loads. Chemicals include a broad range of products from feedstocks for plastics and pharmaceutical producers to fertilizers and ethanol. When chemical shipments are on the rise, it usually means factories are increasing demand for raw materials to make products and packaging.

Short lines’ grain loadings, their second-largest cargo type, rose nearly 9 percent in the first 15 weeks to 219,692 carloads. Construction base materials - stone, clay and aggregates - jumped 15 percent to 160,924. Intermediate metals and product

shipments climbed 10 percent to 130,970. And while coal has lagged other groups, short lines loaded 181,615 railcars with it so far this year, up 4 percent.

Although the small railroads focus on bulk commodities, their higher-value intermodal container and trailer volume has surged 21 percent to 116,476 boxes. And motor vehicle and equipment loadings have soared by 49 percent to 22,941 carloads.

Via RailSource 5-2

Rail News - May

Union Pacific will continue improving Illinois' transportation infrastructure with a nearly \$17 million investment to enhance the rail line that runs from Dupo to about five miles south of Valmeyer. The nearly 26-mile project includes removing and installing new rail, renewing the surfaces in 38 road crossings and replacing five switches. Additionally, the rail yard at Dupo will receive improvements including the removing and installing more than 11,000 ties, replacing seven switches and spreading more than 4,000 tons of ballast.

The Association of American Railroads reported that 298,649 freight cars remained in storage as of April 1, representing 18.7 percent of the North American freight car fleet. The AAR said that approximately 26,667 had left storage since March 1. The AAR defines stored cars as those in an inactive event status and that have not had a revenue load in the last 60 days.

Manufacturers Railway formerly filed to discontinue service on its lines in St. Louis, MO. As reported in our last edition, the railroad's principal customer, Anheuser-Busch, has reached agreement with Foster Townsend Rail Logistics, a contract switching service, to provide freight rail service on Manufacturers Railway lines.

Progress Rail Services (owned by Caterpillar Corp) announced that it had reached agreement with Balfour Beatty to acquire the latter's trackwork business. Terms of the deal were not immediately disclosed.

Freight car order up

The "explosion of orders in this year's first quarter" has led Economic Planning Associates to increase its projection of freight car deliveries this year from 22,000 to a "conservative" 37,000. EPA expects deliveries to rise to 43,000 in 2012, 48,000 in 2013, 53,000 in 2014, 59,000 in 2015, and 62,500 in 2016.

EPA President Peter Toja (pictured) says first-quarter orders for 36,903 cars and intermodal platforms was the highest quarterly total since fourth-quarter 1997. Builders' backlogs increased from 22,658 on Dec. 31 to 51,913 on March 31.

"At current production levels, this backlog represents 6.8 quarters of assemblies, the highest level since we began calculating this ratio in 1992," said Toja in EPA's latest Railcar Review. "[A] rapid escalation in assemblies in the past two quarters, along with a continuation of this trend, could strain the availability of parts and components [and] has turned us somewhat cautious with regard to assemblies in 2011 and 2012."

Toja noted that "some of the current backlog contains cars that, as part of a multiyear agreement, will be delivered 3-5 years from now. While we will closely monitor assemblies and parts availability during the second quarter, we view our 2011 and 2012 deliveries estimates as conservative and will raise this forecast as conditions continue to improve."



An eastbound NS merchandise train hustles through Homer, Illinois on April 9th, 2011. The horse on the nose of the lead locomotive looks like it's been rode hard and put away wet! Makes you wonder if it was collision damage or just normal wear and tear on the paint.

This was a rare occasion for the photographer to catch a train on the "back way" to and from Champaign for one of Rick's operating sessions. And the weather on this day was much nicer than what we have had recently.

Photo by Doug Nipper

