

POTOMAC RAIL NEWS

POTOMAC CHAPTER, NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 235, KENSINGTON, MARYLAND 20895-0235

APRIL 2010



NATIONAL CAPITAL TROLLEY MUSEUM REOPENS TO THE PUBLIC! Ex-Toronto Transit Commission PCC No. 4603 prepares to board passengers in front of the Museum's new visitors' center on March 27, 2010. This historic streetcar was built in 1951 and ran in Toronto until taken out of service in 1995. Photo by: Alex Mayes

PROGRAM: 3D IMAGE SPECIAL PRESENTATION. Washington area photographer and railfan Jim Roy will present a program of 3-D train images taken with special stereoscopic cameras and utilizing dual projection. Images will span the timeline of 1896 (on the Mt. Washington Cog Railway) to the present. Includes steam, diesel, mainline and excursion railroading both domestic and foreign plus some scenes of the last days of Baltimore traction. 3D glasses will be provided.

MEETING: April 20, 2010. 8PM Lobby Level Auditorium of the Montgomery County Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD

NEXT MEETING DATE: May 18, 2010

DEADLINE FOR MAY ISSUE: May 21, 2010. Send news items to Clay Moritz, Editor, Potomac Rail News, 2811 Plyers Mill Rd., Silver Spring, MD 20902 or via E-mail to cdmoritz@erols.com

INFORMATION ON POTOMAC CHAPTER ACTIVITIES: (301) 946-9461;
www.potomac-nrhs.org/

ADDRESS MEMBERSHIP INQUIRIES TO: Rick Davidson, Membership Agent, 2908 Breezy Terrace, Alexandria, VA 22303-2401

THE CHAPTER FAMILY

If you know of a Chapter Member who is sick, has lost a loved one, or has a new birth in the family, please call the Chapter on (301) 946-9461.

COVER PHOTO STORY. The National Capital Trolley Museum reopened at their new location on January 16, 2010, after being closed for 13 months. The new facility is located a half mile East of the previous location, in a \$20 million complex funded by the State of Maryland. The relocation was required by the construction of the Inter-County Connector expressway, which is being built through the site of the previous location. The new facility is a significant improvement over the previous one, with three new large brick buildings that serve as a visitors' center, car barn, and trolley maintenance and storage building.

The Museum's main trolley line also had to be re-located, as well as the overhead catenary. The new 3/4 mile trolley line was not in full operation as of late March, however, is expected to be completed by mid-June 2010. Short trolley rides are currently provided on an oval track in front of the visitors' center until the main line is completed. There are currently 14 streetcars in the collection; six that operated in Washington D.C., two from other U.S. cities, and six from foreign countries. The interior of the new visitors' center is filled with interesting historical displays and murals describing several long-abandoned trolley systems from the local area, and an operating O-scale trolley layout.

Museum visitors can take a trolley ride and a guided tour of the car barn to see and walk through some of the historic streetcars. The museum is located near Wheaton, MD at 1313 Bonifant Road, Colesville, MD. They are open on weekends throughout the year from Noon until 5:00 PM, and on some holidays. Operating days and hours are subject to change. Visitors can call (301) 384-6088 or visit their website at <http://www.dctrolley.org/> to confirm operating days and hours.
-- Alex Mayes

FIRST POTOMAC CHAPTER DIGITAL PHOTO CONTEST....will be held on May 18, 2010, at our monthly membership meeting. See below for Contest Rules. Thanks to Stephen Sery for volunteering to set-up and manage the contest. Unlike our previous slide contest, there is no hard-copy entry form. See the contest rules for how to submit your digital images.

2010 POTOMAC CHAPTER DIGITAL PHOTO CONTEST RULES

This will be the Potomac Chapters first experiment with a digital image contest. It does not mean that we will not again have a traditional slide contest at sometime in the future. Some of the categories for this contest are new and the format and submission requirements may change as we evaluate the results of this first competition. The contest will be held at the May 18th membership meeting. Only current Potomac Chapter members may enter the contest. Entries on any of the designated formats may be turned in at the April meeting or mailed to Stephen Sery at 1603 Moffet Road Silver Spring MD 20903-1936 or e-mailed to Stephen at PotomacDigital@gmail.com. It is advised to call 301-431-0088 to confirm receipt of entry and attachments. Mailed or e-mailed submissions must be received by May 8th 2010. Images must be accompanied by a word document or text file with descriptive information as detailed below.

ELIGIBILITY: Only current Potomac Chapter members who have paid their 2010 dues are eligible to participate.

PRIZES AWARDED: A \$10 prize will be awarded to the First Place winner in each

category excepting the Grand Prize winning image, which will be awarded a \$50 prize. The grand prize image will be determined by a run-off vote of all first place winners at the June meeting.

RULES:

1. No more than two (2) images may be entered in each category. All images (except for those in category 11) must be taken with a digital camera.
2. All images must be taken by the contestant entering them.
 - a. Each image must have the follow descriptive information accompanying it on a separate word document or text file:
 - b. Contestant's name and phone number
 - i. Category to be entered in
 - ii. Title of image
3. The actual picture file should be named with a word or two from the title.
4. Photo software may be used only to crop, color correct, or modify brightness and contrast. Images may not be altered by the use of montages, splicing, airbrushing or radically changing color.
5. Entries may be submitted on a CD, DVD, flash drive with a USB connector or e-mailed to PotomacDigital@gmail.com to be received no later than May 8th. Your name, address, and phone number should be written on all items submitted. Discs and flash drives will be returned. You should ensure that no 'virus' is present within your CD, flash drive or e-mail. All images will be checked when submitted and any found with a virus will not be accepted. Mailed entries should be sent to Potomac Chapter Contest c/o Stephen Sery, 1603 Moffet Rd., Silver Spring, MD 20903-1936
6. Entries may be submitted in a JPEG or TIF format only. No RAW files will be accepted. The maximum individual file size must not exceed 2.5 MB. For best quality presentation, picture area should be approximately 1400 pixels horizontal by 1050 pixels vertical.
7. Any issues or disputes regarding the contest rules or eligibility of the entries must be directed to the Digital Image Contest Chairman for resolution at above email address or 301-431-0088.

CATEGORIES

1. Electric: Any image featuring motive power using catenary or third rail power. Includes Amtrak, LRV's, and trolleys.
2. Mainline and Regional Freight East: Scenes of freight trains hauled with diesel locomotives on main lines, characterized by heavy rail, signaling systems, multiple diesel units, etc. Pictures in this category must have been taken East of the Mississippi River.
3. Mainline and Regional Freight West: Scenes of freight trains hauled with diesel locomotives on main lines, characterized by heavy rail, signaling systems, multiple diesel units, etc. Pictures in this category must have been taken West of the Mississippi River.
4. Diesel Passenger East: All diesel powered passenger trains (excluding tourist and excursion) operating on rails East of the Mississippi River.
5. Diesel Passenger West: All diesel powered passenger trains (excluding tourist and excursion) operating on rails West of the Mississippi River.
6. Short line, Branch line and Industrial Diesel Freight: Trains with diesel power operating in an industrial or mostly single track environment. This includes operating engines in a rail yard setting.
7. Tourist and Excursion: Images of steam or diesel operations taken on a

tourist railroad in the United States or any special excursion trip operating on rails outside of a designated tourist operation.

8. Foreign: All scenes taken outside the United States. Examples: any diesel, steam or electric powered train or any railroad scene with or without motive power taken in Europe, Canada, Mexico, China, Central & South America, etc.
9. Night and Indoor: Any subjects photographed at night or indoor with artificial or available natural light. Reminder: digitally enhanced images taken in daylight but altered to look like a night or twilight scene will not be accepted.
10. Miscellaneous: Railroad subjects not specifically covered in other categories. Included are railroad structures, rolling stock, cabooses, work equipment, signs and signals, light engines, helpers on the move, snow plows, etc. This category also includes roster shots of engines.
11. Vintage Scanned Images: This category includes any railroad subject in any category taken from an original slide, print, or negative and scanned into a digital image. Same restrictions for digital scans as in Rule Number 5 apply.
12. Planes Trains and Automobiles: Images of other interesting 'vehicles' you have encountered during your rail fanning/photo trips. Includes cars, trucks buses, planes, fire engines, construction equipment, farm tractors, hot air balloons, etc. Image can include any of these conveyances alone or posed with a railroad subject.
13. Rail Fun: Best comic picture and title on any railroad subject or theme.

RAIL NEWS

BOARD GIVES APPROVAL FOR CARFLOAT REPAIRS. A deeply divided Accomack County Board of Supervisors voted 5-4 to take on a loan to pay part of the bill to repair the railroad carfloat, Nandua, if language in the agreement about who is responsible for its maintenance is "satisfactory." The agreement is between the companies that operate the Bay Coast Railroad and the two counties, Accomack and Northampton, that own the carfloat. The carfloat ferried rail cars across the Chesapeake Bay before it fell into disrepair. The State has offered a \$700,000 grant to pay the majority of the repair bill, but the counties must agree to pay \$100,000 each, which will be funded through a 10-year loan. The railroad also would pay \$100,000 under the agreement. The big issue is whether the County will be liable for any future maintenance of the carfloat during the loan period. According to one commissioner, the real value of the railroad, which stretches North to South through Virginia's Eastern Shore, is its other use as a "utility corridor." (Delmarva Now - Salisbury, MD)

TRAIN ROBBERS STRIKE IN ARIZONA. Arizona officials say modern-day train robbers tried a pair of hijackings, seeking TVs and computer gear. Two Mexican nationals have been arrested for allegedly trying to disable freight trains moving through the Flagstaff area. BNSF has said the first burglary was reported March 19th near Williams, where robbers cut the brake hoses on a train to disable it and offload a shipment of televisions. They were caught in the act, but all except one got away. The second burglary was reported East of Flagstaff near Winona. Again, brake hoses were cut on a BNSF train. This time the thieves wanted computer equipment from a rail car. (Arizona Daily Sun)

ADDITIONAL RALEIGH-CHARLOTTE TRAIN SERVICE TO START JUNE 5. According to the North Carolina Department of Transportation, North Carolina's passenger train schedule will expand on June 5th by adding a third daily round-trip train between

Raleigh and Charlotte. The added train will leave each city at midday. The expanded schedule means that Raleigh residents will have the option to catch a Southbound train at 6:50AM, 11:50AM or 4:50PM each day for the trip to Charlotte, which takes about 3 hours and 12 minutes. The Northbound trains will leave Charlotte's Amtrak station at 7:30AM, 12:30PM, and 5:15PM. Each train also stops at Cary, Durham, Burlington, Greensboro, High Point, Salisbury and Kannapolis.

North Carolina recently won \$545 million in Federal stimulus grants to beef up and speed up the State's passenger rail service. Plans include faster trip times and more frequent trains, with the scheduled addition in 2012 of a fourth daily round-trip between North Carolina's two largest cities. One of the daily trains running through the State now is Amtrak's Carolinian, which travels from Charlotte to New York; the other current train and the new one starting in June both serve the Amtrak Piedmont route between Raleigh and Charlotte. One-way fares between Raleigh and Charlotte are \$25 and up, depending on how and when you buy your ticket from Amtrak. (The News & Observer - Charlotte, NC)

RICHMOND - HAMPTON ROADS RAIL PLAN GAINING SPEED. Momentum is building for operating conventional passenger trains between Norfolk and Richmond as an interim step to getting high-speed rail. The budget approved by Virginia's General Assembly in mid-March waives a 30% match on state Rail Enhancement Funds, clearing a financial hurdle that will allow construction to begin later this year and for trains to begin operating within three years. According to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, there is enough money in the Rail Enhancement Fund, which comes from taxes on rental cars, to cover the capital costs of upgrading the existing freight tracks to accommodate passenger trains with a top speed of 79 mph. The route roughly parallels Interstate 95 between Richmond and Petersburg, then U.S. 460 between Petersburg and South Hampton Roads, with a terminus at Harbor Park in downtown Norfolk. This is viewed as a beginning, not an end. The view is that the availability of Federal funding for high-speed rail is far more likely if some rail service is already in place. High-speed service would come incrementally. It must be kept in mind that the budget is still subject to approval by Governor Bob McDonnell, but Virginia rail officials are confident of his support.

There has been a groundswell of support for rail transportation in the region and high-speed rail in recent months based on two hearings in Hampton Roads. It is estimated that close to 1,000 people attended a high-speed rail hearing in Norfolk. After the hearings, Virginia's new Rail and Public Transportation Director Thelma Drake, sought ways to tap into the Rail Enhancement Fund for the service.

There are, however, still many things that need to fall in place before passenger trains to South Hampton Roads become a reality. Agreements need to be reached with Norfolk Southern and CSX, which own the tracks that the passenger trains would share with freight traffic. Both railroads are interested in partnering with the State to make it happen. NS has indicated that it recognizes that passenger service is something of value to the public and NS is willing to share its tracks if certain conditions are met such as for NS to be able to preserve and grow its freight capacity on the line, to protect itself from liability, and to be compensated for the use of its tracks. NS estimates it will cost \$75 million to upgrade its tracks along U.S. 460. Virginia is working with CSX on an estimate to upgrade its tracks around Petersburg and into Richmond. Details also have to be worked out with Amtrak to operate the service. Funding must also be identified to subsidize operations. The State legislature has agreed to task the State rail department to study how to create a sustainable rail operations fund for not only the Hampton Roads service, but other passenger rail in Virginia.

Money still needs to be found for likely stations at Harbor Park in Norfolk

where the track would tie into the light-rail line now under construction - at Bowers Hill in Chesapeake and in Petersburg. If and when it becomes a reality, it would be the first passenger rail service from Norfolk since 1977; Amtrak operates two passenger trains daily from Newport News. Meanwhile, Virginia is still pursuing high-speed rail service both between Washington and Richmond and between Richmond and Hampton Roads, which is more expensive and depends on Federal funding. (The Virginian-Pilot)

STEAM LOCOMOTIVE DAMAGED IN PORTLAND FIRE. A steam locomotive that was being repaired for the Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad was damaged in a late March outdoor fire in Portland, ME. A wooden frame over several steam engines that were being repaired caught fire around 4AM. The frame had been covered with plastic to provide workers with cover, but the plastic was blown off in a storm earlier in the month. Officials do not know the cause of the fire, but an investigation is under way. The locomotive was damaged by the heat of the fire, but most of the damage can probably be repaired since parts of the locomotive, including the boiler, had already been removed. The fire was brought under control within about 30 minutes and there were no injuries. (Portland Press Herald - Portland Maine)

PLANS FOR CIVIL WAR-ERA TOURIST TRAIN MOVE FORWARD. In Pennsylvania, York County commissioners have approved a plan to operate a Civil War-era tourist train along the rail trail between New Freedom and Hanover Junction. The commissioners voted to lease the Northern-Central rail corridor for 15 years to Steam Into History, Inc., a group backed by local investors that's pursuing the project as a tourist attraction. Their goal is to get the train running in time for 2013, the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg and the Gettysburg Address. The project would not require any money from the County. Steam Into History would pay for the train and for upgrades to the trail. Board members also plan improvements to the two stations, which are County parks.

The Board's initial plan is to have passengers board the train in New Freedom for a nine-mile trip North to Hanover Junction, where the train would make a brief stop before returning. Eventually, project organizers would like to be able to have the train stop at Sovereign Bank Stadium in York.

Board members are already in talks to build a replica 1863-model, oil-fueled steam locomotive, four passenger cars and one split passenger/baggage car. It would travel at a top speed of 15 miles per hour and would not prevent bicyclists or pedestrians from using the rail trail.

Gettysburg is expecting millions of visitors for the anniversary of Lincoln's address, and Steam Into History members hope that York County can attract some of that tourist trade by emphasizing the role that the County played in the Civil War. (York Daily Record)

OVERHEAD WIRES IN DC: YES OR NO? While the District is putting down the first miles of track for a planned 37-mile streetcar network that advocates hope will bring back Washington's still-languishing neighborhoods, an issue has arisen over its potential footprint on the cityscape. The streetcars envisioned by D.C. planners, and the first three they have purchased, are powered by overhead electrical wires. Similar wires are in use in Portland, OR, Charlotte, NC, and a dozen other cities. In Washington, however, the overhead system is being scorned by preservationists as outdated visual clutter inappropriate for a grand city of monuments and boulevards. So before city planners can realize their vision of a \$1.5 billion transportation system that connects neighborhoods instead of moving commuters, they must either battle some guardians of the Federal city or redefine what it should look like in the 21st Century.

Wire opponents, from local preservation groups to the National Capital

Planning Commission, want streetcars that draw electricity from buried batteries or power strips. On their side is an 1889 Federal law banning overhead electrification in Georgetown and the original center city design by Pierre L'Enfant in 1791, which is bounded by the Potomac and Anacostia waterfronts North to Florida Avenue. Streetcars would run through much of the core, including H Street NE, where the City is now laying tracks. According to Meg Maguire, a leader of Committee of 100 on the Federal City and an opponent of overhead wires, Washington has an unusual number of clear views and vistas and broad boulevards that are not to be tampered with.

A spokesman for the National Park Service has stated that NPS does not want and does not approve of overhead wires in the City. The Capital Planning Commission has also hotly protested against wires during reviews of City plans for the reconstruction of H Street, the 11th Street bridge and a 1.5-mile stretch in Anacostia, with the H Street-Benning Road section scheduled to open in 2012. Northern Virginia leaders are also planning a streetcar line along Columbia Pike, between the Pentagon City Metro station and Baileys Crossroads, that could eventually reach Alexandria. Along with the District's ban on virtually all City buildings more than 130 feet tall, the ban on overhead wires allows light and air to reach pedestrians. Telephone and other utility lines are buried beneath the city streets, and traffic lights are placed at the street's edges.

Meanwhile, top D.C. officials say that aesthetic regulation is getting in the way of the new generation of mass transit, which they hope will prod investment in Southeast Washington and continue the City's renaissance. They also stand ready to make the 121-year-old law history. Gabe Klein, the District's transportation chief is counting on the Obama Administration's support for public transit investment to jump-start the streetcar program. Klein has noted that today's wireless technology is costly and untested in cities like the District that has rain and snowy winters. Only a few companies make wireless streetcars, and they have had growing pains where they've been introduced, mostly in Europe. Moreover, it could be fiscally irresponsible for the City to limit its options. As a compromise, Klein is floating an idea to preservationists for a hybrid system that would run on wires outside the Federal city and switch to battery power inside. United Streetcar, a Portland-based company looking at wireless cars to expand that city's streetcar line, is designing a prototype that would recharge batteries every mile, possibly with a braking mechanism at stations. The battery, however, could take several minutes to charge, and city planners want more flexibility. DC Council Member Tommy Wells (D-Ward 6) has said he will introduce a bill this month to not only overturn the ban on overhead streetcar wires but also revise the definition of downtown Washington that has existed for more than 200 years. The legislation would allow the Council to determine which views in the Federal city are worth preserving and which are not.

Historically, streetcars ran on the streets of Washington from 1862 until 1962. They were the backbone of Washington's transportation system until Congress ordered buses to replace them as the auto industry boomed in the 1950s. The problem of overhead wires was solved by a plow attached to the underside of the trolley, which connected to power from a center rail about 18 inches below the pavement surface and supplied current to the car. Outside the core of the city, a pole was raised to meet an overhead wire. The center rail collected rain and snow, though, so the system was unreliable.

DDOT plans to pursue Federal funds and private sector help in financing and managing the modern system, possibly by enacting special tax district for commercial property owners near the tracks. Three cars built in the Czech Republic and stored there for several years are now sitting in Metro's Greenbelt rail yard until the first tracks are ready for them. (Washington Post)

POTOMAC RAIL NEWS is published monthly by the Potomac Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 235, Kensington, Maryland 20895-0235 Phone: (301) 946-9461; Website: www.potomac-nrhs.org/

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**CELEBRATING OUR
40TH ANNIVERSARY
1970 - 2010**

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