

*The* **SPIKE & TIE**

**March/April  
2024**

*Official newsletter of the  
Blackhawk Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society*



# **Blackhawk**

## **RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

### **Meetings**

Blackhawk holds regular meetings every month (except July and August) at **7:30 PM on the first Friday of the month** at the **Gladys Fox Museum** (also known as the “Old Congregational Church.”) The museum is at **231 East 9th Street**, on the southwest corner of 9th Street (Illinois Route 7) and Washington Street in the historic downtown district of **Lockport, Illinois**.

Doors open at 7 PM and there is FREE parking on Washington Street. If there is no wake scheduled, parking is also available in the lot of the adjacent Goodale Memorial Chapel. Meetings are open to the public and food and drink are available. Meetings feature a program from either a live presenter or material from the Blackhawk’s archives. Meetings will run to no later than 10 PM.

### **Membership**

All memberships run for the calendar year January to December. Dues go towards our meeting space, chapter publications, and supporting our preservation projects.

- **Regular Membership - \$25**  
Includes full membership in the Blackhawk Railway Historical Society, including the Spike & Tie newsletter, published six times a year, a meeting reminder mailing in the other months, a free 8' vendor table at each of our railroad swap meets that take place in January, April and October at American Legion Post 66 in Griffith, Indiana.
- **Additional Family Members - \$3**  
For immediate family members. Does not include publications or the free swap meet table.

Membership details and applications are available from Blackhawk Membership Headquarters  
(Please do not mail membership inquiries to the society's main mailing address):

**Blackhawk Railway Historical Society**  
**4644 E 9000N Rd.**  
**Manteno, IL 60950-3111**

### **Contacting us:**

- Our website: <https://www.blackhawkrailwayhistoricalsociety.org/>
- Our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BlackhawkRailwayHistorySociety>
- Our YouTube page: <http://www.youtube.com/@blackhawkrailwayhistorical6785>

All correspondence (other than membership) should be addressed to:

**Blackhawk Railway Historical Society**  
**2009 Boehme St.**  
**Lockport, IL 60441-4611**

Or E-mail us at [bbmolony@juno.com](mailto:bbmolony@juno.com)

### **Board of Directors, Appointed and Elected Officers:**

- Bill Molony - President
- Dave Daruszka - Vice-president, Program Director
- Bobbie Molony - Secretary
- Michael Riha - Treasurer, Webmaster
- Bruce Haffner - Director at Large
- John Eagan - Director at Large
- Peter Viall - Membership Chair

## SPIKE & TIE BEGINS NEW ERA

After faithfully editing and producing our bi-monthly newsletter for over two decades, Blackhawk's long-time president Bill Molony has stepped down as editor of the "Spike & Tie." As we transition, Dave Daruszka and Michael Riha will be handling the assembly of the newsletter. We will also be using this time to explore other options like electronic distribution and additional types of content.

If you have ideas, or would like help with the newsletter, please contact an officer at our monthly meeting, or E-mail us at [chgorrhistorposter@gmail.com](mailto:chgorrhistorposter@gmail.com)

## SPIKE & TIE CALENDAR FOR MARCH AND APRIL 2024

March 1: **Blackhawk Meeting**, 7:30-10 pm (doors open at 7 pm); **Gladys Fox Museum**, 231 E. 9<sup>th</sup> St. Lockport, IL; program: Michael Riha will be presenting slides from his father, John T. Riha's, collection.

March 3: **Great Midwest Train Show**, 9 am-3 pm; **DuPage County Fairgrounds**, 2015 Manchester Rd, Wheaton, IL

March 16 & 17: **Rock River Valley Train Show**, Sat. 10 am-5 pm, Sun. 10 am-3 pm; **Harlem High School**, 9229 N. Alpine Rd., Machesney Park, IL

March 23: **The All-American Railroad Show**, 9 am-5 pm; **Lyons Township High School Fieldhouse**, 100 S. Brainerd Ave., LaGrange, IL

April 5: **Blackhawk Meeting**, 7:30-10 pm (doors open at 7 pm); **Gladys Fox Museum**, 231 E. 9<sup>th</sup> St. Lockport, IL; program TBA

April 6: **Will County Model Railroad Association Swap Meet**, 9 am-1 pm; **Stone City VFW**, 124 Stone City Drive, Joliet, IL

April 6: **Will County Model Railroad Open House**, 10 am-4 pm; 2175 Oneida St, Joliet, IL

April 6: **Illinois Railway Museum "Snowflake Special"** excursion fundraiser supporting IRM's collection of CTA rapid transit cars, departs 9 am, **Forest Park CTA Blue Line station**, 711 Des Plaines Avenue, Forest Park, IL - <https://www.irm.org/in-the-news/snowflake-special-2024/>

April 7: **Great Midwest Train Show**, 9 am-3 pm; **DuPage County Fairgrounds**, 2015 Manchester Rd, Wheaton, IL

April 21: **Blackhawk Spring Railroad Swap Meet**, 10 am-2 pm; **American Legion Post 66**, 132 N. Wiggs St., Griffith, IN

April 27: **Illinois Traction Society 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Meet**, 9 am-10 pm; **Illinois Railway Museum**, 7000 Olson Road, Union, IL <https://www.illinoistractionsociety.org/Arrivals.html#AnnualMeet>

April 28: **43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Chicagoland Railroadiana Show**, 9 am-3 pm; **Elk Grove Holiday Inn**, 1000 Busse Road, Elk Grove, IL

## BLACKHAWK WANTS YOU TO GIVE A PRESENTATION!

### How long should a program be?

60 to 90 minutes in length. There is a break at midpoint during the evening for a 20 minute raffle, food and restroom break.

### Will I be compensated for my presentation?

Maybe...if the presenters have considerable travel time to get to Lockport, we will negotiate fair compensation for travel. Presenters also get a one-year complimentary Chapter membership to non-members and an optional meal at a local restaurant at the discretion of the Chapter. We will also assist with lodging information if you need it.

### What type of presentation equipment is available?

We provide a laptop computer (Windows), a digital projector and a large projection screen. Presenters may bring their own computer, but we normally run programs from flash drives or CDs provided by the presenter. We also have a Kodak 35mm Carousel slide projector available, but presenters should bring their slides in Carousel trays. We will not load slides at the meeting. Speaker audio is provided with by two handheld wireless microphones.

### How should I present my images?

Some types of presentation software, like PowerPoint, are ideal but not necessary. We can run images from your files in File Explorer, but please save all the images you wish to present in one distinct file folder.

### What sort of presentations are of interest to our members?

We are a railroad history group. If you have an idea for a presentation regarding some aspect of railroad history, we are interested. We welcome authors, producers and artists promoting their work. You are welcome to offer your work for sale to our members with no charge or fee from the Chapter. We are equally interested in programs about contemporary railroading, including representatives of the industry. We welcome programs from railfan photographers interested in showcasing their work.

### What if you're interested in presenting a program?

Contact us via E-mail at [chgorrhistorposter@gmail.com](mailto:chgorrhistorposter@gmail.com) or at a meeting with a short explanation of your idea. You can include sample visuals if you wish.

### Some tips to first time presenters:

- Practice and time your presentation.
- You will find that you have more images than you need. Reduce your image count or talk less about each image. Pick your best images and don't over focus on multiple images of the same thing.
- Write your dialogue down, your explanation for each image. A well-paced presentation will keep the audience's attention.

## **AMTRAK WANTS TO DOUBLE ITS RIDERSHIP BY 2040**

The company said this new goal builds on the ridership gains it has made since the COVID-19 pandemic. Amtrak wants to move 66 million passengers, up from a current 33 million.

CEO Stephen Gardner said the billions Amtrak is receiving from the Infrastructure and Jobs Act for new rail cars and significant safety and capacity improvements will help make the goal a reality.

“Amtrak has rebounded from the pandemic and is growing again as part of our plan to double ridership by 2040,” Gardner said. “With funding from the infrastructure bill in hand, we and our partners are transforming intercity passenger rail across the country in a big way.”

Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul are expected to see significant service and infrastructure improvements. Overall, the company said it will invest an estimated \$5.5 billion in Amtrak’s largest ever annual capital program to modernize trains, enhance stations, tunnels and bridges, and upgrade critical infrastructure; this includes the Frederick Douglass Tunnel Program and East River Tunnel Rehab Project.

D.C.’s Union Station has a nearly \$9 billion upgrade on the drawing board, which will benefit not only Amtrak but passengers on the VRE and MARC systems.

The railroad said the Union Station project, as well as a major redevelopment of New York City’s Penn Station, which sits below the iconic sports arena, Madison Square Garden, will transform rail service in the Northeast.

Amtrak also said the first of its new Acela and Amtrak Airo trains lines should be prepared for testing by the end of this year.

“Amtrak is working on two overarching objectives in 2024 — improving passenger train service for our customers and efficiently and effectively carrying out a massive major infrastructure capital program aimed to modernize and upgrade our infrastructure, stations, fleet and technology,” Amtrak President Roger Harris said. “As both a passenger rail service provider and a major construction company, we are quickly growing and evolving to deliver on both.”

The company is also selecting proposals to begin replacing Amtrak’s long-distance fleet.

Amtrak said many of the improvements it is making will focus on improving customer service, improving its food and beverage service and providing passengers with more choices and higher quality food and continuing to advance accessibility to improve services, communications, equipment, and experiences for customers with disabilities while making stations accessible through Amtrak’s Americans with Disabilities Act Stations Program.

*Adapted from WTOP*

## **AMTRAK ISSUES RFP TO REPLACE LONG-DISTANCE FLEET**

Amtrak on Dec. 22 issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to railcar manufacturers to begin the process of replacing its current Long-Distance Fleet. The multi-billion-dollar procurement will start reequipping a fleet that provides vital train service from coast to coast and is made possible through funding provided by President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Congress.

“We believe in the future of our Long-Distance service,” said Amtrak Board Chair Tony Coscia. “Amtrak’s Long-Distance network provides vital mobility and an economic link for communities around the country. A new Amtrak Long Distance fleet will help us modernize and transform the service to meet the needs of customers now and into the future.”

According to Amtrak, the new fleet will allow the company to introduce an updated product that “meets current and future market expectations, improves customer experience, reimagines onboard accessibility and mobility, improves operational efficiency, and bolsters sustainability, resiliency, and ridership.” “Procuring new equipment for our Long-Distance trains is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine our iconic routes through a modern, accessible, and sustainable fleet,” said Amtrak President Roger Harris.

The Long-Distance fleet replacement RFP is one of several Amtrak investments aimed at upgrading and enhancing the Long-Distance customer experience—including refreshing passenger car interiors, restoring stored equipment to active service and improving stations, onboard amenities, sales and support channels. These recent highlights specifically include:

- Purchasing 125 “cleaner, faster, more fuel efficient and more environmentally friendly” ALC-42 Long Distance locomotives
- Investing \$28 million for interior upgrades to 400 bi-level Superliner and 49 Viewliner cars.
- Restoring and repairing 63 idled railcars by the end of 2024.

“Designers, suppliers, and the traveling public have all been waiting for a long time for this exciting news. Issuing this RFP kicks off what will be the biggest rolling stock acquisition since the 1940s, when the New York Central turned to three manufacturers for a blockbuster order for more than 700 cars,” said Rail Passengers Association President & CEO Jim Mathews.

Amtrak Long Distance ridership grew by more than 12% across the network in FY23 (Oct. 2022-Sept. 2023), serving 3.9 million customer trips.

*Adapted from Railway Age*

## PEORIA-CHICAGO PASSENGER RAIL PROJECT TAKES NEXT STEP FORWARD

Several area community representatives attended a press conference on Dec. 7 in Peoria announcing the designation and funding in regard to the Peoria to Chicago passenger rail project. The press conference was hosted by co-chairs, Peoria Mayor Rita Ali and former United States Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, to announce the application for the Peoria-Chicago Passenger Rail Project submitted by the City of Peoria, which was selected for the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Corridor Identification Program. They were joined by representatives from Senator Dick Durbin and Senator Tammy Duckworth's offices, regional leaders, and members from the project leadership team.

The Corridor Identification and Development Program was created under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to develop passenger rail routes. The Peoria-Chicago Passenger Rail Project will receive \$500,000 to fund Step 1 of the Service Development Plan, in the Corridor Identification Program. The Service Development Plan will determine engineering and cost requirements. Mayor Ali remarked, "This effort started as a local project that grew into a regional project that became a state project and is now a federal project. This level of support and collaboration will help to achieve our goal of bringing Amtrak passenger rail to and from Peoria in the coming years. I'm very excited about this new development."

Local leaders have been involved in the project since early 2022 and have been participating in meetings regularly. The proposed route begins at Peoria and runs through LaSalle-Peru, Utica, Ottawa, Morris, and Joliet, ending at Chicago's Union Station. "The FRA Corridor Designation for Peoria, plus \$500,000 will continue the momentum to bring passenger rail service to and from Peoria and Chicago," said LaHood.

To assist in moving this project forward, a local study is currently being completed to analyze potential station locations in LaSalle-Peru, Utica, Ottawa, and Morris. NCICG (North Central Illinois Council of Governments) received an IDOT Statewide Planning and Research (SPR) grant for this study. Each of the participating communities assisted in providing a local match. This study is anticipated to be completed in the spring.

More information about the Peoria-Chicago Passenger Rail project is available on the city of Peoria website. -- <https://www.peoriagov.org/394/Peoria-Passenger-Rail>

The press conference can be viewed on the city of Peoria YouTube channel. -- <https://www.youtube.com/@cityofpeoriaty>

*Adapted from The Mendota Reporter*

## MoDOT TO STUDY POSSIBLE THIRD RIVER RUNNER TRAIN

Despite the Amtrak line between St. Louis and Kansas City losing money, state transportation officials say subsidizing a third daily train on the route could be a worthwhile investment.

The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) recently received two federal planning grants of \$500,000 each, one of which includes funding for a study of a possible third Missouri River Runner train. "What they'll enable us to do is really get to the bottom of what the potential ridership might be, what the capital costs could be," MoDOT Director Patrick McKenna told members of the House Subcommittee on Appropriations for Public Safety, Corrections, Transportation and Revenue last month.

Emily Underdown Hopkins, Washington's director of tourism, told The Missourian in October that ridership grew "immensely" when two daily River Runner trains began operating again in July 2021. "That was kind of when I think Amtrak and MoDOT realized that we were very serious about the promotion of Amtrak," she said.

Tourism representatives from several communities along the route now meet regularly with MoDOT and Amtrak about marketing opportunities for their towns and cities, and during April, May and June of 2023, foot traffic on and off the trains in Washington was 96.6 percent higher than during the same period in 2022.

McKenna acknowledged that keeping the Missouri River Runner running currently requires an operating subsidy from the state. "We understand the consternation that exists with a subsidy here," he said. He added that the study funded through the federal planning grant "will give us a lot better information about what the potential ridership is and whether or not there would need to be an operating subsidy" for a third daily train. "Most likely there would be," he said.

The Missouri River Runner may not pay for itself through ticket sales, McKenna said, but indirectly, it brings significant revenue into the state. He pointed to economic development along the route and the tourism traffic the rail line brings as examples. Subcommittee members echoed McKenna's statements about the indirect value to the state that the Amtrak line provides. "I don't mind subsidizing that if we need that," said Rep. Jim Kalberloh, R-Lowry City.

"We do finally have the new cars and engines, and they're fantastic, they really are," he said. "They're wider, they're much more comfortable, they've got all the technology, so for commuters, if they're using it, and there are bike storage racks and things, because we have a lot of people coming over from Illinois to get off with their bicycles and ride along the Katy Trail."

*Adapted from Missourian*



## **AMTRAK EXPANSION IN OHIO: WHAT COMES NEXT, AND HOW SOON MIGHT WE BE TAKING THE TRAIN TO COLUMBUS?**

Ohio State football fans won't be taking the train to Columbus this September. Not next September either, or the one after that. Maybe by September 2030, says William Murdock, executive director of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission.

Ohio was a big winner last month when the Federal Railroad Administration announced the first 69 grant recipients in a new program that is designed to expand passenger rail service throughout the United States. Four proposed routes in Ohio received initial funding, including two that travel through Cleveland -- new service linking Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati, as well as new service from Cleveland to Detroit via Toledo. Other Ohio winners include new service that would connect Chicago, Columbus and Pittsburgh, as well as expansion of an existing route linking Chicago and New York City via Cincinnati.

Amtrak has long targeted Ohio for expansion, arguing that the state is one of the most underserved in the nation by passenger rail. There are two Amtrak routes that stop in Cleveland -- the Lake Shore Limited, which connects New York City and Boston to Chicago, and the Capitol Limited, which connects Washington, D.C. to Chicago. Both eastbound and westbound trains on those routes stop in Cleveland in the dark, early-morning hours. A third Ohio route, the Cardinal, travels through southern Ohio, linking Chicago and New York via Cincinnati, but runs just three times per week. Columbus, meanwhile, is one of the largest cities in the United States without any passenger rail service.

Despite the state's early success in the first round of funding, there is no guarantee that all four Ohio projects -- or any of them -- will make it to the construction stage. Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine has been consistent in his support for expanded rail only if travel times are competitive with driving. "It can't average 34 miles an hour," DeWine said in a meeting with reporters last month. In a 2022 report, Amtrak estimated that the 3C+D route could launch with a travel time of about 5 hours and 40 minutes between Cleveland and Cincinnati. That compares to about 4 hours of drive time between the two cities.

The economic impact of the new routes is expected to be substantial. All Aboard Ohio commissioned a study last year that found the development of the 3C+D route would generate an estimated \$106 million in economic impact, primarily for the construction industry. Annual economic impact of the new route would be \$25 million to \$47 million, according to the study, which was developed by Scioto Analysis, a Columbus-based public policy firm.

*Adapted from Cleveland.com*

## **OFFICIALS CONSIDER PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE FROM LOUISVILLE TO CHICAGO**

Regional planning officials and regulators are taking initial steps towards studying the viability and potential development of passenger rail service between Louisville and Chicago -- including the potential for a stop in Columbus.

The Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency is in the process of finalizing an agreement with the Federal Railroad Administration on the terms of a \$500,000 grant awarded in December to look at potential passenger rail service between Louisville and Indianapolis.

The Louisville-based planning agency hopes to hire a consultant this spring who would guide officials through the first step of what will likely be a "multi-year effort" to determine the feasibility of passenger rail between the two cities, said Andy Rush, the agency's director of transportation.

At the same time, the Indiana Department of Transportation has been awarded a similar \$500,000 grant from the Federal Railroad Administration to look at passenger rail between Indianapolis and Chicago, said INDOT spokeswoman Cassie Bajek. Should both segments come to fruition, they would complete a roughly 300-mile route between Louisville and Chicago.

"Frankly, there's not likely to be lots of stops between Louisville and Indianapolis. That would be inefficient," he said. "But Columbus is a pretty prime location. It's more or less central, and it's the largest city between here and there."

The grant funding comes a couple years after Amtrak proposed a new passenger rail line that would connect Louisville to Chicago, with a stop in Columbus along the way.

As originally proposed, there would be four roundtrips daily from Louisville to Chicago, meaning that passenger trains would pass through Columbus eight times per day -- four times in each direction.

Currently, it is unclear how long it would take to travel from Columbus to Indianapolis, Louisville or Chicago by train should the proposed route come to fruition. Amtrak previously estimated that it would take about 5 hours, 45 minutes to travel from Louisville to Chicago and 3 hours, 35 minutes from Indianapolis to Chicago.

Right now, the speed limit on the Louisville & Indiana Railroad tracks, which run under the railroad overpass on Columbus' west side, is 49 miles per hour, considerably slower than interstate speed limits.

In the meantime, officials said the possibility of passenger rail going through the city is still more of an idea at this point than a firm plan and many questions remain.

*Adapted from The Republic (Columbus, Indiana)/Andy East*

## **PLANS FOR PASSENGER TRAIN CONNECTING SOUTHEAST AND NORTHERN MICHIGAN**

The goal of getting a passenger train that connects Southeast Michigan and Northern Michigan is one step closer to completion, as phase two of the longtime plan is now in the works.

The Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities is spearheading ‘The Northern Michigan Passenger Rail Project.

Transportation Program Director Jim Bruckbauer said it could include stops in Traverse City, Petoskey, Cadillac, Ann Arbor and possibly Detroit.

“There was an initial feasibility study that looked at lots of different route options and lots of different scenarios. And this phase two process will really outline what exactly this train service will look like,” said Bruckbauer.

The project, now in phase two, is about to launch a national search for a transportation planning firm and seek input from local communities along the proposed line.

The surveying should take between one and two years.

“It’s going to be very important that the stations are placed in the right areas. It can help revitalize downtown, like specifically like Cadillac. Being able to connect the train with buses in the community and other modalities like bikes and pathways and all of those things that make communities better,” said Thompson.

Thompson said it would benefit the community as improvements to the infrastructure continue full steam ahead.

“When you improve passenger rail, you also improve freight rail. So, it’s kind of a two for one for us, right? It’s a good thing. And it’s important to the manufacturing base here as well as tourism, to be able to move both people into the community and product in and out,” said Thompson.

*Adapted from 9and10.com/ Jodi Miesen and Jacob Johnson*

## **METRA ADOPTS NEW PASSENGER CODE OF CONDUCT**

Metra is adopting a new passenger code of conduct and for the first time ever, it can be reinforced with rider suspensions or confiscated fare cards. Suspensions can range from 10 days to one year, with repeat offenders getting more time. Metra will also maintain a database of those that violate the new protocols.

According to Metra, some of the prohibited behaviors include the following:

- Verbally or physically threatening the safety of another person/others.

- Causing or attempting to cause physical harm to another person/others.
- Sexually assaulting or attempting to sexually assault another person or persons.
- Engaging in acts of public indecency.

The new policy was adopted on Wednesday by the Metra Board of Directors. Anyone caught engaging in any of the prohibited behaviors will receive a notice from Metra Police and have a hearing date scheduled for confiscation of fare cards. Those who are in violation may also be issued a criminal citation if warranted.

Last year, a Metra train conductor was robbed at gunpoint. A company spokesperson says although Metra has not seen a dramatic increase in crime, the newly adopted passenger code of conduct serves as a safety net for Metra workers and riders.

*Adapted from FOX 32 – Chicago*

## **METRA'S CHANGES FARE STRUCTURE, CLOSES TICKET WINDOWS**

Metra made a variety of changes to its fare structure, prices, and purchase channels effective Feb. 1. Here are the highlights:

- There is a new fare structure with a variety of new fare prices, products, and rules. Fares under the new structure are set at or below pre-pandemic levels.
- February Monthly Passes are now on sale. Paper January Monthly Passes will remain valid until noon on Feb. 5.
- The 10-Ride Ticket is no longer available for purchase.
- The Regional Connect Pass is available in the Ventra app only.

Under the new structure, the number of fare zones is reduced from 10 to 4, with downtown stations assigned to Zone 1 and outlying stations assigned to Zones 2 through 4. The zones are based on a combination of distance from downtown, service patterns and ridership characteristics on each line, which vary.

Metra has closed its remaining ticket windows and repurposed some of the agents as customer service representatives. Tickets are available for purchase through the Ventra app, from new ticket vending machines that have been installed at the busiest stations, and from conductors on the trains.

Further details can be found on Metra’s website – <https://metra.com/2024FarePlan>

*Adapted from Metra.com*

## **SOUTH SHORE PROJECTS PROGRESS AS RAILROAD PREPARES TO EXPAND SERVICE**

The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District has entered 2024 with a focus on increasing South Shore Line service upon completion of the \$650 million Double Track NWI project, while dealing with potentially long-term challenges to ridership — and revenue — ensuing from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The commuter railroad expects to return to, and expand, full service in May, after two years of construction that includes busing passengers along portions of the line. South Shore officials believe the end of busing alone will help return riders to the railroad, while faster and more frequent service to and from Chicago — an increase from 43 to 57 trains per weekday — will provide a categorical boost to ridership.

Expectations are that ridership will continue to rise, particularly with new service, but railroad officials are also lobbying state leaders for a boost to the state's support of its operations.

The South Shore is currently making up revenue gaps with capital reserves. "We've always maintained a healthy cash reserve, because things happen, and so we have been using that cash reserve to offset the difference between revenue and expense the last few years," NICTD President Michael Noland said at the NICTD Board of Trustees meeting Monday. He said NICTD's planning provides for the use of capital reserves to subsidize operations through 2025.

The Double Track project, which gets its name from the addition of a second set of tracks to single-track areas between Michigan City and Gary, also includes new bridges and station replacements and upgrades along the 16-mile stretch. The work is 97% done, according to NICTD, with the return of rail service between the Dune Park and Gary Metro Center stations — now provided by bus — scheduled for April, and the start of full revenue service, including the additional trains, in May.

NICTD is also planning for the conclusion of its \$950 million West Lake Corridor project, currently scheduled for May 2025. The project extends commuter rail service from Hammond to the Munster/Dyer border at Main Street. The project is 60% done, managers reported, with major bridge placement continuing this winter. One remaining challenge, Noland said, is working out an agreement with CSX railroad to build an access road under the CSX freight line at Main Street, to provide access to the South Shore's planned parking lot on the west side of the parallel railroads.

*Adapted from NWI.com*

## **CREATE PROGRAM PARTNERS SHARE VISION FOR BUILDING THE REGION'S MOST SIGNIFICANT RAIL PROJECT**

The CREATE Program sponsored a panel discussion regarding the role the 80th Street Junction and the Belt Replacement Project will play in transforming the nation's passenger and freight rail system. This project will remove North America's largest chokepoint in the freight rail network and result in significant global, national, statewide, regional and local impacts on the supply chain and passenger rail service.

Recently, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) applied for a \$260 million federal grant from the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity Program to fund the first segment of the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (CIP) (the 80th Street Junction and Belt Junction Replacement is the largest component of the 75th Street CIP). Awarded funding will reconfigure track segments and signals at Belt Junction; add a third track to a NS line; replace and restore 14 aging bridge and viaduct structures; and implement mobility improvements on surface streets throughout the corridor.

*Adapted from CREATE press release*

## **IDOT REQUESTS FURTHER STUDIES ON CANADIAN NATIONAL'S POTENTIAL CHANNAHON INTERMODAL**

The Illinois Department of Transportation requested that the traffic study submitted by V3 Companies on behalf of Canadian National go further in providing an analysis of downstream traffic impacts. Canadian National started purchasing property near its railroad tracks west of McClindon Road and north of Route 6 in 2019, amassing around 900 acres.

The Morris Herald-News first reported on this project back in December, when both the Village of Channahon and the Village of Minooka administrators shared questions about the project, which includes how traffic gets in and out of the site, where the site is accessed from, what effects it will have on local infrastructure and roads and regional roads, and what necessary improvements need to be made in both the short and long terms.

This transportation hub could be coming as soon as 2025, but no plans are in place for further development at this time. Canadian National has not yet provided the Village of Channahon with information on any planned public information meetings, although an informational meeting is expected.

*Adapted from Morris Herald-News*



## **SPRINGFIELD RAIL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT TAKES A MAJOR BLOW**

Construction of the Hub transportation center, part of the Springfield Rail Improvement Project, will be delayed at least a year after the U.S. Department of Transportation denied a grant that would have funded completion of the project.

An unexpected blow hit the Springfield Rail Improvement Project this week when the U.S. Department of Transportation denied a \$138 million grant request necessary to complete the final portions of the project.

The denial means Springfield and Sangamon County's most significant project in years – relocating downtown rail traffic from Third Street to the 10th Street corridor – will be delayed more than a year. The project was expected to finish in 2025.

U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said in a letter to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg that because the department didn't allocate any money to SRIP this year, construction on the final usable segments and the HUB – a multi-modal transportation center – could not be completed in the next two years.

Work is continuing on underpasses at Madison, Jefferson, and Cook streets, and South Grand Avenue. City officials announced Friday that South Grand Avenue would be closed between 9th and 11th streets for eight days beginning Jan. 8 to demolish the Norfolk Southern bridge substructure.

The federal government has already provided at least \$98 million for the \$475 million project. The Illinois Department of Transportation, Sangamon County, and the city of Springfield combined have spent \$227 million on the project, so far. Another \$138.5 million was needed for the last segments, which include an overpass on North Grand Avenue and a new track along the 10th Street corridor.

In addition, the \$111 million HUB transportation center, which will be the home to Amtrak and bus service along with a parking garage, art exhibits, and dining has yet to be finished.

Sangamon County Board chairman Andy Van Meter said that as a result of USDOT not providing funding, the project will be pushed back until at least 2027. Engineers at Hanson Professional Services are reviewing how far they can stretch existing grants to keep progressing on the project, but August is the earliest new funding can be secured.

The delay will make the project more expensive, Van Meter said, estimating the price tag could increase by \$10-20 million, moving the cost close to \$500 million at completion.

*Adapted from Springfield State Journal- Register*

## **STB RULES AGAINST CN IN CHICAGO INTERCHANGE DISPUTE WITH CP**

In a long-running Chicago interchange dispute, federal regulators yesterday ruled that it's unreasonable for Canadian National to unilaterally designate the Belt Railway of Chicago's Clearing Yard as the location where it will exchange traffic with rival Canadian Pacific Kansas City. It's the second time that the Surface Transportation Board has ruled against CN's selection of Clearing Yard as its interchange with CP. CN appealed the STB's October 2020 ruling, however, and in 2021 a federal appeals court tossed the STB decision and sent the matter back to the board.

The STB said it was not reasonable for CN to shift interchange from Spaulding, Ill., to Clearing Yard while expecting CPKC to pick up the tab for switching costs. CN in 2019 had sought to shift the interchange from Spaulding to its Kirk Yard in Gary, Ind., but the railroads reached a temporary agreement designating Clearing as the interchange. In April 2020 CN asked the board to rule that CN could designate Clearing as the interchange and that CP as delivering carrier is responsible for paying BRC's switching fees. The board said it was not reasonable for CN to expect CP to pay switching fees when there's a direct interchange location available at Spaulding.

"CN's proposed designation would depart from the parties' own past practice, industry practice, and CN's prior claims regarding the benefits of removing traffic from Clearing," the board said. "It also attempts unfairly to shift significant costs associated with interchange facilities — which, under [federal law] CN is obligated to provide — to obtain a benefit for CN, while also setting a precedent that is likely to have detrimental effects on the national network."

The board said its decision "does not speak to the merits of any alternative arrangement for interchanging traffic at Clearing (e.g., one that involves a different percentage allocation of the BRC fees — a change that could affect the reasonableness of the proposed interchange location)."

*Adapted from Trains.com*

## **IOWA ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY: RAIL DEAL PUTS IOWA ON RIGHT TRACK**

Access to rail transportation is essential to Iowa's economic prosperity. Freight rail transports 40% of all long-distance freight volume for U.S. goods. Specifically, in Iowa, rail plays a critical role in moving corn, soybeans, biofuels, and manufactured goods to markets around the world.

Naturally, when there are changes with key transporters, Iowa's agricultural and business leaders ask the question, "is this change good or bad for us?"

In the case of the Canadian National Railway Company's (CN's) acquisition of the Iowa Northern Railway (IANR), the answer for Iowa rail customers is that this development is clearly good.

Under the deal, Iowans will keep all the access we have today with Iowa Northern (including interline options with Union Pacific, Canadian Pacific, and CRANDIC railroads) and have new single-line options on CN that give Iowa freight customers more choices. Choice means competition. Competition means customers will get the best deal possible.

The Iowa Northern Railway is an Iowa success story. Its roots go back well over a century, serving customers with more than 215 route miles from Manly in northern Iowa down to Cedar Rapids and Oelwein. The Sabin family has owned and operated the IANR since 2002 and shepherded the company through challenging financial and operating times to be a successful, dependable, short-line railroad serving Iowa's agricultural and manufacturing customers.

CN, a Class I railroad spanning the Atlantic to the Pacific in Canada and through the U.S. heartland to the Port of New Orleans, has operated in Iowa from the Missouri River to the Mississippi River for decades.

CN acquiring the IANR is a win-win-win: customers will have more options to move their products to market, the infrastructure owned and maintained by IANR in Iowa will have access to more capital for ongoing maintenance and improvement, and IANR's employees will gain long-term security and more opportunities for upward mobility.

CN sees the long-term opportunities that Iowa's agricultural, biofuel and manufacturing production present. They could put their capital anywhere, but they are choosing Iowa because they know that what we produce will be in demand far into the future. This transaction is as much an endorsement of Iowa's economic model as it is a recognition of the excellent condition and operational efficiency of the IANR.

*Adapted from editorial in The Gazette by Mike Ralston, president of the Iowa Association of Business and Industry*

## **IRM ACQUIRES TWO C&NW BI-LEVEL COACHES**

The Illinois Railway Museum has received delivery of two bi-level cars, also known as gallery cars, originally from the Chicago & North Western (C&NW). These two cars are coaches that operated in commuter service out of Chicago for more than four decades. Both were built by Pullman-Standard. The older of the two is Metra 7716, built in 1960 as C&NW 65, while the newer car is Metra 7734, built in 1961 as C&NW 83. The two cars were purchased from a tourist railroad in Ohio and are complete and in good condition.

The addition of these two cars brings the size of the museum's bi-level fleet to six cars, all ex-C&NW. This collection now features examples of all the major sub-types of C&NW bi-levels, including two cars from the railroad's group of 1955-vintage St. Louis Car Company bi-levels, one car from the 1956 group of "six-window" Pullman-built bi-level coaches, the first of the 1960-vintage Pullman-built cab cars, and now two of the post-1960 type of "four-window" Pullman-built bi-level coaches.

The two bi-levels arrived in Union on January 10, 2024. IRM intends to restore and repaint both of the new acquisitions to their appearance while in commuter service out of Chicago. Donations toward this restoration work are needed to fund repainting and other work.

*Adapted from Illinois Railway Museum*

## **BLACKHAWK ACCEPTS DONATION OF PHOTO ALBUM**

At our January Swap Meet in Griffith, Indiana, we accepted the donation of a photo album containing around 400 photos of railroading around Chicago, mostly in the 1940s and 50s. We are currently going through the album and are considering ways to archive and share the contents.

From time to time, we hear stories of households or historical societies that have disposed (either accidentally or intentionally) of historic railroad photographs and other materials like timetables, promotional materials, or other paperwork. Once it is thrown out, it is gone forever. Blackhawk accepts free donations of such materials and parties with such materials they want to donate can contact us through...

- Our website: <https://www.blackhawkrailwayhistoricalsociety.org/>
- Our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BlackhawkRailwayHistorySociety>
- Our E-mail address: [bbmolony@juno.com](mailto:bbmolony@juno.com)
- Or regular mail:  
**Blackhawk Railway Historical Society**  
**2009 Boehme St.**  
**Lockport, IL 60441-4611**

*By Blackhawk newsletter staff*

## THE MYSTERY OF CB&Q #14570



Every so often, we hear about a former Burlington Route wood waycar in north central Illinois that at one time belonged to Blackhawk. We are interested in unwrapping this mystery and finding out what its status is, but we can tell you this -- as much as we would like to claim it, we do not own it.

Chicago, Burlington & Quincy 14570 was a typical design wood waycar (that is what the Burlington called their "caboose") built in the 1880s. After retiring from active service, 14570, like other out-of-work cabooses, ended up in private hands. Much of the exact history is unknown to us, but the caboose eventually ended up in the town of La Moille, Illinois, located on one of the Q's many now abandoned branch lines that used to blanket rural Illinois. It sits in front of the town's 19th-century CB&Q depot, miles from any active railroad lines.

Sometime in the early 21st century, sources on the Internet started attributing ownership to "Blackhawk Chapter NRHS." We have no paperwork or any other proof of ownership. It briefly appeared for sale on an equipment broker's website, which is one of the ways it was brought to our attention. A 2014 article in the local paper has the caboose and depot being worked on by volunteers from the community. After that, the trail runs cold.

We will continue to follow up on this mystery and hope to not only find out how 14570 ended up in La Moille, but also how our name got attached to it, and finally, how well the current preservation effort has gone for the waycar and depot and even help it out, if needed.

# THE SPIKE & TIE

Blackhawk Railway Historical Society

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Having just crossed the diamonds at Joliet, a Penn Central business car brings up the rear of a Blackhawk Chapter "Bicycle Special" chartered on the Rock Island in 1974. (John Riha photo)