



CINDERS

SEPTEMBER 2023



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Volume 84

Number 7

Newsletter of the
 PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER
 NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
 Post Office Box 7302
 Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302

Chapter Website: www.nrhsphiladelphia.org

Amtrak Travel to the South Affected by Hurricane Idalia; 2023 Convention Travelers – How Did You Do??

Just as NRHS Members were Converging on Florida for the 2023 Convention in Fort Lauderdale, Amtrak travel to the Sunshine State was affected by Hurricane Idalia.

Because this disruption below Jacksonville was affecting rail travel just as *Cinders* was being put to press on September 6, we'd like to hear from members as to how their travel was affected.

Please contact Editor Larry Eastwood and tell us.



MEETING NOTICE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2023

SEPTA Elkins Park Regional Rail Station, Elkins Central Meeting Venue, 7879 Spring Avenue, Elkins Park, PA 19027. **PLEASE USE THE SPRING AVENUE ENTRANCE TO THE "ELKINS CENTRAL" MEETING ROOM. PLEASE DO NOT USE THE TRACKSIDE ENTRANCE. THANK YOU!!**

MEETING START TIME: 7:00 PM

This program will be a 35mm color slide program ONLY (NO ZOOM). Chapter President Larry Eastwood will present a program illustrating a week-long trip covering the entire BRITISH COLUMBIA RAILWAY in Canada, sponsored by the West Coast Railway Society. The trip took place in **September, 1987**, some 36 years ago this month. BC Rail no longer exists, having been taken over by Canadian National Railway.

The West Coast group covered the entire BC Rail system using three Budd RDC's carrying nearly 200 passengers. The train would offload each night in an on-line community with housing in nearby hotels and motels. In 1987, BC Rail's motive power fleet consisted of mostly MLW units. Trip participants were given virtually unlimited access to yards.

Please see summary on Page 2 of an interesting lineup of programs for the period September through December, 2023.

Chapter Member Featured in *Trains* as Strasburg GM

A full feature article by Writer Dan Cupper in the October, 2023 issue of *Trains* Magazine details the Strasburg Rail Road's expanding freight business. The article highlights Strasburg's General Manager, Jim Hager, of Ringoes, NJ. Hager is a 37-year member of Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS having joined the Chapter in 1986. Strasburg has always had a minimal freight business, handled by GE 44-ton switcher which had an ex-Pennsylvania Railroad heritage. In 2006, Strasburg acquired ex-NYC EMD SW8 #8618, which now handles the short line's freight traffic.

NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER, INC.
 Post Office Box 7302, Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302

Founded 1936, incorporated 1973 as a 501c3 non-profit corporation

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2023-24 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES: Effective September 1, 2023, \$20.00 per person, which covers Philadelphia Chapter dues through December 31, 2024. (NRHS National membership dues for 2023 are \$50.00, billed directly by NRHS.) NRHS chapters bill their members separately for Chapter dues. Donation requests for Philadelphia Railfriends will be mailed during October, 2023 via separate mailing from *Cinders*. Anyone interested in becoming a member of Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS should forward remittance, payable to **Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS** in the amount of \$20.00 to Post Office Box 7302, Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302. Please be sure to include name, valid mailing address, telephone number and E-mail address, as applicable.

ADDRESS CHANGES: Send to Editor Emeritus at Post Office Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353. (Include your **CURRENT TELEPHONE NUMBER** and **E-MAIL ADDRESS** so our records are complete.) Beginning in early 2023, we will effect electronic delivery of *Cinders* to those who elect to receive same.

Cinders is published 11 times a year by Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS, Inc. Correspondence regarding *Cinders* should be directed to the Editor at P.O. Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353. **EXCHANGE newsletters should be sent to:** R. L. Eastwood, Jr., Editor, P. O. Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353, or by electronic mail to reastwood2@comcast.net.

Fall, 2023 Program Schedule

Chapter Program Director Steve Ferrell has announced the Chapter’s programs for the period September-December, 2023.

As noted on the Meeting Notice for September, Chapter President Larry Eastwood will provide an in-person slide program on Thursday, September 21. He will recall a week-long charter rail trip covering all of Canada’s British Columbia Railway from September, 1987; plenty of vintage views of BC Rail, which is now part of the Canadian National System.

On **Thursday, October 19, 2023**, Steve Ferrell himself will cover the New York & Long Branch in another in a series of “Ride With Me Steve” programs, which itself contains at least five Philadelphia Chapter members.

Our **Thursday, November 16, 2023** digital program will feature the history of the **Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad**, provided by noted local rail historian and architect **James Rose**, using maps, historic and contemporary photos, plus the paintings of noted Artist Howard Fogg.

Rounding out 2023 will be Chapter Member and National Representative William Welk, who will screen views of Canadian rail travels.

Members will want to mark their calendars so as to not miss these interesting and informative programs.

Two Area Rail Notables Pass

Two well-known area rail historians and model notables passed away during the last week in August, 2023.

John Roy Greene, 85, of Telford, PA passed away on Tuesday, August 29, 2023 at LifeQuest Nursing Center in Quakertown. John was a graduate of Lansdale Catholic High School in 1956, and went on to serve in the United States Army in the 1950’s.

John was a model railroad enthusiast, and owned and operated Bethlehem Car Works for some 35 years. The firm was particularly well known for its ready-to-run HO passenger cars modeled after Reading Railroad prototypes. John was a member of the Reading Company Technical and Historical Society, the Hatfield Jaycees, the Hamburg Train Association, and had been a former Hatfield Township Commissioner.

Interment was held on Saturday, September 30, 2023 in Leidy’s Cemetery in Souderton, PA.

Michael J. Del Vecchio, 63, of Dover, NJ, passed away on Thursday, August 31 after a lengthy battle with cancer. We was particularly well known as an associate editor of *Railfan & Railroad Magazine* and later at the rail industry publication *Railway Age*. Mike was a member of the Tri-State Chapter, NRHS, including a term s president, and also had been a member of the Dover (NJ) Fire Department.

Mike also had somewhat of a railroading career, working at times for the Morristown & Erie as a trainman. And his editor skills found him writing marketing brochures for the Morristown & Erie.

WANTED!!

Members are invited

to submit short railroad or

traction history articles (up to one

page) for publication in *Cinders*.

Please contact:

R. L. Eastwood, Jr., Editor

with complete details on articles to

Post Office Box 353,

Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353



FRANK G. TATNALL, JR.

SEPTA System

It's been an unusually busy summer for railroad and transit news since the June issue of Cinders appeared. This will make it doubly difficult to condense a meaningful amount of this new news into a single column, but we will attempt to do so.

SEPTA alone has accounted for several notable events over the past three months, some of them reflecting favorably on the Authority while others were frankly embarrassing. Among the latter category was the incident of a Route 14 bus crashing into the rear of a Route 1 bus on Roosevelt Blvd. in Rhawnhurst on July 21, which resulted in the death of a 72-year-old passenger and injuries to 14 other people including the driver of the second bus. Another shocking event happened on the night of July 27 when an unmanned trolley drifted out of Elmwood shop, proceeded north on Island Avenue, struck an SUV then crashed into the historic Blue Bell Inn at the corner of Woodland Avenue & Cobbs Creek Parkway. (Though a mechanic was on board the car, its air brake system had been disabled.) Also there was the empty Route 31 bus which jumped the curb at 15th & Walnut Streets in mid-city on July 25, smashing into the front of a building. All told, SEPTA vehicles during the summer were involved in eight incidents that were serious enough to gain coverage in the news media.

Some of the other incidents were out of SEPTA's control, but that can't be said for the July 24 rear-ending of one suburban trolley by another car along Garrett Road near Lansdowne Avenue in Upper Darby. Five passengers were hospitalized with non-life-threatening injuries. The previous night a Route 15 bus ran into a utility pole at Frankford & Girard Avenues in Fishtown, injuring four people. Yet another bus crash happened at 15th Street & Oregon Avenue on August 9, when one Route G bus crashed into the rear of another Route G. Six people were injured, three on each bus.

But two rather spectacular accidents involving SEPTA vehicles did result from the actions of motorists. One occurred on August 8, when an SUV traveling east on West Chester Pike in Havertown crossed over to the westbound lanes, colliding with four other vehicles including a tractor-trailer and a SEPTA bus. Newspaper photos showed the SUV wedged in a vertical position between the bus and the truck. Four people received minor injuries, including the bus driver and the SUV driver who had suffered a medical emergency.

Another accident was caused by an off-duty SEPTA employee who ran a red light in her Mercedes-Benz at 52nd Street & Chester Avenue early on Sunday morning, August 6, then crashed into the side of Route 13 trolley #9068. Four passengers were hurt, none seriously. The trolley was derailed and shuttle bus service had to be substituted for several hours until the tracks were cleared. The

driver of the Mercedes, later identified as a SEPTA maintenance worker, fled the scene but was arrested and charged with DUI and other crimes. There was no announcement as to what disciplinary action would be taken against the employee who caused the accident.

On the good side of SEPTA's summer of discontent were several events, among them the completion of the final phase of Regional Rail's long-running Southwest Connection Improvement Program. This multi-year project has seen the total rebuilding of the rail infrastructure between 30th Street Station and "Arsenal" interlocking just south of Penn Medicine station. The 2023 work required the complete shutdown of the line between Saturday, July 22, and Saturday, August 26. Penn Medicine station was closed for that period. Media-Wawa line passengers were bused around the area, while Wilmington-Newark and Airport line trains operated into and out of the Lower Level of 30th Street Station (except that airport passengers were bused on weekends)..... Another project carried out each summer is the Trolley Tunnel Blitz, in which the center city tunnel receives needed track and power maintenance work along with station upgrades and heavy cleaning. During the Blitz from July 7 to 24 four trolley routes were diverted to the 40th Street subway station, while Route 13 passengers were bused there.

With the threatened loss of major federal funding next year, SEPTA is looking to increase its revenues through any and all other means. For one thing, the City of Philadelphia announced that it will subsidize SEPTA passes for most city employees, as well as for some low income residents, beginning September 1. This action will add much-needed revenues to the transit system's Key Advantage Program, in which qualified employers pay for the SEPTA passes as another employment benefit. Such fare cards normally would cost a rider about \$204 a month. Swarthmore College has also signed up for a similar "UPass" program and will give the passes to all of its 1,600 full-time students. Twenty-two businesses in the area, including Key Advantage charter members Penn Medicine and Wawa, already offer free passes to their employees.

The Inquirer reports that SEPTA is lobbying in Harrisburg for a 45% increase in the annual share of the State sales tax which is earmarked for public transportation. If this were done the trust fund for public transportation would receive 6.4% of the money generated by the sales tax instead of the present 4.4%. SEPTA estimates that it would receive an additional \$190 million annually, helping offset the decline in revenues from its operations and loss of Federal COVID grants.

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PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS

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Meanwhile, SEPTA ridership continues to inch upward, but is still far below pre-pandemic levels. Currently, systemwide ridership is about 60% of that recorded in 2019, with Regional Rail at 56% and transit 60%. Regional Rail ridership in June was 31% higher than in the same month of 2022 and transit was up by 17%. Service levels are at about 75% of what they were in 2019.

In response to the unprecedented series of accidents which occurred during the summer, SEPTA began a “safety stand down” in mid-August which will require all employees to undergo a full day of safety reinforcement training. It was said that the training will emphasize “safety guidelines that are in place” and “the need to be vigilant about safety in all aspects of all jobs.” Because the program will require around 10% of the 2,500 bus and trolley drivers to receive the training on any given day, riders were warned that some service delays inevitably will result. With the program lasting for up to eight weeks, it obviously will exacerbate the already serious shortage of bus and trolley drivers, but at the same time help insure safer operations. The training program initially will affect surface operators, but also will be extended to Regional Rail and other operating employees—and even to office staffs. The accidents have received such widespread publicity that the Federal Transit Administration said it will directly review SEPTA’s rail and bus operations as well as its safety practices.

The long-awaited return of SEPTA’s historic PCC cars to Girard Avenue has now been officially set—it will happen on Sunday, September 10. SEPTA said that six of the 18 classic trolleys dating from 1947 have been completely rebuilt at the Woodland shop, with new frames and bodies topped off by the classic green and cream paint scheme that became famous during the postwar years before SEPTA took over the system. Each of the PCC’s has gone through a \$250,000 restoration, which has been in progress since they were removed from active service in 2020 because of their deteriorated condition. Work continues on the remaining cars in the fleet, but because the six rebuilds obviously are not enough to handle the entire Route 15 schedule that became effective September 3, buses will be used to fill the gaps until more cars become available.

After the sudden collapse of an I-95 bridge in Tacony on Sunday, June 11, which snarled traffic on that very busy highway, SEPTA quickly announced that it would add service to the paralleling Trenton, West Trenton and Fox Chase lines. The bridge collapse was caused by an oil tanker truck that caught fire directly beneath the span, and more than two weeks of furious activity were needed to erect a temporary replacement bridge. On Monday, the day after I-95 was closed, SEPTA added a few extra trains and by Tuesday ridership had jumped by 14% on the three lines, with standing room only reported on some Trenton trains. After the temporary bridge replacement was opened on June 23, some of the extra Trenton trains were continued for a time, but were finally removed in late July. The Cynwyd line, which had been bused to free up equipment and staff for the emergency service, also got its trains back. The bridge disaster revived the old talk of building a rapid transit line to the Northeast along Roosevelt Blvd., an idea that

first surfaced way back in 1913! And it may have given impetus to a new series of discussions between SEPTA officials, State Transportation Secretary Mike Carroll and members of City Council who represent the Northeast. A major sticking point is where the estimated \$7 billion-plus in funding for the project would come from.

SEPTA and AMTRAK are again seriously considering a plan to reopen the tunnel that once connected 30th Street Station with the 30th & Market subway station. According to a report from WHYY’s Billy Penn News, a federally-funded renovation plan will include the repair and reopening of the tunnel, which has been closed off since the 1980’s due to maintenance problems and the presence of homeless people.

SEPTA has awarded a \$5-million design contract for the rebuilding of three trolley subway stations, the ones at 22nd, 33rd and 36th Streets. The main objective is to increase accessibility for the new Alstom cars now on order for the subway-surface lines. The station design will include elevators, high platforms, new signage, lighting, security cameras and waterproofing.

The SEPTA board in June approved the operating and capital budgets for Fiscal Year 2024 which began this past July 1. The \$1.69 billion operating budget includes SEPTA’s final installment of Federal COVID relief funding, without which Board Chairman Pasquale T. Deon, Jr. said SEPTA would be facing a “fiscal cliff [which] threatens SEPTA’s ability to provide reliable day-to-day services.” The \$976-million capital budget includes some of the \$1.63 billion cost for new trolleys and infrastructure upgrades, \$650 million to begin replacement of the 50-year-old Silverliner IV cars on Regional Rail, and a start to the \$950 million plan for replacing the Market-Frankford railcar fleet, infrastructure upgrades and a new signal system. But even with these higher-than-ever spending levels, General Manager Leslie Richards said that “we are still not keeping up with our peers or even our own backlog of needs.”

SEPTA is addressing the many complaints from riders who would like a better way to pay their fares than using Key Cards. So SEPTA is running a pilot program that allows customers to pay by tapping their credit cards or using a mobile app like Apple Pay or Google Pay at the turnstile or when boarding a bus or trolley. These systems are considered easier as compared with Key Cards which require users to create an online account through SEPTA’s portal and periodically to reload fares from their bank accounts onto a Key Card. Reportedly the new system will be rolled out to the general public sometime this fall. This plan is different from the new SEPTA Key Tix option which allows the purchase of mobile tickets for up to five persons to travel together on transit lines. Key Tix can be accessed by scanning a single barcode on a smartphone.

SEPTA is now offering an “enhanced” TransPass+ that will allow cardholders to travel at no additional cost to or from any of the 24 inner-ring Regional Rail stations located in Center City Zone 1. SEPTA also is offering Regional Rail riders who hold Zone 1 TrailPasses a new lower price equal to the TransPass+ rates of \$25.50 for a weekly pass and \$96 for a monthly.

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Work is progressing on the new Ardmore rail station which will be used both by SEPTA and AMTRAK. The eastbound high-level platform is mostly completed but construction of the new station building has not yet begun. Meanwhile both eastbound and westbound trains continue to use the temporary platforms on the other side of Anderson Avenue that have been in service since early 2022. On the old westbound platform all that is visible are the bases installed for the future high-level platform. It's obvious that the new station, which must be fully ADA-accessible, will not be in service until well into next year—if then.

Meanwhile, over at Conshohocken on the Manayunk-Norristown line the final phase of construction of the new station is underway. Brick still needs to be applied to the station building as well as work on the roof structure. A new grade crossing also will be opened, leading to a new parking area. The existing station, located a short distance to the south, will remain in service until the formal opening of the new facility next spring. SEPTA still has not made a final decision on whether to build a parking garage there, an idea opposed by the Conshohocken Borough Council and many residents (Harry Garforth).

Unibet will sponsor free rides home on the Broad Street Line after every Eagles game at Lincoln Financial Field this season. Fans will need only walk from the stadium to NRG station to take advantage of the offer. Unibet is the official casino and sportsbook partner of the Eagles. Similar plans in the past have been offered by other providers for both Eagles and Phillies fans.

SEPTA has been working to refine its ambitious "Bus Revolution" plan, which proposes a fairly thorough makeover of the current inefficient system that evolved over the past decades. On Friday, September 1, the latest and perhaps "final" draft of the proposed network was released online. It takes into account the sometimes testy feedback received from riders in a series of public hearings held by SEPTA. Major features of the new plan include trimming the number of fixed routes from 125 to 106, increasing the number of frequently-operating routes with 15-minute or less headways from 33 to 43, and in eight suburban zones "on-demand" bus service would be offered where there is no need for regular routes. The idea of spreading out bus stop locations rather than having stops at every intersection in order to speed up service, will be considered at a later date.

SEPTA had to contend with some bad weather events this past summer which racked up a long list of delays. A strong rain and wind storm pummeled the Philadelphia area on Monday evening, August 7, leaving around 135,000 utility customers without power. The Paoli-Thorndale and West Trenton Regional Rail lines were suspended for a time due to downed trees and wires, and West Trenton remained out of service until the next morning, as did the Cynwyd line. Several lines operated with shorter than normal consists on Tuesday. The Norristown High Speed Line also was halted for a while on Monday evening due to fallen tree branches near Parkview station in West Philadelphia. Then on Thursday afternoon August 10 heavy rain and winds caused some mischief on the Routes 101 and 102 trolley lines. Fallen trees downed the

overhead wires at Springfield Road station on the 101, forcing SEPTA to use shuttle buses for several hours between Scenic Road station and Media. Route 102 passengers had to be bused between MacDade Blvd. and Sharon Hill station, due to the usual flooding in the underpass at the CSX mainline. The tunnel was reopened by 7 PM. Another rainstorm on Sunday, July 9, had also flooded the CSX underpass and blocked trolley service for a time.

Heavy rain and winds during the early morning of Tuesday, June 27 caused numerous problems for rail operations in the Philadelphia area. Downed trees and other debris on the tracks led to many delays for AMTRAK's morning Keystone trains to and from Harrisburg, while SEPTA was forced to suspend Thorndale service west of Malvern during the AM rush. The first inbound train to operate out of Thorndale that morning was #9552 departing at 11:34 AM, and SEPTA warned that residual delays on the line would persist through the day. Indeed, there were many other delays as signal problems were encountered on several lines. Even by late morning inbound Wilmington-Newark line passengers were being instructed to board their trains on the inner #2 track between Crum Lynne and Darby stations, due to downed trees on #1.

All Regional Rail timetables were reissued effective on Sunday, August 27, but SEPTA emphasized that weekday service will be maintained at around 75% of pre-pandemic levels. Major adjustments were made on the Wilmington-Newark line due to AMTRAK bridge work in Chester set to begin in mid-September. During that period all northbound SEPTA and Amtrak trains will operate on the #2 track between Marcus Hook and Darby. Significant midday service reductions were made on Chestnut Hill East to accommodate track and survey work for various rehabilitation projects, and adjustments also were made on Chestnut Hill West to improve school travel. Several other lines saw numerous minor changes in schedule times.



AMTRAK

AMTRAK did a lot of business during the summer, but often didn't seem to have enough equipment to handle all the customers who wanted to ride its trains—especially long-distance trains. But Amtrak says it's begun chipping away at the backlog of cars laid up in its shops, and told the Rail Passengers Association that 63 more cars will be restored to the active fleet during Fiscal Year 2024 beginning October 1. An Amtrak executive said that the FY'24 plan will include 48 cars brought out of long-term storage, plus another 15 cars to be restored from "wreck" status. Twelve of those 15 cars are badly-needed Superliners, which hopefully will be available for next summer's heavy travel period. Some other stored cars have already begun to trickle back into the active fleet. Among the cars lined up for FY'24 restoration are eight Viewliner I sleepers and 18 Horizon class coaches.

All of this refurbished equipment, of course, will be in addition to the fleet of 83 new Airo trainsets now on order from Siemens, which could be used anywhere in the system. But the Airo fleet is

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not designed for long-haul or overnight services but rather for such shorter-haul assignments as the *Pennsylvanian*, *Empire Service*, *Carolinian*, *Palmetto*, *Cascades*, *Adirondack* and even in Northeast Corridor Regional service. The need for more sleepers, diners and long-distance coaches will still exist. The Airos actually will consist of semi-permanently-coupled trainsets, 73 of which will be dual-mode.

As if the equipment shortages were not bad enough, AMTRAK also has had a myriad of operating problems on its midwestern, southern and western routes. Many of these problems stemmed from the brutal—and almost unprecedented—weather this past summer which made running a railroad, airline and almost anything else much more difficult than usual. Persistent high temperatures, floods, continuous weather alerts, an almost-unheard-of tropical storm in California and mechanical problems on its trains, all contributed to a multitude of delays and cancellations. And Amtrak's problems were not confined to its long-distance and state-supported services, as train delays were almost a daily occurrence on the Northeast Corridor as well. More often than not, the delays in electrified territory were attributed to problems with Amtrak's aging fleet or infrastructure.

One infrequent but still serious cause of Corridor delays is the incursion of trespassers on the right-of-way. Just a few months after a train killed two children who strayed onto the tracks in Chester (see May *Cinders*), a male trespasser was struck and killed by southbound train #127 at Eddystone about 6:30 PM on Friday, August 4. The train with its 383 passengers and crew was delayed for more than three hours, and numerous other trains also experienced serious delays.

In early July AMTRAK had to deal with signal issues in North Jersey, which began on Monday the 3rd and continued on and off for several days. The signal problem started around 3 PM on the 3rd and delayed both Amtrak and NJ TRANSIT trains for several hours. Some trains were cancelled and all service out of Penn Station was suspended for a time. Many trains including Acelas were severely delayed, one example being #2168 which ran more than four hours late into Washington.

A couple of days later, on the morning of July 6, Corridor service was again disrupted, this time by overhead power problems, which delayed many trains including Acelas and forced the cancellation of several NJT trains. Some of the power issues were in the North Philadelphia area, resulting in many Harrisburg-Philadelphia trains either originating or terminating at 30th Street Station. The power problems continued into the next morning, with numerous additional Corridor trains delayed, more Keystone trains from Harrisburg terminating at 30th Street, and at least one NJT run out of Trenton cancelled.

Sunday, July 9, proved to be a very bad day for the New York-Pittsburgh *Pennsylvanian*. Storm conditions on the NORFOLK SOUTHERN mainline west of Harrisburg resulted in a lengthy service shutdown. At 3:30 PM westbound #43 was being held at Harrisburg due to downed trees ahead and eastbound #42 was at Lewistown for the same reason. By 5:30 #42 was again on the

move, five hours and 20 minutes late, but #43 was still at Harrisburg because no crew was available. At 7:17 #43 finally was underway four hours and 30 minutes late, and #42 reached Philadelphia and departed for New York five hours and ten minutes late.

While at least five full sets of the new Acela high-speed trains are stored in Penn Coach yard adjacent to 30th Street Station, production on the other 23 sets apparently is proceeding slowly at the Alstom plant in Hornell, NY. It remains to be seen how many sets will actually be ready for revenue service by late 2024, which is the time when AMTRAK now promises they will be ready to go. Apparently, some of the delay is due to additional testing of the equipment now being required by Federal agencies and Amtrak's own equipment experts.

Tropical Storm Idalia, which plowed into the West Coast of Florida on Wednesday, August 30, then roared up the coast to the Carolinas, forced AMTRAK to cancel its Miami service for up to three days. The *Auto Train*, *Silver Meteor* and *Silver Star* were cancelled entirely for Tuesday and Wednesday, as was the Washington-Savannah portion of the *Palmetto*. The *Meteor* and *Star* operated as far as Jacksonville on Thursday. No damage to railroad lines was reported.



CSX,
NS,
OTHER ROADS

NORFOLK SOUTHERN's Morrisville Line is a former bypass built by the PRR in the 19th Century to move freight traffic around Philadelphia. Known for many years as the Trenton Cut-off, it was rarely the scene of any unusual activity, at least none since 1956 when steam locomotives were finally withdrawn from helper service on eastbound Cut-off trains. Well, the era of anonymity ended around 5 AM on Monday, July 17, when 15 cars of a 40-car CSX freight enroute from Lansdale to Woodbourne yard near Langhorne derailed in Whitmarsh Township, Montgomery County, near the site of the old Corsons lime plant. Running on NS trackage rights, the train apparently struck a sinkhole in an area which is underlaid with porous limestone. There have been many past reports of highways caving in due to the limestone subsurface but this is the first time in memory that a train has encountered such a hazard on a major route. Several of the derailed cars were tankers but there was no indication of any hazardous material spill. Clearing the scene was somewhat difficult because it happened in a narrow cut, but track repairs were underway on Tuesday. Service evidently was restored by Wednesday morning.

Taking a leaf from NS's playbook, CSX has launched a program to repaint several diesel locomotives in the liveries of predecessor railroads. Last month ES44-AC #1869 had its sides painted a la Chesapeake & Ohio, becoming the fifth CSX unit to wear a heritage scheme. (The nose still has the standard CSX logo.) Other heritage units honor the memories of Baltimore & Ohio, Chessie System, Seaboard and CONRAIL. The new numbers each

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reflect the year the railroad was founded, thus the Conrail unit bears #1976. All paint work is being performed at the Waycross (GA) shop, and more additions to the heritage roster are anticipated.

Last month's issue of *Cinders* featured the news that Philadelphia Chapter had sold its ex-Reading FP7 locomotive #903 to SMS Rail Lines. SMS is already well known for its busy operation within the Pureland Industrial Park near Bridgeport, NJ, now home to the nation's largest collection of Baldwin-built diesel locomotives. SMS also operates at several other locations in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York. Many of the Baldwin units are in operating condition and at least one of them currently is used on SMS's Woodstown Central tourist line located on the former PRSL Salem branch in South Jersey. That is where #903 will be headed when it is released from the Steamtown Museum in Scranton, a move which will require some mechanical work that SMS will perform. The 903 has been in residence at Steamtown for many years, in the company of sister FP7 #902 owned by the Reading Company T&HS. The 902 was not a part of the negotiations with SMS.

NJ TRANSIT has adopted an operating budget for Fiscal Year 2024 of \$2.86 billion, of which about 60% is intended to cover labor costs and fringe benefits. The budget does not provide for any fare increases. Capital funding for FY 2024, which began this past July 1, is \$1.73 billion.....NJ Transit has received a high honor from the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), being named the 2023 winner of its Outstanding Transportation System award.....NJ Transit has signed a 25-year lease for a new state-of-the-art headquarters in Two Gateway Center, Newark. It expects to occupy the 407,000-square-foot space by the end of 2024. Some online critics, however, are questioning why NJT would spend many millions of dollars for new offices.....Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen have unanimously voted to strike NJT. The union is demanding that NJT raise their pay levels to more nearly approach those paid to engineers on other nearby commuter railroads. The pay issue has been before the National Mediation Board for almost three years, and a strike could not occur until the parties are released from mediation.

NJT has announced that it is cutting weekday peak hour service on the Camden-Trenton River Line because of a shortage of serviceable equipment. The Camden-Trenton line has long been suffering from equipment problems and NJT has already decided to replace the diesel engines in most of the trains. The latest service cutback will require 30-minute headways during peak hours, the same as already in effect during non-peak periods.....NJT has donated an ALP-44M electric locomotive to the United Railroad Historical Society. Engine #4424 was built in 1996, one of the 32 ALP-44's built by Asea in Sweden between 1989 and 1997. Its first public display will be held on September 24 as part of URHS's one-day festival in Boonton.

The Franklin Institute has closed the "Train Factory" railroad room to prepare for its expansion into a new gallery, which of course

will include historic 350-ton Baldwin steam locomotive #60000 displayed on a cutaway floor. The project is being supported by the Hamilton Family Charitable Trust, whose members are direct descendants of Baldwin's famed president Samuel M. Vauclain. President Vauclain had donated #60000 to the Institute in 1933. As part of the Train Factory reimagining the historic *Rocket* locomotive has been moved to the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania in Strasburg. Built in England for the Philadelphia & Reading Railway, the little 17-foot-long locomotive arrived in Philadelphia in 1838. CONRAIL actually took ownership of the *Rocket* when it absorbed the Reading in 1976, and quickly agreed to its transfer to Strasburg as an appropriate place for display.

READING & NORTHERN plans a big excursion program for this fall season, featuring of course ex-Reading T-1 4-8-4 #2102 now restored by the R&N shop force. A full-page ad appeared in the August 17 issue of the *Inquirer*, detailing the Reading-Jim Thorpe excursion schedule. Engine #2102 will operate on October 1, 14 and 21, while F7 diesels #270 and 275 will pull the train on October 7- 8, 15, 22, 28-29 and November 4-5. Fare for the steam trips is \$99 and for the diesel runs \$49. For further information and reservations go to website www.RBMNRR-Passenger.com or call 610-562-2102.

If your *Cinders* Arrives in Damaged Condition

If your *Cinders* arrives damaged or with pages missing, contact Editor Larry Eastwood at 215-947-5769 or avrestower@comcast.net and a replacement copy will be promptly sent to you. The incidence of damage has been virtually eliminated through the use of envelopes for mailing each issue, although there is an additional cost involved.

CSX Santa Train on Track in 2023

The CSX Santa Train will return again this season, CSX President and CEO Joe Hinrichs announced on August 17 in a video on CSX's Facebook page. On November 18, 2023, the train will make its way through Appalachia with Santa Claus to deliver gifts and Christmas cheer.

The Santa Train returned in 2022, after the pandemic derailed it for two years. The train traditionally makes stops in Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee to distribute more than 15 tons of toys and other items. In the past, the 110-mile route began at Shelby Yard near Pikesville, KY and has ended at Kingsport, TN.

"The Santa Train is an integral part of CSX history and we are proud to be part of this long-standing tradition," Hinrichs said. "Our company is all about growing through service and strengthening the communities in which we serve, and we are thankful for another year of giving back and bringing the magic of the Santa Train to all of you."

Hinrichs thanked the other sponsors of the train, Appalachian Power, Food City, the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce and Soles4Souls. "Planning for this year's Santa train event is moving full steam ahead," he said.

--*Progressive Railroading*, August 18, 2023

VIA Rail Canada Puts \$80 million Into Preservation of Four Historic Stations

VIA Rail Canada is in the midst of spending more than C80 million to preserve and upgrade four heritage stations across its network, the company said during August. That includes \$25 million at Winnipeg, MB, where work is expected to be complete later this year.

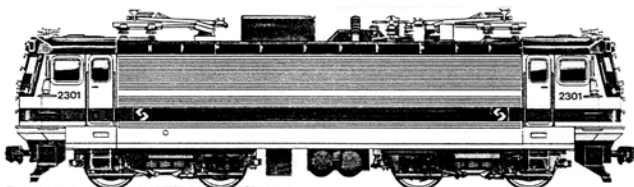
That money is being spent between 2020 and 2025 for renovation of four classic structures – Winnipeg Union Station, built in 1911; Vancouver Pacific Central Station, which dates to 1917; Halifax station, completed in 1928, and Gare du Palais in Quebec City, dating to 1915.

“These iconic stations embody the history of railroad, and by extension the creation of Canada, which we have a responsibility to protect”, VIA Rail CEO Mario Peloquin said at an event in Winnipeg. “With this announcement we are ensuring that VIA can continue to maintain these landmark buildings and that we can improve the customer experience by making these stations more accessible and sustainable for future generations to enjoy.

The work in Winnipeg is being conducted within the guidelines of Parks Canada to respect the building’s heritage status. The project has included upgraded interior platforms; upgrades to elevators and escalators, and replacement of the exterior platform, which will be the first fully accessible platform on the VIA long distance and regional network.

“Our Winnipeg Union Station is a crucial point of our Western operations,” said Francoise Bertrand, Chair of VIA’s board of directors. “It plays an important role in our ability to deliver our mandate as it is part of the lifeline service to communities in Northern Manitoba and gives access to the iconic **Canadian** that travels between Vancouver and Toronto.”

--*Trains Newswire*, August 28, 2023



Susquehanna Valley Chapter Sets 60th

Harrisburg Chapter informs us that the Susquehanna Valley Railway Historical Society has announced celebration of its 60th anniversary by commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Delaware & Hudson Company.

The event will be held on Saturday, October 28, 2023 at the American Legion Post 1645, 177 Robinson Street, Binghamton, NY 13904. The date promises to be a grand day with excellent daytime program presentations, exhibits/displays and planned special events. An evening dinner banquet will feature a guest speaker with program presentation. Daytime events include a morning brunch and luncheon buffet. More info at [SVRHS Rail Symposium October 2023](#).

Steamtown NH\$ to Restore Pioneer Ex-ACL EMC SW1 #1901

Steamtown National Historic Site has received what it terms as “a generous donation” from the estate of rail enthusiast Eric J. Yankovich to help fund the restoration of EMC SW1 locomotive #1901, an Atlantic Coast Line diesel switcher built by Electro-Motive Corp. in 1939. Yankovich, from Warminster, PA, died on November 15, 2019 at the age of 62.

“On behalf of the National Park Service, I would like to thank that family of Mr. Yankovich for their generosity and support of these treasured and historic places,” said Steamtown Superintendent Cherie Shepherd in a press release. “I’d also like to thank the Iron Horse Society for helping fulfill Mr. Yankovich’s wishes and facilitating the transfer of funds to the Park for this important restoration work.” (The Iron Horse Society is Steamtown’s philanthropic partner.)

Yankovich, a graduate of Drexel University with a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering, went on to an engineering position with the U. S. Navy, continued his studies and received a master’s degree in engineering and became a licensed professional engineer. He eventually left the Navy and formed a structural analytics consulting firm that he managed until his retirement.

McHugh Locomotive & Equipment has received a contract for the restoration, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2025. The locomotive will be used for switching at the historic site and may be used for short-distance passenger rides at Steamtown’s rail yard. The Iron Horse Society has selected a Lehigh Valley Railroad paint scheme for the project.

--*Trains News Wire*, August 14, 2023

Important Phone Numbers

Cinders lists below the telephone numbers which should be used to report suspicious sightings, emergencies or other conditions affecting rail operations, including trespassers, vandalism, fires, defective equipment, etc.

AMTRAK	800-331-0008
CSX	800-232-0144
CONRAIL Shared Assets	800-272-0911
NJ TRANSIT (NJ only)	800-242-0236
NORFOLK SOUTHERN	800-453-2530
PATCO Transit	856-963-7995
SEPTA	215-580-8111

(Members may wish to photocopy and or clip this notice and keep a copy in your wallet as you are out watching or riding trains. Please send corrections to the Editor.)

SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING!

