

THE CROSS-TIE

Inside, Page 2: William Huskisson: A man with a dubious railroad connection
Inside, Page 10: 2005: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly in Railroading

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GREETINGS FROM CHATTANOOGA

WHERE THE RAILROAD ROOTS RUN DEEP

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. – The Downtown Arrow ground to a halt as it approached the crossing with a major freight artery.

In the distance a Norfolk Southern mixed freight train whizzed by, not taking notice to the excursion train and its passengers waiting patiently.

(Continued on page 4)

THIS MONTH...

Here's a quick look at what happened this month in railroad history:

Jan. 7, 1830: The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad opens a 1.5-mile stretch of track in Baltimore, Md., marking the first American railroad to carry fare-paying customers.

Jan. 8, 1863: Construction begins on the Central Pacific Railroad.

Jan. 9, 1830: Construction begins on the South Carolina Canal and Rail Road in Charleston, S.C.

Jan. 27, 1830: The Lexington & Ohio Railroad is chartered.

Jan. 1, 1838: The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad receives the first ever contract to carry mail.

Jan. 28, 1852: The Memphis, Clarksville & Louisville Railroad is chartered.

Jan. 29, 1869: George Westinghouse applies for a patent for the air brake.

Jan. 1, 1983: N.J. Transit Rail Operations, Inc., is created and assumes operations of commuter rail in New Jersey from Conrail, who was ordered by Congress to its passenger operations.

Jan. 1, 1986: The Milwaukee Road merges into the Soo Line.

WILLIAM HUSKISSON AND THE DUBIOUS RAILROAD DISTINCTION

Had the events of Sept. 15, 1830, turned out a little differently, William Huskisson probably would be remembered for his political career, not for his dubious railroad connection.

But as it turns out, Huskisson's name is forever preserved in the annals of railroad's history books, not for his career as a politician but for his taking a bad step — into the path of an on-coming train and becoming the world's first ever railroad fatality.

Born in 1770, Huskisson's political resume included a stint in British Parliament.

Huskisson served as the first commissioner of Woods and Forests from 1814 until 1823. Between 1823 and 1827, he was president of the Board of Trade. For the next two years, Huskisson served as Britain's colonial secretary.

In 1827-8, he was leader of the House of Commons.

On Sept. 15, 1830, Huskisson was among the dignities attending an opening ceremony for the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, a day that was supposed to be a celebratory event.

By the end of the day, Huskisson would go down in history as the world's first railroad fatality when he was killed by George Stephenson's locomotive, *Rocket*.

During festivities for the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, Huskisson was riding in a car pulled by the locomotive, *Northumbrian*. When the train stopped near Daresbury, Huskisson stepped out and starting crossing the tracks to talk to the Duke of Wellington — why is open to some debate as Huskisson and the Duke previously had a disagreement.

He didn't however, look both ways before crossing the tracks and in the meantime, the locomotive *Rocket*, driven by Joseph Locke, approached on a parallel track.

"Everybody scrambled out of the way, and those who could got again into the first car," Charles Granville wrote of the day's happenings. "This Huskisson attempted to do, but he was slow and awkward; as he was getting in some part of the machinery of the other car struck the door of his, by which he was knocked down."

Huskisson was unable to escape from harm's way and his left leg was caught under the locomotive and crushed.

Fatally wounded, Huskisson was loaded onto a rail car and transported to Eccles, a town in Greater Manchester, where he died.

A monument was later erected at the spot where Huskisson was killed.

— Todd DeFeo

Editor's Note: History corner is a new feature to The Cross-Tie. Each month, we will write about an important person or event in the history of the railroad industry. In the left-hand column, we'll give a rundown of the major historical events that happened during the month. Tell us what you think of this new feature by e-mailing news@thecrosstie.com or by logging onto our Web site at www.thecrosstie.com.

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WRECK ROUNDUP

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

Five people were killed following a Dec. 25 East Japan Railway Co. derailment that happened during a blizzard about 180 miles north of Tokyo. In addition, at least 32 people were injured when the six-car train derailed. Investigators questioned why the train was traveling at such a high speed — as fast as 60 mph — while there were wind gusts in the area, according to published reports. The derailment comes on the heels of an April wreck that left 107 people dead. Takeshi Kakiuchi, president of West Japan Railway Co., resigned in December, taking responsibility for the April crash.

As many as 50 people were injured Dec. 20 when two passenger trains collided near the Italian town of Roccasecca, located about 80 miles south of Rome. A train traveling from Rome to Campobasso crashed into a parked train in the station at Roccasecca. The stationary train was traveling from Rome to Cassino. Crews spent some time freeing people who were trapped in the wreckage. Everyone was freed within hours of the 3:20 p.m. collision. No one was killed in the wreck, according to news reports.

A truck driver was killed Dec. 14 after an Amtrak train struck the truck he was driving, according to various published reports. The truck, according to an Associated Press report, tried to cross the tracks in front of the approaching California Zephyr. It took one-half mile for the train to stop. The crossing does not have gates. Five of the train's 119 passengers were injured in the crash. None of the injuries, according to published reports, appeared to be life threatening. The lead engine's front wheel derailed in the wreck. The Federal Railroad Administration will investigate the wreck.

Trackside Profile

CHATTANOOGA, TENN.



Todd DeFeo | The Cross-Tie

A freight train passes by the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga, Tenn., during June 2002.

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — The depot on Market Street is perhaps the only reminder of a bygone era.

But several major railroads once served the city, making it among the most important railroad towns in the southern United States.

The name “Chattanooga” comes from the Creek Indian word for “rock coming to a point,” referring to Lookout Mountain which begins in Chattanooga and stretches 88 miles through Alabama and Georgia.

The name, however, wasn't the city's first; it was previously known as Ross's Landing and Lookout City.

With the organization of Hamilton County in 1819, Ross's Landing served not only the Cherokee trade but also as a business center for the county. In 1838, city officially took the name of Chattanooga, the same year Cherokee parties left from Ross's Landing for the West on what became known as the Trail of Tears.

Over the past 170 years, Chattanooga is probably best known for its railroads.

During the Civil War, the railroad was of vital importance for bringing in not only supplies to the troops stationed within the city, but also for transporting reinforcements. Chattanooga was the destination of

the failed Andrews Raid — a Union raid aimed at destroying the Western & Atlantic Railroad that served the city.

Other major railways that met in Chattanooga include: the Memphis & Charleston; the Nashville & Chattanooga; and the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad.

The famed Chattanooga Choo Choo, of the Cincinnati Southern Railroad, first departed for Chattanooga on March 5, 1880.

The city's first major depot was erected in 1905. A year later, Southern Railway acquired the station at a cost of \$71,500.

The current station, known as Terminal Station, was completed in 1908 and dedicated on Dec. 1, 1909. New York architect Don Barber was hired by Southern Railway to design the depot.

The last passenger train, of Southern Railway, stopped at the depot on Aug. 11, 1970. A group of businessmen saved the building, and a second grand opening was held on April 11, 1973, when the station opened its doors as a hotel.

— 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.



TAKING A STEP INTO CHATTANOOGA, TAKING A STEP BACK IN TIME

(Continued from page 1)

Within minutes, the freight had passed and the Arrow's locomotive, an EMD GP7, picks up speed as the engine and its three coaches start moving again, briskly crossing the multiple freight tracks. The train navigated switches on its approach into Terminal Station.

In the distance, passenger cars sit parked at the station's platforms. But, there were no passengers waiting to board, and the cars weren't about to embark on a journey. Passenger trains have long been silent in this railroad town, but the image on this summer afternoon was an eerie glimpse back at how the busy railroad station must have once looked.

Today, the only trains serving Chattanooga's Terminal Station are those from the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum, a group of railfan's who banded together to preserve history. The museum operates excursion trains year round near the former East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia Railroad's right of way.

The museum owns forty acres, property that includes four railroad bridges and the

historic 984-foot long Missionary Ridge Tunnel. The structure, completed in 1854, was an important location during the Civil War Battle for Chattanooga. Likewise, railroads throughout city made Chattanooga a strategic location during the War Be-

tween the States.

Train lovers will marvel at not only the chance to ride aboard a vintage train, but the opportunity to examine vintage cars and locomotives up close. The museum's collection includes: steam locomotive No. 4501, built in 1911; the "Eden Isle," a 1917 office car; dining car No. 3158, built in 1924; "Clover Colony," a 1924 heavy weight Pullman once used by Marilyn Monroe; and a 1927 wooden caboose which saw service on the Florida East Coast and the Nash-

ville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis railroads.

The museum offers two different excursion trains — a local service and the Downtown Arrow. The local excursion trains takes passengers on a six-mile round trip to the East Chattanooga depot. There,

guests watch as railroad workers turn a locomotive on a vintage turntable to prepare the train for a return trip. The Downtown Arrow shuttles passengers from the museum into Terminal Station, the once bustling heart of Chattanooga.

Opened on Dec. 1, 1909, Terminal Station served passenger trains for six decades until the last departure on Aug. 11, 1970. At its heyday, 14 tracks brought 68 arriving and departing trains to and from the station every day. Once closed, the building was to fall victim to the wrecking ball. But, a year after the last train left, a group of businessmen vowed to save the depot.

And today, the station is a hotel.

The Chattanooga Choo Choo hotel, named after Glenn Miller's 1941 hit of the same name, greets visitors in a different fashion. Today, the 24-acre Choo Choo hotel offers more than 360 comfortable rooms and suites, including the 48 rooms aboard former passenger cars. A vintage 1924 trolley, which once ran the rails in New Orleans, shuttles passengers around the premises.

At the hotel, guests have plenty of opportunities to pick up souvenirs at one of the hotel's 10 retail stores. And, don't forget the food. The Chattanooga Choo Choo offers a wide selection of dining at five unique restaurants.

— Todd DeFeo

Within minutes, the freight had passed and the Arrow's locomotive, an EMD GP7, picks up speed as the engine and its three coaches start moving again, briskly crossing the multiple freight tracks. The train navigated switches on its approach into Terminal Station.



This Train is Bound for... East Chattanooga

The Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum (TVRM) stands ready to provide a ride upon its rolling time machine.

Started by a small group of local residents in 1961, TVRM was chartered as a non-profit, educational organization with one goal in mind: "Save our trains!"

After forty-plus years of hard work, the railroaders present outstanding facilities and a living, breathing link to the past. The mission was to preserve, restore and operate historic railway equipment, and TVRM delivers with a fully refurbished steam and diesel locomotives hauling carloads of satisfied passengers.

"Missionary Ridge Local" trains run daily mid-March through October and weekends only in November. TVRM's main terminal is called Grand Junction Station and is easily accessible from Interstate 75. Grand Junction offers a unique rail-

road gift shop, Depot Delicatessen, and a historical audio-visual program.

Outside can be found locomotives and passenger coaches on display, a railway exhibit car, a red caboose, and a picnic grove shaded by pine trees.

The rails used for the ride were originally placed in 1856 and include 979-foot Missionary Ridge tunnel. Southern Railway operated the line for nearly 100 years before the single-track tunnel became a bottleneck for their burgeoning freight traffic.

After building a new route to bypass the tunnel, Southern turned over title of the historic line to the fledgling railroad museum for preservation. Using volunteer manpower and what little funding they could acquire, the group rebuilt the rail line and opened it to tourist service in 1971.

The rest, as they say, is history.

TVRM has become the largest operating historic railroad in the southeast, the Official Railroad Museum for the State of Tennessee, and "Chattanooga's Trademark Attraction."

In addition to "Missionary Ridge Local" daily train rides (50-minute round trip), TVRM also operates extended "Dixie Land Excursions" on select weekends throughout the year and "Chickamauga Turn" trains on summer Saturdays to the Chickamauga, Ga.

Annual special events include "Day Out With Thomas," "Hiwassee River Rail Adventures," and "North Pole Limited" trains during various seasons.

For more information, track down TVRM on the web at www.tvrail.com, email info@tvrail.com, or write to TVRM, 4119 Cromwell Road, Chattanooga, TN 37421.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

Choo Choo Me Home!

Chattanooga's Former Union Terminal Has a New Use as a Hotel



Todd DeFeo | The Cross-Tie

Union Terminal in Chattanooga, Tenn., as it appeared on July 28, 2004. The first train departed from the terminal in 1909 and it served as a train station until 1970, when the last train pulled out. Today, the building serves as a hotel.

ABOUT THE COVER: The cover photo, courtesy of the Chattanooga Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, shows locomotive No. 610 at the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum. The locomotive, a 2-8-0, built in 1952 by Baldwin for the U.S. Army.

In 1941, the “King of Swing,” Glenn Miller, released a song composed for the film “Sun Valley Serenade.” The song reached No. 1 on the Hit Parade chart and sold more than a million copies as a single. Miller was awarded the record industry’s first gold record for the famous song, “Chattanooga Choo Choo.”

Chattanoogans, however, had been singing the praises of the railroad since December 1, 1909, when the first train arrived in Chattanooga from Cincinnati in the new Southern Railroad terminal. It was the golden age of railroads, when half the thrill of the journey was being able to travel on a train.

With departure of the first train in 1909, Chattanooga became a part of the golden age of railroads. Woodrow Wilson, Teddy Roosevelt, William Jennings Bryan and Franklin D. Roosevelt were just a few of the millions of travelers who passed through the city during the 61 years the depot was in operation.

At the height of Chattanooga’s train days, 14 tracks were in use and 68 trains arrived and departed each day. Eventually, however, railways were replaced with airplanes. The last train left Chattanooga in 1970, and the depot fell silent after six decades of use. It was boarded up and left to crumble.

In 1971, a group of investors decided to restore the depot, and after a year of renovation, the Chattanooga Choo Choo opened as an historical hotel. Wanting to ensure that the tradition of railroading would continue, coaches were purchased and converted into hotel rooms providing the elegance of yesterday with the comforts of today.

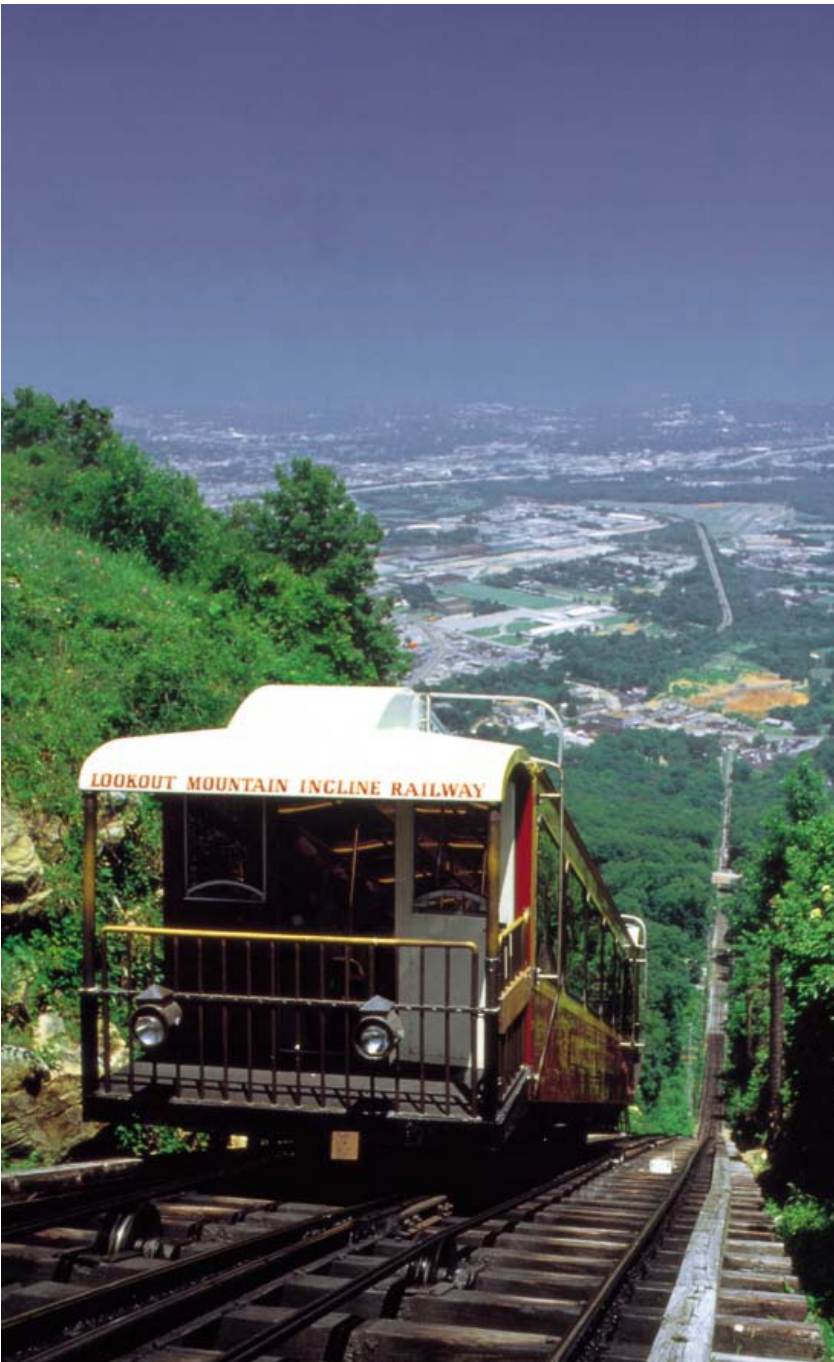
The Chattanooga Choo Choo offers more than 365 comfortable rooms and suites, including the 48 rooms aboard the restored Victorian traincars.

Visitors may tour the 24-acre complex in a 1924 New Orleans trolley, or they can stroll through the formal rose, herb and butterfly gardens.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

Riding to the Top

TAKE THE INCLINE RAILWAY TO THE TOP OF LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN



Courtesy Chattanooga Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

The incline railroad takes visitors to the top of Look out Mountain in Chattanooga, Tenn.

The thrill of riding “America’s Most Amazing Mile” has delighted guests for more than a century. As the Incline climbs historic Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga’s surrounding mountains and valleys come alive as the trolley-style railcars carry visitors cloud high.

The 72.7 percent grade of the track near the top gives the Incline the unique distinction of being the steepest passenger railway in the world.

Built in 1895 as a fast, inexpensive means of transportation, the Incline Railway provided easy access to the cool temperatures of the picturesque mountain. As a result, Lookout Mountain quickly developed into a popular summer vacation resort area during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and is still popular today.

Designated as both a National Historic Site and National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark, the Incline is an exciting trip to the top of scenic Lookout Mountain. Riders can board the railway from either of the Incline’s unique stations.

The free observation deck at this Station is the highest overlook on Lookout Mountain. On a clear day, visitors can see the Great Smoky Mountains which are some 100 miles away. While at the Lookout Mountain Station, visitors can tour the Incline’s machine room where the giant gears and cables are put into motion.

At the base of Lookout Mountain, visitors will appreciate the historic charm of the St. Elmo Station. The large covered porches, wood columns and railings, steeply pitched roofs and tri-color paint scheme are reminiscent of the original 1895 station.

The Incline Centennial Exhibits depict the history of one of Chattanooga’s most unusual landmarks. The centennial displays feature rare photographs of today’s Incline and points of interest on Lookout Mountain from the late 1800s to the present.

At the Lookout Mountain Station, the Candy Connection and the Snack Bar offer visitors the opportunity for a refreshment. Souvenirs can be found at the Gift Shops at both stations.

Visitors can enjoy the Mile High Arcade on the Lookout Mountain Station observation deck and hand-dipped confections from the Ice Cream Depot at the St. Elmo Station.

At the foot of Lookout Mountain and accessible from the Incline’s St. Elmo Station, visitors can enjoy gift shops in the historic St. Elmo neighborhood, or visit the cemetery where some of the city’s famous residents are buried.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*



NEWS FROM THE RAILS

QUICK HITS FROM AROUND THE FREIGHT RAILROAD INDUSTRY

Union Pacific Unveils \$8.5 Million Inspection Vehicle

OMAHA, Neb. — Union Pacific Railroad on Dec. 16 unveiled its new \$8.5 million state-of-the-art track inspection vehicle, EC-5, that will continue to enhance track safety with technology.

Union Pacific now owns two self-propelled track geometry inspection vehicles designed to perform a variety of electronic track inspections at speeds of up to 70 mph. A three-person crew operates the EC-5, which performs inspections six days a week.

The vehicle even has a full-size kitchen so meals can be prepared while on the go. In a year, the two geometry vehicles will test miles of track equivalent to more than five times around the earth's equator.

The EC-5 was built in Linz, Austria, by Plasser & Theurer. Ninety feet long, the vehicle has 11 computer systems that gather data from various types of lasers measuring track surface or level, rail wear and tunnel measurements. The on-board computers also use Global Positioning Satellite systems to accurately record and report the location of variances for accurate repairs.

Track maintenance crews follow the inspection vehicle and make repairs as needed when a track defect is found. The real-time data recorded by the EC-5 also is used in scheduling track improvement projects.

These two vehicles join the 22 UP-owned ultrasonic rail-flaw detection vehicles. The

ultrasonic vehicles are designed to “look” inside rail to detect flaws unseen by the human eye. An internal flaw may be caused by a poor casting or metal mixture.

— *PRNewswire-FirstCall*

FRA, Central Oregon & Pacific RR Reach Agreement

WASHINGTON — Track-caused train derailments resulting from inadequate track maintenance and inspection has led the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to enter into an agreement with the Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad, Inc. (CORP) to improve its compliance with Federal track safety standards.

The safety compliance agreement with CORP, a subsidiary of Rail America of Boca Raton, FL comes after a series of inspections conducted by FRA safety inspectors revealed ongoing failure to fully comply with federal track safety regulations. In addition, there have been at least seven derailments on CORP territory in 2004 and 2005 caused by track quality, FRA inspectors noted.

Specifically, the problems identified by FRA officials involve defective crossties, poor rail joint conditions, and wide gage where the rails have spread too far apart. Inspectors also noted that the railroad has not adequately trained its track inspectors, nor provided sufficient managerial oversight to ensure proper compliance with federal track safety rules.

“Performing sound track inspections and maintenance is

not optional,” said FRA Administrator Joseph H. Boardman. “We fully expect railroads large and small to comply with safety regulations that protect the public and safeguard railroad employees.”

The agreement requires the railroad to develop and implement a detailed track maintenance and inspection plan. The plan must specify all measures to be taken to eliminate track defects and outline the number and type of inspections that will be conducted in order to eliminate wide gage and defective rails. It also will develop and implement a program to train employees on how to make inspections for compliance with the federal track safety regulations and ensure they are qualified to assess the railroad's compliance.

During the two-year agreement, FRA will conduct periodic inspections to review whether the railroad is fulfilling its obligations, Boardman added. If at any time FRA determines that the CORP is not meeting its responsibilities, the railroad will be subject to a more stringent compliance order that would hold top railroad officials personally responsible for the railroad's failure to adhere to the terms set forth in the original agreement.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

Labor Coalition, Rail Carriers in Spat Over Negotiations

WASHINGTON — The National Carriers' Conference Committee (NCCC) on Dec. 14 refused to set new dates for bar-

gaining with the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition (RLBC), the RLBC said.

The RLBC represents seven rail labor unions whose contracts cover nearly 85,000 rail workers — or 65 percent of the carriers' employees. The NCCC represents the Class One carriers, including Union Pacific, BNSF and Norfolk Southern.

“It is premature to refuse to bargain over the serious items both sides have placed on the table,” said Freddie Simpson, President of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division. “What this round of negotiations needs is patience, hard work and willingness on both sides to listen and respond meaningfully to the other's issues.”

In response, the NCCC asked the National Mediation Board to release the railroads from mediation with the seven-member union coalition led by the Teamsters union, citing “no discernible progress” toward voluntary agreements.

— *PRNewswire*

Buttrey Selected as Temporary Chairman of STB

WASHINGTON — The Surface Transportation Board announced Dec. 20 that it has voted to elect Board Member W. Douglas Buttrey to serve as the agency's Chairman, until President George W. Bush designates a Chairman for the agency.

Chairman Roger Nober previously announced that he is leaving the Board on Jan. 3.

— *The Cross-Tie*



NEWS FROM THE RAILS

QUICK HITS FROM AROUND THE PASSENGER RAILROAD INDUSTRY

NYC MTA Workers Walk Out for Three Days, Sign New Contract with Government

NEW YORK — Subway workers broke the law in late December by participating in a strike that crippled the city's public transportation system for three days starting Dec. 22.

The workers returned to work after the strike and later signed a new contract.

MTA employees were asked to return to work for their next shift. The MTA said Dec. 22 it would need between 10 and 18 hours after workers show up to get the system up to full capacity; it was expected that buses would be running later in the evening on Dec. 22.

For three days, more than 7 million riders had no choice but to find another means of transportation as 33,000 New York City transit workers were on strike. Even though the strike has ended, the transit agency and its 33,000 workers are still fighting over wages and pension contributions.

The three-day strike is the first since an 11-day strike in 1980.

In mid-December, state Attorney General Eliot Spitzer's office obtained a court order enjoining the unions and their members from striking. Since transit workers opted to strike, Spitzer's office asked the court to hold the TWU in contempt, and to impose fines of \$1 million per day, doubling every day. The court on Dec. 21 agreed that the union was in contempt of its order, and imposed a \$1 million per day fine.

His office also went to court Dec. 21 proceeding against two smaller ATU local unions that represent about 3,000 Queens and Staten Island bus line employees, and asked the judge to hold these smaller unions in contempt and to impose fines of \$500,000 per day. A judge found these two local unions in contempt, and imposed per-day fines of \$50,000 and \$75,000 per day.

"One thing is clear: This was a big test for this city and I think it passed with flying colors," Mayor Michael Bloomberg said Dec. 22. "It wasn't easy, and certainly serious economic harm was inflicted, but we did what we had to do to keep this City running and running safely. Public safety was our first priority and it never was in jeopardy."

— *The Cross-Tie*

Metro Proposes no Fare Increase, New Buses and Rail Cars in Fiscal Year '07

WASHINGTON — Metro is proposing no fare increase as part of next fiscal year's budget for the second year in a row.

Metro General Manager-CEO Richard A. White in early December outlined the authority's \$1.8 billion fiscal 2007 operating and capital budget proposal today before the Metro Board Budget Committee, which includes new buses, rail cars for eight-car trains and other expanded services.

The more than \$1 billion operating budget would provide for a traditional 1 percent increase in bus service to relieve

overcrowding and improve on time performance. Managers also would like to fund another 2 percent increase in service in fiscal 2007, outside of the proposed spending plan.

"And still this will meet only two-thirds of the overall bus service needs," White said. "We need a major reinvestment in Metrobus."

The spending plan also would fund more than 200 new operational and police positions, and would eliminate bus routes with low ridership. Metro managers also proposed nearly \$13 million of unfunded bus, rail and other improvements, including additional money to relieve bus overcrowding and security, increasing rail service on four federal holidays and running longer trains during off peak hours and weekends year round.

The more than \$1 billion operating budget grew 7.3 percent, or \$74 million, mostly due to service expansion and inflationary costs. The revenue from ridership, parking, advertising and other areas, along with a proposed 5.9 percent, or \$26 million, increase in the subsidy contributed by D.C., Maryland and Virginia suburbs served by Metro, would balance the budget.

In the \$662 million capital budget, a majority of funds are going to new rail cars for eight-car trains, rail yard expansions, buying new buses and elevator and escalator overhauls.

Metro's Board Budget Committee will review the proposed budgets over the next six months. The full Board will

make its final recommendations on the budget next June. The fiscal 2007 budget will take effect July 1, 2006.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

TSA Teams With Railroads to Test Security Preparedness

WASHINGTON — The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is partnering with Amtrak and three commuter railroads for a three-day pilot project to test the agency's ability to assist State and local authorities by quickly deploying federal assets in response to a specific threat.

The pilot will run from Dec. 14 through Dec. 16 and will involve Federal Air Marshals, surface transportation inspectors and TSA canine teams. Commuter railroads participating in the project are the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), SEPTA and Metrolink.

There is no specific intelligence involving threats to the transportation domain at this time. However, TSA is constantly working to build upon its capabilities to meet evolving threats and more effectively manage risk.

Providing assets to WMATA and Amtrak facilities in Washington, Metrolink in Los Angeles and SEPTA in Philadelphia is one piece of a broader national pilot program being conducted this week in seven cities, in coordination with various levels of government and the private sector, according to the TSA.

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TAKING A LOOK BACK AT 2005 FOR RAILROADS

ATHENS, Ga. — For better or worse, 2005 began and ended with the railroad industry in the headlines.

On Jan. 6, two Norfolk Southern trains collided in Graniteville, S.C. The National Transportation Board later ruled 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.

Fast forward 12 months.

In December, the subway drivers in New York City went on strike, an illegal strike at that. It was eventually resolved, with the union coming out of the deal with what it wanted.

But there were more head-

lines throughout the months in between, though some didn't crack the pages of the mainstream media.

Beleaguered Amtrak decided to dump David Gunn in November.

Hurricane Katrina caused major disruptions to the railroad industry after it pummeled New Orleans on Aug. 29.

In case Amtrak's financial woes weren't enough, the railroad on April 15 suspended Acela operations after the discovery of cracks on the spokes of brake discs. They returned to service in July.

The year 2005 also marked the 25th anniversary of the Staggers Act, deregulating the industry. It was perhaps the single most influential railroad-related legislation last century.

And railroads still are not immune to terrorism and remain a possible target.

But the news in the railroad

industry wasn't all doom and gloom in 2005.

During the first half of the year, the overall number of "rail-related accidents and incidents" declined by 12 percent, the Federal Railroad Administration announced.

Among the improvements: The number of people who died in a train wreck at a grade crossing dropped by 11.7 percent, according to the FRA.

Let's hope we can continue with that trend in 2006.

In reality, in 2006, we'll probably be continuing to discuss some of the same issues, such as terrorism and what the government is doing to keep America's rails safe.

In the coming year, and years for that matter, let's hope we're not writing about what railroads did wrong after it's too late.

Todd DeFeo is editor and publisher of The Cross-Tie.



TODD DEFEO