

THE CROSS-TIE

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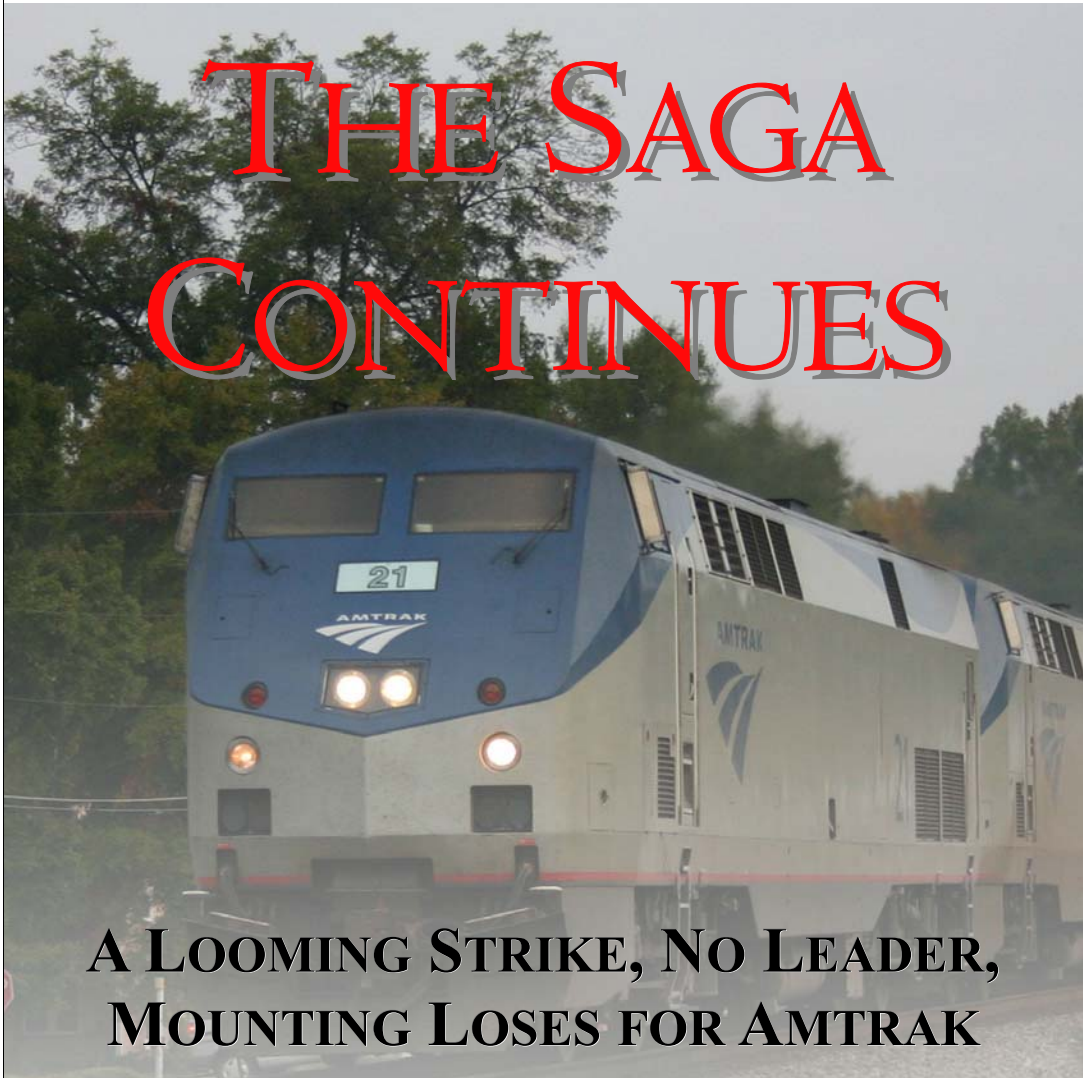
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Railroad Quick Hits

- News updates and special reports are available online at Railfanning.org.
- *The Cross-Tie* has launched an e-mail based subscription. To receive future issues of *The Cross-Tie*, drop a line to subscriptions@thecrosstie.com or log onto <http://www.thecrosstie.com/subscribe>. There is no cost to subscribe and e-mail addresses are not sold to third party vendors.
- Railfanning.org is in the process of a complete redesign. Some of the Web site's pages have a new look. Drop a line to trains@railfanning.org with your thoughts.
- We're planning some changes to *The Cross-Tie* starting with our January 2006 edition. We're planning more travel and historical features among other changes.

Inside, Page 4: Derailments Lead to More Inspections
 Inside, Page 5: Switch Safety Project Begins



THE SAGA CONTINUES

A LOOMING STRIKE, NO LEADER, MOUNTING LOSSES FOR AMTRAK

WASHINGTON — Amtrak's Board of Directors in early November voted to fire David Gunn, the railroad's president.

The action drew the criticism from the chairman of the House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Railroads.

“One of the board's re-

sponsibilities is to hire Amtrak's officers, including the President and CEO,” said Rep. Steven LaTourette, R-Ohio. “I happen to believe that Mr. Gunn was doing a reasonable job with the hand he was dealt. As matter of law, Mr. Gunn or any CEO ‘serves at the pleasure of the

(Continued on page 2)



Todd DeFeo | The Cross-Tie

A southbound Amtrak passenger train — *The Crescent* — passes through Norcross, Ga., on Oct. 12, 2003. Amtrak Employees are threatening to strike, further continuing the government-subsidized railroad's woes.

WOES CONTINUE: LOOMING STRIKE FOR A RAILROAD WITH NO LEADER

(Continued from page 1)

board.' But there are deeper issues here, whether one is a supporter or opponent of Mr. Gunn."

In a statement, Amtrak Chairman David M. Laney said Amtrak requires a "different type of leader."

"David Gunn has helped Amtrak make important operational improvements over the past three years," Laney said. "Amtrak's future now requires a different type of leader who will aggressively tackle the company's financial, management and operational challenges.

"The need to bring fundamental change to Amtrak is greater and more urgent than ever before," Laney added. "The Board approved a strategic plan in April that provides a blueprint for a stronger and more sustainable Amtrak. Now we need a leader with vision and experience to get the job done."

Gunn came out of retirement in May 2002 to lead Amtrak after a career that included running transit systems in New York and Washington. David Hughes, Chief Engineer, has been named Acting President and CEO.

A report released last week by the Gov-

ernment Accountability Office offered a scathing insight into problems at the railroad.

In mid-November, the U.S. House Subcommittee on Railroads held a hearing to discuss whether Amtrak's board was "legally functional" and if it could fire Gunn.

"The best word I can think of for this situation is pathetic," LaTourette said.

Meanwhile, the all-to-familiar threat of a strike loomed over Amtrak. On Nov. 21, commuters traveling through Union Station were greeted by rail workers warning of a possible Amtrak shutdown in their future.

Locomotive engineers and maintenance of way workers who are represented by the Teamsters Rail Conference in November passed out leaflets to hundreds of commuters using Amtrak.

"Many of the commuters were surprised to hear that Amtrak service might stop," said Kevin Hussey, a member of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWED). "The Amtrak board won't negotiate with us so a service shutdown may be our only option."

— *Staff and Wire Reports*

GAO: AMTRAK'S OPERATING LOSSES WILL ONLY INCREASE

WASHINGTON — A two-year investigation by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) into Amtrak's management and spending practices uncovered numerous procurement abuses, inadequate financial controls and questionable spending, leading GAO to predict that Amtrak's current \$1 billion annual operating loss will increase by \$400 million a year by FY 2009.

A GAO report states "while Amtrak has recently reduced costs, revenues are declining faster than costs, leading to operating losses exceeding \$1 billion annually. These losses are projected to grow by 40 percent within four years; no effective corporate-wide cost containment strategy exists to address them."

The GAO report entitled "Systemic Problems Require Actions to Improve Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Accountability" was publicly released Nov. 3.

The report also found that no-bid contracts were awarded without justification even when Amtrak's own guidelines required justification; there is no company-wide strategic plan or cost containment strategy; over \$500,000 in performance bonuses were given to Amtrak managers despite the lack of measurable performance goals; and of \$4.3 billion in costs for 2002-03, only \$357 million — or 8 percent — was directly assigned to each train line.

"Over the last two years the GAO has been working at my request on an evaluation of Amtrak's management and performance," said Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska. "As we assess the current federal role and look to the future opportunities to meet intercity passenger rail transportation needs, it is imperative that any system we adopt or continue to support operates in an efficient and businesslike manner."

To view the entire report, log onto www.thecrosstie.com.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

WRECK ROUNDUP

Here is a list of some of the railroad wrecks and derailments reported in the last month:

Nine people were flown to hospitals Nov. 26 after a train derailment caused by a landslide near Inverness, Scotland. There were 94 people on board the train, which was headed for Edinburgh, at the time of the derailment. Rail officials blamed the landslide on ground that thawed after a recent freeze.

The worker of an Elbert County, Ga., quarry who tried to remove a broken-down golf cart from beside CSX railroad tracks, dislodged the rails, leading to a Thanksgiving Day derailment, the *Athens (Ga.) Banner-Herald* newspaper reported. Although no one was hurt, three cars and three engines derailed. Some diesel fuel also spilled as a result of the derailment. Charges against the quarry worker were not immediately filed.

Sixteen people were injured Nov. 23 when a Metra commuter train slammed into trains sitting on a grade crossing, according to published reports. The train hit five vehicles sitting on the grade crossing and at least one burst into flames, according to reports. Safety signals were working at the grade crossing. The drivers of the vehicles had 54 seconds from the time the crossing gates lowered until the Metra train made it to the crossing, *The Associated Press* quoted a National Transportation Safety Board official as saying.

A Nov. 15 BNSF freight train derailment caused evacuations in eastern Oklahoma County, Okla., *KOCO-TV* reported. Seven or eight cars derailed and at least one of those cars leaked a “molten sulfur product,” the television station reported. Residents were allowed to return to the area after authorities found the source of the leak.

Trackside Profile

GAINESVILLE, GA.



Todd DeFeo | The Cross-Tie

A northbound Norfolk Southern mixed freight train passes through Gainesville, Ga., on Sept. 11, 2004.

GAINESVILLE, Ga. — May 28, 1871, spelled an important day for the city of Gainesville — it was the day that the Atlanta and Richmond Air Line Railway opened.

In 1894, the railroad came under the control of Southern Railway. The railroad served as an important link between Atlanta and Charlotte.

As the railroad grew, so to did other lines that served Gainesville and the city quickly became an important railroad hub.

On Aug. 23, 1872, the Gainesville, Jefferson and Southern Railroad was chartered. A 55-mile segment between Gainesville and Monroe opened March 8, 1884.

In 1904, the Gainesville Midland Railway took over the Gainesville, Jefferson & Southern Railroad, which had some financial troubles. In 1959, the line between Athens and Gainesville was sold to the Seaboard Air Line Railroad.

A third line — the Gainesville and Northwestern Railroad — was chartered in 1912 and initially built between Gainesville and Cleveland. The line was abandoned in the 1930s, primarily because of a decline in the lumber business.

The Gainesville and Dahlonega Railroad

was the fourth railroad to serve Gainesville. A portion of the line was apparently built in the latter half of the 1870s but soon was abandoned, according to Railga.com.

During the early 20th century, streetcars also served Gainesville.

Today, Norfolk Southern operates the former Southern Railway line through town. CSX operates the former Gainesville Midland Railroad line, though a portion of the tracks around the old train depot have been removed.

There are still two railroad depots standing in town. One of the train depots, built in 1910 and formerly Southern Railway’s building, is still used by Amtrak’s *Crescent*. The other depot, built in 1914 and formerly used by the Gainesville Midland, is now used as an arts center.

On display near the former Gainesville Midland depot is decapod steam engine No. 209 that served on the railroad. A Seaboard Air Line Railroad caboos is also on display near the decapod.

— Todd DeFeo

Each month, *The Cross-Tie* will feature a trackside location. For more information about these locations, log onto Railfanning.org and click on Trackside.

FRA: DERAILMENTS LEAD TO MORE DETAILED INSPECTIONS OF RAILROAD TRACK JOINT BARS

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Transportation will require railroads to inspect certain types of track joint bars more frequently using new uniform standards to help prevent train derailments, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta said on Nov. 4.

Noting that better inspection of continuous welded rail (CWR) joint bars is essential to improving rail safety, Mineta detailed the new joint bar inspection standards that railroads must incorporate into their track maintenance plans. Unlike conventional track that has short sections of rail bolted together, CWR consists of long continuous rails that may extend for a mile or more between joints.

Specifically, the interim final rule states that railroads must inspect CWR joint bars for visible or detectable cracks, loose or missing bolts, other damage and evidence of any rail movement.

In addition, special on-the-ground visual inspections of the joint bars must be conducted on a regular schedule. As a result of the regulation, FRA estimates that the number of detailed inspections of CWR joint bars will increase by at least 11 percent per year, Mineta added.

“Inspections are the best form of prevention against derailments,” Mineta said. “This rule will increase the number of inspections in hopes of immediately reducing the number of accidents.”

Failure of CWR joint bars was identified by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) as the probable cause of three serious train accidents, which resulted in two fatalities, more than 350 injuries, and the release of hazardous materials in Minot, N.D.; Flora, Miss.; and Pico Rivera, Calif.

“These tragic accidents did not have to happen,” said Federal Railroad Adminis-

trator Joseph H. Boardman.

“They should be a constant reminder to railroads that they simply must do a better job of inspecting and maintaining their tracks,” Boardman added.

The interim final rule which takes effect Dec. 2 also supports a primary goal of the Federal Railroad Administration’s National Rail Safety Action Plan to reduce track-related train accidents.

The Action Plan also targets the most frequent, highest risk causes of accidents; better focuses the inspection and enforcement resources of the Federal Railroad Administration; and accelerates research efforts that have the potential to mitigate the largest risks.

In addition, the FRA’s regulation addresses four safety recommendations issued by the NTSB following their investigation of the three wrecks.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

RAILROADS’ ‘HOLIDAY’ TRAINS SPREAD CHRISTMAS JOY

KINGSPORT, Tenn. — Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter Naomi Judd was among the guests on board with Santa Claus for the 63rd annual CSX Transportation-Kingsport Area Chamber of Commerce Santa Special on Nov. 19.

“CSX is proud to carry on this more than half-century-old tradition because it’s our special way of giving back to the communities we pass through each day,” said Michael J. Ward, CSX chairman, president and CEO.

The train, filled with 15 tons of gifts secured by grocery store chain Food City, kicked off the Christmas season by traveling 110 miles through Appalachia with Santa and his helpers distributing gifts.

“The Santa Special is the

Chamber’s way of connecting with the surrounding communities,” Elaine Bodenweiser, interim executive vice president and CEO of the Kingsport Chamber.

“Kingsport merchants appreciate the opportunity to thank the communities for their business each year,” Bodenweiser added. “We also appreciate the support CSX and Food City have shown for this wonderful project.”

For 13 years, Food City, of Abingdon, Va., has solicited donations of toys, candy, clothes and money, and at least 50 employees work on the project each year. Last year, Food City received more than 160 individual contributions from across the U.S. and Canada, as well as 50 corporate donations.

Each year, one or two gradu-

ating high school seniors living along the train’s route receive a four-year, \$5,000 college scholarship. Since 1989, 20 students have been awarded scholarships.

The train traveled to 15 towns beginning in Shelby, Ky.

Meanwhile, the 2005 Canadian Pacific Railway Holiday Train similarly travels to communities raising money, food and awareness for North American food banks.

This year’s CP Holiday Train program features a revamped and more user-friendly Web site that gives supporters of the rolling food bank fundraiser and rail enthusiasts more information and more features.

CPR has also released a Holiday Train CD that officials say is intended to bring even more emphasis on the fight against

hunger. Songs from the “In Harmony with Your Community — Music of the CPR Holiday Train — 2005” were recorded by Holiday Train performers.

In Canada, the Holiday Train, with hundreds of thousands of LED Christmas lights, will stop at more than 60 cities and towns in six provinces. A second Holiday Train will visit about 40 communities in the Northeast and Midwest United States.

Since its launch in 1999, the Holiday Train program has collected close to 378 tons of food and taken in more than \$1.6 million for North American food banks. In 2004, 165 tons of food were collected and \$321,000 donated by Canadian and American residents.

— *Wire Reports*

FRA: RAILROAD SWITCH SAFETY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT BEGINS TESTING

WASHINGTON — A federally-funded test of new technology designed to prevent train accidents in dark, or non-signalized, rail territory by electronically monitoring the position of railroad switches is underway, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta announced in November.

If successful, the new technology will help reduce accidents like the recent collision involving a hazardous materials release in Graniteville, S.C., Mineta added.

“Leaving a switch in the wrong position needlessly puts communities and railroad employees at risk and is simply unacceptable,” Mineta said.

The test involves the installation of wireless communication devices at 49 switches along a 174-mile section of non-signalized BNSF Railway track between Tulsa and Avard, Okla. Train dispatchers at an operations center in Fort Worth, Texas will monitor the devices to identify when hand-

operated switches are set in the wrong position. If a switch is misaligned, the dispatcher directs a train to stop until railroad crews in the field confirm it is safe to proceed.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is contributing \$527,308 to the test. BNSF Railway is providing an additional \$472,680 for the cost of equipment.

“If successful, this technology will prevent needless accidents and make a large part of the nation’s rail network safer,” said FRA Administrator Joseph H. Boardman.

Approximately 40 percent of all mainline track is located in dark territory and carries only about 20 percent of all rail traffic. Thus far in 2005, there have been nine accidents involving misaligned switches in dark territory resulting in ten fatalities and over 600 injuries.

This project is the latest in a series of

actions taken by FRA to improve switch safety in dark territory.

In January, FRA distributed a Safety Advisory to railroads recommending ways to improve their switch operating procedures.

In May, FRA began the process to develop a federal rule addressing proper switch operation.

In October, an Emergency Order was issued directing railroads to immediately re-instruct employees on how to operate these switches and to communicate whenever a switch is operated.

The project also fulfills a major element in the FRA’s National Rail Safety Action Plan. The Action Plan targets the most frequent, highest risk causes of accidents; better focuses the inspection resources of FRA; and accelerates research efforts that have the potential to mitigate the largest risks.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

NTSB: NS TRAIN CREW FAILED TO RELINE SWITCH

WASHINGTON — The crew of a Norfolk Southern train failed to return a main line switch to the normal position after the crew completed work at an industry track in Graniteville, S.C., the National Transportation Safety Board has found.

On Jan. 6, 2005, a northbound Norfolk Southern Railway freight train (No. 192) encountered an improperly lined switch that diverted the train from the main line onto an industry track where it struck an unoccupied, parked train (P22).

The collision derailed both locomotives and 16 of the 42 freight cars of train 192 as well as the locomotive and one of two cars of train P22. Among the derailed cars from train 192 were three tank cars containing chlorine, one of which was

breached, releasing chlorine gas. The train engineer and eight other people died as a result of chlorine gas inhalation.

About 5,400 people within a 1-mile radius of the derailment site were evacuated for several days, many of them complaining of respiratory difficulties.

“This was a tragic chain of events that did not have to happen and unfortunately resulted in the loss of life,” Acting NTSB Chairman Mark Rosenker. “The Board can not stress enough the importance of following proper procedures and protocols, at all times, when operating these massive machines.”

The Board determined that the crew of train P22 failed to reline a switch back to the mainline after using it, leading to the subsequent and unex-

pected diversion of train 192 into an industry track where it struck train P22 and derailed. The Board also concluded that had the conductor of train P22 held a comprehensive job briefing at the industry track, as required by NS operating rules, the crew may have attended to the main line switch, and the accident may not have occurred.

Contributing to the accident was the absence of any feature that would have reminded crewmembers of the switch position. Post-accident inspections revealed that the switch was lined and locked for the industry track, as it had been when train P22 used the switch on the evening prior to the wreck.

Investigators noted there was no evidence of tampering and

no other trains used the track in the area from the time the P22 crew left until the wreck. The Board stated that contributing to the severity of the accident was the puncture of the ninth car, a tank car containing chlorine.

The chlorine gas release that occurred when the shell of the ninth car on the train was punctured by the coupler of the 11th car. Metallurgical examination of the damage on the shell around the puncture documented several impression marks on the shell that matched damage found on projecting surfaces of the coupler.

The Safety Board concluded that the chlorine gas release occurred when the coupler of the 11th car punctured the shell of the ninth car.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*



NEWS FROM THE RAILS

QUICK HITS FROM AROUND THE FREIGHT RAILROAD INDUSTRY

Report: Train Accident, Employee Injury Rates Decline

WASHINGTON — New government statistics show significant gains for railroad safety in 2005, building on an industry safety record that has improved dramatically over the past two decades, according to an American Association of Railroads news release.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) show an 11.6 percent increase in overall rail safety — as measured by the train accident rate — for the first eight months of 2005 compared with the same period last year. Employee injury rates were down 16.1 percent from the same time period in 2004 — the safest year for employees in the history of the railroad industry.

“Much of this progress can be tied to the rail industry’s investment in new technology and in employee training,” said Edward R. Hamberger, president and CEO of the Association of American Railroads. “We will continue to push for ways to make the rail network even safer for our employees and the communities we serve.”

Freight rail is by far the safest way to move goods and products across the country. Over the past 24 years, the rail industry has reduced accident rates by 63 percent and employee injury rates by 77 percent.

And the industry is currently working closely with labor and the FRA to reduce accidents caused by human error — the leading cause of train accidents.

“Railroads have been work-

ing on this safety issue for a number of months in order to reduce these human factor accidents,” said Hamberger.

“Because most train accidents occur as the result of human error, we are working to improve procedures, technologies and training on our rail network.”

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

BNSF Railway and New Mexico DOT Reach Agreement on Future Commuter Rail Line Between Belen and Trinidad PRNewswire-FirstCall

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — BNSF Railway Co. (BNSF) on Nov. 28 announced that an agreement has been reached with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) to sell the nearly 300-mile BNSF main rail line between Belen, N.M. and Trinidad, Colo.

The sale will be closed in segments for a total of \$76 million to create a commuter rail line. Under the agreement, BNSF keeps on-going freight easement rights on the line, and NMDOT also has acquired a 13-acre portion of BNSF’s Albuquerque rail yard property. The sale and commencement of service are contingent on completion of other agreements anticipated by early next year.

BNSF indicated that the majority of the proceeds from the sale will be received in 2006. In the fourth quarter of 2005, BNSF will record a non-cash loss of \$75 million, or approximately 12 cents per share. BNSF expects to record a gain

of approximately \$25 million, or 4 cents per share, in the first quarter of 2006.

— *PRNewswire*

Settlement for South Dakota Core Line Announced

PIERRE, S.D. — Gov. Mike Rounds and BNSF Railway Company (BNSF) on Nov. 28 announced a settlement has been reached for the sale of the state-owned Core railroad line to BNSF.

The state will collect approximately \$40,337,295 from BNSF for the sale of the Core Line. The proceeds will be deposited in the state’s Railroad Trust Fund. The originally agreed upon sales price of \$42.5 million was adjusted by the value of the properties sold by the state, track improvements that will be made by both BNSF and the state, as well as additional rental payments for 2005 owed by BNSF.

The final settlement of the sale is subject to dismissal of all litigation and approval by the Surface Transportation Board.

With this final agreement, both the State of South Dakota and the BNSF agree to the following railroad infrastructure improvements: BNSF will build sidings at Alpena, Redfield, and North Sioux City. The state and BNSF will improve the Wolsey interchange as well as reconstruct the interchange at Napa Junction, north of Yankton. The state will construct a siding north of Aberdeen.

The state’s investment in the infrastructure improvements benefiting railroads that will

use the Core line will be approximately \$6.5 million over the next several years.

— *PRNewswire*

Norfolk Southern Employees Talk Up Strength of Rail

NORFOLK, Va. — As Norfolk Southern Corporation approaches its 175th birthday, employees are talking up the benefits of rail transportation.

The message of a newly formed Thoroughbred Speakers Network is this: Today, the nation depends more than ever on a safe, secure and efficient rail freight network. Rail transportation has withstood the test of time.

“Back when we had a station agent in every town, communities easily identified with the railroad,” said Wick Moorman, chief executive officer. “We want to rekindle that connection by underscoring that Norfolk Southern is vital to the people and communities we serve.”

Norfolk Southern traces its beginning to Christmas Day 1830. In 2005, 175 years later, “It is an especially exciting time to be a railroader,” Moorman said.

“More and more people are realizing the benefits of shipping by rail, not only from a cost effectiveness and efficiency standpoint, but also because of our ability to mitigate highway congestion and provide a greener transportation alternative,” Moorman added. “More than ever, the railroads are a key element in our nation’s economic prosperity.”

— *PRNewswire*



NEWS FROM THE RAILS

QUICK HITS FROM AROUND THE PASSENGER RAILROAD INDUSTRY

Chicago Train Accident Attorneys Question Design of Rail Crossing

CHICAGO — Power, Rogers, and Smith, Chicago Train Accident Attorneys spoke out about the design of the railway crossing, site of the Thanksgiving eve car train crash that injured 16 people.

More than 15 cars were involved in a wreck with a Metra train, according to published reports.

"It is too easy for cars to get trapped in the crossing," said Todd A. Smith, Partner in the Chicago law firm of Power, Rogers, and Smith. "I have been to the site, and there is an unusually long area behind the stop line, and it is easy for cars to get stopped inside the crossing gates."

Smith also noted that Mark Rosenker acting chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board NTSB was quoted in the a Nov. 25 Chicago Tribune article as saying that the crossing design was unique and that since 1976, there have been 26 wrecks at the crossing, including two fatalities in 1983 and 1997.

"Clearly this is a very unusual circumstance for motorists to find themselves in," he said.

"We are advocates for the injured and we specialize in incidents like this car train accident," said Joseph A. Power Jr., founding partner of Power, Rogers, and Smith. "For example, we were recently appointed to the steering committee and we are the co-lead counsel for

those injured in the 2005 Metra train accident."

Added Smith: "For decades citizen groups have sought to eliminate grade crossings. Because of the frequent conflict between cars and trains the risk is too great. Our governmental agencies have to take action to address these dangerous situations."

— *PRNewswire*

Arlo & Friends Ridin' on the City of New Orleans

SEBASTIAN, Fla. — Arlo Guthrie and friends will travel the Amtrak City of New Orleans train for 12 days in December, performing along the way to benefit the small venues in the train's namesake city that were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

Arlo was the first to record Steve Goodman's song, "City of New Orleans" and make it a national hit. The song is based on a the Illinois Central's incarnation of the train, which predates Amtrak.

Arlo & Friends will start at The Vic Theatre in Chicago on Dec. 5 and arrive in New Orleans to perform at Tipitina's on Dec. 17. Arlo, his son Abe with his band, Xavier, and daughter Sarah Lee Guthrie and Johnny Irion, will hold seven concerts along the route.

Some of Arlo's friends will step aboard along the way, including Guy Davis, Ramsay Midwood, Kevn Kinney with Drivin' n' Cryin', John Flynn and The Burns Sisters, riding on this "southbound odyssey."

Focusing on small clubs and

venues, Arlo and friends will work with manufacturers and arrange to bring donations to New Orleans. They will help to facilitate the restoration of the musical infrastructure in New Orleans and the surrounding area. MusiCares, The Recording Academy's safety net of critical assistance for music people in times of need, will help distribute "the gear," along with Tipitina's Foundation.

"When I think of New Orleans, I think of music," Arlo said in a public note a few weeks ago. "New Orleans is the city that truly began America's contribution to the history of music worldwide. When I wonder what they might need in New Orleans to get back on their feet, the stuff that gets ruined under water, I think of all the sound boards, the cables, the lighting, the microphones, the instruments.

"I am determined to help restore all of those little places and bring the music back as soon as possible," he continued "I contacted Amtrak to help us take today's City of New Orleans from Chicago all the way down to New Orleans."

It was Arlo's hit "City of New Orleans" song that prompted Amtrak to bring back that name for the train in 1981, after a 10-year hiatus.

Amtrak's City of New Orleans runs between Chicago and New Orleans daily.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

Amtrak Cascades Achieves Record Ridership for 2005

SEATTLE — A record

623,000 passengers rode Amtrak Cascades service during fiscal year 2005, the railroad and the state of Washington announced Nov. 17.

The ridership for FY05 (ending September 30) tops the 597,161 passengers who rode Cascades trains in FY04 by 4.4 percent.

Amtrak Cascades serves the 466-mile rail corridor that includes Vancouver, BC, Bellingham, Everett, Seattle, Tacoma and Olympia-Lacey, WA, Portland, Salem, Albany and Eugene-Springfield, Ore., and nine other popular destinations.

The train continues to rank near the top of Amtrak's 42-route national system for customer satisfaction. Passengers enjoy features such as onboard movies and plug-ins for laptop computers, as well as the route's beautiful scenery and the space to get up and move around.

Regular one-way adult fares between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia, or Seattle and Portland, Oregon, start as low as \$24. Passengers may upgrade to Business Class for an additional charge and enjoy wider seats, more legroom, and priority boarding. Passengers are encouraged to purchase tickets early to obtain the lowest fares. Reservations are required.

The Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor extends 466 miles from Eugene, Ore., to Vancouver, British Columbia. Intercity service is provided in partnership with the states of Washington and Oregon.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

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Questions, comments, concerns, fears, trepidations?

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OPERATOR CITED COMMUTER DERAILMENT

WASHINGTON — The engineer of a Chicago commuter train failed to observe and comply with signal indications, leading to a 2003 train wreck, the National Transportation Safety Board has found.

At the same time, the Board again called on the Federal Railroad Administration to require positive train control systems that would prevent this type of accident in the future.

On Oct. 12, 2003, Metra train 519, from Chicago to Joliet, Ill., derailed its two locomotives and five passenger cars as it traversed a crossover on the Rock Island Line in Chicago. The train derailed at a recorded speed of 68 mph, where the maximum authorized speed was 10 mph.

Damages from the wreck exceeded \$5 million.

The Board's investigation determined that the engineer's

cumulative operating concerns — for example, trying to ascertain the location of a maintenance-of-way work crew and where his train would be crossed over from one track to another — likely diverted his attention from safety-critical tasks.

The Board determined that the probable cause of the accident was the engineer's loss of situational awareness minutes before the derailment because of his preoccupation with certain aspects of train operations that led to his failure to observe and comply with signal indications. Contributing to the wreck was the lack of a positive train control system.

As with many previous rail accidents, the Board determined that a Positive Train Control (PTC) system would have prevented the accident. PTC requires the engineer to

comply with signal indications or the train will automatically be brought to a stop.

The Board reiterated a recommendation it had made to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in 2001, to require the implementation of PTC on mainline tracks, and specifically recommended that Metra install such a system.

"How many more accidents do we have to see before the railroad industry and the FRA are convinced that PTC is needed on all mainline track in the United States?" NTSB Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker asked.

On Sept. 17, 2005, another Metra commuter train derailed close to the location of the October 2003 accident, killing two passengers. Safety recommendations for that wreck are expected to be released soon.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*