

NEWS AND VIEWS

Charlie G

Slight uptick in traffic.

Over the past few weeks there has been a slight uptick in traffic observed on the P&I. Mainly the two locals that come in from the CN and the BNSF have had more cars inbound than I have seen in a good while.

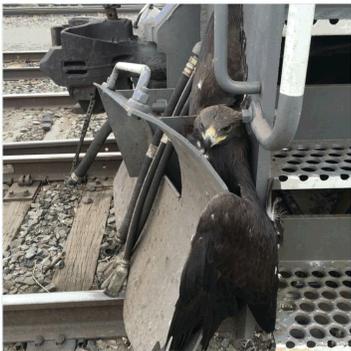
I don't have any more local news to share so I will share some stories of interest off the Trains news wire and facebook.

UP has a Missouri Pacific Moment.

Union Pacific employees in Stockton, California, made an unexpected discovery on Valentine's Day. A Golden Eagle became trapped in locomotive No. 7426's plow somewhere between Nebraska and California – and survived.

The employees called the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Game Wardens Brad Mello and Justin Cisneros came to the Stockton Yard to help. The team carefully dismantled the locomotive's plow, piece by piece. When the last piece was removed, the eagle fell into a blanket. The warden quickly placed it inside an empty dog crate for safe transport.

Union Pacific employees cut foliage from nearby trees, ensuring the eagle was comfortable as possible. The bird was treated at Tri County Wildlife Care in Jackson, California, for minimal injuries and released back into the wild this morning.



UP workers discovered an eagle stuck between the plow and the engine in California.

Norfolk Southern adds crews, reopens through route to ease congestion in South

NORFOLK, Va. — Norfolk Southern is taking steps to unclog congested areas of its system in Alabama and Georgia, where a combination of traffic growth and bad weather have gummed up yards and single-track main lines.

For the year-to-date compared to the first quarter of 2017, average train speed on NS has declined 16 percent, to 19 mph, while terminal dwell has risen 23 percent, to 29.9 hours, largely due to problems centered on the Alabama and Georgia divisions.

“Our No. 1 priority is to return velocity to the railroad,” Chief Financial Officer Cynthia Earhart told an investors' conference last week.

Norris Yard in Irondale, Ala., outside Birmingham, is plugged, forcing NS to hold trains outside the terminal for miles in each direction in sidings on the former Southern Railway main line.

NS has temporarily transferred 55 train and engine employees to Birmingham from around the system. Earhart says 44 have arrived in Birmingham and are already qualified and working, while the final 11 crew members will arrive within a week or so.

The new crews will primarily be working in the terminal, Earhart says, but some will be handling road trains.

“We need to get the terminal turning quicker,” she says. “There's a lot of traffic that we're trying to get through there.”

To ease main line congestion on the East End District between Birmingham and Atlanta, NS has returned through traffic to the Central of Georgia District. Through trains were shifted off the Birmingham-Columbus-Macon, Ga., routing in the middle of 2017, Earhart says.

Earhart could not provide a firm estimate on how long it would take NS to restore service to prior levels.

“This is weeks. It's not days for sure,” she says.

Systemwide, NS has enough crews and locomotives to handle its current traffic levels, Earhart says.

Terminal dwell at Norris Yard was 53 hours last week, well above the 31-hour average in the first quarter last year. Across the system, five other yards were operating with average dwell times above 40 hours, including Chattanooga, Tenn.; Columbus, Ohio; Elkhart, Ind.; Macon; and Sheffield, Ala.

NS is far from alone in experiencing service problems.

Last year all of the Class I railroads reported year-over-year declines in Association of American Railroads' performance measures as train speeds slowed and cars spent more time in yards, notes independent analyst Anthony Hatch of ABH Consulting.

Canadian National is adding yard and main line capacity, as well as crews and locomotives, to handle a surge in traffic that has bogged down its Western Corridor.

Union Pacific executives say they're not satisfied with lower train speeds and higher terminal dwell.

And CSX Transportation's service problems last year drew shipper complaints, regulatory scrutiny and forced some shippers to divert their freight to trucks and NS.

Florida educational farm completes rescue of 20 'circus train' cars

WILLISTON, Fla. — Now that 16 passenger cars and four flat cars that once were part of the famed Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus have a new home in north-central Florida, a Florida family plans on turning them into dormitories for at-risk and special needs youth.

On Saturday, Feb. 24, curious railfans gathered at the invitation of the Kirby Family of the Kirby Family Farm in Wil-

liston to watch as a crew with a crane moved circus cars from a Florida Northern Railroad siding to panel track at the farm. Farm owner Daryl Kirby told *Trains News Wire* before the event that he wanted as many people who want to, to see the move.

GP7u No. 55 of sister Pinsky railroad Florida Central led the train and helped crews position cars so they could be lifted onto the nearby panel track. Kirby said reusing the circus cars as dormitories would be a novel experience for the children who will someday stay in them. Kirby decline to say how the farm acquired the cars, but thanks Circus-owner Feld Entertainment, CSX Transportation, and U.S. Sugar, among others, for their cooperation and support.

The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus operated continuously from 1871 to 2017. The circus moved by train during most of its existence including to its final performance May 21, 2017.



San Antonio Museum moves SP business car, looks at steam

ELMENDORF, Texas— The San Antonio Railroad Heritage Museum has a new and significant piece in its collection: On Wednesday, the San Antonio Railroad Heritage Museum took delivery of a former Southern Pacific business car, No 127, the *Alamo*.

The Pullman car has a long history with Texas railroads. Built in 1926 for the Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio as No. 999, then was sold to the Texas & New Orleans between 1931 and 1932, it was renumbered as 127 after being merged into the Southern Pacific fleet, where it served until it was retired to private ownership in 1982.

No. 127 called Pasadena, Texas, home until 2014, at which point the property

was sold and the new owner put the business car up for sale. At that point, the museum took an interest in acquiring No. 127, and in 2017, worked out a deal with the owners to donate the car to the organization's extension at the Elmendorf Heritage and Railroad Museum. The city of Elmendorf provided a grant covering the moving costs. On Wednesday, contractors moved the car out of the greater Houston area and transported it 210 miles over the road to its new location southeast of San Antonio.

"We were rained out four times in a month, and we had to dry the ground out with lime and other agents," says Jim Lesiak, owner of Over the Top Construction, the moving contractor. "Our challenges were unstable ground, causing the jacks and cranes to fail. We also had challenges from narrow streets and poor visibility."

Lesiak also said that unique modifications made to No. 127 while it was still in service also complicated the move.

"The Southern Pacific redid some of the mechanical things that Pullman did, so we had to refabricate the dollies to support the car," he said. "This is the only car out of 22 I've hauled that needed this type of special attention."

Museum President Gary Rodriguez says that acquiring No. 127 is a step toward realizing the museum's eventual goal of offering train rides to the public.

"Our goal is to completely restore the 127 and update it with modern HEP equipment," he told *Trains News Wire*.

"The *Alamo* car will be the pride of our future fleet of equipment."

Rodriguez says the museum has also secured the donation of a GE 70-ton switcher from the Ash Grove industrial plant in Midlothian, Texas. While it is being prepared to move to the museum, the staff is raising funds to cover repairs on the bearings on one axle.

"These units were nicknamed "scooters," and had top speeds of 60 miles per hour," Rodriguez says, "It'll definitely work for train rides."

The museum is also raising money to fund a functional restoration of Southern Pacific 794, a 1916 Alco currently on display at the Sunset Station Depot in San Antonio. Phase I of the restoration calls

for \$100,000 to cover the asbestos abatement and remediation of the 2-8-2's boiler. The funds will also provide for a thorough inspection of the locomotive and its components, allowing the museum to establish a detailed budget for the restoration.

"We look forward to seeing the *Alamo* behind the SP 794 in the future," Rodriguez says, "Our organization's goal is to be Texas' premier railroad museum."



Museum Notes

The Museum made its soft opening the first week of March. I was there on Saturday fixing some issues. We had a good crowd on Saturday for it being the first of the season. We expect a bigger crowd for the "Little Obie" on the 10th

As always, if you have any train related news you can email me at

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Roundhouse Notes

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**Next Meeting
March 13th
7 PM
At the
Railroad Museum
Paducah**

Auto wrecked by IC engine 1911. The driver forgot to "stop, look and listen." Unknown location and fate of the driver.