



BLUE RIDGE DISPATCHER

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

It's still July but mark your calendar for August 12. We intend to resume our regular, monthly meetings on that date following the protocols in place. Fred Mayer is scheduled to present the program. In case you forgot, we meet at Charley's Restaurant located at 707 Graves Mill Rd. in Lynchburg. Dinner begins at 6:00 p.m. The business meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. with the program following. If anything changes, we will advise. Anxious to see everyone again.



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NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Lynchburg, Virginia



Amtrak intends to reduce service / workforce levels - Amtrak has announced its intention to reduce the frequency of its long-distance trains from daily to tri-weekly in response to the severe drop in ridership created by the COVID-19 virus beginning with the start of the 2021 fiscal year (October 1, 2020). Needless to say, the overall response has been negative, especially from passenger advocate groups. Below it a statement from the Rail Passengers Association regarding the idea. Following their statement is a link to an article that seems to indicate there is a more sinister motive behind the reductions in service.

In addition to train frequency reductions Amtrak intends to reduce costs by cutting its workforce by up to 20%. Voluntary separation packages to certain retirement-eligible employees were offered in June. (Your Editor accepted the offer. His last day on the job will be July 24.) Involuntary furloughs could follow in October.

RAIL PASSENGERS STATEMENT ON AMTRAK SERVICE REDUCTIONS - June 15, 2020

Contact: Sean Jeans-Gail, Rail Passengers Association (202-320-2723; sjeansgail@narprail.org)

WASHINGTON - Rail Passengers President and CEO Jim Mathews issued the following statement today about Amtrak's planned coronavirus-related service reductions.

"Given CEO Bill Flynn's May 25th letter to Congress, this decision is unsurprising. But the fact that it was expected doesn't make it any less disappointing, nor any less misguided than it was 22 days ago when Amtrak telegraphed its intentions and provoked congressional leaders. For that matter, it is as misguided as it was years ago when the folly of three-times-weekly service was first foisted on Amtrak and American policymakers.

Let's be clear: this is penny-wise and pound-foolish. Amtrak famously looks for 'demand signals' to tell it when to add service. Chopping back to 3X will mute any demand signal before it gets to management. The long-distance services declined the least among Amtrak's three business lines during the coronavirus-induced slowdown, and its services remain essential to the hundreds of small communities across the United States with fewer options than Philadelphia or Boston or New York City.

It's no coincidence that the worst-performing trains in Amtrak's system are the two less-than-daily long-distance services. Remaking the entire National Network to emulate this failure is no solution to a temporary -- if dramatic -- decline in ridership. Working with legislators and policymakers to find a way through is the right answer.

Moreover, Amtrak may be setting itself up for failure by losing operating slots on host railroads, losing employees it will need to restore service and possibly losing the rolling stock as well.

Congress has said unambiguously and repeatedly that it views Amtrak as a public benefit and it does not tie Amtrak's continued operation to its ability to make a profit. And this Congress has been willing to put money where its mouth is, appropriating coronavirus rescue funds for the railroad and contemplating a surface-transportation bill that would give Amtrak three times more money than it has ever had before. While Congress might well not 'support us indefinitely to run mostly empty trains,' congressional leaders have demonstrated a willingness to do so in the short-term to preserve the Network and its utility for millions of Americans who may have no other choice.

Our position remains what it was on May 25th: like many congressional leaders, Rail Passengers strongly supports the need to get Amtrak through this crisis with additional funds. Also like many congressional leaders, however, we insist that any additional funds appropriated need to buy certainty for workers and passengers alike. Daily train service must be the very minimum service level."

About the Rail Passengers Association

The Rail Passengers Association is the oldest and largest national organization speaking for the more than 40 million rail passengers in the U.S. Our mission is to improve and expand conventional intercity and regional passenger train services, support higher speed rail initiatives, increase connectivity among all forms of transportation and ensure safety for our country's trains and passengers. All of this makes communities safer, more accessible and more productive, improving the lives of everyone who lives, works and plays in towns all across America.

From Railway Age - Amtrak declared war on its riders by imposing, effective Oct. 1, 2020 (the first day of its 2021 fiscal year), service cuts on long-distance (LD) trains so severe that the national passenger train network, as we have known it for nearly 50 years, will cease to exist.

Read this compelling article at

<https://www.railwayage.com/passenger/intercity/first-in-a-series-has-amtrak-declared-war/>

National Representative's Report by Bob Leslie

The NRHS National Convention in Fullerton, CA, already moved from early June to early September has been cancelled as have the Fall Meetings which were to be held in Johnson City, TN, in October. Plans for a 2021 convention have not been announced. The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Directors and Advisory Council is April 8-11, 2021, in Raleigh, NC.

It is with great sadness that I report the death of Del Kittendorf in March. He was Chairman of the Advisory Council, National Representative for the Atlanta Chapter, a car host on the Crescent west of Atlanta, member of the Georgia Society of Ferroquinoilologists, a member of the Florida East Coast Railway Society, and a great all-around railfan and friend. He was actively pursuing an NRHS National Convention for south Florida in the next few years to include rides on the new Miami to Orlando high-speed line and an excursion behind recently overhauled US Sugar 4-6-2 #148.

Newly Revived East Broad Top Railroad to Offer First Excursions in August by M. T. Burkhart, Railfan & Railroad magazine

ORBISONIA, Pa. — Since the announcement earlier this year that the [East Broad Top had been purchased by a non-profit foundation](#), a lot of work has been done in preparation for reopening. Five switches were replaced in the yard, there's a new concrete floor in the locomotive shop, buildings are being stabilized and sections of main line track have been resurfaced. Two 2-8-2 locomotives – Baldwin 14 and 16 – have been torn down and are being inspected and hydro-tested.

In fact, enough work has been done that short train rides, pulled by a diesel locomotive, are being planned for Aug. 13-15 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of tourist trains on the East Broad Top. There will also be shop and roundhouse tours as well as streetcar rides at the neighboring [Rockhill Trolley Museum](#).

"It's amazing to see things happening," Lawrence Biemiller, an [EBT Foundation Inc.](#) board member, told Railfan & Railroad recently. "We are ahead of where we thought we would be and a lot of things are falling smoothly into place."

During the pandemic, some contract and staff work continued at a safe social distance, but large volunteer projects were postponed, including those of the [Friends of The East Broad Top](#). But with much of western and central Pennsylvania moved to the "green" recovery phase, sessions resumed June 13 with a limit of 45 participants split into multiple small groups. The Friends organization has been growing, too. Since the announcement of the railroad's rebirth, the organization has increased from about 775 members to about 1,160. The lone work session before the pandemic closed things down drew more than 60 people on a Saturday and about 40 on a Sunday.

Of the steam locomotives, superheated Mikado 16 has been found to be in the best shape and will probably be the first returned to service, said Biemiller. "It was shopped by the railroad in 1955, and according to records it ran only a handful of days in 1956." Locomotive 14, which ran into the 2000s, has also been found to be in good shape and is a likely candidate to run in the coming years.

Next up on the "to-do" list was the stabilization of the south end of the car shop, which was done by the Woodford Brothers. Repairs are also planned for the bridge at Runk Road, which was struck and damaged by a large boom truck this spring.

The 33-mile East Broad Top was built in the 1870s to bring coal out of the central Pennsylvania mines, but also carried general freight, mail and passengers. Demand for coal kept the railroad running until 1955, but it fell on hard times and filed for abandonment. In 1956, the assets of the East Broad Top Railroad & Coal Co. were purchased by Nick Kovalchick, a local salvage dealer. In 1960, the twin boroughs of Orbisonia and Rockhill Furnace approached Kovalchick about putting a locomotive on display for the towns' bicentennial. Instead, a series of excursions were run that summer. The trips were so successful that they continued for 52 years until 2011.

In early February, the deal closed on the foundation's purchase of 27 miles of track, the shop complex, locomotives and rolling stock. Regular excursions should return in 2021. Tickets for the August events will go on sale soon on the railroad's web site at eastbroadtop.com.

Cass Scenic RR extravaganza report by Wayland Moore



I made my 57th annual trip to Cass on Saturday, June 20, 2020. In celebration of West Virginia Day (Abraham Lincoln created the state of West Virginia with the stroke of a pen on June 20, 1863. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/west-virginia-enters-the-union>), Cass Scenic Railroad fired up all their operational steam locomotives in an event called "The Cass Scenic Railroad Parade of Steam!" Five steam engines were operating: a Climax and two Shays on one track and two Shays on a freight train on the adjacent track. (Details about each locomotive is provided below.)

Cynthia and I left Cass after about 90 minutes. This was before they coupled all five locomotives together, but you can see them together in the second half of the video. Find the link below.

Due to my concern about the virus I got no closer than one-third of the way over to the far side of the parking lot (Yes, I'm a basic chicken when it comes to COVID). Here's a picture of me standing on the stump on the far side of the parking lot where I spent most of the time, never closer than 15 to 20 feet from anyone else except Cynthia. I saw only four people with masks on.

With the telephoto lens and standing on the stump I could get pretty decent photographs most of the time. I was also able to get sound recordings and that was all that I expected I'd be able to get,

however, one time I did get a very faint whiff of coal smoke 🙄. For the most part they ran the trains back and forth along about a quarter-mile piece of track. What they lacked in mileage was more than made up in sights and sounds. It was a most rewarding and memorable railfanning day, for sure!

Watch! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_mFFclOFEI&feature=youtu.be

The locomotives

Climax 9: 3 Truck - 70 tons. Wearing a Mann's Creek Crosby 3 Chime Climax 9 is a class 70-3 type Climax Locomotive, and was built in 1919 by the Climax Locomotive Works of Corry PA. She was built as locomotive 6 for the Moore-Keppel & Co. She was likely the last commercially operated Climax locomotive and Cass's only logging-era climax.

Shay 2: 3 Truck - 80 tons. Wearing a Lunkenheimer 3 Chime Shay 2 is a class PC-13 type Shay Locomotive, built in 1928 by the Lima Locomotive Works. She is a "Pacific Coast" type locomotive and boasts as the only locomotive that's ever burned all types of fuel. She was built to burn wood, converted to burn oil, then converted to burn coal by Cass.

Shay 4: 3 Truck - 70 tons. Wearing a Louisville & Nashville 3 Chime - Or a Custom Built 3 Chime by Cass Legend Artie Barkley? Shay 4 is the smallest at Cass, and is a class C-70 type Shay Locomotive built in 1922 for the Birch Valley Lumber Co. She was acquired by Mower Lumber Company and is one of the originals from Cass's logging days. She was also the first locomotive used for the tourist operations at Cass.

Shay 5: 3 Truck - 80 tons. Wearing a Lunkenheimer 3 Chime Shay 5 is the oldest operating Shay in the world, Cass's oldest locomotive, and the state locomotive of West Virginia. She was built in 1905 by Lima for the original logging operation in Cass and is a C-80 type Shay locomotive.

Shay 11: 3 Truck - 90 tons. Wearing a custom-built Single Chime Hooter, Shay 11 is the second biggest Shay at Cass and is a C-90 type shay locomotive built in 1923 for Hutchinson Lumber Co in California. She's a newer member to Cass, often handling the trains to Bald Knob.

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