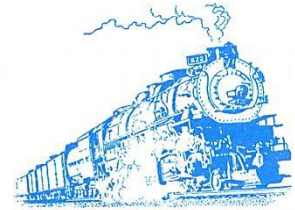


# The Semaphore

South Shore Model Railway Club

## NEWSLETTER

Home of the "East Coast Lines" since 1938



---

**SUMMER 2023 ■■■■■■■■■■ VOLUME 43 ■■■■■■■■■■ NUMBERS 6-7**

---



**Savery Moore--A trip to the Durango & Silverton**

# The Semaphore

David N. Clinton, Editor-in-Chief



## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Southeastern Massachusetts.....	Paul Cutler, Jr.
“The Operator” .....	Paul Cutler III
Boston <u>Globe</u> .....	Paul Bonanno
Western Massachusetts.....	Ron Clough
Rhode Island News.....	Tony Donatelli
“The Chief’s Corner” .....	Fred Lockhart
“Behind the Scenes”.....	Savery Moore
Mid-Atlantic News.....	Doug Buchanan

## PRODUCTION STAFF

Publication.....	Al Munn
	Jim Ferris
	Bryan Miller
Web Page .....	Savery Moore
Club Photographer.....	Joe Dumas
Guest Contributors.....	Ross Hall

*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. ©2023  
E-mail: [daveclinton@verizon.net](mailto:daveclinton@verizon.net) Web page: [www.ssmrc.org](http://www.ssmrc.org)

VOLUME 43 ■■■■■ NUMBERS 6-7 ■■■■■ SUMMER 2023

### CLUB OFFICERS

President.....	Jack Foley
Vice President.....	Rich Herlihy
Treasurer.....	Will Baker
Secretary.....	Eric Mercer
Chief Engineer.....	Fred Lockhart
Directors.....	David Galbraith (*24)
	Bob England (*24)
	Roger St. Peter (*23)
	Gary Mangelinkx (*23)

**ON THE COVER:** The D&SNG train to Silverton, Colorado, leaving Durango with K-37 2-8-2 #493. This was the first loco to be converted from coal to oil-burning, because of the danger of forest fires due to sparks and embers from coal locos. Photo by Savery Moore.

### BILL OF LADING

A Trip to Durango.....	12
Chief’s Corner .....	3
Clinic.....	10
Contests .....	3
Editor’s Notes. ....	11
Election Results .....	3
Form 19 Calendar.....	3
Library Corner.....	11
Member News .....	11
Memories .....	4
Potpourri .....	5
What are You Doing?.....	12

## FORM 19 ORDERS

### JUNE B.O.D. MEETING

Monday, June 26<sup>th</sup> 8 p.m.

### JULY BUSINESS MEETING

Monday, July 10<sup>th</sup> 8 p.m.

### DCC & EQUIPMENT TUNE-UP CLINIC

Thursday, July 13<sup>th</sup> 8 p.m.

### JULY B.O.D. MEETING

Monday, July 31<sup>st</sup> 8 p.m.

### SUMMER OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, August 5<sup>th</sup> 9 a.m.- 4 p.m.

### AUGUST BUSINESS MEETING

Monday, August 7<sup>th</sup> 8 p.m.

### DCC & EQUIPMENT TUNE-UP CLINIC

Thursday, August 10<sup>th</sup> 8 p.m.

### NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

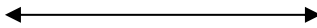
Sunday, August 27<sup>th</sup>

### AUGUST B.O.D. MEETING

Monday, August 28<sup>th</sup> 8 p.m.

## CONTESTS

Congratulations to **Doug Buchanan** on winning this month's "50/50" drawing! Also, thanks to Doug, as he donated his winnings back to the Club!



## CHIEF'S CORNER

Fred Lockhart

We will start this month as usual with an update on the railroad progress: first up would be Scenery with most of that activity taking place in the West Middleton area; in the area formed by the Mountain Division loop. An FYI note to the builders on that project, Savery and I have discussed a possible location that scenery can be re-used on the permanent railroad when it is expanded, so if that works out, your work won't be wasted. Savery has spent a lot of time sorting, organizing, and making homes for all the scenery materials he collected and placed under the railroad; quite a project completed. One other scenery item--I have noticed more building lights around the railroad that look nice. I have been working on the trolley ever since Ron's first trolley meeting, which I think was in April.

Trackwork was finished first and after that wiring has been going on for several work days/nights. It is just about complete. There is only one turnout that needs its frog isolated so it can be wired. Then it's on to the switch machines or hand throws or a combination of both. The harbor loop is done, after I installed the auto reverser for the reverse loop. I wired the tortoise switch machine to the auto reverser to take advantage of the auto throw feature and it works great. The same feature on the other auto reverser will be used on the city loop so a trolley will be able to run continually loop-to-loop. Another electrical project is still ongoing with John Sheridan working on the Essex Junction side of leg--updating the power districts, adding detection, organizing the wiring and providing documentation.

The new lockers are coming along, we have enough cabinets put together for twenty-seven lockers. When they are finished, we will do the second phase which will be six more cabinets, making eighteen lockers for a total of forty-five lockers. We felt dividing up the construction would be more manageable to work with. Hopefully, by the next Semaphore issue in late August the first phase of the lockers will be ready to be occupied.



Thank you to all who have worked on all our ongoing projects--there are many more than have been mentioned. Before closing, a special thank you to the Operations Committee for all their effort to get the railroad ready for the OP sessions. It takes a lot of work to organize all the trains. Hopefully, when we have more frequent ops the rolling stock will be where it was left from the last session.

That's it for this month, as always, your questions or comments are always welcome.

Fred Lockhart  
Chief Engineer

## ELECTION RESULTS

President..... Jack Foley  
Vice President ..... Ed Bulman  
Treasurer ..... Will Baker  
Secretary..... Bryan Miller  
Chief Engineer..... Fred Lockhart  
Directors (2 yr.) ..... Gary Mangelinkx  
..... Roger St. Peter

**Congrats to the new Officers and Directors! The Annual Business Meeting voted to retain the current dues and locker fees of \$35/mo. and \$22/unit.**

## *Semaphore Memories*

### **JUNE/JULY 2018** (5 years ago)

- Carnival Corp. acquires White Pass & Yukon Route Railway from TWC Enterprises Ltd.
- Conway Scenic RR begins fitting engine and components from NHN GP9 #1757 into 470 Club's B&M F7 #4268, which had its innards stripped out in the 1980s.
- Ford Motor Company purchases neglected Michigan Central Station in Detroit (1913), with plans to restore the building to office space.
- Governor Baker opens talks on feasibility of east-west passenger rail service.
- Amtrak president Douchebag limits use of private rail cars on Amtrak trains and makes it illegal for private car passengers to ride on the rear platform.
- Grand Central Terminal celebrates the 40th anniversary of Supreme Court ruling that saved the building from destruction. (The preservation push started with Jacqueline Kennedy.)
- State of CT provides \$769 million to upgrade Inland Route from New Haven to Springfield, MA, to 110 MPH speed in many areas and adding three new stations.

### **JUNE/JULY 2013** (10 years ago)

- Drawings for what is now "Bryantville" presented.
- Turnouts made for Cedar Hill passenger yard installed.
- FTA approved spending for preliminary work on construction of two new Hudson River tunnels.
- Association of Railway Museums and the Tourist Railway Association merge to form Association of Tourist Railroads and Railway Museums.
- After absence of 12 years, EMD re-enters passenger locomotive market with order for 20 new F125 "Spirit"-series locos for the Southern California Regional Rail Authority.
- Alaska RR begins work on 32-mile, \$88-million extension between Point MacKenzie and Houston, AR.
- ACF re-opens tank car manufacturing plant in Milton, PA, after being idled in 2009, due to demand.
- The famous ex-B&M tower in Waltham closed, marking a final history in lineside towers. The only remaining towers in New England handle moveable bridges.
- Amtrak ships first AS-64 "Cities Sprinter" loco to test facility in Pueblo, CO.
- East Broad Top Preservation Assoc. purchases four miles of track from Mount Union interchange with NS to Aughwick Creek.
- MBTA awards contract to S&R Construction Enterprises to build Wachusett station west of Fitchburg.
- Construction begins on a \$78-million restoration of Springfield's Union Station.
- Eastern Maine Railway, a subsidiary of J.D. Irving Ltd., purchases 28 miles of ex-BAR from MM&A, between Madawaska and Van Buren, ME. Was to be abandoned.

- Plans underway to celebrate Club's 75th anniversary.

### **JUNE/JULY 2008** (15 years ago)

- New entrance and road being built for Bare Cove Park.
- MassCentral RR purchased by on-line shipper, Wildwood Reload.
- "Walkway Over the Hudson" group breaks ground for \$30-million project to open New Haven's Poughkeepsie Bridge to walkers and bikers.
- AT&SF 4-8-4 steamer #3751 completes first trip between L.A. and San Diego in nearly 55 years.
- Cog Railway places the first diesel-hydraulic engine in service, powered by 600 HP John Deere tractor engine.
- The tracks running in Portland's Commercial St., connecting the former Grand Trunk terminal with Portland Terminal's yard at State St., ripped up; not used since 1986.
- Preparations began at South station for 67-story, mixed-use skyscraper above the tracks.
- MBTA files suit against CSX for runaway freight car from Cohenno Lumber Co. of Stoughton.
- NS and Pan Am Railways propose "Patriot Corridor", joint rail service between Mechanicville, NY and Ayer, MA, along with 281 miles of secondary and branch lines in NY and New England.

### **JUNE/JULY 2003** (20 years ago)

- Mass Bay Commuter RR wins bid to operate MBTA Commuter Rail Service.
- NY/NJ Port Authority begins rebuilding ferry slips at Hoboken Terminal (ex-DL&W) in New Jersey.
- Edaville hosts "Day out with Thomas" for the first time.
- Wilton Scenic RR in New Hampshire begins operations.
- Trains magazine selected as one of "50 Best Magazines in America".
- Cog Railway installs a second automatic, hydraulic turnout.
- New Haven steamboat "SS Nobska" scrapped, after languishing at Charlestown Navy Yard for years.
- Several SSMRC members travel to NMRA Convention in Toronto, Ontario, despite fear of "SARS" virus.
- Acadian Railway shuts down operations in northern New England.
- Former B&M-CP line between White River Jct. and Newport, VT, officially becomes Washington County Railroad's "CT River Division"; part of VTR System.
- O. Winston Link's ex-wife arrested for stealing and then trying to sell 1,400 of his pictures on Ebay. Link died in 2001.
- Al Munn joins *Semaphore* staff.

### **JUNE/JULY 1998** (25 Years Ago)

- Breakup of Conrail into CSX and NS approved by STB
- Amtrak extends *Pennsylvanian* to Chicago.
- Kato brings out RS2 locomotive in HO.
- Tom Wylie provides "Internet mailing list" for Club members.
- Last "Official Operations" held at Weymouth on July 13th and 16th.
- Amtrak begins rebuilding some old F40 locomotives into "cab-baggage" ("Cabbages") control units.

### JUNE/JULY 1993 (30 Years Ago)

- ConCor Airslide hoppers arrive in ECL colors.
- Club trip to Amtrak's Maintenance Center in South Bay, with guide member Richie Schmeir.
- German "I.C.E." train demonstrates on Northeast Corridor.
- Test train passes through "Chunnel" between England and France.
- Amtrak takes delivery of first "Genesis" –series P40 locomotive from GE.
- Edaville equipment convoyed to Maine Narrow Gauge Museum in Portland, using antique flatbed trucks.
- Members removing nails from used lumber obtained for Building 51 from various sources.
- MBTA Board approves \$20 million for new Commuter Rail bridge over Neponset River in N. Quincy.
- Red Line receives new Bombardier cars from Montreal

### JUNE/JULY 1988 (35 Years Ago)

- Two Operating sessions in a month held for the first time.
- Spanish Talgo and Canadian LRC trains tested on Northeast Corridor.
- Forge Park/I-495 station opens on Franklin Line.
- White Pass & Yukon RR resumes service.
- Daily service between Braintree Red Line station and Hyannis/Falmouth provided by Cape Cod & Hyannis RR.
- Old Colony restoration gets "OK" for Federal funding.

### JUNE/JULY 1983 (40 Years Ago)

- Readville Station burned down by vandals.
- Steamtown signs agreement with Scranton, PA to move equipment from Riverside, VT.
- Cog Railway ownership changes from original owners Teague family to four Littleton, NH businessmen.
- Amtrak announces "Superliner" service to operate for the first time in the East on the "East Coast Hiawatha", through Buckhorn, Rockville, Union and Middleton stations.
- Edaville RR receives "eviction notice" from Atwood Estates.
- LTX Corp. of Westwood features our railroad in their sales brochure.
- Long-time member Chet Price dies.
- B&M sold to Guilford Transportation for \$25-million.
- "The Gov" (John Governor) institutes new schedules for Operations.
- MBTA renovates 32 old New Haven commuter cars (stainless coaches), with life expectancy of 25 more years.

## POTPOURRI

**CSX TRANSPORTATION** has been recognized by intermodal providers as the top-performing railroad in North America. The "Intermodal Service Scorecard" ranking was compiled by the Journal of Commerce, and assessed performance through the first four months of 2023, the railroad said in a news

release. To create the Scorecard, more than 100 shippers and intermodal marketing companies were invited to perform a satisfaction assessment. Respondents cited their satisfaction with domestic intermodal service as a key driver of CSX's number one ranking. Customers highlighted improvements in the railroad's fluidity, train speed and customer service. (TN)

●●●●●●  
**AMTRAK IS ADDING** two additional Northeast Regional trains serving Springfield beginning June 5, Amtrak, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, and Connecticut Department of Transportation announced. The trains will offer single seat rides from Springfield to New York City in three and half hours. Connections can be made at New York to the Northeast Corridor for travel to Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington.

For early risers, the new service will allow passengers to depart Springfield at 4:45 a.m., arriving at New York Penn Station at 8:10 a.m. Another train will leave Springfield at 7:50 a.m. and arrive in New York at 11:21 a.m. Heading north, trains will depart New York at 6:59 p.m. and arrive Springfield at 10:40 p.m.; another will depart Penn Station at 8:50 p.m. and arrive in Springfield at 12:26 a.m. The trains make intermediate stops at Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, and Stamford, Conn.

●●●●●●  
**THE NEVADA NORTHERN RAILWAY'S** beloved shop cat and mascot, Dirt, died January 10 at age 15. The railroad is planning to give him a big send off Memorial Day weekend. May 28 will see a full day of events to honor Dirt, including special tours and excursion trains. There will also be a eulogy at Dirt's final resting place – a short walk from the East Ely Depot where he will be able to look out over the yard.

"In Dirt's passing, he has transformed from being our Boss Shop Cat to becoming an ambassador for Heritage Railroading across the country and around the world," NNRy President Mark Bassett told Fox 11 News in Reno. "We consider Dirt following in the paw prints of Smoky Bear. Smokey was a real bear cub that survived a forest fire. Since 1944 he has been a symbol of forest fire prevention, and we see Dirt, Boss Shop Cat, doing the same thing. Dirt will help us reach new people to explain why the preservation of our steam railroading heritage is so important and he will also be



instrumental in helping us teach railroad safety to children.” The railroad said there has been a worldwide outpouring of support and appreciation for the cat who was born in the main locomotive repair shop, under one of the steam locomotives. NTRY has hired a sculptor to create two life-size bronzes of Dirt. The statues will be made with some of the bronze from locomotive No. 93’s crown brass. One statue and a gravestone will sit at his burial place, near the East Ely Depot. The second will be displayed in the engine house where he was born. Nevada Northern has set up a special account “**Dollars for Dirt**” to help preserve his legacy and care for his protege, DJ (Dirt Junior).

●●●●●●

**LAUNCH OF SERVICE** for Amtrak’s next-generation *Acela* trainsets has been pushed back into 2024, as testing and computer simulations continue to find problems, most recently with the train’s wheelsets. That means the new trains will enter service at least three years late, placing increasing pressure on the existing *Acela* fleet that dates to 2000. *Trains News Wire* has learned that four of the 20 first-generation *Acela* sets have been



withdrawn from service. Two New York-Washington *Acela* round trips were dropped from the schedule as of May 8; an Amtrak spokesman said this was “due to a need to perform additional maintenance on *Acela* equipment.” Alstom, which is building the 28 new high-speed trainsets, said that “modeling of the wheel-to-track interface is particularly complex due to age, condition, and specific characteristics of Amtrak infrastructure on the Northeast Corridor, and especially the existing tracks.” The company said it has been “conducting extensive investigations” to ensure the trains will operate safely and is “confident that this extensive process will demonstrate compatibility of the latest generation of high-speed technology with existing [Amtrak] infrastructure.” Sources tell *Trains* that the computer modeling designed to predict the trainsets’ operating

characteristics and enable them to reach maximum speeds over 150 mph were confirmed on the test track at Pueblo, Colo., but could not be verified on some Northeast Corridor sections. Track quality has been upgraded on New Jersey tracks between Trenton and New Brunswick, and Amtrak already hosts legacy *Acela* trainsets at 150 mph over portions of right-of-way upgraded in the 1990s in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, but track quality varies widely elsewhere. Amtrak and Alstom announced a \$2.45 billion deal to build the new equipment in 2016, with a 2021 target to begin service. (TN)

●●●●●●

**NORFOLK & WESTERN J-CLASS 4-8-4** streamlined steam engine No. 611 (Roanoke Shops,



1950) wrapped up a two-year stay at the Strasburg Rail Road tourist and short line over the Memorial Day weekend and was soon headed back to its home state of Virginia. Owned by the Virginia Museum of Transportation, the engine had operated periodically on the 4-mile-long Strasburg since May 2021, following a shorter stay here in 2019. During both visits, it pulled regularly scheduled excursions; offered stationary and operating in-cab experiences; and performed maneuvers for a wide array of photo charters. In addition, Strasburg’s steam-shop employees performed inspection and maintenance on the engine. Moreover, in January, No. 611 moved for a few months across the street to the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania for static display in the outdoor yard of the state-owned facility. (TN)

●●●●●●

**RAILROADS HAVE TO MEND** frayed relationships with customers, employees, Congress, and regulators, CSX Transportation CEO Joe Hinrichs told a shipper conference last month. “At best we have strained relations with every single key stakeholder except investors. And most of our key stakeholders hate us,” Hinrichs says he told CSX management shortly after becoming CEO last fall. “We’re seeing that play out. We’re at an inflection point in this industry.” Hinrichs, who joined CSX in September, brings customer



perspective to the railroad because he previously served as CEO of Ford Motor Co. and spent decades dealing with railroads. “We never felt like we were ever important,” Hinrichs says. “And Ford — you might have heard of it — it’s a pretty big company. And if the railroads didn’t think Ford was that really important, how does everyone else feel? This fundamentally has to change.” Shippers have not felt that railroads prioritize service. “If we’re going to change and actually talk about profitably growing the business, it starts with setting our customers first. And that’s not the reputation our industry has,” Hinrichs says. A key step to putting customers first is treating employees well, Hinrichs says. “We’re a service business. You cannot run a healthy good service business without your employees being engaged and feeling motivated to serve. And frankly, our industry has not provided that environment for our employees, certainly not at CSX, historically,” he told the North American Rail Shippers conference. A number of recent factors have helped perpetuate that negative relationship over the past several years, including implementation of Precision Scheduled Railroading, the pandemic, protracted and contentious labor negotiations, and tension over paid sick leave. Hinrichs says he’s committed to building a better relationship with the railroad’s employees because it’s the right thing to do and because good service requires it. “And that’s what we’ve been focused on,” he says. (TN)

●●●●●●

**CPKC IS STOKING INTEREST** in the revival of Canadian Pacific 4-6-4 Hudson No. 2816, which will



set out on a tour this summer to celebrate the CP-Kansas City Southern merger. In social media posts, the railroad this week teased the progress made on the locomotive’s

overhaul in preparation for its first outing in more than a decade. “We’ve been lifting steam engines for 110 years. Today, working in the same location railroaders did in 1913, crews at our Ogden Shops lifted the 2816,” CPKC said. “This time, it’s back onto its wheels as refurbishment work nears completion. This summer, 2816 The Empress will make more history when it departs from Calgary on a special

North American tour to celebrate the creation of CPKC and the connecting of three nations.” CP acquired the 2816 in 1998 and, after an extensive overhaul that included converting the 1930 Montreal Locomotive Works product to burn oil, returned the locomotive to service in 2001. It has emerged from storage in Calgary a few times since CP pulled the plug on its steam program in 2012.

CP’s hydrogen fuel cell locomotive No. 1001 towed the 2816 into the railway’s Calgary shop in November 2022 to begin the latest overhaul. CEO Keith Creel has said that the locomotive will pull the railway’s business train from Calgary to Mexico City. (TN)

●●●●●●

**MAJOR IMPROVEMENT** in Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority rail operations will take a year or more, MBTA board chair Thomas Glynn said in an online forum Thursday. “I think people will see a different T a year from now,” Glynn said, “but I don’t know if they’ll see a different T in two months.” Glynn said new General Manager Phillip Eng is working to change the decision-making and organizational culture and address major projects which are well behind schedule. “A lot of these things need to be integrated to have a significant impact,” Glynn said. Quincy Mayor Thomas Koch, who is part of both the MBTA board of directors and its advisory board, said it could be a year and a half before the agency addresses “huge structural issues” and improves service. Eng compared the situation to one he faced when he took over the Long Island Rail Road in 2018, saying “service and reliability was at some of low points in its history.” Improvement, he said, will require addressing a large track maintenance backlog, increased staffing, and addressing the capital projects that are behind schedule. (TN)

●●●●●●

**CSX TRANSPORTATION** CEO Joe Hinrichs showed off the railroad’s second heritage locomotive today on LinkedIn: ES44AH No. 1973, a salute to the Chessie System. “The Chessie Cat is back! Here is the CSX Chessie System locomotive #1973,”



Hinrichs wrote. "Enjoy! Great job again by our Waycross team."

The locomotive was painted at CSX's Waycross, Ga., shop and recognizes Chessie System's founding year. (TN)

●●●●●●

**CSX CORP. HAS ANNOUNCED** a \$5 million gift to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum, which will go toward the museum's \$30 million capital campaign as it prepares for the bicentennial of the B&O in 2027. The donation will be used to build the CSX Bicentennial Garden, an amphitheater and multiuse space that can host local organizations and community gatherings. "CSX is proud to support the future of the B&O Railroad Museum and help expand its role in the community," CSX CEO Joe Hinrichs said a railroad press release. "As the successor to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, CSX has been an integral part of the Maryland economy for generations. We are thrilled to be able to deliver this substantial contribution and serve as a catalyst of growth for this iconic institution and the Baltimore community." Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said the project will serve his administration's goals of "connecting institutions with their neighboring communities, expanding workforce training opportunities on campus, creating publicly accessible open space, and remodeling the South Car Works building, our nation's oldest, continuously operating railroad repair facility, as the new entryway to the Museum." In remarks included in a video posted to the CSX Instagram page, Moore says the state of Maryland will be contributing \$3 million to the B&O master plan. A state press release notes Moore included a \$1 million grant for the museum in the fiscal 2024 capital budget. (TN)

●●●●●●

**THE FEDERAL RAILROAD** Administration will conduct safety assessments of all Class 1 railroads, citing a June 1 letter from FRA Administrator Amit Bose to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) The letter by Bose says the FRA will conduct the assessments of each railroad over the next year and release "an overarching final report assessing issues, trends, and commonalities across all railroads reviewed," with railroads asked to develop corrective actions in response to FRA recommendations. (TN)

●●●●●●

**CALTRAIN HAS REACHED** a major milestone in the electrification of its San Francisco-San Jose main line, with the commuter rail operator announcing Tuesday that electrified trains have begun operating under power from the overhead contact system. These initial runs will take place

between the Santa Clara and College Park stations on the Santa Clara Drill Track, with test runs expanding this summer to the main track between the San Antonio station in Mountain View and San Jose Diridon. "The start of testing for our new electric trains marks an historic moment for our agency, symbolizing tangible progress towards



electrification," Caltrain Executive Director Michelle Bouchard said. "It signifies a future of improved service, reduced environmental impact and a more reliable experience that will benefit both our riders, and the communities that we serve." Electrified service will be provided by seven-car multiple-unit trainsets built by Stadler in Salt Lake City. (TN)

●●●●●●

**A FORMER BANGOR & AROOSTOOK F3A**, which became Canadian Pacific property with the purchase of the Central Maine & Quebec, is on its way to CPKC headquarters in Calgary. A CPKC spokesman confirmed the locomotive, shown in Galt, Ontario, on June 2, is in route to Calgary, but



said he had no information on future plans for the unit. BAR No. 502, built in 1947, had previously been owned by CM&Q predecessor Montreal, Maine & Atlantic. It is reportedly in original, un-rebuilt condition. The unit had been moved to Montreal for storage in 2021 after having earlier cleared out of the former CMQ shop in Derby, Maine. (TN)

●●●●●●

**THE MBTA** Board of Directors on June 8 voted to approve a \$2.7 billion operating budget for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) that "will sustain levels of service while making strategic investments in safety, staffing and hiring, key capital investments, including station and accessibility needs, and design work required



for a future connection of the Red and Blue lines,” according to the agency. According to the MBTA, the budget allocates funding to increase the agency’s overall workforce to 7,643, which is 964 positions above what was budgeted for FY23. The additional positions, the agency says, will support expanded capacity in several areas with a focus on the MBTA’s Safety Department and Operations. Specifically, more than half of all new spending for FY24 is directly related to safety-related positions and represents an increase of more than four times over prior years’ average. (RA)

●●●●●●

**WITH THE T’s** subway network dogged by cuts, anemic ridership, and an array of high-profile safety incidents, the commuter rail has emerged as something of a bright spot in the MBTA’s portfolio. Last month’s commuter rail ridership peaked at 80% of its pre-pandemic levels, after tumbling to 2% in the spring of 2020. On average, 94% of trains arrived on time and on weekends, commuter rail ridership has exceeded pre-pandemic levels for nearly two years. Compared to the subway service, where average weekday ridership is about half of what it was before the pandemic, as the system struggles with safety issues that have slowed trains on about a fifth of the tracks and reduced service to weekend schedules on the Red, Orange, and Blue lines. The lines that picked up riders were Framingham/Worcester, Providence/Stoughton, Haverhill and the three Old Colony lines. The Greenbush and Kingston lines experienced the largest jumps in weekday ridership at 16% and 12%, respectively. (BG)

●●●●●●

**A GLOBAL OPERATOR** of temperature-controlled warehouses will locate facilities along the CPKC network, the railway and Americold Realty Trust recently announced. The first cold storage facility under the collaboration deal will be built in Kansas City, Mo., which is on the route of CPKC’s new Mexico Midwest Express intermodal service linking Chicago with points in Mexico. CPKC’s temperature-controlled service aims to send U.S.-produced meat to Mexico and Mexican-grown produce to the U.S. It’s the first cross-border intermodal reefer service between the two countries. (TN)

●●●●●●

**BNSF RAILWAY** has donated former Santa Fe B40-8W No. 537 to the non-profit Railroading Heritage of Midwest America (RRHMA). The unit was delivered to the RRHMA shop in Silvis this month. No. 537 was constructed by General Electric for Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe in October 1990 as part of its “Super Fleet” of new EMD and GE diesels painted in

Santa Fe’s famous Warbonnet passenger diesel paint scheme revived by Mike Haverly, the railroad’s then-president. AT&SF was the only railroad to order the B40-8W. No. 537 is the first of the type to be preserved, although the model is still operated by four short lines in addition to BNSF. (TN)



●●●●●●



**CSX TRANSPORTATION** CEO Joe Hinrichs showed off the railroad’s second heritage locomotive: ES44AH No. 1973, a salute to the Chessie System. “The Chessie Cat is back! Here is the CSX Chessie System locomotive #1973,” Hinrichs wrote. “Enjoy! Great job again by our Waycross team.”

The locomotive was painted at CSX’s Waycross, Ga., shop and recognizes Chessie System’s founding year.

●●●●●●

**THE MBTA** and its contract operator, Keolis, will expand planned fare reductions on the Newburyport/Rockport commuter rail line to help address the upcoming Sumner Tunnel reconstruction project. From July 1 through Aug. 31, the fare for the entire line will be \$2.40, the equivalent of a subway fare. Previously, the fare reduction had been planned only for the Salem and Swampscott stations, as part of a broader program that will also include free service on the Blue Line. The new plan means the discount will be available at 13 more stations to the north and east. “We hope the public takes advantage of this excellent mitigation and considers Commuter Rail not only as a travel alternative this summer, but as the best means of travel even after the tunnel reopens,” MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng said. “I thank our partners at Keolis for their support.” The Sumner Tunnel project will close the 90-year-old highway tunnel that makes up part of State Route 1A,

connecting Boston with Logan Airport and East Boston. It's the first of two summers of planned closures. (TN)

●●●●●●

**CANADIAN PACIFIC KANSAS CITY (CPKC)** and CSX Corporation (CSX) announced June 22 a planned joint venture for the building and development of hydrogen locomotive conversion kits for diesel electric locomotives. As an initial step in the collaboration, CSX says it plans to convert one of its diesel locomotives using a hydrogen conversion kit developed by CPKC. The conversion work will be done at CSX's Huntington, West Virginia locomotive shop. According to the Class 1's, nearly the entire freight locomotive fleet of all railway operators in North America consists of diesel-powered units, representing the industry's most significant source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. "Rail has an important role to play in a lower carbon economy and the industry needs a long-term, effective alternative fuel solution," the Class 1's said. (RA)

●●●●●●

●●●●●●

**I ENJOYED THESE ARTICLES** in this month's RR magazines and can suggest them for your reading:

**TRAINS**

BNSF Stars in *Train Time* Documentary

Tourist Railway Success Stories

Best of Trains

The Mohawk that Refused to Abdicate

In My Own Words

My First Train Ride...Alone

**MODEL RAILROADER**

Build a Loop in Segments

Observation

A Tribute to Tony Koester

In Memoriam

Malcolm Furlow

**MODEL RAILROAD CRAFTSMAN**

Calcium Carbide Container Flats

Diverging Points

Where Did it Start? Part 2

**PASSENGER TRAIN JOURNAL** (2023-2)

My New Haven Over the Years

The Month the New Haven Railroad Died

Engine Change at New Haven Station

New Haven Union Station

Trip Report: Amtrak to the Rescue

The Amtrak Diaries, Part 7

50 Years of *Auto Train* Service

News sources: Boston Globe, Boston Herald, Trains "Newswire", Railway Age, Railpace Newsmagazine,

RRE "Callboy", "The 470", Patriot Ledger, Rail Passenger Assoc., Attleboro Sun Chronicle.

**DCC & EQUIPMENT TUNE-UP CLINIC**

Dave Clinton

We had a full-house this session, with applicant **Dylan Lavinsky** starting off with two Walthers "Mainline" ES44AC models painted in CN red/black. These fairly-new locos came with a 21-pin light board, so the installation of ESU's #53614 decoder was a pretty easy install. While he was at it, he installed Kadee "Whisker" couplers, in place of the "crap-u-mate" factory ones. (I think he's having too much fun!-Ed. 😊)



**Ed Bulman** brought a R-T-R Athearn SW1500, decorated in the PennCentral scheme. The nine-pin



socket accepted the DH123 just fine and the light board included resistors, that protected the 1.5v mini bulbs. As usual, with Athearn's use of cheap bulbs, one blew-out after only a couple of test runs! While he was at it, Ed repaired the side frame on one of the trucks, which had broken off in shipping.

**Joe Dumas** brought his new D&RGW HOn3 "Galloping Goose", a unique railcar "doodle bug" of the Colorado narrow gauge railways. This Bachmann unit had a nice 8-pin receptacle, which took the DZ123P with no problem.



**Eric Tedeschi**, one of our two "Eric's" we had this session, brought his Atlas U30C, decorated in UP colors. He swapped out its DH123 into his UP SD7 by Athearn, which was a fairly easy thing, considering both had plugs.



**Tom Davis** brought his New Haven 2-6-0 oil burner by Bachmann and hard-wired the DH123D decoder into the boiler. (Yes, he does use three soldering irons at a time! 😊 -Ed.)



**Eric Mercer** brought his Athearn Genesis F7 decorated in NYC colors. He had replaced the axle gears and wheelsets and installed the DH165AO decoder, which is a good replacement for the factory board, as it snaps right on the pegs. It is a “hardwire” job, so it takes a little longer than “plug ‘n play”. It is much better to solder the wires onto the board, as opposed to using the black factory, slide-on connectors (which can “slide-off”).



The next clinic will be Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup>. Please contact me with any questions about the clinic.

## LIBRARY CORNER

New this month: [Boston in Transit, Mapping the History of Public Transportation in The Hub](#); Steven Beaucher; MIT Press 2020. This 570-page, hardcover book is a very comprehensive look at Boston’s public transportation history, starting with the first public ferries, the Charlestown Ferry, in 1728, through today’s comprehensive MBTA subway, trolley and Commuter Rail lines. Full of maps and b&w and color photos. Whatever you wanted to know about Boston’s transit systems is in this book!

New Library books are introduced on the Breakroom table for 30-days and then placed in the library. They may be checked-out (and back in) anytime by using the form on the return tray in the breakroom. Happy reading!

Dave Clinton, Librarian

## EDITOR’S NOTES

1. A new **Locker Occupancy List** has been posted, showing several vacancies available. If you’re interested in a locker, please see Jack or Will.
2. I hope you enjoy **Savery’s great “Trip Report”** in this issue. It’s been many years, since anyone has written one and takes me back thirty years, when Ron wrote about the trip several of us took to the NMRA Convention in Denver—“Mountains of Fun in ‘91”.

.....*David N. Clinton*

“Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.” (Matthew 7:7)

## MEMBER NEWS

Our condolences go out to **Dan Peterson**, on the death of his son Jason, on May 26<sup>th</sup>. Jason always was an active participant helping out the White Elephant Table staff during our Shows. Dan and we all will miss him terribly.

**Ron Clough** is presently at a rehab “Care One” in Weymouth to clear up some medical issues, which he suffered recently. Visiting and get-well cards are always welcome. He is hoping to be released this Friday, so we look forward to seeing you soon, Ron!

“Welcome aboard” to our newest applicant, **Chris Wheeler**, from Cambridge. We look forward to getting to know you, Chris, during the next few months. I’m his sponsor.

(Note: For 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:

### JULY

Bryan Miller ..... 10<sup>th</sup>  
Fred Lockhart ..... 11<sup>th</sup>



## AUGUST

John Roberts..... 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Jim Ferris ..... 14<sup>th</sup>  
Kurt Kramke (H) ..... 16<sup>th</sup>  
Al McCarty ..... 20<sup>th</sup>  
Bill Roach..... 26<sup>th</sup>

### What are You Doing?

**Peter Palica:** This is another 3D- printed building (the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in NYC) that I recently finished painting. Like most of these buildings they arrive from the vendors as single colors in white, beige or gray. This is actually smaller than N-scale. In N- scale this building would probably be about 30" + high as opposed to its current 14"; however, my plans for many of these landmark buildings that I am collecting is to use forced perspective. It both tricks the eye and looks quite realistic when placed properly. It is not unlike my incorporation of N-scale houses on the hillside overlooking HO buildings on the small town scene to the left of White River Junction on the club layout



**Kurt Kramke (H):** " I just got back from visiting Kenneth in Seattle, we visited the zoo, the aquarium, went on the harbor cruise, and the



glass museum."

## A Trip to Durango The Trip of a Lifetime

By Savery Moore  
Photos by the author

Last September a friend of mine from high school, who is quite the traveler, suggested that we take a trip together. I told her I would think about it and

ended up deciding it *would* be a fun thing to do. During the course of our conversations that day, she also happened to mention to me that one of her nicknames was "Durango." (Her name is Jan.) Well, it didn't take long for me to put two and two together, and I suggested to "Durango" that we travel to Durango, Colorado, and take the train to Silverton and back. Happily, she agreed.

On Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, we met in Dallas and flew on together to Albuquerque, where we spent the night before heading to Durango Sunday morning. Upon arriving in Durango, Jan headed to her hotel room to relax, and I headed to the Durango and Silverton Railroad. There I found the depot, the yard, and the museum building, which is free and open to the public. Inside there was a history of the railroad, quite a few artifacts, along with a 3-foot gauge private car, locomotive #476, the baggage car from "Butch Cassidy," and an HO/Hon3 model railroad. It was a very interesting museum, with helpful and knowledgeable staff.

On Monday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, we headed off to the Durango depot for our 9:00 departure. Since it was my idea to take the train, it was also my treat. I figured I was probably only going to do this once, so I decided early on that we should go first class. I had purchased tickets online a few months prior and reserved a table for two in the parlor car "Alamosa." The parlor car is the last car on the train in both directions. One of the "perks" you get with the parlor car is exclusive access to the open-air rear observation platform. (There are also some free souvenirs, free coffee and muffins, and a cash bar for those who desire it.)

Our guide/narrator/bartender on this trip was an energetic young woman named J. Leigh (Jaylee) who was fun, informative, and gracious. She made the trip very enjoyable, although I missed a lot of her narration due to being out on the afore-mentioned rear platform.

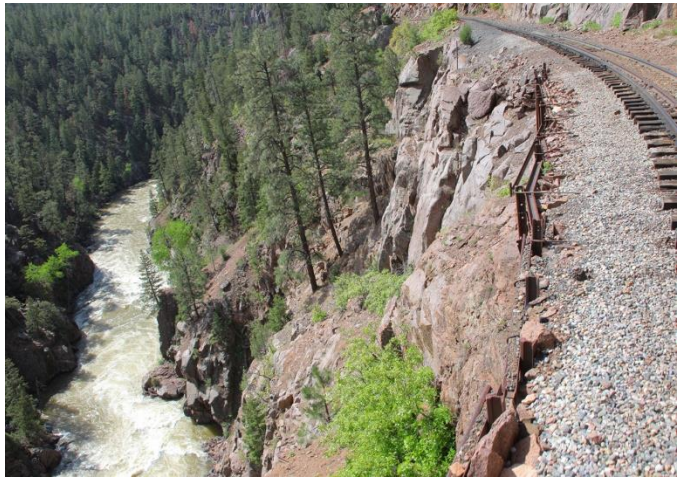
The train left on time, and as we whistled our way through five consecutive grade crossings in town, I could tell something special was beginning. Once on the outskirts of Durango, the ruling three percent grade started forcing our route to snake back and forth to gain altitude. Our loco, Baldwin K-27 #493, built in 1902, was now starting to work hard pulling our full thirteen-car train. A little over 12 miles into the 42-mile route, we went through a rock cut and entered the San Juan National Forest. Two curves later and we were on the edge of the Animas River Gorge, with a sheer 400-foot drop to the raging

waters below. This is where the “Horseshoe Curve” is located, which is the most famous and photogenic location on the railroad.

As we continued to climb toward Silverton, the river came up to meet us, and we were soon right next to the rushing waters. Jaylee told us that the river was the highest it had been in well over a decade due to a record winter snowfall, and the resulting runoff indicated that. (My travel partner and I would go white-water rafting on this same river the following day.)

Once down in the Animas River valley, the views of the snow-covered peaks that surrounded us were magnificent. This was the perfect time to take this trip, as it seemed like late spring in Durango, early spring in the valley, and close to late winter by the time we got to our highest point in Silverton, at over 9,000 feet elevation.

Well, that’s it for this installment of my Colorado trip. See the next issue for more photos and the tales from Silverton and the trip back down the mountain.



The tracks hugged the cliffs of the Animas River Gorge, 400-feet above the water. The passengers were asked not to flock to one side of the car for the view, so the weight would remain even. The opposite side of the train had the same view on the return trip from Silverton.



Here we see K-27 #423 rounding the famous “Horseshoe Curve” high above the Animas River. I was in the parlor car “Alamosa”, the last car on the train, which afforded great views around curves. Below: our 13-car train.



In this photo, you can see that the tracks and roadbed were held in place by old rails and metal hooks embedded in the side of the mountain. It’s a little bit terrifying in hindsight! (Note guardrail, also.-Ed.)



The Animas River was at its fastest flow in more than a decade this year, thanks to abundant winter snowfall. The next day, my friend and I would go “white water rafting” on this river, just south of Durango.



High water on the Animas River.



As we made our way further into the Rockies, and higher in elevation, we began to see snow-covered peaks. Mid-May is a perfect time to take this trip, as the temperatures were comfortable and there was still snow to add to the natural beauty of the area.



Our train parked in Silverton. (Right in the “downtown” section of this old mining town.-Ed.)



One of several water towers along the way.



This is one of two speeders that accompany the trains between Durango and Silverton. There is a lead speeder, that checks for downed trees, rocks, or other issues in advance of the train. The rear speeder carries two employees, who follow the train and gather hats, cell phones, and any other items the guests drop while on the trip. (Also for spotting potential fires started by train.-Ed.)



Here I am on the rear platform of the parlor car *Alamosa*. This extra-fare car was well worth it, as there was unlimited access to the rear platform, along with snacks and beverages. The car seats only 20 and at tables, so it was a very friendly atmosphere.

---continued in the August Semaphore---

## Running Extra

### STB chairman: Class I railroad strategies are inviting stronger regulation

By Bill Stephens, Trains Magazine;| May 26, 2023

**Surface Transportation Board Chairman Martin J. Oberman laments pace of train crew hiring and service problems in the West**

Surface Transportation Board Chairman Martin J. Oberman told a shipper conference that Class I railroad behavior over the past few years – mass layoffs, crew shortages, and poor service – may require a new approach to regulation.

“It may be time to say 2023 is not 1980 and we need to rethink some of these concepts because the current legal structure allows the railroads to do what they’ve been doing for the last 15 years,” Oberman said, referring to the Staggers Act that partially deregulated the industry in 1980. “It’s somewhat beyond my pay grade but I raise the question.”

It would be up to Congress to draw up a new railroad regulatory system, but Oberman says the STB will issue a decision this year on reciprocal switching regulations.

Surface Transportation Board Chairman Martin J. Oberman. Trains: David Lassen “We cannot have a thriving economy and we cannot compete effectively in the world market unless the railroads live up to their responsibility to provide, as the Congress has defined it, service on reasonable request,” Oberman told the North American Rail Shippers conference on Thursday.

Railroads are failing Americans and the U.S. economy by not keeping up with economic growth or the rise in truck tonnage, Oberman says. Over the past decade, volume excluding coal on the big four U.S. Class I railroads was up just 2%, while industrial production was up 3%, the overall economy grew 57%, and truck tonnage surged 26%. “These numbers should be an embarrassment to the entire industry,” Oberman says.

Oberman was critical of the loss of 34,000 railroad jobs over the past few years and called widespread train crew shortages a self-inflicted problem. He also lamented the pace of hiring on the big four U.S. systems, which began experiencing crew shortages late in 2021 that prompted STB service hearings in April 2022. In the year since the hearings, the four railroads have added just 1,439 active train and engine employees, Oberman says.

Most of those new hires have been on CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern, he said, noting

that CSX has been released from the STB's expanded performance data because of its service improvements. Union Pacific has added 142 people to its active train and engine crew ranks, a 1% increase, Oberman says, while BNSF Railway has added 287, a 2% increase.

"This leaves no mystery as to why service on UP and BNSF continues to cause major problems for customers," Oberman says.

Oberman was critical of UP for planning to curtail its hiring efforts as the economy slows and freight demand weakens. "I think it is stunning after all this that UP would say, you know what, we are going to slow down our hiring," Oberman says. "They are way behind. And the notion that their service is OK is silly."

Earlier in the day, UP CEO Lance Fritz told the conference that the railroad was operating well and that its local service performance was at or near all-time highs.

Oberman cited two examples of service problems in the West.

Soda ash mining companies in Wyoming have told the STB that for months UP has provided unreliable and inadequate service. The STB toured four mines this month that ship a combined 110,000 carloads per year on UP. Due to increased demand for soda ash, an essential component for manufacturing glass, detergents, and lithium batteries, the mines are planning to increase production by 60% to 65% over the next five years.

"They have not been able to obtain from UP a concrete plan to increase rail capacity to handle the huge growth," Oberman says. "Only after I personally intervened in the last few days ... has UP even been willing to provide a written description of its plans for the line which moves the Green River soda ash to market. But that response sent to me was labeled confidential. It was not sent to the miners who are the ones who need the information. And unfortunately, while referring to UP's capacity strategy, UP's letter was silent as to whether that strategy will enable them to actually move all additional 65,000 carloads."

Oberman says the lack of capacity assurances from UP has hurt the mining companies' ability to plan for expansions. "What kind of business needs a government official to lean on it in order to relate to its own customers in order to increase its own sales and make more money? Apparently, only a railroad," Oberman says.

Even more concerning, Oberman says, is BNSF's inability to handle demand for finished vehicle shipments. "As a direct result, there are at least 70,000 new vehicles stranded across the industry

unable to move to dealers," he says. "Because they cannot move these already finished vehicles, auto manufacturers have already reduced production schedules by at least 50,000 vehicles."

The reduced production has affected employees at automakers and their suppliers, causing \$350 million in direct impacts and likely costing the U.S. economy more than \$3 billion in indirect impacts, Oberman claims.

"These are just two examples of how the shortsighted strategies of the Class I's in recent years are hurting not only their own customers, but every U.S. citizen, by depressing the nation's economy," Oberman says.

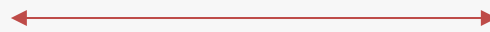
Oberman says there are positive signs in the rail industry, particularly from the new Class I chief executives who are taking what he called "meaningful steps to turn their railroads toward better service and growth."

CSX CEO Joe Hinrichs has established a better relationship with rail labor and was a leader in reaching paid sick time agreements with unions. The improved union-management relationship, Oberman says, has contributed to CSX's industry-leading service recovery.

Oberman praised Norfolk Southern CEO Alan Shaw and Canadian National CEO Tracy Robinson for pledging to not furlough crews during downturns so that they can handle a rebound in traffic and provide more consistent service over the long term. "If the railroad industry has learned nothing else from the past three years, it is that railroad employment levels must be set for the long term," Oberman says.

He also applauded the tentative agreement UP reached this week with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen that will provide a set schedule for engineers.

And Oberman credited Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern for their ambitious goals related to the CPKC merger.



## Saluda Grade

The steepest railroad grade is no more

By [Kevin Gilliam](#), *Trains Magazine* | June 6, 2023

The famous Saluda Grade in western North Carolina has seen its last train. Railbanked in December 2001, nature has slowly but surely reclaimed the right-of-way. Now, in 2023, an agreement has been reached to sell the railroad to become a hiking trail. Let's look back at the years when Norfolk Southern operated the nation's steepest mainline railroad.



The beginnings of Saluda date to the late 1800s when railroad builders aiming for Asheville and beyond were confronted with the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Several surveys of different routes were made, but the final choice, no doubt at least partially driven by finances, was that the best way to get over the mountain was a basically straight-line climb from Melrose to Saluda.



Completed in 1886, the Asheville & Spartanburg provided a direct path for tourists coming to the mountains and for freight heading to the South Carolina ports.

The challenges with Saluda began almost immediately. The grade officially rings in at 4.7%, which is incredibly steep for a railroad. Yet, the Saluda line is one of three former Southern Railway routes in the North Carolina mountains with grades in excess of 4%, so the idea of railroading on super steep slopes isn't as uncommon as it might seem to the casual observer. The other two 4-percenters, Red Marble Grade and Balsam Mountain, are on the Murphy Branch running west of Asheville, N.C. While Red Marble, part of the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad, is now out of service, Balsam Mountain still sees regular freight movements courtesy of short line Blue Ridge Southern.

The difference between the routes is that of the three 4% climbs, Saluda is by far the straightest and therefore the most prone to runaways. There were so many runaway trains in the early days that

something had to be done. The solution was to install two safety tracks on the mountain. In later years, a road foreman of engines was required to take each train down the mountain — an expensive operating proposition, to say the least.

Operationally, the challenges of getting trains safely down the mountain were met with equal challenges with how to get them up the mountain. The grade

was so steep that couplers would break apart under the heavy strain. The compromise was to cut the trains into sections at the bottom, make up to three trips over the hill, and then recombine everything at the top. Needless to say, this time-consuming and expensive operation was the main reason for the line's eventual closure. But from the fan perspective, the show was spectacular.

Several excursions operated over Saluda during the final years. Famed Norfolk & Western 4-8-4 No. 611 made several trips in the early 1990s. The final passenger excursion over Saluda operated in 1996 as part of the National Railway Historical Society's annual convention.

Not long after that, the rails over Saluda became silent and were soon overgrown. In the years since, several washouts left rails suspended in mid-air. Saluda has seen its last train. Soon, the rails themselves will be removed in hopes tourists will find ample hiking and biking opportunities on what was the nation's steepest class I mainline railroad grade.

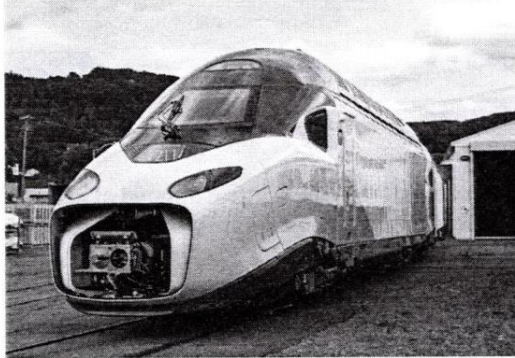
EDITED FROM *WASHINGTONPOST.COM*, MAY 27, 2023

## Testing difficulties delay launch of faster Acela trains, Amtrak says

By Laz Luzo

Amtrak's plan to roll out higher-speed trains in the Northeast Corridor this year has been derailed amid complications in completing testing of the new train sets along the route's decrepit infrastructure.

New Acela trains scheduled to debut this fall need more analysis to ensure they can safely operate on the curvy and aging tracks between Washington and Boston, railroad officials said, saying the new trains are now slated to enter service in 2024, at least three years behind schedule.



**A completed Amtrak Acela trainset in the yard at the Alstom production facility in Hornell, N.Y., last summer.** (Heather Ainsworth for *The Washington Post*)

The 28 Aveliã Liberty high-speed trains, which will replace Amtrak's existing Acela fleet, are part of a \$2.5 billion investment supporting upgrades to passenger service through the nation's busiest rail stations. The trains will come with improved safety, reliability, rider comfort and capacity, railroad officials said.

But their delivery has been snarled by multiple delays, including some stemming from unforeseen complexities in testing and computer simulation processes required by the Federal Railroad Administration. Amtrak and train manufacturer Alstom have cited some compatibility hiccups between the high-tech train, modeled after those in operation across Europe, and infrastructure that dates back 190 years in some areas.

The latest hurdle, officials said, involves testing the train's wheels, particularly at higher speeds.

"The modeling of the wheel to track interface is particularly complex due to age, condition, and specific characteristics of Amtrak infrastructure on the Northeast corridor, and especially the existing tracks," Alstom said in a statement.

The company said it has been "conducting extensive investigations" to ensure trains will operate safely in all conditions. It added: "We are confident that this extensive process will demonstrate compatibility of the latest generation of high-speed technology with existing [Amtrak] infrastructure."

Amtrak last year pushed the debut of the trains by 18 months from spring 2022 to fall 2023, citing the need for more testing because of the train's construction with adjoining coaches sharing a single wheel assembly. The articulated train, a structure that minimizes bouncing felt by passengers and that improves the quality of the ride, proved to be more challenging from a testing perspective, officials said at the time.

Design changes in recent years have helped to address incompatibility with the corridor's catenary system — the

overhead wires that supply the train with electricity. The trains had to be modified after a prototype train that began tests on the route in 2020 lost contact with the electrified wire and could not reach optimal speed. Officials said adjustments were made to ensure the device atop the train that makes contact with the wire will perform properly.

Amtrak this past week said "further refinement of analysis, simulations and testing" are needed, which will mean delays in the delivery of the trains to Amtrak. Alstom said it has shipped six trains to the railroad and is preparing to deliver the seventh while it continues to make progress on the remaining 21 train sets.

"We want our customers to experience these new trains as soon as possible, but Amtrak cannot operate them for passenger service until Alstom has completed testing and meets all safety requirements," Amtrak said in a statement.

Alstom and Amtrak have also cited challenges caused by the pandemic, including supply chain issues, as contributing to delays. They also noted these are the first train sets built under an FRA rule that establishes new safety standards for high-speed trains.

Amtrak in the coming months will seek approval from the FRA to operate on Northeast Corridor tracks, as well as for passenger safety standards and emergency preparedness requirements.

A required towing training was successfully tested in recent days between Philadelphia and New York with federal inspectors aboard, said FRA spokesman Warren Flatau. He said the agency expects Amtrak will submit results of December testing on sections of the corridor and a simulation testing plan next month. Approvals would lead to another round of testing requirements.

Alstom's \$1.8 billion contract with Amtrak includes 28 train sets as well as 15 years of technical support and maintenance. The trains are being assembled at Alstom's plant in Hornell, N.Y.

Amtrak's inspector general in 2020 warned that any hiccups in the delivery of the trains would result in delaying the upgrade, costing Amtrak millions of dollars in potential revenue. Demand for Acela, a service used primarily by business travelers, was severely affected by the pandemic, but Amtrak officials have said ridership is bouncing back.

The new trains for Amtrak's premier service will travel at top speeds of 160 mph, outrunning legacy Acelas that travel up to 150 mph — the nation's fastest passenger train. The trains will accommodate up to 386 passengers, an increase of 25 percent, according to Amtrak.

[Contributed by Lance Kawesch & Alan MacMillan, Jr.]



**An Alstom employee works on the sliding doors of an Amtrak Acela passenger train at the Alstom production facility in Hornell, N.Y.** (Heather Ainsworth for *The Washington Post*)