

DANVILLE FLYER

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

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

Membership in the Chapter is open to anyone having an interest in any aspect of railroading. Dues per year are \$17.00 for Chapter membership in addition to \$33.00 for NRHS membership. Meetings are held on the third (3rd) Sunday of each month (except June, July, August and December) at the Jocko's Depot Resturant, Gilbert Street (Illinois Route 1) and Williams Street, next to CSX, in Danville, Il. with lunch beginning at 1:00 PM Central Time followed by meeting and program.

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



On April 5th, Chapter members and friends pause after the return trip on the South Shore for a group photo at the Hegewisch station. See article on page 4 for an account of the trip. Photo by Doug Butzow

Coming Events

April 20, 2008

Danville, IL - Chapter monthly meeting at Jocko's Depot Restaurant, Williams and Gilbert Street, lunch at 1:00, meeting and program to follow.

April 19-20, 2008

Decatur, IL - Decatur Train Fair at the Decatur Civic Center, downtown 10-5 & 10-4.

April 26, 2008

Watseka, IL - Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad Historical Society annual meeting at the Watseka Depot. 10 AM to 9 PM Display tables, tour of former C&E lines, dinner and annual meeting. Contact Bob M. or Rick S. for more details.

April 26 & 27, 2008

Arcola, IL - Makin' Tracks Train Show at Rockome Gardens, southwest of Arcola. 10-4 each day.

May 11, 2008

Wheaton, IL - Great Midwest Train Show, DuPage County Fairgrounds 9:30-3, \$7

June 28-29, 2008

Galesburg, IL - Annual Railroad Days with displays and train show.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held Sunday, April 20, 2008 at Jocko's Depot Restaurant, Williams and Gilbert Street, beginning at 1:00 PM.

The Spring Model Railroad show at Urbana was a success for the Chapter as popcorn sales went very well again. We have paid off the machine and now will just have expense of supplies. At the same time we will be renting out the machine to other groups and thus continuing the income. In addition to the popcorn we sold items that had been donated by the Fred Hubbard estate in addition to the magazine collection. Bob G. did a great job selling some complete boxes of magazines.

The month of May is approaching and we need to start cleanup of the depot at Rossville. We are actually a month away from opening weekend with holiday starting on May 24. The items from the train show need to be put away, the rooms cleaned up and the train layout setup for operation during the weekends. In addition the exterior needs to be cleaned up from the winter winds. A work day will be discussed at this meeting and a date set.

The Spring Rail Trip was a success, see the article in this issue. We need someone to step forward and continue the work that Allen has done planning a trip for 2009.

Program will be vintage slides by Rick Schroeder.

The DANVILLE

FLYER, an Electronic Newsletter

If you want to ready your newsletter early, that is before the post office delivers it, and save the chapter some postage (going to \$.42 in May), send Doug Nipper (sigmtr1[at]cbpnet.net) your Email address and you will get to read early and in color.

Editor

Danville Chapter, NRHS Minutes 3/9/8

The meeting was called to order at 1404.

The Treasurer's report shows the following balances:

Checking	\$1608.63
Savings	\$4530.25
Total	\$6138.88

Old Business

The Urbana railroad show is scheduled for the weekend of 15-16. The Chapter will have a booth selling various items and POPCORN.

The trip is scheduled for 4/5 to the South Shore RR. Members may meet at 7:30 at Cooke Business Products. Pickups will also be made along IL 1 with advance notice.

New Business

The summer is coming (eventually).

The Meeting was adjourned.

Thanks to Allen for the notes as the secretary was out of town.

Got a lot of french fries?

GALESBURG, Ill. - An attempted weekend burglary of a refrigerated boxcar carrying ketchup left a mess; the burglar or burglars, apparently frustrated by the car's contents, sprayed the interior with the ketchup, the Associated Press reported. The car was parked behind Railroad Refrigeration Services. The burglary was discovered Saturday night. Police said no ketchup was stolen.

April 8 via TRAINS On-Line



The President's Corner

At the last operating session at Rossville, the last for the season in effect since the April session has been cancelled, we had a late breakfast up at the L&M diner in Hoopeston and I was distressed to learn that this little eatery will be closed for a time while one of the proprietors has knee surgery. In fact, there is some chance that it won't re-open since the brothers and one wife that run it want to retire. This is a classic old time lunch counter, and the food is excellent. The only thing better would be to have it next to the railroad tracks! Rick used to eat there when he was working many years ago on the Hoopeston waste treatment plant. Allen and he both know the brothers, Larry and Mick, from their days in the Army Reserve as cooks. It will most certainly be a cultural loss to Hoopeston when this place does close. We can only hope it goes on a couple more years...

In the drive up there, Doug Butzow mentioned something about the L&N that I had forgotten. The ex-CE&I under their tenure was not very busy, and sometimes they would line up a train "at noon for one that would come though at 6 PM". I remember looking out my parents' kitchen window as a youth and in the winter months I could see the northbound signal at the original RA Jct. just south of Poland Rd. I could easily spot the "green eye" above the trees of the northbound signal off the then #2 main (now #1), and at times it would indeed be lined for many hours before the train would show.

In my senior year at DHS, I used to walk home early if the weather was nice in the spring of 1980. If no reason existed to detour to North Yard, I would get up on the old NYC at Fairchild St. and walk up to Winter Ave. where I climbed up the embankment to the ex-C&EI for the final leg home. If I did walk all the way over to North Yard on Fairchild St., the entire walk home was on the L&N.

The point is not about my trespassing youth, but rather how idle both the CSX and the CR lines used to be in those days. During all those walks, I don't recall encountering trains more than a few times on either line. One day I was thrilled to see a southbound Milwaukee train on the Conrail from the perspective of the Winter Ave. overpass. The L&N seldom parked trains on the second main like CSX does, so I always felt safe walking that line with another track to escape to. Sadly, I hardly ever had to worry.

So the standard disclaimer applies here to any young folks reading these words: Don't trespass on the railroad. Times have definitely changed since my walking days. The railroads that are left are busier than they ever were, and they use all tracks at their disposal at any time.

Doug

AMTRAK NOTICE - Through July 11, track work being performed by Canadian National Railway will affect *Saluki* Train 391 and *Illini* Trains 392 and 393.

Train 392 - Temporary Delay - Through April 13, passengers traveling on Train 392 may experience significant delays. For up-to-date arrival and departure times, please visit Amtrak.com or call 1-800-USA-RAIL.

Trains 391, 392 and 393 - Temporary Schedule Change - April 14 through May 6 - Trains 391 and 392

***Saluki* Train 391 will operate one hour earlier to all stations on the route. and the *Illini* Train 392 will operate one hour later to all stations on the route.**

May 7 through July 11 - Train 393 *Illini* Train 393 will operate one hour later to all stations on the route.

FRA touts third straight decline for train accidents

The number of train accidents across the United States declined for the third year in a row, the Federal Railroad Administration and the Department of Transportation announced Tuesday. Preliminary full-year 2007 data show a 13.7% decline in train accidents (excluding highway-rail incidents), or 406 fewer train accidents nationwide, compared with 2006 figures.

FRA and DOT also emphasized the 24.6% reduction in train accidents from 2004 to 2007, reflecting a decline of 833 accidents.

"Our strong focus on improving rail safety is achieving significant results for three years running now," said DOT Secretary Mary E. Peters. Peters attributed some of the improvement to FRA's National Rail Safety Action Plan, initiated in May 2005.

Comparing preliminary full-year 2007 data to 2006, FRA and DOT noted that California (down 46), Texas (down 45), and New York (down 30) led the 34 states recording fewer train accidents. New Jersey (up 20, or 37%), Indiana (up 12), and Oklahoma (up 8) suffered the highest increases by number.

Texas also did well in reducing highway-rail grade crossing incidents (down 45), as did Florida (down 26) and Alabama, Illinois, and Louisiana (all down 23). Indiana (up 24), along with South Carolina and Pennsylvania (each up 19), had the greatest increases in such incidents.

Arizona (down 9) and Missouri (down 7) did best in reducing trespasser-related fatalities, still deemed the No. 1 cause of rail-related death. New York (up 9), Florida (up 8), and New Jersey (up 7) saw the largest numerical increase in trespasser-related death.

North Platte observation tower set for spring opening

Construction on the Golden Spike observation tower at Union Pacific's Bailey Yard, the world's largest freight yard, is on time and should be complete for a late May or early June opening, the North Platte Bulletin reported. A viewing platform on the top deck of the tower will afford a good view of the diesel locomotive service rack and the east hump.

Tower director Shelley Harshaw told the Bulletin that the tower's elevator is not fully operational, so workers must climb 14 flights of stairs to work at the top of the 100-foot-tall tower. On Feb. 19, film crews from the History Channel were at Bailey Yard, shooting film for an upcoming episode on the yard for the series "Modern Marvels."

Visitors will see four television screens showing information about Bailey Yard and the railroad. One screen is expected to show a live scene of trains moving around the yard. Another screen will show film shot from the front of a moving locomotive.

Via TRAINS On-line 3-08

Steam in Wisconsin - Summer 2008

This summer the "Friends of the 261" in cooperation with Amtrak and Canadian Pacific, will operate steam excursion trains featuring Milwaukee Road steam locomotive 261. The trips will originate at the recently remodeled Amtrak Station in downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

On Wednesday, June 18, Milwaukee Road 261 will pull a one-way trip from Minneapolis to Milwaukee. The train will make the regular Amtrak stops at Red Wing, Winona, La Crosse, Tomah, Wisconsin Dells, Portage and Columbus and passengers may board or detrain at those points. The train will make another one-way run

from Milwaukee to Minneapolis on Monday, June 23, making the same stops.

On Friday, June 20, No. 261 will make a dinner train run from Milwaukee to Sturtevant, WI where it will be turned and return to Milwaukee. First and Premium Class riders will enjoy a full dinner. Coach passengers are welcome as well, although no dinner will be served in coach.

On Saturday, June 21 and Sunday, June 22 locomotive 261 will pull a round trip from Milwaukee to Wisconsin Dells each day. After arrival at the Dells, a local trip will operate to New Lisbon to turn the train. In total, 261 will make a 270-mile round trip each day.

Premium Class will include Milwaukee Road Skytop Observation "Cedar Rapids" and Super Dome 53 and includes hors d'oeuvres and gourmet meals prepared on board by our executive chef. First class and coach seating is also available; first class includes an upscale meal plan with hors d'oeuvres. Both First and Premium Class include complimentary beer and wine. Order your tickets now since these trips are sure to be sellouts!

The Minneapolis-Milwaukee excursions will depart from and arrive at 401 Harrison Street Northeast located at Harrison Street and Hennepin Avenue in northeast Minneapolis (a map will be included with your ticket order). Milwaukee trips will originate at the Amtrak depot in downtown Milwaukee.

June 18, 2008:

Depart Minneapolis at 8:30 a.m. Water stop in Winona at 11 a.m. Arrive Milwaukee at 6 p.m.

June 20, 2008:

Depart Milwaukee at 6 p.m. Wye train at Sturtevant Arrive Milwaukee at 9 p.m.

June 21 and June 22, 2008:

Depart Milwaukee at 9 a.m.

Arrive Wisconsin Dells at noon Depart Wisconsin Dells at 12:30 p.m. Wye train at New Lisbon

Arrive Wisconsin Dells at 2:25 p.m. Depart Wisconsin Dells at 3 p.m. Arrive Milwaukee 6 p.m.

June 23, 2008:

Depart Milwaukee at 8:30 a.m. Arrive Minneapolis at 6 p.m.

For more information on tickets, please visit www.261.com.

*Via North Western Illinois Chapter...
information provided by WY/
W.26J.com*

Railroads are keeping up with escalating ethanol demand, AAR says

Railroads are working effectively with ethanol producers to keep up with skyrocketing biofuel demand, according to comments recently made by the head of the Renewable Fuels Association (RFA) that the Association of American Railroads (AAR) released yesterday. Between 1995 and 2006, rail ethanol volume increased from about 32,000 carloads to more than 145,000 carloads.

"As the demand for fuel ethanol grows, the infrastructure available to transport, store and blend ethanol into gasoline has expanded as well," said RFA President and Chief Executive Officer Bob Dinneen during his testimony last month before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. "Railroad companies are working with our industry to develop infrastructure to meet future demand." Railroads also increasingly are using unit trains (up to 95 cars long) to move ethanol, he said.

"We will continue to grow the necessary infrastructure to make sure that, in any market we need to ship ethanol, there is rail access at gasoline terminals and that those terminals are able to take unit trains," Dinneen said. An announcement today (3/13) by U.S. Development Group L.L.C.

(USDG) supports the unit-train ideal. The company said its Dallas Fort Worth Rail Terminal L.L.C. (DFWRT) has launched operations and is receiving and offloading ethanol rail cars and unit trains.

Served by Union Pacific Railroad, the new rail terminal will facilitate and expedite the distribution of fuel-grade ethanol to the Dallas-Fort Worth area, USDG said. The terminal features storage capacity for 130,000 barrels and a high-speed offloading facility for 84 rail cars. The need for continued ethanol-related investments by railroads underscores the importance of the Freight Rail Infrastructure Capacity Expansion Act (S. 1125/H.R. 2116), said AAR President and CEO Edward Hamberger. The legislation would provide a 25 percent tax credit to any business investing in rail infrastructure improvements or expansions, including ethanol producers or gasoline refiners in terminals that can accommodate unit trains.

"The fact that we have been able to handle the four-fold increase in ethanol traffic without difficulty demonstrates the commitment we have to meeting the needs of all our customers," said Hamberger

Via Progressive Railroading

DM&E quits running on ex-Minneapolis & St. Louis trackage

The Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern has ceased through operations over its former Minneapolis & St. Louis line from Waseca to Albert Lea, Minn. Since it began operations in 1986, DM&E used the line to reach Mason City, Iowa, using trackage rights over UP's ex-Rock Island "Spine Line" from Albert Lea to Mason City. As part of the 1986 Chicago & North Western sale agreement to the DM&E, C&NW and now UP retained ownership of the M&StL line from Hartland, Minn., to Albert Lea, but only DM&E trains used it. DM&E used the line to bring interchange traffic to

C&NW/UP in Mason City.

The last through run down the old M&StL from Waseca occurred on or about Jan. 11. Today all traffic for the UP in Mason City is routed through Owatonna and Austin, Minn., to Mason City on the DM&E and its sister railroad Iowa, Chicago & Eastern. The daytime Waseca Yard job still runs down the line to switch on-line industries as needed, going as far as the end of DM&E ownership in Hartland. Industries include Central Trading and Recycling south of New Richland (scrap) and WFS in New Richland that receives an occasional car of fertilizer. The speed limit on the entire line is 10 mph.

The Waseca-Albert Lea trackage is one of the largest intact segments of the M&StL main line that once ran from Minneapolis to Marshalltown, Iowa and on to Peoria, Ill.

Via Trains On-Line 3-08

NS opens Rickenbacker Intermodal Terminal in Ohio

Norfolk Southern's \$63-million, 250-acre Rickenbacker Intermodal Terminal opened on March 3. The terminal provides direct intermodal train services to/from Norfolk, Va., and the Chicago gateway for movement to/from the U.S. West Coast. It also has an automated gate system to expedite draymen in and out of the facility, while improving the equipment inspection process. The terminal, located at the Rickenbacker Global Logistics Park, is the first of three new NS terminals to be added as part of the Heartland Corridor Project. NS has started the clearance projects on the corridor with completion planned for 2009. Once completed this corridor will provide a shorter and quicker route for double-stack trains from Norfolk to the Midwest.

Chapter Spring Trip

A ride on the electrified South Shore Line took place on a fine spring Saturday, April 5. Two cars left Danville at 730, making pickups in Rossville and Milford and rendezvousing with another car in Momence. Before we could arrive at the Hegewisch station in SE Chicago, a nb train stopped us at the ex-NKP crossing of 130th St. near Torrence Ave. There was plenty of parking available at Hegewisch at no charge. While there were 20-30 riders waiting for the 1025 train to Chicago, we were the only riders boarding the eb train #507 at 1035.

There was a delay before reaching Hammond, the next station, waiting for an extra train. East of Hammond was a section of single track operation on the south track while catenary work took place on the north track. The train offered a fine opportunity to view rail operations in NW Indiana as it paralleled, crossed and junctioned with many other lines, including NS, CSX, IHB, EJ&E and various industrial operations. A pair of new KCS units were sitting in a yard near Portage and BNSF and UP units were also encountered.

The street running along 10th and 11th streets in Michigan City were fun. It must be a large treat when the freight operator runs down the street with a coal train. Following Michigan City there is some fast running through the countryside with a few lakes and hills. Arrival at the Michigan City airport was about 7-8 minutes late.

An agent was on duty at the airport station for tickets back to Hegewisch. Only 20 minutes are scheduled there. A good crowd boarded, including a number with suitcases who apparently arrived on a flight. The return trip (train #508) was closer to on-time. South Shore freight locos were seen in a couple sidings. Arrival at Hegewisch was at 1425.

After a group photo at the Hegewisch station, the autos traveled to Fuddrucker's in Matteson for an enjoyable meal. Then it was back to Danville. Woodland Jct. was visited on the return, but all was quiet until Wellington siding where a nb train appeared to be passing another nb sitting



On the left, you are looking west at the replacement of the single lane concrete structure under CSX on Winter Avenue. This replacement, a proposed 3-span structure, was designed by URS Corporation and is being constructed by O'Neil Brothers of Danville. On the right you are looking north along the track as they install the 60-foot deep, 4-foot diameter cassion for the abutments. On the left is a sheeting wall that is part of the tie back system to hold No. 1 main in place during bridge construction on No. 2 track.

in the siding. Arrival back in Danville was around 1830. Thanks to Allen Cooke for scheduling the trip.

Those attending were: Jess Bennett; Dick Brazda; Doug, Zoë & Lincoln Butzow; Allen Cooke; John Cooke; Larry Prosser; Dave Sherrill with grandson Ryan and his friend Jacob; Bill Wright and Mark Ziebart



St. Louis Station **nearly ready to open**

Once escalators are working and the track extensions are finished in late spring, the Gateway Transportation Center will fill with bus and train passengers.

Whether many of them will be boarding Amtrak trains to Kansas City — that's the uncertainty. About two dozen Missouri legislators toured the new train and Greyhound depot near Scottrade Center on Monday and heard a pitch for more Amtrak funding — a \$10.6 million request to improve on-time performance and ridership across the state. Heavy freight rail congestion in Missouri has hurt Amtrak's reliability between St. Louis and Kansas City. Annual boardings have dropped to 144,000 in 2007, a 30 percent decline since 2000, according to Amtrak. The drop bucks the growth in passenger rail service nationwide. In Illinois, where the state has invested \$100 million in track improvements since 2000, ridership between Chicago and St. Louis has risen 93 percent to 409,000 passengers.

"What we have found (in Missouri) is the reliability issue is really well known," said

County to fight Intermodal Yard

The state of Virginia and Norfolk Southern Railway are pushing for an intermodal yard near Elliston, but local residents are lining up in opposition, the Roanoke Times reported. The proposed center would be part of the \$249 million Heartland Corridor. The state pegs spinoff economic activity from the intermodal yard to be in the range of \$140 million to \$550 million, though the yard itself would employ only about a dozen. But residents worry about truck traffic on Interstate 81 and U.S. Route 220, two roads that already have substantial truck traffic.

NS evaluated 10 sites before settling on Elliston, and planners call the site the only feasible location. Still, Montgomery's county supervisors are opposed, and one supervisor hinted the county would sue to stop the yard from locating there. Norfolk Southern's Heartland Corridor aims to raise track capacity and tunnel clearances to connect ports around Norfolk, Va., to the Midwest. Intermodal centers along the route, such as the proposed Elliston terminal, would allow trains to drop off containers for truck delivery to nearby cities.

Via TRAINS On-Line

Marc Magliari, Amtrak spokesman, after riding a train with legislators from Jefferson City.

“The difficulty we’re having with reliability has really been driving ridership downward.” Amtrak’s problem in Missouri is the single east-west track it shares daily with about 55 to 60 freight trains, transportation officials say. West of Jefferson City, the trains share one track that operates like a single-lane road with occasional pull-over lanes, except the lanes aren’t long enough for freight trains. The shorter Amtrak trains, then, must always pull over and stop whenever freight trains are approaching. As a result, 29 percent of Amtrak trains on the route ran more than 30 minutes late last year, according to the Missouri Department of Transportation. Some months, as many as 46 percent of trains were more than 30 minutes late, with many delayed by two to three hours.

“We’re not here because things are going well,” said Brian Weiler, who oversees rail safety and use for the Transportation Department.

The Missouri Department of Transportation is requesting \$10.6 million from the Legislature to address the situation. Much of the money would be spent on additional pull-over track, called sidings, that would be long enough for freight trains. The additional track would allow Amtrak trains to pass, thereby improving on-time performance. A study by the University of Missouri last year found that more than half of Amtrak’s delays in 2005 were due to freight train interference. Increasing coal shipments and rising gasoline prices account for much of the growing freight congestion, said John Mulligan of Union Pacific, which owns the track between St. Louis and Kansas City.

“Our business is booming,” Mulligan said. As legislators toured the unfinished \$27 million building, several said they would like to see Amtrak service in Missouri improve. The building, with its four train platforms and 10 bus bays, is set to open in early June. Legislators hope to figure out the future of Missouri Amtrak service before then.

“We don’t have the money for it, that’s

the bottom line,” said Rep. Sam Komo, D-House Springs, a member of the Transportation Appropriations Committee. To get millions needed for capacity improvements, he said, “We’ve got to think outside the box.”

CSXT plans new dispatching center in Huntington, W.Va.

CSX Transportation is establishing a new dispatching center at its division headquarters in Huntington, W.Va., with approximately 80 train dispatcher and related positions being relocated there.

“CSX has a rich history in the Mountain State and we’re delighted the company is investing in these good jobs in Huntington,” said West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin. “This is a partnership for success for both CSX and for West Virginia.”

CSXT thanked Governor Manchin for his support in bringing the new jobs to Huntington. The state has offered Economic Opportunity Tax Credits for each job created in the move and is providing up to \$2,000 per employee for training. CSXT is spending about \$4.5 million to create the dispatching center at the railroad’s Huntington Division headquarters. Construction is scheduled for completion in late May and the center is scheduled to begin operation in August.

CSX is in the process of moving dispatchers out of Jacksonville, Florida and back to locations within the Divisions. Several have been moved to Calumet City and Indianapolis, Atlanta and other cities will soon see additional dispatching added to existing centers or new centers setup.

Crossing, trespassing fatalities down sharply

Railroads recorded only 55 fatalities in January, a 17.9% decline from the 67 deaths reported in January 2007, according to Federal Railroad Administration statistics released March 31. Grade crossing fatalities were down 27.3% to 23 and trespassing deaths dropped 12.1% to 29. There was only one employee fatality in January, compared with three in January last year. Total accidents and incidents declined 11.0% to 961 in January. Train accidents were down 4.7% to 203 and derailments declined 8.7% to 147, though collisions increased 12.5% to 18. Yard accidents declined 8.1% to 228.

Rail News

BNSF Railway Co. has attained the highest score among six railroads in *FOR-TUNE* magazine’s annual ranking of the nation’s most admired companies. BNSF achieved a score of 8.34 on a 10-point scale. The Class I earned high marks in eight categories: innovation, people management, use of corporate assets, social responsibility, quality of management, financial soundness, long-term investment and products/services quality. BNSF also ranked in the top 10 of all 1,000 rated companies for innovation, use of corporate assets, quality of management, financial soundness and long-term investment. Union Pacific Railroad ranked second among railroads on the most-admired list, followed by CSX Corp., Norfolk Southern Corp., Kansas City Southern and Amtrak.

Editor: Recently I mentioned that freight traffic most of the time would be a leading indicator of downturn, or upturn, in the economy. The other night Warren Buffett was on CNBC and discussed his stock holdings in the major carriers. He said he watches the traffic volume on a weekly basis and this determined his purchase of additional stock in the railroads. The

following is the recent report on the upturn of traffic, which has been ongoing since the first of the year:

The U.S. Department of Transportation released data today (3/12) showing that the freight services transportation index was 111.5 in January, up 2.7% from January 2007. The index, which measures freight activity in the railroad, air freight, and trucking industries, was 66.6 when it was introduced in January 1990. It reached a high mark of 113.1 in November 2005. DOT also said the passenger transportation index increased 1.3% to 115.5 in January from January a year ago. That index was 70.5 in 1990 and reached a peak of 117.4 in August 2006. The index measures movement in the transit, airline, and passenger rail industries. DOT's combined freight and passenger transportation services index rose 2.4% to 112.1 in January. It started in 1990 at 67.1 and reached a high of 112.6 in May 2006.

Union Pacific will be able to move double-stacked container trains from the port of Oakland, Calif., over Donner Pass if the railroad receives \$43 million in state money, the Sacramento Business Journal reported. Staff of the California Transportation Commission recommended the state approve the money. Currently, double-stack trains must take a more circuitous route through the Feather River Canyon because tunnels on Donner aren't high enough. The grant would cover half the cost of the project. In addition to raising tunnel clearances, the project would lengthen sidings, allowing trains over Donner to operate at 8,000 feet in length. Currently trains are limited to 5,000 feet. The funding would come as part of voter-approved Proposition 1B, which includes \$2 billion for infrastructure improvements in corridors with large volumes of freight. The commission will make a final decision of which programs it will fund at its April 9-10 meeting in Sacramento. *Via TRAINS On-Line 3/17*

ROCHESTER, Minn. - The Mayo Clinic, long an opponent of a plan that would bring an increase in rail traffic through its hometown, is backing down - sort of. The Sioux Falls (S.D.) Argus Leader has reported the clinic will push for safety improvements and grade separation of the

Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern rail line through Rochester, Minn. Mayo's change of position is a major development in DM&E's decade-long quest to extend a new rail line into Wyoming's Powder River Basin coalfields. The world-renowned clinic has long insisted DM&E construct a bypass around or a tunnel under Rochester, and city leaders have joined them in that position. But clinic spokesman Chris Gade said he thinks such things are unlikely as the Surface Transportation Board reviews a proposed takeover of DM&E by Canadian Pacific. "Given that every sign seems to indicate there will be a PRB expansion, we're taking steps necessary to ensure the safety of our patients and our community," he said. Those steps include pushing the STB to require safety measures be taken. In 2005 the Federal Railroad Administration cited DM&E for its poor safety record, largely the result of decaying track structure purchased from Chicago & North Western upon DM&E's creation in 1986. Mayo wants to see the STB impose strict safety improvements as a condition of the CP merger. *Via TRAINS On-Line 3/12*

Doug Nipper reports that CSX has grade crossing materials spotted at all crossings north of Danville up to Rossville. This is probably in advance of a tie gang that will be here this spring/summer. It has been many years since this section had a tie or rail gang in the area. In addition, No. 2 track at Danville, and specifically Winter Avenue, is out of service for both rail and building of the new Winter Avenue bridge. They are now using No. 2 track north of Liberty Lane as the passing and storage siding. On March 23 CSX derailed a train south of Beecher on the Union Pacific portion of the double track. Some 15 cars were in the ditch.

Illinois ICC has approved a plan to spend more than \$139 million to improve safety at more than 3,800 grade crossings during the next five years. Projects will range from the installation of automatic flashing lights and signal upgrades to multi-million-dollar grade separations, such as the BNSF Railway Co./Belmont Road overpass in Downers Grove (designed by URS and estimated to cost \$36.2 million). The five-year plans also calls for installing reflec-

tive crossbuck warning and/or yield signs, and modifying remote monitoring devices at dozens of crossings. The state of Illinois currently appropriates \$27 million annually for crossing upgrades through the Grade Crossing Protection Fund, which partially covers the cost to install warning systems, improve highway approaches, and build or reconstruct grade separations.

The U.S. Federal Railroad Administration released a demographic report on rail trespasser fatalities. The report also examined suicides, which are not normally included in FRA trespasser fatality counts, but which the report said accounted for 18 percent of total trespasser fatalities. The report summarized the average trespasser fatality to be a 38-year-old Caucasian male under the influence of alcohol or drugs, with a median household income of \$36,000, adding that more than 25 percent of them had not graduated from high school. The report included information gathered from coroners and medical examiners across the country.

The former president of the Greenbrier Resort in White Sulphur Springs, WV filed suit against CSX, which owns the resort, for \$50 million. In his lawsuit, Paul Ratchford claims that he was wrongfully forced out of his position after less than a year's service after he tried to halt the railroad's senior executives from enjoying special privileges at the resort. These privileges are alleged to have included free rooms and meals, discounted merchandise, and free medical exams. The suit further alleges that these may have been improperly shielded from being taxed as fringe benefits.