



BLUE RIDGE DISPATCHER

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Gale McKinley will be back in March to present slides taken on her October/November 2018 cross-country Amtrak trip that she made with her father, Richard A. Claytor. Her show was scheduled for the February meeting, but things were unexpectedly sidetracked, and the show was postponed. Their trip began in Washington, DC, with travel to Los Angeles via New Orleans on the Crescent and Sunset Limited. The return trip was on the Southwest Chief to Chicago, concluding on the Cardinal back to Washington, DC. Photographs will include scenery, historic buildings, and various railroad related subjects encountered on the journey. Seen above is a picture of the Southwest Chief at Raton, NM.

Wednesday, March 11, 2020. 6:00 p.m.
Charley's Restaurant 707 Graves Mill Rd. Lynchburg, VA.



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Lynchburg, Virginia



**Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS
Minutes of Meeting
February 12, 2020**

President Rick Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm at Charley's Restaurant and welcomed 19 members and seven guests: George Paulson, Dona Duval, Lydia Dixon, Mary Guthrow, Dorr Tucker, Kathy Overholser and Rex McKinley. Minutes of the January meeting were distributed in the newsletter and approved as distributed. Rick thanked Tom Ledford for taking the January minutes. New BRC Treasurer Skip Hansberry provided the treasurer's report. Rick thanked Tom Dixon for the C&OHS handouts that Tom provided to all meeting attendees.

Under old business, Rick reported \$13.00 local BRC membership dues are due, as well as \$50 National dues.

Under new business Rick announced that Lynchburg Railroad Day 2020 was a "GO" after a LRD committee meeting held January 15th at Charley's Restaurant and attended by 10 members and guest. All attending wanted to see this event continue and offered to help see it succeed. Preliminary planning was begun. The next LRD committee meeting is scheduled for February 26th at Charley's. Rick briefly discussed the possibility of seeking 501c3 non-profit status for the BRC and a revision of our bylaws would be required to establish a board of directors. Currently our bylaws provide for an executive committee.

The remainder of the meeting was abruptly cancelled due to a medical emergency experienced by our National Representative, Bob Leslie.

The 50/50 drawing was completed as tickets had already been sold prior to the business meeting. 50/50 was won by a Charley's employee.

Respectfully submitted,
Rick Johnson, acting Secretary

Secretary's Note: Bob Leslie was transported to the hospital where he remained for several days while tests were being conducted. Bob is now home and doing well. The remainder of the business meeting and Gale's program is rescheduled for the March 11th meeting. I would like to thank those meeting attendees and restaurant staff that assisted Bob and the emergency personnel. I would also like to thank the remainder of our meeting attendees that remained calm, said prayers and stayed out of the way giving room to those directly assisting Bob.

-Rick

Amtrak names new Chief Executive Officer and President



WASHINGTON – Amtrak announced that it has named William J. Flynn as its next Chief Executive Officer and President. Flynn, a seasoned business leader with four decades of transportation and logistics experience, will begin his role on April 15, 2020. Flynn succeeds Richard Anderson, who joined Amtrak as CEO in July 2017. Anderson, who fulfills his three-year commitment to the company this year, will remain with Amtrak through the end of the year as a senior advisor to Flynn. Flynn, 66, has been a successful leader across multiple modes of transportation, including rail, maritime and aviation. Most recently, he served 13 years with Atlas Air Worldwide Holdings, Inc., which serves the global air freight, military charter and passenger charter markets, as President and CEO and Board Chairman. He also held senior roles with CSX Transportation, Sea-Land Services, Inc., and GeoLogistics Corp.

“Bill is the right executive to lead us into the future,” said Amtrak Board Chairman Tony Coscia. “We’ve never been stronger as a company than we are today. We are modernizing the customer experience and delivering our service to more people. Bill has a consistent track record of growing and improving complex transportation businesses. We are confident he will build upon the strong foundation of record-setting growth and improvement set by the Board, Richard and the entire Amtrak team.”

In fiscal year 2019, Amtrak set new records in ridership, revenue and earnings. In 2020, Amtrak is on pace to achieve operational breakeven for the first time in the company’s 49-year history. Additionally, Amtrak is investing billions in capital assets and is undertaking the largest fleet renewal in company history, with new high-speed Acela trains entering service on the Northeast Corridor next year.

“Amtrak’s future is incredibly bright and I’m excited to join the team,” said Flynn. “Amtrak service is vital to millions of Americans across the nation and by improving the customer experience, driving safety, and strengthening our partnership with states and other stakeholders, we can do much more for the American people. Tony, Richard and Amtrak’s dedicated employees have done an amazing job modernizing the company for the 21st Century. It’s a privilege to join them in continuing this work and advancing something as important as Amtrak’s mission.”

“I congratulate the Board on selecting Bill to lead Amtrak into its 50th year and beyond,” said Anderson. “Bill brings deep expertise across all aspects of transportation and a true passion for the customer. As the company reflights our equipment, expands our services and advances key infrastructure projects like the Gateway Program, it will require the steady leadership and relentless drive for improvement that I know Bill can provide.”

AMTRAK TAKES ACTIVE MEASURES TO MAINTAIN SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Amtrak Coronavirus Update

The safety of Amtrak's customers and employees is our top priority. We are closely monitoring the coronavirus and are taking action based on guidance from public health experts. In order to maintain a safe environment and address customer concerns and potential business impact, we are taking the following measures:

Before you travel

If you are planning your Amtrak trip:

- **Travel with confidence:** As a valued customer, we are waiving change fees on all existing or new reservations made before April 30, 2020. Simply log in to your account or go to Modify Trip on Amtrak.com, or find your reservation from your account on the home screen in the Amtrak app. If you want to cancel your reservation, call 800-USA-RAIL. A fare difference may apply to your new itinerary.
- **Minimal service impacts:** There are currently no travel restrictions on Amtrak. As we are experiencing some lower demand, we have temporarily suspended three trains that operate between New York and Washington (Trains 2401, 2402, 2403). All three of these trains have alternative services available within 30 minutes before and after their scheduled departure.
- **Take care of yourself and keep others safe:** If you are feeling ill, please stay home until feeling better.

Maintaining a safe environment

To reduce risk, we are:

- **Enhancing cleaning protocols:** We have increased the frequency of cleaning service on our trains and at our stations to multiple times a day, and in some cases, on an hourly basis. We have increased the use of disinfectants to wipe down handrails, doorknobs, handles and surfaces.
- **Increasing supplies of antibacterial products:** We have increased the quantity of sanitizers and disinfectant wipes available for customers and employees throughout our trains and stations.
- **Reinforcing good hygiene practices:** We are regularly sharing with employees and customers best practices on ways to protect against communicable diseases.

What you can do

To protect against all communicable diseases:

- **Wash hands frequently with soap and water – and for 20 seconds.** If you can't wash your hands, use hand sanitizers.
- **When sneezing or coughing, use tissues and promptly dispose of them or cover your mouth with your sleeve or elbow.**

Amtrak Statement: Coronavirus Update, 2:00 p.m. CT, Mar. 8.

At Amtrak, safety is our top priority. We have received notification from St. Louis County, Mo. that an individual who traveled on Amtrak train 303 (Chicago – St. Louis) on March 4, 2020, has tested presumptive positive for the coronavirus. We are working in close contact with public health and emergency management teams to have the best available information to be able to share with our customers and employees who might be affected. Amtrak is notifying passengers and employees who may have been on the same train, and as a precaution, we have taken the train out of service for comprehensive cleaning and disinfection, and are also working to do a thorough disinfection of the Chicago and St. Louis stations.

With homegrown ingenuity, Norfolk Southern achieves a first with innovative track-inspection technology

Norfolk, Va. - Mar 05, 2020

Norfolk Southern (NYSE: NSC) today announced that it has achieved a breakthrough in track inspection technology that will enhance railroad safety and operating efficiencies.

Combining ingenuity and innovation, the company is the first North American freight railroad to develop and deploy an autonomous track geometry measurement system that is mounted on a locomotive. In contrast, autonomous track-inspection systems commercially available today are installed on converted freight or passenger rail cars, which require an external power source to operate and occupy space on a train that could be used to move revenue-producing freight.

“With our locomotive-based system, we use an existing asset to increase the frequency of our track inspections, without adding another piece of equipment that has to be run across the railroad,” said Ed Boyle, vice president engineering. “This innovative approach enhances our safety practices by permitting us to have precise and quality track inspections done under load at track speed. With this system, Norfolk Southern will provide service safely, efficiently, and cost-effectively.”

Norfolk Southern’s track inspection group, part of the Engineering Department, developed this mold-breaking system. It provides a more robust and cost-effective way to continuously monitor track performance in near real-time. The system is mounted in a ruggedized box under a six-axle road locomotive between the snow plow and the first set of wheels. A computer that powers the system is housed inside the electrical locker in the locomotive cab.

The autonomous system supplies timely and accurate data used for track maintenance activities and capital budgeting. The system facilitates compliance with both Norfolk Southern and Federal Railroad Administration track safety standards.

As part of a pilot, Norfolk Southern is operating the autonomous system on a mainline between Norfolk, Virginia, and Portsmouth, Ohio. The route offers a comprehensive range of track and operating conditions, including straight and curved track, hilly terrain, and high-tonnage loads.

“With this innovative system, any time this locomotive is moving and pulling freight, it is testing track at the same time,” said Mike Allran, manager track inspection and development, who helped lead the initiative. “This gives us more robust data for use in predictive-modeling to determine track maintenance intervals, which enables us to maximize efficiencies that will generate significant cost savings.”

Norfolk Southern turned to defense industry firms to find commercially available components to build the system, which consists of lasers, gyros, accelerometers, and global positioning system sensors. The system can detect defects or anomalies in track geometry, including track gauge, or the distance between rails, and the elevation and curvature of track. The system transmits inspection data wirelessly to office locations, where track geometry engineers confirm potential defects and notify track maintenance personnel.

The autonomous inspection system will supplement testing done by the company’s existing fleet of manned track geometry cars and hi-rail trucks. Norfolk Southern plans to equip additional locomotives with the system and potentially upgrade its capabilities, including adding an optical system to evaluate track components such as fasteners, rail welds, and switch points.

“Our team is committed to helping Norfolk Southern achieve industry leadership in the use of advanced technologies to enhance safety, increase operating efficiencies, and better serve our customers,” Allran said. “The development and deployment of our autonomous track-inspection system is one more way we are making progress toward that goal, generating benefits for us and all our stakeholders.”



Watch this [Norfolk Southern video](#) for more information about the railroad’s innovative track-inspection system.
Ed. Note: The train pictured in the video link spent the weekend in Lynchburg Feb. 21-23.

**2020 NRHS CONVENTION
BUENA PARK, CA - KNOTT'S BERRY FARM
June 8 - 13, 2020**

The 2020 NRHS National Convention will be held from Monday, June 8th through Saturday, June 13th in southern California.

Come west on Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* trains to and from the nearest station at Fullerton. Amtrak's *Sunset Limited* and *Texas Eagle* also serve Los Angeles.

The convention hotel will be the Knott's Berry Farm hotel, located in Buena Park. The rate will be \$119.00 per night, excluding taxes. The phone number for our 2020 Convention hotel at Knott's Berry Farm hotel is 1-866-752-2444 and be sure to mention the code **NRHS** block to reserve your room.

The link to the hotel's reservation web page is:

<https://reservations.knotshotel.com/knotts/?requesttype=invBlockCode&code=NRHS&start>

Planned events include visits to the Orange Empire Museum, the Fillmore & Western Railroad, the Rail Giant Museum, the Travel Town Railroad Museum, the Los Angeles Union Station, a night photo session at the Rail Giant Museum, and a tour of the Queen Mary in Long Beach or a tour of Amtrak-California to San Diego and return.

The convention will also have Advisory Council, Board of Directors and Annual Membership meetings on Tuesday, June 9th at the hotel. Also planned is the annual Banquet at the hotel on Friday evening, June 12th.

This is the link to the convention website:

[2020 NRHS Convention](#)

The Convention website has the full 2020 NRHS Convention Registration Booklet with complete event information and a mail-in form. There is also a link on the website to place your order online.

Don't miss out - place your order now.

www.nrhs.com

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LYNCHBURG RAILROAD DAY. SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 2020.