

# POTOMAC RAIL NEWS

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

SEPTEMBER 2024



**FLORIDA COLORS!** On March 5, 2024, Sunrail shows off its colors along the Central Florida Rail Corridor 104 on P312 at Taft, Florida. Photo by: Jim Kleeman.

**PROGRAM:** Jim Kleeman will present an in-person program titled "Fast Trains and Sugarcane," a look at Florida railroading over the last 15 years. We will start with a tour of the Florida East Coast Railroad focusing on the scenic highlights between Jacksonville and Miami. Brightline now shares their right-of-way south of Cocoa adding 32 colorful trains a day and more variety. We'll then review commuter operations in Orlando and Miami, new power on the Florida Central, and finish with US Sugar Corporation operations around Lake Okeechobee during the harvest season.

**MEETING:** SEPTEMBER 17, 2024 at 8PM. The in-person meeting will be held in the Lecture Hall of the [Stella Werner Council Office Building](#), 100 Maryland Ave, Rockville, MD. Those unable to attend may view the program via Zoom video conference. ZOOM LOGIN LINK ON PAGE 2.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:** October 15, 2024

**DEADLINE FOR OCTOBER ISSUE:** September 21, 2024. Send news items to Clay Moritz, Editor, Potomac Rail News, at [c.moritz@comcast.net](mailto:c.moritz@comcast.net)

**INFO ON CHAPTER ACTIVITIES:** <http://potomacnrhs.org/>

**ADDRESS MEMBERSHIP INQUIRIES TO:** Rick Davidson, Membership Agent, 2908 Breezy Terrace, Alexandria, VA 22303-2401 [rdavidsonjr2908@gmail.com](mailto:rdavidsonjr2908@gmail.com)

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 contact the editor at: [c.moritz@comcast.net](mailto:c.moritz@comcast.net)

ZOOM TOPIC: POTOMAC CHAPTER JULY MEMBERSHIP MEETING:

Time: SEPTEMBER 17, 2024 08:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81672625788?pwd=MHptaXJpL1RUalhEcDFwZk5vaGREdz09>

Meeting ID: 816 7262 5788

Passcode: 547873

One tap mobile

+19292056099,,81672625788#,,,,\*547873# US (New York)

+13017158592,,86741529997#,,,,\*653332# US (Washington DC)

REMEMBERING BILL HOPKINS. This obituary notice appeared in the Third Quarter 2024 Vol. 38 No. 3 Issue of Southern Railway Historical Association's Magazine, TIES.

William E. Hopkins December 26, 1934 - July 14, 2024

Longtime SRHA member Bill Hopkins passed away on July 14, 2024, in Silver Spring, Md., at the age of 89. Over the years, Bill was a significant part of our "Photographers of the Southern" series. Bill brought to our attention the unsung of NASA photographer Bill Taub, some of which appeared in our 2022-2 issue (cover; pp. 24-30). Bill himself came up with classic photos of Southern steam and diesel powered trains in Alexandria, Va., that he took in the early-1950s. See 2013-4 TIES, PP. 4-11.

Bill was born in Washington, D.C., the day after Christmas, 1934, and became interested in railroads at an early age. It helped that his mother's hometown was Connellsville, Pa., where Bill had five uncles who were railroaders on the Baltimore & Ohio and the Western Maryland. After high school, he hired on as a machinist helper with the Washington Terminal Company (WT) at its Ivy City (Washington D.C.) shops in 1953. During that time, Bill met, and worked with fellow machinist and future-SRHA member Bernie Gallagher, who went to work for WT after Southern's Alexandria shops closed as a major facility in 1949.

Like all young men back then, Bill was subject to the draft. In 1955, he took a military furlough from WT and, with three close friends from his high school days, joined the Marines Corps.

Thanks to his background as a machinist, he was assigned to the air wing, where he maintained jets stateside, at Cherry Point, N.C. He married his high school sweetheart, Carolyn, in 1958; they were blessed with a daughter and two sons. After returning to civilian life, Bill joined the Washington, D.C. fire department in 1963, rising through the ranks to Captain of Engine Company 18 on Capitol Hill. He retired at end of 1988.

Over the years, Bill acquired a reputation in rail photography circles as an excellent lensman. He began photographing the last of steam in 1950 with hand-me-down cameras. Tired of blurred prints he bought a high quality camera from Montgomery Ward around 1951, which had a camera clinic back then. His new acquisition was a German Rolleiflex that used 120-size black-and-white film and had a 1/250 shutter speed and f.4 lens that stopped most action traveling less than 70 mph. In the late 1960s, he started shooting color with a Pentax single-lens reflex camera.

POTOMAC CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEWS. The Chapter Board received an email from Robert (Bob) and Penny Dixon-Gumm that they have resigned from the Board of Directors due to the fact they are moving overseas in early September. They expressed that it has been a pleasure working with the fellow Board members and being a part of the Potomac Chapter. The Board thanks Bob and Penny for their years of service on the Board and has wished them the best in the future.

In light of the resignations of the two Board members, the Board of Directors recommends membership approval of the revisions to the Chapter bylaws shown below. The revisions will reduce the size of the Board from nine to seven. Members will be asked to vote on the revisions at the November membership meeting.

### **ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENTS (FYI)**

Proposed amendments to these By-Laws must be presented in writing to the Board. The Board will review same and place the proposed amendment and its recommendation in the next Chapter newsletter. A vote on the proposed amendment as submitted to the Board will be held at the second monthly meeting following the newsletter. A motion to approve an amendment to the bylaws must receive: (1) a majority of the votes cast, and (2) the votes in favor must represent at least 10 percent of the membership, voting either in meeting or by mail ballot.

### **ARTICLE IV: BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Section 1. There shall be a Board of Directors (hereinafter called the Board) consisting of the four elected Chapter officers, the National Representative, and the ~~four~~ two directors at large which shall conduct the corporate affairs of the organization. The Board shall meet at the call of the President or at the request of two-thirds of the members of the Board to conduct required Chapter business and shall have the authority and functions normally delegated to a Board of Directors with its actions subject to review of the membership. Authority to approve expenditures without membership review is limited to \$1,000. Larger expenditures must be approved by the membership at a regular membership meeting. ~~A quorum of the Board shall consist of six members,~~ **Under normal circumstances, a quorum of the Board shall consist of five members. If there are one or more vacancies on the board, a majority of the remaining members shall be sufficient for a quorum, but** **Members** may cast their vote by phone or mail, without their physical presence. Simple majority vote of the quorum of Board of Directors in contact shall prevail. The Board may adopt procedures to conduct business via alternative communication methods, such as email.

Section 2. The directors at large shall be members in good standing elected for two-year terms to fill seats of directors with expiring terms. They shall take office on the 1st day of January following their election.

Section 3. ...

Section 4. As provided in the bylaws of the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS), the Chapter may designate a National Representative to the national organization. The National Representative shall represent the Chapter on the Advisory Council of the National Railway Historical Society. The Chapter's representative may not hold office or directorship in the NRHS. ~~The Chapter's sitting National Director shall assume the office of National Representative upon completion of the transition by the NRHS to the organizational structure adopted in the new NRHS bylaws of June 24, 2011. The first election for National~~

~~Representative will occur at the next annual Chapter election. Thereafter The National Representative shall be elected by the membership annually at the same time as the officers and other directors. The National Representative will take office the first day of January following his or her election and serve for the ensuing year or until a successor is installed.~~

## **ARTICLE X: QUORUM FOR MEETINGS OF MEMBERS**

At least 10 percent of the Chapter membership or ~~10~~ eight members, whichever is greater, shall constitute a quorum for conducting business at a Chapter meeting.

## **RAIL NEWS**

PASSENGER RAIL EXPANDS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA. Virginia has approved a deal with Norfolk Southern to extend passenger rail service to the New River Valley and expand commuter rail operations in Northern Virginia, while saving the state time and money.

The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority adopted two agreements with NS on August 27<sup>th</sup> after a closed-door meeting of the Authority's Board of Directors to discuss the confidential terms of the deal.

The agreements will allow the Authority to run passenger trains between Roanoke and Christiansburg on NS's main rail line instead of a previously planned route that would take longer and cost more to complete, while making it easier to extend passenger service south and west in the future.

"It's a huge win for us," Executive Director DJ Stadtler told the Board. "It will allow us to get done faster."

The Authority has not disclosed financial terms of the deal but estimated that changing the route in Southwest Virginia would save the state \$102 million on the project and accelerate the project's completion to 2027 instead of 2028. The state will own the historic Cambria station in Christiansburg, which operated from 1906 to 1979, and Norfolk Southern will build a new passenger platform at the stations as well as a layover facility in Radford.

As part of the deal, the Authority will purchase 24 miles of track used by the Virginia Railway Express for its commuter rail line between Manassas and Alexandria. Owning the line will give the state greater control over sharing the track with Norfolk Southern freight trains, allowing it to run trains at night and on weekends on the former RF&P rail right-of-way that the state partly owns between Richmond and Alexandria under a \$525 million deal with CSX Corp. in 2021.

"This will give us the ability to add night and weekend service on both lines, which is critical," Stadtler said.

He said that state also will save money that it pays the freight railroad now for the use of the Manassas Line tracks.

"This will give VRE/Virginia much more certainty, much more predictability in what it costs for service," Stadtler said.

Governor Glenn Youngkin hailed the deal as "a better, faster, and cheaper solution to bring passenger rail back to a historic location in the New River Valley while also providing opportunities to bolster service in Northern Virginia."

"We are excited to deliver these benefits as we continue to accelerate results not only in these two regions, but across the entire Commonwealth," Youngkin said.

The closing for the purchase of the Manassas Line was September 5. The VRE Board of Directors and its parent commissions - The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and Potomac Rappahannock Transportation Commission - will act on the agreements in the next two months. Under the agreements, VRE

would contribute \$155 million, which would lower the net cost of the New River Valley extension and save the state money.

By the end of the year, the state Authority will return the V-Line that it purchased from Norfolk Southern two years ago but proved unworkable in extending passenger rail service from Roanoke to Christiansburg. In return, the state will take ownership of a short segment of track known as "Seminary Passage" where the Manassas Line meets the former RF&P track running between Richmond and Alexandria.

Owning the V-Line would have given the Authority more control over the tracks, but it learned that the route also would have cost \$546 million to complete by 2028, while leading to a mountain tunnel that would make it harder and more expensive to extend service further in the future.

By using Norfolk Southern's main line instead and including VRE's expected contribution for the Manassas Line, the state estimates it will cut the net cost to \$444 million and complete the project a year earlier.

"It's very positive," said former Senator John Watkins, R-Powhatan, a member of the Authority Board. (Richmond Times-Dispatch)

STUDY TO CONSIDER FUTURE OF ETTRICK STATION. The Ettrick train station just got a down payment on the future, as the linchpin of an ambitious effort to restore passengers service between two state capitals - Richmond and Raleigh, North Carolina.

Representative Jennifer McClellan, D-4th, presented a symbolic \$1 million check to the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority on August 26 to begin a planning study for the future of the station, also known as Petersburg Station, as it prepares to handle higher-speed passenger service on a rebuilt rail line between Richmond and Raleigh.

"The Ettrick Station, is a priority for us because it is a key link to not only Northern Virginia and points north such as Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, but also our planned expansion south, said " DJ Stadtler, Executive Director of the Authority, on August 26<sup>th</sup>.

Ettrick Station in Southern Chesterfield County next to Virginia State University, already receives daily visits from 14 Amtrak trains traveling along the Atlantic Coast and shuttling between Norfolk and Washington, D.C.

"Ettrick Train Station serves as an important transit hub in the Tri-Cities region in our district accommodating tens of thousands of passengers every year, including students at Virginia State University, commuters traveling to and from work, and tourists and long-distance passengers," said McClellan, the daughter of a Virginia State professor who grew up in Ettrick. "However, decades of under-investment has left the station out-dated and in need of repairs," she said on August 26<sup>th</sup>. "This Federal funding will help support the planning and construction of a new state-of-the-art rail station that can meet current and future needs."

The planning study will consider whether to rebuild or replace the station, using several acres of adjacent land and a defunct railroad warehouse.

The Authority is already spending money from another Federal grant to make short-term improvements at the 69-year-old station, which sits just across the Appomattox River from Petersburg.

Two years ago, the Federal Railroad Administration awarded the state a \$6.4 million grant to upgrade the station; building a new platform and canopy for boarding or disembarking from trains, making the station more accessible to people with disabilities, and other improvements, Stadtler estimated the total cost of the improvements at \$11 million, with the Authority paying for the balance.

The design of those improvements is almost complete, and construction will begin next year.

"This station has been serving residents of Petersburg since 1956, and while the Richmond to Raleigh project will make Petersburg a key station stop, today the Ettrick Station is in need of a little facelift," said Stadtler. "As a result, we are not waiting for Richmond to Raleigh," he said. "Instead, we are working on what Ettrick needs today."

The push to North Carolina is going to be a long wait, North Carolina began work in July to rebuild an 18-mile stretch of the abandoned S-Line between Raleigh and Wake Forest, North Carolina, using a \$1.1 billion grant the state received in December under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that President Biden signed in 2022.

Virginia also plans to reclaim the abandoned S-Line track, which was part of a \$525 million deal the state signed in 2021 with CSX for control of 350 miles of railroad right-of-way and 225 miles of track that is part of the CSX freight rail system. That includes 30 miles of active track between Richmond and Petersburg, and 75 miles of the abandoned S-Line between Petersburg and Ridgeway, North Carolina.

The passenger rail authority expects to begin work next year to survey, clear, and reclaim right-of-way for the project, but Stadtler does not know how long it will take to lay new track or how much it will cost. The Authority has identified contractors to begin preliminary design of the six segments of the S-Line project, using \$38 million from another Federal Grant, but it's still waiting for the government to release the money.

"That will give us a much better feel of the budget and schedule," Stadtler said.

For Virginia, the S-Line is part of a much larger, \$4.4 billion initiative to expand passenger rail service in the state. The centerpiece is the construction of a new rail bridge across the Potomac River to separate passenger trains from the freight trains that now cross on the 120-year-old Long Bridge. The new rail bridge will allow the state and Amtrak, a partner in the deal with CSX, to expand service between Richmond and Washington to almost hourly by the end of the decade, and to extend train service to other parts of Virginia. (Richmond Times-Dispatch)

EAST BROAD TOP 2-8-2 NO. 16 IS BACK IN SERVICE. ROCKHILL FURNACE, Pa. - After being out of service for eight months, East Broad Top Railroad narrow-gauge 2-8-2 Mikado engine No. 16 (Baldwin Locomotive Works, 1916) will resume hauling tourist passengers tomorrow on August 30<sup>th</sup>.

The engine will pull regularly scheduled EBT trains on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays through October 27<sup>th</sup>, plus additional special runs and, in December, Christmas trains. Among the highlights will be visits from conferees at the 44th National Narrow Gauge Convention in September and the Friends of the East Broad Top annual reunion on October 4-6.

On Wednesday, August 28, three busloads from the National Railway Historical Society's annual convention, held in Harrisburg, Pa., visited the property and saw No. 16 on its shakedown run. Restored to operation in February 2023 after being idled for 67 years, the engine ran for 150 days that season, carrying what EBT spokesman Jonathan Smith calls "a record-breaking 35,000 passengers."

It was down for its annual boiler inspection last winter when cracks were discovered in two spokes of a main driving wheel. The EBT Foundation announced that a diesel locomotive would pull regularly scheduled tourist trains through August. See "[East Broad Top No. 16 out of service . . .](#)", *Trains News Wire*, April 11, 2024.] Pinch-hitting in the interim were General Electric center-cab switcher M-7 and, on selected dates, EBT's 1927 gas-electric car, the M-1, built in kit form by the J.G. Brill Co. and assembled in the EBT shops here.

Meanwhile, the driver repair was handled in-house, overseen by Dave Domitrovich, Master Mechanic, and Linn Moedinger, retired President and Chief

Mechanical Officer of the Strasburg Rail Road and an EBT Foundation Board Member.

No. 16 is the first of the railroad's six BLW Mikados to return to service since the Foundation in 2020 bought most of the railroad's 33-mile-long main line, historic circa-1910 machine shops, eight-stall roundhouse, rolling stock, and station and office building. During the tourist years 1960-2011, EBT at various times ran engines No. 12, 14, 15, and 17. The next one to be reactivated is planned to be No. 15 (BLW, 1914).

Chartered in 1872, EBT hauled iron ore, timber and, primarily in later years, coal to an interchange with the standard-gauge Pennsylvania Railroad main line at Mount Union, Pa. When it shut down in 1956, scrap dealer Nick Kovalchick bought it and in 1960 reopened a 4½-mile segment for seasonal steam tourist runs.

Named a National Historic Landmark in 1964, the line continued carrying tourists until closing for a second time at the end of the 2011 season.

After it appeared for more than eight years on various "most endangered" lists, owner Joe Kovalchick, son of Nick, agreed to sell it to the newly formed nonprofit EBT Foundation Inc., and to accept a seat on the group's Board. The Foundation reopened regularly scheduled passenger service in 2021 and reactivated No. 16 in 2023. See ["East Broad Top steam returns . . .,"](#) News Wire, Feb. 20, 2023. (Dan Cupper, Trains News Wire)

AMERICAN HERITAGE RAILWAYS HAS ACQUIRED THE BRANSON SCENIC RAILWAY. American Heritage Railways, owner of the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad and other properties, has acquired the Branson Scenic Railway, the tourist rail operation launched in 1993 on a former Missouri Pacific route.

The new owners took over operations on September 1<sup>st</sup>. The purchase was prompted by the current owners' retirement, AHR said in a press release. Founders Alan Kamp, Illa Kamp, and Thomas Johnson have spent more than 30 years establishing the railroad as a Branson attraction, and American Heritage says it will maintain the company's pride in quality customer service while exploring opportunities to expand operations and product offerings.

"Alan, Illa, and Tom have done an amazing job building a first-class operation and we're thrilled to have the opportunity to continue their work preserving history in this exciting market," said John Harper, AHR General Manager and Chief Operating Officer. "We look forward to honoring their legacy here in Branson and within the heritage rail industry for many years to come." Current employees will remain on staff with additional positions available as operations grow, the company said.

The Branson Scenic offers 1-hour, 45-minute excursions from a downtown Branson depot built in 1905, running on trackage operated by Genesee & Wyoming's Missouri & Northern Arkansas Railroad. Trains are powered by an F9PH (former Baltimore & Ohio/MARC) and GP30M (former Chesapeake & Ohio) and feature a fleet of nine Budd Co. passenger cars, including three dome cars, built between 1939 and 1956. Four of those cars are of Chicago, Burlington & Quincy heritage; others come from the Pennsylvania Railroad; Texas Pacific; Atlantic Coast Line; Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac; and Southern Railway.

The Branson Scenic joins the Durango & Silverton and Great Smoky Mountains Railroad as American Heritage's current rail operations. Other properties include Rail Events Inc., which licenses Polar Express train rides and Peanuts-themed rail events, and Heritage Rail Management, which provides consulting, management, and leasing services for other Heritage rail operations. (Trains News Wire)

POTOMAC RAIL NEWS is published monthly by the Potomac Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 235, Kensington, Maryland 20895-0235 Website: [www.potomacnrhs.org](http://www.potomacnrhs.org)

\* \* \* \* \*

Potomac Chapter Officers & Directors:

- President.....Gordy Bjoraker (301) 577-5061
- Vice-President.....John Sery (301) 431-0088
- Secretary.....Bill Holdsworth (301) 762-9376
- Treasurer.....Jay Creswell (703) 255-3258
- Directors.....Stephen Sery/Charles Greene
- National Representative.Rick Davidson (703) 768-2831
- Membership.....Rick Davidson (703) 768-2831
- Historian.....Bob Cohen (301) 424-3228
- Editor, PRN.....Clay Moritz (301) 933-3618
- Program Committee: Alex Mayes, John Sery

Contributors: Alex Mayes, Glenn Orletsky, Ray Saunders

**POTOMAC CHAPTER, NRHS  
P.O. BOX 235  
KENSINGTON, MD. 20895-0235**

**FIRST CLASS**