

THE CROSS-TIE

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Railroad Quick Hits

- News updates and special reports are available online at Railfanning.org.
- We apologize for the delay in this month's *Cross-Tie*. Due to computer problems, this edition wasn't released in a timely manner. Next month's edition might likewise be delayed. Also, updates to the Railfanning.org News Wire has been slow due to the same computer problems.
- Got a news submission? Let us know. Drop the newsroom a line at news@thecrosstie.com. Also, be sure to check us out on the web at http://www.thecrosstie.com/
- Three people were killed June 28 when a Union Pacific train hauling chlorine and anhydrous ammonia crashed into a second train and derailed near San Antonio, Texas, Reuters reported. Another 20 people were hospitalized, the news agency said. Burlington Northern Santa Fe owned the second train.

SAFER CROSSINGS HIGHWAY-RAIL CROSSING FATALITIES REACH RECORD LOW IN '03



An R.J. Corman freight train passes through Clarksville, Tenn., on May 19, 2004. In 2003, there were a record low number of highway-rail grade crossing fatalities. (Todd DeFeo/*The Cross-Tie*)

WASHINGTON – The nation's rail transportation system achieved a record low number of highway-rail grade crossing fatalities in 2003, statistics from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) show.

Preliminary full-year statistics compiled by the FRA also reveal similar improvements for other key measures of industry safety, despite an increase in the overall number of train-miles operated.

In 2003, highway-rail grade crossing fatalities

declined to a record low of 324, down 9 percent from last year and a more than 47 percent since 1994. There were 862 rail-related fatalities last year, down almost 10 percent from 2002. 96 percent of those fatalities are the result of highway-rail crossing collisions or trespassing.

Also during 2003, a record low 19 railroad employees were killed. Reportable employee injuries declined to 5,948 in 2003, a decrease of 10.5 percent from 2002.

NTSB: TRACK MAINTENANCE PARTIAL CAUSE OF AMTRAK WRECK

By Todd DeFeo

A National Transportation Safety Board report has determined that track maintenance could be partially responsible for the July 29, 2002, derailment of Amtrak's *Capital Limited*, in Kensington, Md.

No one was killed in the derailment. However, 16 people, including two Amtrak crewmembers, suffered "serious injuries," the report indicates. Another 79 people, including eight crewmembers, suffered "minor injuries."

The report, released May 28, outlines three possible causes for the derailment, including maintenance.

The eastbound train, which was headed for Washington from Chicago, derailed about 1:55 p.m. The train had two locomotives and 13 cars. It was traveling at 60 mph.

"According to event recorder data, the engineer made an initial application of the train air brake system about 1,150 feet before the derailment," the report reads. "The engineer briefly increased the service brake application before placing the brake handle in emergency."

“This data shows that RCL technology has great potential to reduce train accidents and dramatically increase worker safety. As the use of RCL expands to more rail yards around the nation, its safe implementation will continue to be a top priority.”

— *Federal Railroad Administrator Allan Rutter*

FRA RCL AUDIT SHOWS FEWER ACCIDENTS, EMPLOYEE INJURIES

WASHINGTON – A preliminary report released in May indicates that the deployment of remote control locomotives in and around rail yards has resulted in significant safety benefits, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) said.

The findings are contained in the agency’s Interim Report: Safety of Remote Control Locomotives Operations. The report finds the safety record of Remote Control Locomotives (RCLs) has been positive.

Between May 1, 2003, and Nov. 30, 2003, the RCL train accident rate was found to be 13.5 percent lower than the rate for conventional switching operations over the same period

and the employee injury rate was 57.1 percent lower.

“This data shows that RCL technology has great potential to reduce train accidents and dramatically increase worker safety,” Federal Railroad Administrator Allan Rutter said. “As the use of RCL expands to more rail yards around the nation, its safe implementation will continue to be a top priority.”

To date, nearly all of the accidents or incidents involving RCL operations have been the result of human error. There have been virtually no accidents or incidents caused by RCL technology malfunctions. RCL operations are a significant departure from traditional railroading, involv-

ing the use of a radio transmitter and receiver system, rather than a person physically located in the locomotive cab, to control a train’s movement. Previously used mainly for in-plant rail operations, many railroads have begun to make wider use of the technology.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, however, questioned the data used in the FRA report.

“It is well known that self-reporting of accident/incident data by railroads has been problematic,” BLE said in a statement. “And in the case of the FRA’s ‘Preliminary Findings and Initial Accident/Injury Statistics,’ all data is based on self-reporting by railroads.”

INDIAN DERAILMENT KILLS AS MANY AS 20 PASSENGERS

By Todd DeFeo

An Indian passenger train derailed June 11, killing as many as 20 people and injuring scores more, officials said.

An *Associated Press* photograph showed a passenger coach dangling from a railway bridge. According to *CNN*, an engine and three passenger cars from the train – known as the Matsyagandha Express – fell off the 65-foot tall bridge after the locomotive jumped the tracks.

A boulder that washed onto the tracks may be to blame for the derailment, various accounts indicate.

The stretch of tracks –

known as the Konkan route – is considered by many to be one of the most scenic in the world. The wreck happened in a western state known as Maharashtra and near the city of Karanjadi, according to an *Associated Press* story.

Last year, 51 people were killed in a similar accident along the same line, *CNN* reported.

“After last year’s accident we had taken special sanction from the ministry to do a complete engineering solution to cover cuttings,” *IndiaExpress.com* quoted Managing Director of Konkan Railways B Rajaram as saying. “Everybody agreed

it will be protective. So, all cuttings above 10 meters were covered with high strength steel nets.”

The wreck, Rajaram said, was “nature humbling man.”

The death toll was expected to rise, some officials said. The exact number of passengers varied according to different news accounts.

The *Indo-Asian News Service* reported June 18 that only 14 people were killed in the derailment. As many as 100 other passengers were injured.

Rail traffic was diverted for about 36 hours before resuming.

RUNNIN' DOWN A TRAIN

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. — I was driving along Interstate 24, when I came to a familiar bridge over a rail line.

On every trip along this stretch of highway, it was tradition to gaze over and see what train might be traversing the Rutherford County landscape. Usually, there wasn't a train, just a pair of parallel rails heading towards the horizon.

But today was different. I caught a glimpse of a pair of locomotives — the lead being a BNSF C44-9W, No. 5097. "Surely, this must be rare," I thought to myself.

Regardless, I was determined to catch this one — No way was this train going to get away. Along this stretch of tracks — the former Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad — I wouldn't expect to see much more than CSX locomotives pulling mixed freights. So to me, this was an unexpected treat, albeit a welcome one.

Coming to the next exit, I veered off. Luckily, I was somewhat familiar with the town's surface streets and had once before tried to railfan in the area and had a spot in mind of where I could stop and snap a few — dozen, that is — pictures.

There was no luck on my



Todd DeFeo
Down the Tracks

previous attempts of railfanning in Murfreesboro, but I knew today would be different. Undeterred, I thought I might have met my match — a red light. I sat, none too patiently, waiting for the light to change. To my right, I could see the auto rack rail cars passing through grade crossings.

The train appeared to be moving faster than I first

thought. I began to think I might not be able to catch this train. As the light changed, I motored along, continuing to look to my right. Before long, I again spotted the lead engines and knowing my stop-off point was near, I was confident I had indeed caught my train.

I readied my camera. I crossed a bridge over the tracks and veered off to the left and stepped out of my car. With my camera poised, it dawned on me — I had time to spare. What was I worried about?

Within seconds, the train came and my shutter snapped. And finally, I had success in Murfreesboro. And on a day I wasn't anticipating railfanning. Isn't that how it always works?



(Todd DeFeo/The Cross-Tie)

SEPTA, TRANSIT FUNDING BILLS INTRODUCED IN PA.

PRNewswire

PHILADELPHIA — Pennsylvania state Sen. Stewart J. Greenleaf, R-12, has introduced legislation that would help provide dedicated and predictable funding for public transit

agencies throughout Pennsylvania. And state Rep. John J. Taylor, R-177, intended to introduce identical legislation in the near future.

The legislation would lift a \$75 million cap and dedi-

cate an additional 3.2184% of the existing sales tax to transit, generating approximately \$282 million in the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2004.

SEPTA's share would exceed \$174 million.

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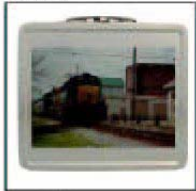
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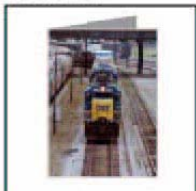
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SEATTLE APPROVES MONORAIL ALIGNMENT

SEATTLE – By an 8-1 vote, the Seattle City Council in June approved a route alignment for the Seattle Monorail Project's Green Line, moving the voter-approved transit project a step closer to becoming a reality.

"This is a huge accomplishment for the Council, for the Monorail Project and for the City," said Council President Jan Drago, who co-chaired the Monorail Committee. "I don't want to be part of another generation that fails to provide adequate mass transit in this City."

The council in the past year, Drago noted, has held 21 committee of the whole meetings and four public hearings on the monorail.

"Every major transportation project kicks up some

dust – some would call this a Saharan sandstorm," said Councilmember Nick Licata, the other co-chair of the Monorail Committee. "But once the winds die down the monorail will be a winner because it is a project the citizens of Seattle are building and we will control it."

While the SMP can begin some work on private property it has acquired as a result of this vote, it cannot begin work on public rights-of-way and will not be able to obtain other permits until the Council approves a transit way agreement, which it began consideration of today. In addition to the transit way agreement, which stipulates conditions under which the monorail can operate on or above public rights-of-way, a separate

Seattle Center agreement is needed that will spell out compensation and other considerations for use of land at the Seattle Center.

Finally, the monorail will not be allowed to go forward until final financial assurances are met after construction and operation bids are received later this summer.

Not all the Council discussion on the monorail was praise.

"It is delicious irony that we are approving the monorail on the same day we are proclaiming Science Fiction Day," said Councilmember Richard Conlin in reference to a Council proclamation alluding to this week's opening of the Science Fiction Museum. "Citizens were deeply divided on the monorail vote."