



CINDERS



MARCH 2021

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Vol. 82 NO. 3 -OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER of the
 PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER OF THE NRHS
 PO BOX 7302
 PHILADELPHIA PA 19101-7302
 WEBSITE: www.nrhsphiladelphia.org

PETER M. SENIN, JR.



It is with deep sadness that we inform you of the passing of Chapter National Representative Peter M. Senin, Jr., of Burlington, NJ on Saturday, February 27, 2021. Peter was born on Sept. 24, 1936 making him 84 years of age and had formerly resided in Philadelphia and Roslyn, PA. Peter was a member of Philadelphia Chapter since 1979 and was very active in our Chapter.

He is survived by his wife, Judy, a familiar face at Chapter meetings. He is the father of Michael P, Robert P. and Thomas P. Senin. He is also survived by one grandson, Andrew, and sisters Peggy Herman and Jo Ann Crandall., as well as numerous cousins, nieces and nephews. He considered the many employees of Burlington Safety Laboratory, Inc. his extended family as well. He was the owner of this company for 45 years.

When his boys were young, he enjoyed coaching baseball for the Ardsley-North Hills Athletic Assoc. Peter was a graduate of North Catholic High School in Philadelphia and was a U. S. Army veteran. He was a proud PSU Alumni. He enjoyed traveling by train, and Burlington had facilities in California, which he often visited.

A viewing and services were held on March 5th at the William R. May Funeral Home, 364 N. Easton Road (at Keswick Avenue) Glenside, PA 19038. Interment was to be held at Hillside Cemetery in Ardsley (adjacent to the SEPTA Roslyn Regional Rail station). Expressions of sympathy may be addressed to Mrs. Peter M. Senin, Jr., 53 Shelburne Street, Burlington, NJ 08016-4308.

PRESIDENT/EDITOR EMERITUS MESSAGE

- R. L. Eastwood, Jr.

At Least the Snow is Melting!

February became a rather challenging month, with several snowstorms affecting our lives with varying results. But, some rain at the end of the month has assisted the Delaware Valley in washing the snow away (hopefully for good!). We are still seeing unacceptable U. S. Postal Service reliability entering March, and I’ve had a number of instances of people receiving their copies of Cinders with delays that remain hard to explain (see article on Page 7). We would anticipate that this issue should be mailed about the 9th or 10th of March.

I have scheduled our March Board of Directors Meeting for TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 2021 at 7 PM. Because of recent sudden events, a separate mailing will be made around March 15 Please tune in (ZOOM Codes for the March 30 meeting will be included in the March 15 mailing). Please don’t be afraid to step up for an officer position for the 2012-2022 year. Also, make sure your membership is current for the year 2021. March 31 traditionally has served as the expiration date for memberships. Please don’t be left behind.

As you’ll note on Page 2, longtime Chapter Member C. Bruce Irvin departed this life on December 18, 2020. We were notified that our Chapter would be a benefactor in Bruce’s will and his estate has been in contact with us, providing details to the Chapter. Bruce (and his late wife, Virginia) were both key members of the dedicated group which restored former Reading Company FP7 diesel locomotive #903 to operating condition during the 1990’s. We also just learned that National Representative Peter M. Senin, Jr, passed away on Feb. 27th, following a battle with colon cancer [see column to the left].

... continued on Page 2

For our March 18th meeting, the presenter will be well-known Philadelphia area rail photographer Gary Pancavage. Gary worked for Amtrak from 1976 until June 2015, in any number of key positions dealing with maintenance materials. He ended his career as Director of Operations, High Speed Rail (mechanical) from 2002 through 2015. The first half of Gary’s program will look at Amtrak around Torresdale, PA, plus Jersey Central Lines (and SEPTA/Chessie System/CSX) from the 1970’s through 2000s. An add-on part of the program will consist of slide scans by the late Chapter Member Walter Schopp on the Reading Company’s West Trenton Line from Philadelphia, PA to Bound Brook, NJ. Don’t miss what promises to be an outstanding evening of vintage slide activity from our area. The ZOOM information for the March meeting appears on page 3.

While in-person meeting restrictions have eased somewhat, we would not anticipate any in-person meetings before the summer.

SEPTA Restores Weekday-Only Chestnut Hill West Service



SEPTA has announced the restoration of limited weekday-only Regional Rail service on the Chestnut Hill West Line, effective Sunday, March 7, 2021. There will be no weekend or holiday trips.

Inbound to Center City, trains will leave Chestnut Hill West at 5:51AM, 6:51, 7:47, 8:51 and 9:51. A midday trip will leave Chestnut Hill West at 1:51 PM, and afternoon/evening trips will leave at 4:51PM, 5:51 and 6:51. All trains except the 5:51 AM trip will operate through Center City to Fox Chase.

Outbound trains will leave Temple University at 6:36AM, 7:36 and 8:36. A midday trip will leave Temple at 12:36 PM, and afternoon/evening trips will depart Temple at 3:36PM, 4:36, 5:36, 6:36 and 7:36. All outbound trips will make “D” discharge stops at stations between North Philadelphia and Highland.

It will be interesting to see what ridership develops on this limited service.

C. BRUCE IRVIN

Longtime Chapter Member C. Bruce Irvin passed away on December 18, 2020, following a period of declining health. He was 94 years of age and had resided in one or more care facilities in New Holland in Lancaster County. Bruce was interred in Sky-View Memorial Park in Tamaqua, with his wife Virginia. There were no immediate survivors.

Bruce and Virginia, who passed away in 2010, were longtime residents of Upper Darby, and both were veteran employees of the General Electric Company in Southwest Philadelphia. They were members of Christ Lutheran Church in Upper Darby, even after they moved to Garden Spot Village in New Holland. Bruce joined Philadelphia Chapter in 1982 and his wife Virginia joined as a family member in 1986. Both Bruce and Ginny were part of the joint Lancaster and Philadelphia Chapter team which restored former Reading Company EMD FP7’s #902 and 903 over a couple of decades to operating condition.

Bruce, a generous and charitable individual, provided a bequest in the amount of \$5,000 to Philadelphia Chapter, which will be invested and held for future use. Other rail-affiliated organizations named in his will were Harrisburg and Lancaster Chapters NRHS, as well as the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum and the Reading Company Technical & Historical Society plus the Friends of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania. In addition, a whole host of varying non-rail charitable organizations were remembered in his estate.

Bruce and Virginia were both loyal and active members of Philadelphia Chapter, and will be well-remembered for their generous support over the years.

In-person Chapter meetings are CANCELLED for the foreseeable future. We plan to hold monthly "ZOOM" meetings with log in info available in the monthly issues and on our website. Log in info for our MARCH meeting appears in the middle of the right column. Please bear with us during these continuing uncertain times.

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

CHAPTER WEBSITE:

For current Chapter information, as well as vintage views of Chapter trips and activities, visit:

www.nrhsphiladelphia.org

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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES:

Effective September 1, 2020, dues are \$20.00 per person, which covers Philadelphia Chapter thru Dec. 31, 2021. (NRHS National membership dues for 2021 are \$50.00, billed directly by NRHS.) NRHS chapters bill members separately for Chapter dues.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS should forward remittance in the amount of \$20.00, payable to:

**Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS
Post Office Box 7302
Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302.**

Please be sure to include name, complete mailing address, telephone number and E-mail address.

ADDRESS CHANGES:

Send to Editor Emeritus at
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Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353.

(Include your CURRENT TELEPHONE NUMBER and E-MAIL ADDRESS so our records are complete.)

Also contact the Editor Emeritus if your copy does not arrive or arrives in a damaged condition.

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Chapter ZOOM Meeting for MARCH 18, 2021

<https://zoom.us/j/93354496817?pwd=OW1jKzM0MDBhbmZyWFRIQXZZMzZhQT09>

Meeting ID: 93354496817

Passcode: 104928

+13126266799,,93354496817#,,,,*104928#

US (Chicago)

+19292056099,,93354496817#,,,,*104928#

US (New York)

UPCOMING LOCAL EVENTS

The **Rockledge Model Railroad Museum** [aka **GATSME**] at 323 Montgomery Ave. in Rockledge, PA should be open to the public on Saturday, March 13th from Noon to 3 PM. Going forward, the club expects to continue being open on 2nd Saturday of each month, with possible additional dates later in 2021. At the Museum, there is an area offering donated model RR and RRiana items for sale. Visitors are asked to confirm the open house dates on its web site or Facebook page before traveling there.



FRANK G. TATNALL, JR.

SEPTA last month rolled out a new five-year strategic plan entitled “SEPTA Forward: A Vision for a Stronger Future.” The 55-page document outlines the agency’s plan for recovering from the COVID-19 crisis as well as presenting a vision for future growth. One of the objectives for growth is to “deliver a seamless transit network,” which previously has been suggested by a number of industry experts. “The pandemic has highlighted the important role SEPTA has in providing access to essential jobs and services,” said Board Chairman Pasquale T. Deon, Sr. “SEPTA will be at the center of our region’s recovery efforts, and this plan will play a critical role in laying the foundation for that work.”



Of course, attaining the “new normal” will cost money, a problem for SEPTA which has been losing up to a million dollars a day in revenues for the past year due to sharply reduced ridership on all of its modes. Fortunately, the \$1.9 trillion “American Rescue Plan Act of 2021” backed by President Biden, which was making its way through Congress in early March, contains \$30.5 billion in emergency COVID-19 funding for public transit agencies, of which SEPTA can expect a much-needed share. SEPTA already has received a total of \$895 million from the Federal government in the two pandemic relief bills approved last year.

In the same week that the strategic plan was announced, the City of Philadelphia released its “Transit Plan, A Vision for 2045.” The 192-page study highlights the need to improve bus service, especially in areas with heavy pre-pandemic ridership or low-income neighborhoods. To serve a “recovered, reimagined Philadelphia,” the study sets out five goals: improving the safety, reliability and cleanliness of vehicles, which also would offer faster service; shifting trips from private cars to public transit while using more clean energy to power buses, trains and trolleys; reforming the fare structure to offer more service to low-income riders; implementing trolley modernization and the bus priority network; and reimagining the Regional Rail system as a frequent service integrated with the entire transit system. Mayor Kenney and SEPTA General Manager Leslie Richards jointly introduced the transit plan at a news conference on February 22.

After an almost snowless winter in 2019-2020 [0.3 inch -ed.], the Delaware Valley has experienced three significant storms this season. After muddling through the big snow early in the month (see February *Cinders*) a second storm blanketed the area on Thursday morning, February 18. The snow fell in an

irregular pattern, ranging from an official 2.8 inches at International Airport to 10.2 inches in Norristown. There was a lot of slipping and sliding on the highways which caused numerous accidents, but SEPTA service was only modestly impacted. Some 30 bus routes had to be suspended for a time due to icy road conditions. Weather-related delays were reported on trolley routes 101-Media and 102-Sharon Hill and all Bryn Mawr and Hughes Park trains on the Norristown High Speed Line were cancelled. Through the end of February, the Weather Service recorded an official 23.9 inches of snow in Philadelphia, just slightly above normal, but a few neighboring counties got almost four feet!

Philadelphia’s much-maligned wage tax, by far the city’s largest revenue source, could be imperiled by the coronavirus. A columnist in the February 14 edition of the *Inquirer* contends that a possible long-term loss of employment resulting from the pandemic would have a disastrous effect on the city’s finances. Obviously, SEPTA also would suffer from any substantial drop in commuter ridership.....The SEPTA board has approved the diversion of \$40 million in Federal emergency funds to pay for design and engineering work on the proposed extension of rail service to King of Prussia. Use of pandemic relief money for the proposed Norristown High Speed Line (NHSL) spur, on which construction would not begin until 2025 at the earliest, brought protests from some transit advocates who told the board that the CARES Act funds should be used only to help maintain existing services that carry essential workers. But SEPTA officials said that those service levels will not be cut...SEPTA announced that as of February 22 all NHSL turnstiles at the 69th Street and Norristown Transportation Centers would be operational seven days a week. This requires NHSL passengers to pay their fares at the turnstiles at all times.

SEPTA reissued timetables for all Regional Rail lines effective March 7-8 (except for Cynwyd which remains suspended). Service was restored on the Chestnut Hill West Line beginning Monday, March 8 after a long-running suspension, but the service is limited to weekdays only. There are nine inbound trains, five hourly in the morning, one midday and three in the late afternoon. On the outbound side nine trains are spread out to three in the morning, one midday and five hourly during the PM rush. Paoli-Thorndale midday service will be reduced from half-hourly to hourly on weekdays...Trenton service was shut down for most of the day on Sunday, February 7, because of a signal failure on AMTRAK in North Philadelphia.

Regional Rail ridership is way off during the pandemic and rush-hour push-pull trains are generally not needed. So SEPTA is taking the opportunity to finish a years-long refurbishing program on its 35-car fleet of Bombardier-built coaches. Reportedly car #2403 is the last of the 20-to-30-year-old cars to get an upgrade at the Frazer shop.... SEPTA is attempting to enforce President Biden’s recent order to require mask-wearing on all U.S. rail, air and transit systems, but generally is asking non-wearers to take a free mask and put it

on rather than being asked to leave the vehicle or station. SEPTA says that its continuous audits show a mask compliance rate of better than 90 percent.

AMTRAK experienced some serious problems during the last weeks of February, when a series of winter storms swept across the nation. The Delaware Valley escaped the worst of the weather which brought heavy snows, frigid temperatures and floods to many sections of the West,



Midwest and South—most notably to Texas. Nationally, scores of trains were cancelled, many were stranded or delayed for many hours, and even some Northeast Corridor passengers found themselves victims. On Thursday, February 18, several Corridor trains were cancelled, including all southbound trains to destinations in Virginia, as were the Auto Train and Palmetto. The latter train also was annulled on Friday.... The signal failure in North Philadelphia on Sunday, February 7 (see above), also delayed a series of Corridor trains for anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour.

A major freight train derailment blocked NORFOLK SOUTHERN'S ex-Pennsy main line at Newport, PA, 25 miles west of Harrisburg, around 6:30 PM Monday evening, Feb.22. AMTRAK was forced to cancel trains #42-43 Pennsylvanian on Tuesday because work was still in progress to clear the wreckage of 15 flatcars loaded with containers and rebuild the track. The train was intermodal 10W bound from Chicago to Croxton, NJ. The railroad was reopened at 9 AM on Wednesday Feb. 24th. ...A male trespasser was struck and killed by a southbound Acela Express about 11:30AM on Tuesday, Feb. 16, about two miles south of the Wilmington station. Several other trains were delayed by the police investigation.

Construction work on the new Middletown passenger station adjacent to Harrisburg International Airport will affect some Keystone Service train schedules through the end of April. Structural steelwork is being erected for the stair and elevator towers and photos show the steel pedestrian bridge over the tracks being lifted into place.....Work is to begin this month on the first new building in the ambitious Schuylkill Yards development just west of 30th Street Station. The principal developer on the project is Brandywine Realty Trust, which said that the 28-story Schuylkill Yards West building will include 326 apartments, offices and 9,000 square feet of shops and restaurants. It should be completed in 2023. Ultimately the Yards project is planned to include seven million square feet of office, lab, residential, hotel, retail and green space over 14 acres adjacent to the station... AMTRAK has introduced a "BidUp" website which allows passengers holding coach reservations to upgrade to business class on the same train at a reduced cost, depending upon space available. There is no fee to make a bid.

NJ TRANSIT, like SEPTA, had only the normal service problems on the snowy Thursday, February 18. The impact of the storm was far less than the



widespread trouble two weeks earlier when the previous snow emergency caused service on most rail lines to be cancelled. NJT managed to operate regular weekday rail service on the 18th, with some delays, and weekday bus service was as close to normal as possible given road conditions. On that day PATCO operated a slightly reduced snow schedule.

New Jersey Governor Murphy said last month that there will be no fare increases for NJT passengers in his Fiscal Year 2022 budget—the fourth straight year with no fare hikes. But the upcoming budget does not address the lack of dedicated funding for NJT, which means that operating deficits will continue to be met by diverting money from the agency's capital fund. Other support for transit will come from the State's clean-energy fund. A bill was introduced in the Legislature last year to create dedicated funding for NJT, but that plan was shelved due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Governor Murphy announced last month that the Walter Rand Transportation Center in Camden will receive a \$250-million overhaul. "The Center is outdated [decrepit-ed.] and in severe disrepair," said Camden Mayor Frank Moran. "Camden residents and thousands of commuters who use this facility daily



have been patiently waiting for a modern 21st Century transit hub." PATCO last month began a separate project to improve the Broadway station, which is adjacent to the Walter Rand Center. With the west entrance closed until further notice, PATCO passengers now must access Broadway station through the Center's east entrance.

PATCO and the City of Philadelphia have found themselves dealing with a large homeless encampment in the concourse near the 12th & Locust Streets station. The Inquirer reported in late February that the two entities are working to assist the inhabitants in finding other places to go including emergency shelters, residential treatment programs and other safe havens. The city has seen an increase in illegal encampments over the past three years, as fewer people are now living on the streets.

The Posner Foundation, headed by Chapter Member Henry Posner, has renewed its grant funding for Operation Lifesaver, Inc., well known for promoting rail safety education programs. OLI is probably best known for its grade crossing safety initiatives. "Thanks to the continued support of the Posner

Foundation of Pittsburgh, our safety message has been shared with millions of Americans,” said OLI Executive Director Rachel Maleh (*Railway Age*)

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has declined to hear the appeal of the READING & NORTHERN RAILROAD over the selection of an operator for several shortlines owned by the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority in north central Pennsylvania. R&N had claimed that the vote by SEDA-COG’s board awarding the contract to operator Carload Express was illegal.

Freight railroad employees are now required to wear masks while on duty, per an emergency order issued last month by the Federal Railroad Administration. This includes employees who are on board trains or hi-rail equipment or while working in transportation facilities such as yards, yard offices and maintenance shops. An employee who refuses to wear a mask must be removed from service, although anyone working alone in an enclosed engine cab is exempt from the order.

A Federal appeals court has ordered the FRA to reconsider its action in withdrawing a proposed rule requiring two-person crews on freight trains. The court said that the agency’s action had a “real and intended effect...to authorize nationwide one-person train crews and to bar any contrary state regulations.” The court’s ruling came in response to lawsuits filed by three states and two major rail unions.

A 1912-vintage Grand Trunk steam locomotive has been purchased by the COLEBROOKDALE RAILROAD Preservation Trust from the Jackson (MI) Historical Society. The Boyertown-based trust paid \$50,000 for Pacific-type locomotive #5030 but will need to raise almost \$2 million to restore it for tourist train service.

RECENT TRAVEL



Member Tom Fluck drove to EBT’s *Winter Spectacular* on Saturday, Feb. 20th. He paid \$22.40 for a caboose (cabin car) ride. He arrived early at 9:10AM and was able to explore the grounds and enjoy a coffee and a whoopee pie from a local church group before his 10:30AM ride. He rode in the cupola on the way out as the car was pulled by M-1, a historic, narrow-gauge gas-electric doodlebug. On the return, the train dropped riders off at the neighboring **Rockhill Trolley Museum**. For another \$10 he was able to ride a Brill car, a Wason car, two cars from the St. Louis Car Co. and a more modern trolley from San Diego.

Your Editor made another day trip albeit this time overnight. On Friday Feb. 19th, I flew from PHL to Denver [DEN]. DEN is the largest airport in the USA, and it opened in 1995. The airport was designed and built to allow for rail service but that did not start until 2016.



Denver’s **Regional Transport District [RTD]** was created in 1969 and has grown considerably to where it now operates over 170 bus routes [including 8 SKYRIDE routes to DEN and 11 rail lines [a mix of light and electrified commuter rail]. Its transit network really took off after **FAS TRACKS**, a voter initiative, was approved in 2004. The rail lines are alpha and color coded with the alpha code reflective of the route or destination.

I walked to the open-air train station under the adjacent Westin Hotel. The station is stub end with two tracks. Someone had left a day pass on the TVM so I rode free. I boarded an *A Line* Train at 12:12PM. The *A B G and N lines* are electrified using Silverliner V MUs from ROTEM that are almost identical to the same cars on SEPTA. However, RTD’s 66 cars are just high level, have a full-width engineer compartment, the middle seating is 2+2 and there are “luggage towers”. RTD’s commuter rail lines were the first ones built with PTC from the start and were plagued with grade crossing issues when the service started.

I exited at 38th and Blake, which is adjacent to the UPRR tracks – all seven of them! The next train took me to *Union Station*, which was renovated in 2014. While still an **AMTRAK** station, most of the historic building is now the upscale *Crawford Hotel*. My next ride was end-to-end on the *N Line* that recently opened on Sept.21. 2020. This line uses the former **UPRR** Dent Branch and includes a 9533’ bridge, the longest in Colorado. This was followed by a short ride on the *B Line*. Both the *N* and *B Lines* are planned for expansion. My last ride of the day was on the *G Line* to Wheat Ridge and back. The **Colorado RR Museum** in Golden is less than four miles from the end of the *G Line*.

My hotel downtown was on the light rail lines, which I rode the next day. The *D/C Line* parallels the *Joint Line* used by **BNSF** and **UP**. I rode to the end of the *E/F Line* where I boarded a *R Line* train that connected to the *A Line* at Peoria. My flight back was uneventful, but I was in DEN when the UAL 777 blew an engine on take-off.

U.S. Postal Service Meltdown Continuing

The continuing meltdown in the U. S. Postal Service continues as we enter March. In major mail processing centers around the United States, there is no sense of reliability in the movement and delivery of all types of mail items. In most instances, local post offices in your community are delivering what they get from their processing and distribution centers in a timely manner.

The Philadelphia Processing & Distribution Center on Enterprise Avenue in Southwest Philadelphia continues to be totally unreliable. On February 9, the Chapter mailed ALL copies of February *Cinders* to members and exchanges from Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006. Editor Emeritus Larry Eastwood's test copy came back to him on February 11, normal processing time. However, a "flat" piece sent to columnist Frank Tatnall in Radnor, PA was not delivered there until Monday, March 1. Similarly, a regular copy of *Cinders* sent to a member in Philadelphia, PA 19128 was not delivered, also, until Monday, March 1. Horrible.

A book sent Media Mail class from Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006 to Flourtown, PA 19031, a distance of some 8 miles, was mailed on Saturday, February 13, and was delivered in Flourtown until Monday, February 22. Oh, by the way, it was scanned in Jersey City, NJ Network Distribution Center on Wednesday, February 17. This apparently is the roundabout routing. USPS uses for this "slower class" of mail. Certainly, not efficient.

And, for icing on the cake, Editor Emeritus Eastwood's copy of the January 2021 issue of *Railpace Newsmagazine* was delivered on Tuesday, March 2. E-mails between Eastwood and Tom Nemeth of *Railpace* indicate he also received his January issue of *Railpace* on Monday, March 1. These copies were mailed the week before Christmas in 2020. Tom also said he received his February copy on February 4, a month before he received the January issue. Referring to incompetent Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, Nemeth said "There is no DeJoy in Mudville", referring to Major League Baseball's spring training beginning this week.

From Mar.2021 Lancaster NRHS *Dispatcher*

SEPTA St. Davids Sign Update

From the Radnor Historical Society, Jan. 25, 2021

St. Davids train station on the SEPTA Paoli-Thorndale line has been unfairly overlooked since its Victorian-era depot was demolished more than 50 years ago. In an effort sponsored by the Radnor Historical Society, they took the

opportunity to borrow one of the original Pennsylvania Railroad signs from which new castings were made using generous donations from many neighbors of the station. Four new signs were made and painted in authentic colors (though without the expense of using real gold leaf for the letters!). On January 25th SEPTA installed two of the signs on the outbound platform shelter, and soon two more will be installed on the inbound shelter. And don't worry. SEPTA assures us that these shelters are on their repainting schedule!

SEPTA has expressed interest in installing more of these signs up and down the Main Line, but in order to make them they need originals to use as patterns. If anyone knows the whereabouts of original signs (Keystone or not) from Main Line stations that might be available for the creation of new castings, please advise Greg Prichard at greg@gregprichard.com.



Complete Collection of TRAINS Magazine Available

Member Tom E. Halterman wishes to dispose of his complete collection of **TRAINS** Magazines, in binders, dating from 1962 to the present. It is available to a library, organization or individual as a donation of the COMPLETE collection, not piecemeal. Collection is located in Doylestown, Bucks County, PA. Please contact Thomas directly at thalterman@verizon.net. Please do not contact the Chapter. Thank you to Tom for this offer.

From the Feb. 26, 2021 *HIGHLAND Current*

Metro-North to 'Abandon' Beacon Line

Could be converted to join rail trail network

Metro-North earlier this month announced its intention to discontinue use of a 41-mile segment of the Beacon line, a dormant railway running from Beacon to the Connecticut border.

[This line was once part of the New Haven's main line from Cedar Hill in New Haven CT that crossed the Hudson River on the Poughkeepsie Bridge ending at its western terminus [Maybrook Yard] in Campbell Hall, NY. There, the New Haven Railroad once interchanged with five Class I RRs: Erie, L&HR, LNE, NYC and NYO&W. Service to the Maybrook Yard was reduced after the New Haven was sucked into Penn Central on Dec. 31, 1968. A fire on the Poughkeepsie Bridge in 1974 ended service west of the Hudson River. The line was reconfigured to connect with the [ex-NYC] MTA's Hudson Line in Beacon NY giving it the 'Beacon Line' name. There was limited freight service on the line by **CONRAIL** that eventually ended on Dec. 29th, 1992. After that, the Beacon Line was occasionally used by **Metro-North** to transfer diesel-hauled equipment between CT and NY, and for training new diesel engineers. The West Conn NRHS Chapter hosted several "Farewell to the Maybrook Line" fan trips in the 1990s. -ed.]

If the commuter railroad's request is granted by the federal agency that regulates freight rail, it could open the door for transforming the inactive railway spur into a publicly accessible trail, joining not only a growing network of walking paths in Beacon but perhaps connecting to the newly opened 750-mile Empire State Trail, as well.

Metro-North plans to submit its application to discontinue use of the line within the next month, according to a notice filed Feb. 8th.

A paved trail already runs parallel to more than half of the Beacon line — the Maybrook section from Brewster to Hopewell Junction — and has been incorporated into the Empire State Trail, which stretches from lower Manhattan to Canada, or, if you head west, to Buffalo.

Trails advocates have long eyed the Beacon line as a key piece in establishing regional connectivity, and now, with the Empire State Trail open, a connection between Beacon and Hopewell Junction, where the Dutchess County Rail Trail (also part of the Empire State Trail) begins, could be a natural fit. Right now, bikers traveling the 11-miles from Beacon to Hopewell must ride on narrow shoulders along Routes 52 and 82

This postcard was purchased by your Editor at the Plano TX train show back on Jan. 16th.



The back of the card explains the image.

Two "State-of-the-Art" Rapid Rail cars being built for the U.S. Department of Transportation's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA). The production, testing and demonstration of these cars are part of UMTA's Rapid Rail Program designed to improve high-speed, frequent-stop urban rail systems. UMTA's Systems Manager for this program is The Boeing Company's Vertol Division.

Known as SOAC, the two cars were actually built by St. Louis Car Company. They operated on the Broad Street Subway from March 6 to April 2, 1975. Chapter members rode these cars on the BSS on April 13, 1975 after the trial period ended. Our Chpt. President has two color slides taken at Fern Rock that day and now has this postcard for his collection. The cars went to PATCO for a period and were tested on other subway systems, but no more were ever built. The two cars are currently on display at *Seashore Trolley Museum* in Kennebunkport, Maine.

The **Reading & Northern Railroad** set records for carloadings and freight revenue in 2020, a year that saw decreased traffic for the industry as a whole because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a press release, the railroad says it moved over 34,000 carloads and had a revenue increase of almost 4%, and coal business increased in tonnage and revenues. The Company's Ransom, Pa., warehouse saw a 54% increase in carloads, and its steel coil transload facility in West Hazelton, Pa., in its first full year of operation, helped take 700 trucks off the highway. It also was boosted by a new industrial park in West Hazelton. The company moved 91,000 people in passenger operations that were limited by the pandemic, purchased 17 locomotives, 143 coal hoppers, a welded rail train, and 34,000 ties.