

DANVILLE FLYER

Inside this issue:

February Meeting	1
Metra Equipment	1
About Us—Officers	2
CN Grain Record	3
January Traffic Up	3
Home Depot and Railroad	4
Dues Renewal	4
View from the Window	5
UP Replacement	6
December Minutes	6
Second Section	7
Photo of the Month	8

February Meeting at Jocko's

Those of us in eastern Illinois have seen the COVID-19 infection rate come down and on the 20th the word came that restaurants could open for at least 50 percent capacity. We met last month at Jocko's but Champaign County was still shut down. The February meeting will be held at Jocko's on the 21st at 1:00 PM. Rick Schroeder will present a program on the Wabash he photographed prior and during the Norfolk and Western acquisition.

REMEMBER, YOU MUST WEAR A MASK TO ENTER THE RESTAURANT AND THE MEETING ROOM.

Metra to Replace Aging Equipment

The Metra Board of Directors has approved the purchase of up to 500 multi-level commuter railcars from Alstom to replace aging bi-level gallery cars.

Metra's initial order will be for 200 cars, with an option for up to 300 more, totaling \$1.8 billion. The cars, a customized version of the Coradia Duplex (see video below), are to be built at Alstom's Hornell, N.Y., manufacturing facility. The first car is slated for delivery in

mid-2024 (42 months after the contract is finalized), with the full base order complete 30 months later (late 2027 or early 2028).

The agency's \$386.8 million capital program for 2021, approved in November, set aside \$61.5 million for the cars, which had been part of the Board's plan since 2014. A request for proposals was issued in March 2019.



About 40% of Metra's 840-car fleet is "rated in marginal or poor condition, although they are still safe to operate," the agency said. "The new cars will offer increased reliability, while reducing operating costs—a substantial improvement over the increasing expense of maintaining the older cars."

The new Alstom cars will have an advanced HVAC system, "which will scrub the circulated air—reducing staleness, allergens and airborne viruses," Metra said, as well as a mi-

(Continued on page 2)

**FEBRUARY 21
MEETING AT JOCKO'S
ON WILLIAMS STREET
AT 1:00 PM**

**OPERATING SES-
SIONS AT THE MUSEUM
IN ROSSVILLE. FIRST
SATURDAY OF MARCH
AND APRIL, START
AROUND 1:00 PM**

About Us

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 \$30.00 for Chapter membership in addition to \$50.00 for NRHS membership. Rossville Depot Museum membership is \$30 per year. Meetings are held on the third (3rd) Sunday of each month (except June, July, August and December) at the Jocko's Depot Restaurant, Gilbert Street (Illinois Route 1) and Williams Street, next to CSX (former Conrail), in Danville, Il with lunch beginning at 1:00 PM Central Time followed by meeting and program.



Officers for 2021—our 53rd Year

Henry Schmitt – President
Doug Butzow – Vice President
Dick Brazda– Secretary
Doug Nipper– Treasurer
Dave Sherrill – Programs
Jess Bennett – Historian
Bob Gallippi – Museum Director
Rick Schroeder – Editor & NRHS rep
Cooke Wireless, LLC - Publisher & Distributor



(Continued from page 1)

croprocessor-controlled braking system and rider area cameras. Additionally, to reduce dwell times and increase rider accessibility, the cars will have two entranceways on each side with doors nearly level with the platform, requiring only one step to enter instead of multiple steps on the old gallery cars. The cars will also be wheelchair accessible, deploying lifts to bridge the slight difference between the platform and entrance. Among their amenities: video screens, bike racks, storage for bags, charging outlets, cupholders and arm rests.

“This move is truly transformational,” Metra CEO/Executive Director Jim Derwinski said. “We are finally modernizing one of the oldest fleets in the country and, in doing so, we will improve operations while elevating our passenger experience to an entirely new level. It’s really part of our long-term plan to evolve and serve the changing needs of today’s commuters.”

Rail Group News 1-15

CN Sets Grain Loading Record

CN has set a new grain-hauling record for the 11th consecutive month by shipping more than 2.95 million metric tons (MMT) of Canadian grain and processed grain products via carload in January.

The grain haul exceeds the previous January record of 2.33 MMT set in 2019 by 27%, as well as the three-year average of 2.24 MMT by 32%, CN officials said in a press release.

This brings the volume of grain moved via carload in the first half of the 2020-2021 crop year — which spans from early August 2020 to the end of July — to over 17.5 MMT. That's 24% higher than the three-year average of 14.1 MMT, and 17% higher than the record of 14.9 MMT set in the 2018-2019 crop year, CN officials said.

CN also is breaking records of more than 600,000 metric tons of grain moving direct from western Canada via container, in addition to volumes shipped from eastern Canada, they said.

"We know that harsher weather is always just around the corner, so it is critical that we keep up the pace and collaboration that we have seen in the first half of the crop year to keep goods moving," said Rob Reilly, CN executive vice president and chief operating officer.

CN's ability to deliver record amounts of goods is largely due to its investments in capacity, company officials said. Since 2018, the Class I has invested more than CA\$10 billion in track, locomotives and rail cars, including the purchase of more than 2,500 new high-capacity grain hopper cars.

Editor: Out of my window I have been seeing at least one, usually 2, grain trains per day. On the 1st I had a north-bound with a KCS and an unmarked blue unit on an empty. On the 3rd this set went south loaded. One day I had 2 empty trains NB and 3 loaded SB. On the 4th an empty north had KCS/CN power. That afternoon a loaded SB was lead by 2 CSX units and 30 minutes later another SB with 2 NS units. Not sure where these trains are getting loaded, especially the last two noted. I have been surprised at the number of non-CN units on the railroad.



January Rail Traffic Up

Record intermodal and chemicals volumes as well as higher grain volumes boosted overall U.S. rail traffic in January, according to data from the Association of American Railroads (AAR).

January intermodal traffic rose 12.1% year-over-year to 1.17 million containers and trailers, according to AAR. Chemicals carloads increased by 4.4% or 5,717 carloads, while grain carloads shipped increased by 31,434 from a year ago. That's a 40% increase year-over-year.

However, despite the increased volumes for chemicals and grains carloads, overall January carloads were down 2.1% to 930,303 carloads amid a 12.7% decrease in coal carloads, an 18.9% decline in carloads of crushed stone, sand and gravel, and a 12.1% drop in carloads of petroleum and petroleum products.

Combined U.S. carload and intermodal traffic in January totaled 2.1 million, up 5.3% from last year.

"We are encouraged by rail volumes in January. U.S. intermodal shipments and carloads of chemicals set new records; grain had its biggest-ever year-over-year increase; total carloads were the highest they've been in a year; and carloads excluding coal actually grew year-over-year for the second straight month," AAR Senior Vice President John T. Gray said in a release. He was referring to the calculation that U.S. carloads excluding coal were up by 2.3% in January.

"To be sure, the economy remains under strain with a good deal of uncertainty, but we're cautiously optimistic about the future. Railroads are well prepared to support a strong recovery whenever it occurs," Gray said.

Indeed, higher intermodal traffic in January could set the pace for volumes for the first quarter of 2021. The intermodal spot market to and from West Coast ports allude to anticipated tight capacity, while 40 container ships were in San Pedro Bay waiting to dock as of earlier this week. Several Class I railroads during their fourth-quarter earnings calls were also optimistic about intermodal traffic in the first quarter.

Canadian grain volumes were also higher in January

While U.S. grain volumes were up by 40% year-over-year in January, they were also higher for Canadian railway

(Continued on page 4)

Home Depot and Railroads

Rail competition, connectivity, network speed and reliability are some of the big freight rail issues on the minds of shippers like Home Depot Inc. (NYSE: HD), according to the company's director for logistics.

Because Home Depot sells products from all across North America, from forest products in western Canada to more localized building materials like drywall and concrete, good rail network connectivity "is really important," said Robin Baggs, director of logistics for Home Depot. Baggs was a panelist for a Jan. 27 session on rail freight growth. The session was part of the annual meeting of the Transportation Research Board, an organization aimed at promoting innovation through transportation research.

If Home Depot's distribution center is served by one railroad but a vendor is served by another, it takes effort to determine how to connect the two, Baggs said. To help establish connections between two Class I railroads, short line railroads often play the biggest role. "Short lines are often unsung heroes," Baggs said.

A competitive rail environment, or access to multiple railroads, is also something that Home Depot seeks because it affects how the company does its own business, he said. Freight railroads need to consider how they can speed up the overall time of rail moves because speed is one factor in trucking's favor.

"If we have to wait two weeks to actually get that additional product to the customer, that's a problem for us. So, the faster we can react, the better ... It's really about that end-to-end lead time. It's not [just] about one leg moving faster on the train," Baggs said. But coupled with that need for higher speed is reliability since Home Depot wants to be reliable and responsive to its customers' needs, he said.

Baggs explained how Home Depot's supply chain has evolved over the past two decades. It is undertaking a \$1.2 billion investment in its supply chain infrastructure so that the downstream segment of its supply chain — anything that goes to an end customer, whether that customer is a professional or a homeowner — can be at a competitive advantage. Atlanta-based Home Depot has 125 core distribution centers and more than 2,000 stores across North America.

"We think it is now [competitive] but we can make that even better by investing and starting to integrate the up-

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CN (NYSE: CNI), which said this week that January marked the 11th consecutive month in which it experienced a monthly grain record.

The railway shipped over 2.95 million metric tonnes (MMT) of Canadian grain and processed grain products via carloads in January, beating by 27% a previous January record of 2.33 MMT set in 2019. January 2021's figure was also 32% higher than the three-year average of 2.24 MMT.

Since the 2020-21 crop started Aug. 1, CN has shipped over 17.5 MMT of grain volumes via carload, which is 24% higher than the three-year average of 14.1 MMT and 17% higher than the record of 14.9 MMT set in 2018-19, the railway said.

CN also said it is "breaking records" from shipping over 600,000 metric tonnes of western Canadian grain via container and shipping volumes from eastern Canada.

CN attributed the volume increases to successful collaboration with producers and partners, as well as to over \$10 billion in investments to track infrastructure and associated assets, including the acquisition of over 2,500 high-capacity grain hopper cars.

"What great news to start off 2021. I could not be prouder to see such fluidity and collaboration across all supply chains at the same time, especially in Canadian grain. We know that harsher weather is always just around the corner, so it is critical that we keep up the pace and collaboration that we have seen in the first half of the crop year to keep goods moving," said CN Chief Operating Officer Rob Reilly.

Via FreightWaves

NRHS and Local 2021 Dues Payment.

For those of you that are NRHS members you should have received a notice about paying for 2021 dues. For NRHS members this will be completed on line but they will also accept checks and PayPal with the new system.

For your local renewal we appreciate those of you that will be joining for another year. The renewal notice has been mailed to those not at the meeting so mail in to the address on the envelope.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

stream with the downstream,” Baggs said. Upstream means moving products from vendors to distribution centers, he said. One reason Home Depot is investing in its supply chain infrastructure is the changing demands of the customer, Baggs said. That means same- or next-day delivery.

“I like to joke, it’s been fun to see fencing grow at a really rapid clip,” Baggs said.

Another reason is Home Depot’s business growth. The bulk distribution facilities on Home Depot’s network and the rail infrastructure supporting those facilities are working on a rail footprint from 20 years ago, he said. “It’s a great network but an aged network. It’s also one that we managed differently when we [first] built it,” he said. Previously, Home Depot didn’t manage its inbound transportation to its bulk distribution center network, resulting in a fragmented network across 100 to 150 suppliers.

But now “we’re starting to manage it from end to end,” Baggs said. About 50% of volume into this network is through rail. Home Depot is seeking to build 30 new facilities so that it can increase its square footage and offer more products, he said. The new facilities will also help Home Depot manage same-day and next-day deliveries to its professional customers.

For instance, the Atlanta-area Stonecrest facility opening later this year will be served by CSX (NASDAQ: CSX) and Norfolk Southern (NYSE: NSC). The railroads will bring in big, bulky products, and then Home Depot’s flatbed fleets will bring these materials to professionals and individual customers.

“It ultimately drives speed, efficiency and reliability to these wood products and other building materials that we think will be great for our customers,” Baggs said.

Other insights on freight rail growth. Panelist Tyson Moeller, general director of network development for Union Pacific (NYSE: UNP), said the ability to wield massive amounts of data to benefit customers and the railroad is one area that Union Pacific (UP) continues to work on.

The former method of downloading spreadsheets to track shipments wasn’t very efficient: “There was a lot of manual work that had to be done on our side as well as on our customers’ [side],” Moeller said.

The railroad is now seeking to use technology that ena-

(Continued on page 6)

View from My Office Window—Rick

I noted last month that I have the connection to the ATCS through Doug’s computer more than I used to, sometimes having it up all day just so I can walk in and check train movements. It does help to check on NB or SB CN trains lined as I can wait and watch them go by.

On the 24th of January I kept track of several movements. The CN still has a number of ex-IC SD70’s still in IC paint and that day a NB had 9515 (CN paint), 1004 and 1005, all IC. 15 minutes later 1035 and 1000 lead a SB. Within about 20 minutes another SB coal train lead by 2-CSX units with a UP DPU on the rear went by. In the afternoon one of the Prince Rupert stack trains headed south (usually an early afternoon train). Some 15 minutes later another SB had IC 1021, 1008 in CN and a UP unit on a short train. I noted there was something in the siding at Tolono and once cleared a single unit, CN 3181, headed north.

I have SB grain trains with KCS units, SB coal trains with BNSF (UP DPU) and CSX motive power. Grain trains are around at least 2 per day and recent reports note CN grain movements are setting records. I see at least 2 oil trains per week with various power.

I also watch the movement on NS as the coverage is from east of Decatur to east of Lafayette, Indiana. NS uses software that will “decide” the best movement for a train, that is into a siding or stay on the main, for a meet. This same day there was a EB at Bement and a WB west of Homer. The WB was lined into the siding at Sidney and back out. The EB was lined into the Sloan siding. The WB was lined into the pass at Tolono, sat for 2 CN trains and was then lined out of the pass to meet the EB in the siding at Sloan. In the days of dispatcher controls the DS would have moved the EB up to Tolono, but computers know better. I have heard stories of a DS overriding the computer and getting disciplined.

When the weather gets better I will plan some trips to Tolono area when the “banana bunch” of trains are showing up. Tonight (1/27) as I write this a WB is lined into Sloan, another WB is lined ahead of him to #2 at Bement and a EB does not show up yet at Bement. Of interest is the Urbana local just cleared off the Bloomington line at Mansfield.

I did note about trains at night. The other night I woke up around 2, could not sleep and counted 7 trains between 2:15 and 4:30. Busy railroad.

JANUARY MEETING MINUTES

The Jan. 17, 2021, meeting opened at 1333 at Jockos.

There was one correction to the to the secretary's report. The expenditures for the motor car were \$437, not \$37.

The electric bill and electronics for the layout were the major expenditures during the past 1 1/2 months. Income was a combination of donations and dues. Closing balance is \$6007.60.

Skyler has repaired the carburetor on the motorcar.

February, March and April programs will be provided by Rick, Henry and Dick, respectively.

At this point, the C&EI meeting is still scheduled for April.

Even though there were fewer participants than normal, operating sessions are going well.

The possibility of a spring trip was raised; it will depend on reopening of facilities.

Per JD, some of the older loco hulks are being scrapped at the Vermilion Valley by Mervis. They are rehabbing GP15s. They are also looking at the possible purchase of loco in Decatur waiting for scrap. Windmill trains are again expected in March.

The meeting was adjourned at 1344.

Dave presented a video on early 1950s steam on the B&O and C&O.

(Continued from page 5)

bles multiple applications to connect and share information with each other. By integrating application programming interfaces, customers can have better real-time access to data that enables them to perform functions such as automating workflows. The technology also expands customers' visibility into the supply chain by enabling customers to see where shipments are located, Moeller said.

John Maddox, freight and rail program manager for the Kansas Department of Transportation emphasized the role that short line railroads have in the state's multimodal freight network. Approximately 40% of Kansas' rail network is owned or operated by 13 short line railroads. They operate on 1,476 miles and hauled 167,527 carloads in 2019, according to Maddox.

Kansas has benefited from federal grants and public-private partnerships to improve rail network velocity and capacity and implement in-cab, rail yard and dispatch technologies, among other benefits, Maddox said.

Carlo Borghini of Shift2Rail talked about the need for Europe to digitize some operational and safety components of the continent's freight rail network. He also discussed the need for the European Union's 27 member states to research and work together on ways to become a more unified supply chain.

Via FreightWaves' e-newsletters

UP Replaces Retarder in 8 hours

RT&S Ed. Note: While precision scheduled railroading has called for the transformation of a number of Class 1 hump yards to flat switching around the country, many humps still operate. The story below, which appears on Union Pacific's website, highlights some very significant work the railroad completed on their hump yard in Houston in late 2020. DCL

While much of the world was winding down for the year, a Union Pacific team in Houston was gearing up to end 2020 with a bang – installing a new master retarder in Englewood Yard on Dec. 29 in close to eight hours.



BUILDING AMERICA®

“How this team came together – planning, practicing and then executing flawlessly – is a true testament to

the power of teamwork and what we can accomplish when we work toward the same goal,” said Union Pacific's Andrey Drozdov, general manager, Transportation, Houston Service Unit. “Everyone out there that day was excited to see their hard work come together.”

The new master retarder, a device installed in a classification yard to reduce the speed of freight cars as they're sort-

(Continued on page 7)



ed, is a critical piece of a larger plan to turn Houston's Englewood Yard into a lean, mean car-processing machine.

"We're making Englewood a flagship hump yard on the Union Pacific," Drozdov said. "These efficiency improvements will ensure we can process more cars through Houston than we've ever done before."

Replacing a master retarder requires temporarily stopping the entire hump operation. To ensure as little operational impact as possible to a yard processing about 2,700 cars daily, UP's Engineering, Signal and Transportation teams carefully mapped out a plan, welded and pre-built the new master retarder, and knocked out a practice run that ensured six side booms and two track hoes had enough horsepower to lift the 283,000-pound device.

"We generally install new master retarders in three sections utilizing a crane; at Englewood, we were able to use a new bridge extension to stage heavy equipment, enabling us to save a lot of curfew time by pre-welding it and installing it in one piece," said UP's Glen Ivy, director-Signal Maintenance, Engineering. "A lot of teamwork went into making this happen by thinking outside the box."

Then, on Dec. 29, the team started the timer on its eight-hour track curfew.

"The plan spelled out every step of the way," said UP's Michael Azzarello, superintendent-Terminal Operations, Transportation. "Everyone knew their role and responsibility."

Once the old master retarder was removed in about 45 minutes, UP Engineering forces completed extensive grading work to accommodate drainage and ensure the new master retarder would be properly seated. Finally, the new device was installed in just under an hour.

"This was a huge accomplishment for the Englewood team to complete this project in close to eight hours, it's just never been done before – in the past, this would have been a

16-hour project," Azzarello said. "The entire team hung around just to see the first cars roll through. It was a really great experience knowing we are that much closer to processing 3,000 cars here."

Via RT&S 2-8-21

Second Section

Positive Train Control (PTC) could have prevented the Amtrak derailment over I-5 that killed three people in DuPont, Wash. The technology was not yet installed in 2017. It's there now, and officials are ready to use the new safeguards to once and for all pull away from the tragedy. Testing will be conducted on the track this weekend, and for the first time since the accident Amtrak trains will be seen moving over I-5. Testing is needed to re-certify the corridor. The first phase is called system integration testing, where all the railroad signals, markings and signage along the bypass are checked. Sound Transit has been running trucks on the tracks for the past week. Amtrak locomotives will run from Tacoma to Nisqually, starting out at slower speeds and eventually reaching a top speed of 79 mph. Excessive speed is what caused the derailment more than three years ago. The train approached a left-hand curve at double the posted speed. PTC is now active and operational through the bypass, and will kick in if the train is moving too fast. Engineer training will follow the locomotive testing, and Amtrak service is expected to officially return later in 2021. Rail Group News 1-15

BNSF conservation plan to curb grizzly bear track deaths in Montana. The BNSF has proposed a plan to curb the train-related deaths of grizzly bears that allows trains to kill up to 18 grizzly bears over 7 years on the tracks it operates in Montana. In return, the railway will execute a habitat conservation plan to reduce such deaths. That plan would include (1) requiring employees to more quickly clear tracks of any spilled grain, animal carcasses or other things that might draw in bears; (2) increased inspections of grain hopper cars for leaks; (3) adjust train movements time to avoid twilight hours, when bears often feed; (4) putting lights and whistles on trestles where bears cannot easily escape. (Omaha World-Herald, Jan 24, 2021)



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We're on the Web!
www.danvillejct.org

Photo of the Month



The date is May 29, 1965 and Wabash GP35 #541 heads an eastbound approaching Danville Junction. One unit had died and was left at Tilton, thus the train headed east with the single unit and some 82 cars. By the time the caboose passed me they were down to walking speed and the conductor shouted if I could give them a push. Note the reefers behind the power. .