



# *Turntable* TIMES

The Official Newsletter of the  
Roanoke Chapter, National  
Railway Historical Society, Inc.

**Volume 37, Number 5**  
**May 2005**





# Turntable TIMES

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Turntable Times is published monthly as the newsletter of the Roanoke Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Inc. Opinions and points of view expressed herein are those of the staff members of the Turntable Times and not necessarily reflect those of the members, officers or directors of the Chapter.

## *Meeting Notice*

The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will hold its next regular meeting on Thursday, May 19, 2005 at 7:30 pm. PLEASE NOTE: Our meeting location will be at the Link Museum located in the former N&W Passenger Station, 101 Shenandoah Avenue. Please enter on the lower level at trackside, our meetings are held in the theatre/auditorium downstairs.

Please be sure to note our weather cancellation policy below, please note, this policy also applies to Board Meetings.

Our May program will be a surprise!

## *From The Head End*

### **Cards and Flowers**

If you know of a Chapter Member who is sick, lost a loved one or has a new birth in the family, please contact Bonnie Molinary. Bonnie is responsible for Chapter cards and flowers and can be reached at 362-0273.

### **Deadline for Turntable Times**

The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Wednesday, May 18, 2005. Please send articles, information and exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

### **Meeting Cancellation Policy**

Any Chapter meeting will be considered cancelled if any of the following conditions are due to weather: Roanoke City Schools are closed on the day of or for the day after the meeting, or Virginia Western night classes are cancelled for the night of a meeting.

### **Material for Turntable Times**

We are always in need of articles, photos or news items for the Turntable Times. Due to copyright restrictions, we cannot reprint articles from most newspapers; a condensed rewritten article crediting the source, however, is acceptable.

For those interested, a PDF of the Turntable Times is posted on the website when the issue goes to the printer, at least ten days before seeing it in the mail, check the website for last minute announcements as well.

### **Cover Photo**

The weeds are already high this spring 30 years ago when Amtrak's Mountaineer roared towards its next station stop at Roanoke. K.L. Miller Photo

## Mixed Freight - May

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

Since early April, CSX has begun a major track and roadbed renewal project that will continue until June 23rd of this year. This project covers the former Atlantic Coast Line high iron from Collier Yard in Petersburg to Rocky Mount, North Carolina. The project occurs Monday thru Thursday. It is of a magnitude that Amtrak had to adjust schedules for The Palmetto and The Carolinian. Passengers riding those trains are being bused between Richmond and Rocky Mount. The northbound Silver Star schedule has also been adjusted until June 23 Sunday thru Saturday.

Norfolk Southern has once again earned the position of America's most admired railroad according to FORTUNE Magazine's 2005 corporate reputations survey. The company scored 8.24 out of a possible 10.

Another Norfolk Southern achievement worth noting is that Norfolk Southern's chairman and chief executive officer David R. Goode was named Railroader of The Year by RAILWAY AGE magazine for 2004.

Last month I stated that anyone interested in riding the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad all the way to Frostburg had better ride this year. From information I've gathered from railfan associates whom attended a weekend of N.R.H.S. business sessions held in Cumberland, Maryland in April, if you are interested in riding the W.M.S.R. period, you had better make plans to ride this year. The odds are running like this, 70% for the biking 'n' hiking interest and 30% for the railroad. If you are interested in having the Western Maryland Scenic remain, call, write, or e-mail the Governor of Maryland. There are several issues against the railroad. A consulting firm believes that hiking and biking interest will bring far

more revenue tourist wise than train riders. There is a tunnel that the railroad now uses and the biking and hiking interest want to use. For some reason, a safe and compatible tunnel coexistence cannot be worked out. The railroad receives a subsidy from an entity and this entity wants to cease the subsidy. There is even a small group of trackside neighbors claiming that the smoke emitted by the steam locomotive makes a substantial contribution to their respiratory complications. One major ball in the railroad's behalf is this. A lot of people have a place in their hearts for trains. Like Roanoke and Altoona, Cumberland has a rich history and close relationship with the railroad. Maybe this may be the catalyst to push the odds into WMSR's favor. (Editor's note: See the article elsewhere in this issue to help save the WMSRR.)

Now for the lighter side. When it comes to practical jokes, railroaders can be real pros. Back in the 1930s on the Lehigh Valley, a locomotive engineer on a local freight noticed on his daily run during the summer a small group of young boys skinny dipping in a stream that paralleled the tracks. For those of you whom may not know what skinny dipping is it means swimming in the nude. The hogger observed the lads hop aboard his train for a short ride to another swimming spot along the stream on past runs. There was a speed restriction he had to adhere to. One day he decided to fix the free riders. The lads again hop into a boxcar completely nude. Instead of obeying the speed restriction, he speeds up just enough so they can't jump off. The train slows down to a crawl at the next town a few miles from where they wanted to disembark. The hogger and the local's crew laughed for days as they imagined how those boys made it back to their clothes on the stream bank from the middle of the little community.

## Saving the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad

by Gary Ballard

If local politicians have their way, a hiking footpath will take the place of the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. The Roanoke Chapter through the years has enjoyed the sights and sounds of this scenic tourist line. Supporters of the state supported railroad are struggling to persuade Maryland law makers in the state capitol not to abandon the operation. Supporters for a new suggested hiking path hope their arguments will win instead.

For those who love nature, the old abandoned right of way of the once mighty Western Maryland RR has turned into a popular walking and hiking trail along much of the route through the mountain country side running east from Connellsville, PA to points in Maryland. When the Baltimore and Ohio RR and the parallel Western Maryland RR was absorbed into the huge CSX system years ago, the WM became obsolete over night. The giant CSX did not need two rail lines serving identical cities. The ex-B&O tracks were kept, mainly due to in part that the larger B&O had as lightly superb track route through the mountains than the WM. Die hard fans of the WM will raise an argument over that, however.

One segment of the popular footpath has never been a reality because of the fact that actual tracks are still in place. This is the segment of the ex-WM RR between Frostburg and Cumberland, MD. This is the home of the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. From the 1990s to present day, countless numbers of the general public, including hard core railfans, have taken a ride on the beautiful train. The steam locomotive, a restored 2-8-0, has been nicknamed "Mountain Thunder" for the thundering sounds the locomotive

produces as the train climbs the front of the Allegheny Mountains.

News of the fight for the right to be there between hikers and train lovers has reached the media in the area. Much support to keep the WMSRR intact have reached lawmaker's desks in the State House in Annapolis. This is more than a local struggle over a simple train. The railroad's operation has been patronized by people from all over the U.S. Many restaurants and motels nearby have enjoyed the money that visitors to the WMSRR have spent on food and lodging. This includes money spent by an entire busload of railfans that traveled from Roanoke, VA, a five hour bus ride one way!

The state of Maryland has subsidized the train's existence during its lifetime. The state says it wishes to vacate funding of the train, as much as a quarter million dollars each year. The railroad has its servicing operations and shop on the property of CSX, the huge class 1 freight railroad. To keep things running at that location will cost approximately \$ 25 million over the next 5 years. CSX has had offers from outside concerns for the property, so the WMSRR could be asked to leave due to a better offer for the land. This alone has kept both sides involved in thorough dialogue.

Back to the hikers. Much concern of the train and people on foot sharing the 914 foot Brush Tunnel is a big topic of debate. Many say why not have the hikers go over the mountain instead? After all isn't that part of the act of hiking? The Appalachian Trail covers thousands of miles of traversing enormous mountain chains along the Eastern United States. So why is a small climb over a 900 foot tunnel such a big deal? We will have to wait for the outcome of that debate in the months to come.

To contact the WMSRR in a show of support, write:

Western Maryland Scenic Railroad  
13 Canal Street  
Cumberland, MD. 21502  
or log onto [www.wmsr.com](http://www.wmsr.com)

Meanwhile, you may show your support to keep the WMSRR intact by writing your friendly letters to the Governor's Office in Annapolis, MD. A person was hired just to handle the letters of support that are arriving daily. Let them know you've spent money in the Cumberland / Frostburg area on the dates that you rode the train. Let them know this is a good investment to keep operating. One that presents a true bit of history for the entire family to enjoy. If support for the footpath wins, the last ride onboard "Mountain Thunder" will be in December of this year.

## **Passenger Train Update**

by Gary Ballard

The future of Amtrak is once again on the chopping block up on Capitol Hill. As reported in most newspapers and on broadcast media throughout the country, President Bush has all but slashed any funding for Amtrak in the budget for 2006.

The presence of not one dollar allocated for the railroad would force the nation wide carrier to stop operations. Bankruptcy would be the final page for Amtrak. The President has said he wants reform for Amtrak through bankruptcy. Senator Hilary Clinton spoke at Union Station in Washington, last month, and said to a large crowd, "Your President wants reform for Amtrak through strangulation." A roar of applause resulted in support for the Senator's comments. Many lawmakers from various states were there to remark on the importance of having a national passenger rail system. Many a comment was made regarding how the President wishes to bring additional jobs to

America, when at the same time his desire to give the railroad zero funding would cause some 20,000 workers to loose their jobs. The senators spoke about how those people's pay checks contribute to the local communities in which they live. In regards to passengers, much was said to support them as well. Last year Amtrak continued to show higher ridership numbers. The senator from New Jersey spoke of the hundreds of trains that ply the rails in his state, stating that much of everything would come to a halt without passenger rail services. Amtrak not only provides rail service to New Jersey, but provides workers to operate the dispatch centers for New Jersey Transit trains, which use Amtrak's tracks.

The Gentleman from Minnesota then spoke on the fact that his state has only two trains a day, but has over 20 passenger stops. He went on to say that those two trains are indeed important to his many constituents, saying, " That's why I'm here today to say that those in Minnesota can't afford to loose two trains !" The Democratic group also said to the people that both parties on The Hill see the importance of having Amtrak. When it came to the asking of the states to pay for their share of having passenger trains, the lawmakers said it was unfair for Congress to implement a nation wide passenger network in 1971, and then years later ask the states to carry the bill.

In other news coming by the time you read this, Amtrak will go to an all reserved seat policy by April 25th. All trains will be reserved, that means you'll have to make a reservation to take a trip any Amtrak train. If a discount, say for seniors or a student is desired, it will have to be requested at least 3 days in advance of the trip date. Money is coming to transit systems in and around Washington, DC. Homeland security grants in the form of \$12.4 million will be given to

Virginia Rail Express, MARC and Washington's Metro system.

As released by The Associated Press, the money being given is based on several factors that determine how much is given out. Sixty percent is based on ridership. Track miles and number of stations make for 15 percent. Ten percent is based on threats, and so on. The federal funds are meant for adding extra security to the various passenger rail lines. Metro's CEO Richard White says he'd like to have another command center to back up the existing one they have. Metrobus, part of the Washington Metro network will get \$1.2 million for homeland security. This is the first grant for the bus operation. MARC nor VRE have not disclosed how they will spend the security money handed to them.

In April, TV newscasts reported on yet another child standing in the way of an Amtrak train in Maryland, this is in addition to the February fatal incident on which this writer was a crew member on. The story from April 6th, had police and neighbors telling WBAL-TV reporter John Sherman that Matthew Jackson, age 7, was playing with another 7 year old and a 4 year old along the edge of the tracks. Matthew was struck around 6:10pm as the train was traveling through the limits of the tiny town of North East, MD.

Again the topic of putting up fences to keep people from walking onto the right of way was brought up. Just like in February, in which an 11 year old was killed, fingers were pointing at Amtrak for not having a continuous fence built to keep trespassers out of harm's way. One neighbor commented that a fence is not the answer, he said, "So, they're (kids) are going to try to climb a fence. So, why have that little fence?" The locations of both incidents are in the neighboring counties of Harford and Cecil, in

northern Maryland. The last bit of the TV station's report was rather interesting to note. It remains unclear as to whether the Cecil County State's Attorney Office will charge the children's parents for leaving the kids unattended.

Last but not least, the story of a man who tried to steal a locomotive! Darius McCollum, 39, pleaded guilty in February to attempted grand larceny in which he tried to steal a Long Island Railroad engine. Local newspapers wrote of man wearing an orange reflector suit and hard hat, telling everyone in a nearby rail yard that he was a safety consultant.

According to prosecutors, Mr. McCollum went around the property asking how to operate a new type of locomotive. He then left the rail yard when LIRR employees there began asking about his identity. Officials found stolen keys in his possession, one of the keys was for the locomotive.

It appears that Mr. McCollum has an obsession with trains. The police department has it that he has been arrested 20 times for posing as a railroad employee and a motorman. He first made head lines at age 15 when he commandeered a New York subway train.

And finally... Happy railfanning out there! Remember be careful and never step onto railroad property without permission, it IS trespassing. Also, be knowledgeable of railroad policy regarding taking pictures. You may persuade a railroad cop that you are just taking pictures of trains by having a copy of a railfan magazine handy in the car to justify being there. You may be surprised that a track maintenance gang will understand why you are there by merely talking to them. They may show you a better place to stand that provides better safety for you and affords a better photo. Remember, safety first!

## Virginian Caboose No. 322

by Ken Miller

It was a strange sight indeed on Wednesday morning, April 6, 2005. Stopped alongside of Interstate 81 at mile-post 138.6 was a lowboy trailer carrying a 56 year old piece of history. Former Virginian Railway caboose No. 322. It was headed to its next home, the 9th Street Maintenance Facility. About 8 am, I meet the driver with the caboose alongside I-81 to lead him over.

The Chapter purchased the caboose from Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS.

The 322 was built by St. Louis Car Company and delivered to the Virginian on August 30, 1949. The 322 was a part of the 25 cars classified C-10, numbered 300-324 built between July 13 and November 8, 1949. The C-10s, patterned on N&W's Class CH, were Virginian's first all-steel cabooses.

Norfolk Southern donated the cab to Watauga in 1989. It had been stored for several years at Princeton W Va. before being moved to Jonesborough, Tennessee. It was never restored. The 322 acted as a storage bin for a number of parts and supplies for Watauga's other operations. The interior of the 322 remains virtually intact as it came out of service on NS.

Watauga, located on the Southern wanted a Southern Railway heritage caboose, but the 322 was what had been donated. In 2004, it was learned that a former Southern caboose was available for purchase. A series of negotiations over the next 8 months culminated in Watauga purchasing that cab for \$2,000, and Roanoke Chapter buying 322 for the same \$2,000 and both cabs being trucked to their new homes.

Why trucked? Very simple. The 322 has friction bearings, NS has a problem handling friction bearing cars and wanted to charge Roanoke Chapter a movement charge in

excess of \$11,500 for the roughly 160 mile move! It was ultimately cheaper to truck.

We had previously determined that the best way to get to our maintenance facility was via Route 419 to US 220 North at Tanglewood. The problem with the most direct route was the overhead bridges on 581 at Hershberger and beyond precluded that movement as the bridges were about 9 inches too low. Due to regulations, we could not have a high and wide load inside Roanoke City limits before 9 am.

We proceeded out Route 419 through the morning traffic attracting little more than an occasional glance. We entered the Roanoke City limits almost on the money at 9 am, exiting at Elm Avenue, it was a bit of a tight squeeze on the "traffic-calming" devices placed in the roadway, but the truck made it through fine and we arrived at our 9th Street Facility at a few minutes after 9:30.

To remove the 322 from the trailer, we hired a crane company based out of Narrows, Virginia (which will remain nameless for obvious reasons). They had arrived at 7:30 first to lift former Southern baggage car No. 128 back on its trucks on the track. The first hour moved fine, but they had come without the proper equipment, despite the fact they visited the site two weeks before and knew what they needed. The workers moved as fast as old grease in a deep freeze and had to re-rig one of the cranes as well. Finally they lifted the 128 and set it over on the trucks, then went about resetting for lifting the 322, again more slow motion movement and they finally got the 322 set on its trucks at almost 12:30. When we first set the baggage car on the ground in 1987, we also lifted and made some changes to a truck under coach 512, it took two hours total for both jobs then. Some felt the slowness in movement was an effort to run the bill higher!

So the 322 is back in Virginia, for those who want to see the 322 in her period dress, look at page 31 of the book *Virginian Railway in Color* by William G. McClure, III and Jeremy F. Plant.

Like all the St. Louis-built cars, the 322 shows rust and rot along the side sill, mostly at the ends. Some repairs have already been done, courtesy of Mr. Tim Bentley of Charlottesville, who considered buying the 322. This rot comes from the inside out, as our mechanical folks are already familiar with the N&W CH caboose. The soft, high sulphur coal N&W and VGN hauled made for fine coal dust which worked its way inside the body, accumulating in the corners. When coal dust gets damp from the moisture condensation inside the body, it is a fast rust creator. Almost 40 years of coal train service takes its toll on these and older cars.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

**The May Meeting Location will be at the O. Winston Link Museum.  
See Inside for More Details**

May 3 - Board Meeting

May 19 - Regular Meeting

June 7 - Board Meeting

June 16 - Regular Meeting

July 5 - Board Meeting

July 21 - Regular Meeting

August 2 - Board Meeting

August 18 - General Meeting

<http://community.roanoke.com/RoanokeChapterNationalRailwayHistoricalSociety>

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