

# The Railway Museum of BC Newsletter

---

## OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2024

The North Pole Express a Success!  
Sea to Sky 2025 Train Show Confirmed!  
March 22nd & 23rd



**RAILWAY MUSEUM**  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Vol . 64  
Issue# 4

## FROM THE EDITOR

Our front cover shows many of our vollies taking a ride on our VIP coach the 'Alberta' on Dec.14th, the 'Day of the Slide'. Another year closes highlighted on a very successful 'North Pole Express'. In past years when tickets went on sale, our buyers would select departure dates closest to Christmas, with our first weekend always being the last to sell out. This year, we offered a 25% discount on the Nov. 23/ 24th weekend, and it sold out early! And to partially make up for that revenue shortfall, we added one extra day (Dec. 21st) with the result we made up the shortfall. This spring, we will not be hosting Day Out with Thomas due to a conflict with dates with Mattel. A new special event will replace Thomas.

### Updates from WCRA

Reports from our major department heads for the last quarter:

**Bob Philip: President**

At the risk of sounding repetitive, here is the update on the WCRA drive to sustainability. As mentioned before, there are several factors at play as we attempt to shed the stress of constant cash flow issues tempered over the years by last minute member loans, movies, and large donations. We no longer take on debt by asking members for loans, and the movie business has evaporated (at least in the short term), but some large donations helped us survive the pandemic, reduce debt, and balance the books in 2023. Three areas were identified (as indicated below), essential to long term sustainability: reduced operating costs, increased revenue generation, and a new agreement with BCRP to keep MP2 affordable beyond 2029.

1). Cost savings are a challenge because of debt servicing: \$275k and insurance: \$175k, our two large expenses that are basically fixed. However, on the positive side, salaries and incidentals have been reduced for 2025, so there will be saving of over \$200k which is a large step in the right direction.

2). The money invested in equipment to expand business operations at the museum and external opportunities/events is paying dividends with revenues increasing in 2024 and are projected to increase again in 2025. Revenue generation on a regular basis has to be the priority going forward.

3). Getting a new agreement with BCRP to retain MP2 is proving to be a challenge due to the agreement negotiated in 2018 with the purchase of the MP2 buildings and the lease of the surrounding lands.

In fact BCRP will get everything back at some point, based on the current agreement. However they have agreed to work with us and the provincial government to try to come up with a long term agreement which meets our needs and theirs. We have had two meetings so far and have been waiting for the provincial election results before meeting again.

The committee has reached out for assistance to put together a strategy for approaching government and we will be meeting again shortly to get this moving. In summary, we are slowly getting to where we need to be. Having some movies in the short term would certainly help, but getting annual expenses and revenues in sync is where things need to be and this why business operations and other revenue sources such as NPEX, Roundhouse, outside track rentals, and museum admissions and events have to be the priorities.

Bob Philip President and CEO

### **Business Operations Report - Gord Bell**

Business operations at the Railway Museum of British Columbia revolved mainly around the North Pole Express during November and December. This year's production ran over five weekends and resulted in a positive experience for guests and an overall bottom line that met budget expectations. Work has already begun for NPX 2025 to ensure a better experience for our 6PM departures as well as a focus on improving the on-board experience.

Spring 2025 for the WCRA will see the Train and Hobby Show in March and the first ever Buddy & Friends Children's festival coming to the museum on May 3rd and 4th. 2025. The festival will feature all sorts of children's activities including performers, train rides and music.

Blacksheep Event Rentals concluded 2024 with a record year in the books. Gross revenues exceeded \$700,000.00 and the company continues to operate with a profit margin hovering around 25%. The Blacksheep forecast continues to look positive for 2025 as the business grows into new markets.

In collaboration with the Railway Museum of British Columbia, Blacksheep is hosting an 'Open House' Jan 25 – Feb 2 in the CN Roundhouse. This event will feature many of the Blacksheep products, while highlighting the versatility of the venue for weddings, conferences and corporate events.

The roundhouse will be staged in three sections. Track 3 features a wedding ceremony site with a drapery "waterwall" falling from the upper mezzanine. Track 4 features a variety of tablescapes for clients to gain inspirations from and track 5 features a party set up for 100 people. The event starts with a styled photo shoot followed by 'appointment only' visits from Blacksheep clients, potential clients and current collaborators.

## Museum Manger's Report - Tom Arnott

As we reflect back on what has been a very successful year we are now in the midst of our annual North Pole Express (NPX) event.

During the first NPX set up planning meeting in September it was agreed that we should improve and change some of the layouts and themes this year. Karen Schreiber was appointed as the Event Planning Coordinator and proposed that we should change the layout in the Car Shop and create a North Pole Santa Workshop, reindeer stables and Elf workshops.

This year we decided to take out PGE No.2 Locomotive and replace it with the PGE Caboose which would be part of the display. Squamish Theatre donated stage props and a group of volunteers created a large Santa workshop scene with many other smaller Christmas-themed vignettes.

Last year we acquired an additional box car for storage, so we now have a box car for the car shop and train and one for the Roundhouse. We were far more organised this year, so much so that we had the interior décor of the coaches of the NPX train completed mid October. The Car Shop was completed by the first week in November and decorating the Roundhouse started as soon as the Bespoke Market tear down was finished.

I doubt that many people really appreciate that several hundred volunteer hours per week go into preparing for the event. This year we were lucky to have the additional support from a number of Blacksheep staff, which made the workload much easier.

There are also a lot of supplies required for the event that require ordering and storage. Some examples of items ordered:

NPX Mugs	9,000	Cookies:	15,000
Hot Chocolate	240 Bags	Coffee:	5 kg
Soft drinks	500 cans	Marshmallows	20 lbs
Napkins	6,000	Santa Toys	9,000
Wieners	1,000	Chips	500 pkts
Cake Icing	20 bags	Gingerbread Men	5,000
Bottled water	2000		

## Overview

This year has been an extremely busy year for the museum. A number of improvements have been made to the exhibits and hopefully this will make our visitor experience much more interesting and enjoyable.

We are really offering an excellent all round package for the \$30 entry fee. As the population of Squamish continues to increase we are definitely seeing an increase in family passes with more locals regularly visiting the museum.

I'd like to focus on the general refurbishment of our museum buildings next year as many internal and external areas are looking tired and in need of painting and repair. Hopefully we will be successful in our Heritage bid to secure \$50,000 match funding for the Car shop which is now 110 years old.

It would be good to see CP #6503 running and make up a train with the Henry Pickering open car as a feature this summer to compliment the Budd car rides. Our first event in 2025 is the Model Train show in March followed by the Tourism Challenge event and then our meet 'Buddy and friends' event in May.

### **CMO Report - Singh Biln Motive Power**

CN 6520 continued to perform well during NPX. CP4069 was the back-up. All other operating locomotives are being winterized. Work to get BC-33 for operation is continuing as time permits. A member has generously donated two deep-cycle batteries for this unit.

### **Coaches**

Inspection, servicing and minor repairs were completed on all coaches required for NPX by contractor David Walmsley and assisted by our staff. Earlier this year we installed 24 additional seats in coach Porteau to increase capacity for NPX. And two extra washrooms were restored operational in our consist. Two coaches on loan from Rocky Mountaineer arrived on November 18, on a free move (a big thanks to CN for their generosity), to give us more capacity for NPX.

### **Tracks**

Considerable track work this year has paid off with our operating tracks being in safest condition in decades. In fact, large CN locomotives dropping off Rocky coaches entered our MP2 Service Building track for the first time in years. During November, contractor B&B Construction aligned and surfaced the tracks.

### **Facilities**

Two important facility projects during the past month have been completed with minimal cost but of significant benefit to us. Firstly, the road from MP2 to Government Road, riddled with potholes most of the year, was paved during the week leading to opening NPX weekend. The paving was paid for by Fortis and free gravel supplied from Alpine. And this paving allowed us to prepare the area north of Black Sheep for NPX parking.

Secondly , the furnace in the Station basement was damaged and not practical to repair because of its age. Just before the first NPX weekend , it was replaced with a high efficiency unit, installed up off the floor to protect from flooding.

### **MiniRail**

Past MiniRail manager Aaron Gruber left us on October 7th. Volunteer Gary Shortt has taken on MiniRail track maintenance while our staff continue with equipment maintenance & repairs. Staff & volunteers set up the indoor track for NPX and it has allowed flawless train operations. Locomotive SRY#124 operated without any issues with BCR#646 as the back-up unit. This year, we purchased a riding car from BCSME giving the tail-end conductor a much more comfortable ride than in previous years.

### **MiniRail Staffing - Jeremy Davy**

Ed Note: Jeremy has been responsible for staffing the MiniRail for over 15 years! Here is a brief synopsis of the number of events and staffing for 2024 as compiled by Jerermy.

Now that 2024 has come to a close it is time to look back on what can be considered a very successful year. This didn't happen by itself ... It took the efforts of many dedicated people.

-MiniRail operated on 75 days which included:

Tourism Challenge	– 23
Sea to Sky Model Show	– 2
Day out with Thomas	– 4
Museum Days	-28
Kid Safe/Seniors Days	– 9
North Pole Express	– 9

A total of 24 Volunteers were involved in some or all the events. Thank all of you for donating your time. Every hour, big or small cumulatively, helped makes for an enjoyable experience for our Guests.

### **374 Pavilion Manager - George Game**

The Stanley Park Train that ran in Stanley Park from 1947 to 1964 then stored for years when a newer train set was built . It was donated to the Railway Museum where it had been on display at the Park for the last few years . But it really belongs in Vancouver, where she used to run, so arrangements were made to do so.



So our talented park contractor, David Walmsley, built a display case for it and he delivered it to the 374 Pavilion on Nov. 15th. The locomotive was very heavy so David built the case with wheels to enable it to be moved.



Photos: David Walmsley



George submitted the following 374 Pavilion statistics for 2024: We had 44,290 visitors with 30 volunteers on schedule over this period with a total of 5,003 hours of volunteer time, And a total of \$14,269 in sales, with \$7,671 in donations. And an original CP 'Canadian' service booth has been donated (shown above).

## Collection Committee Report

### Acquisitions

Chair Greg Robertshaw confirmed that TransLink has received and accepted our proposal for a donation of a 'first generation' Mark 1 Skytrain Car. At this point, we need to wait until TransLink evaluates the proposals but our proposal looks positive.

### Restorations

**CP8000:** Greg advised that the team is working on the cab doors now.

**BCER 960:** Mike McGaw noted that his team continues to work on the front truck, specifically on traction motor plates. They are looking at brake shoe options. Kirby and his son were thanked for retrieving the DC Cummins-powered generator from outside and positioning it next to 960. The generator's diesel engine has been barred over and it's faulty starter motor will be repaired.

**Clinton:** Kirby & staff continue to clean up the east end of MP2 in preparation of placing the Clinton on the floor sometime in the spring. Two small track panels instead of a large one may be best.

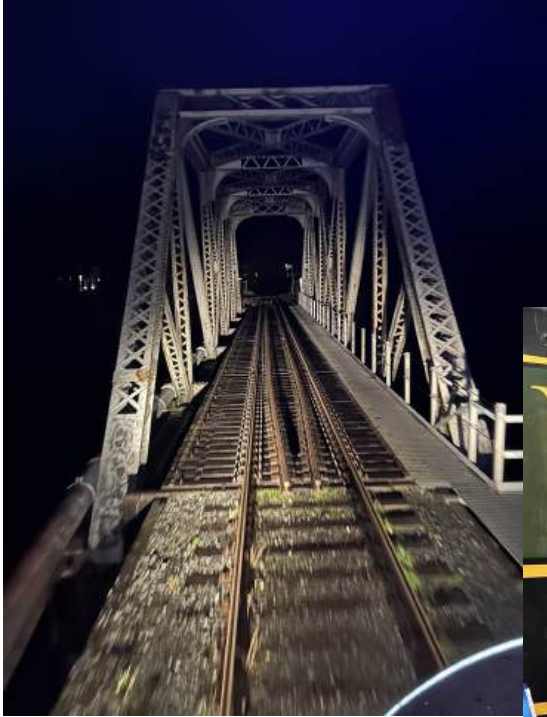
Discussion continued on using the Men's Shed group. Tom & Mike will organize an on-site meeting with the group to kick start their possible involvement in the restoration, specifically the work wood component. Should allocate space around the re-located Clinton to allow for the installation of scaffolding.

### A Recap of the North Pole Express

Our annual Christmas event was a success again this year and is our annual largest revenue producer and was \$20,000 higher than 2024. Unfortunately a slide blocked the Sea to Sky Highway on the morning of Dec.14th, So our passengers that arrived in time for our 10AM departure couldn't return to the Lower Mainland until the next day. And all passengers with tickets for the balance of the day coming had to turn around. We operated all depatures all day for passengers who resided or had arrived overnight north of the slide.







NPX going over the Mamquam River Bridge



Our Train Crew: Devon Persson , David Walmsley , Kirby Read, Rob Payette, Dylan Smith, Kyle Miller, Cathy Thomson, Josh Hyde, and George & Bonnie Game



Santa Claus and a Special Guest from the North Pole!



Winter Scene in our Car Shop





Boys & Girls Club of Vancouver - thanks to donations from Jake Kerr and Lisa Tunningly

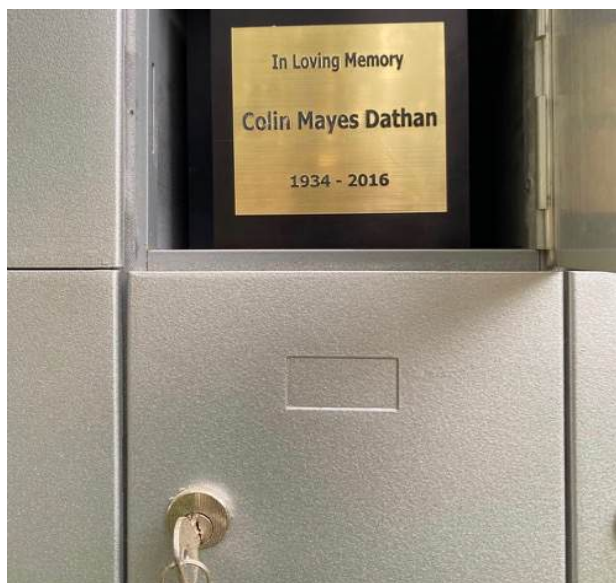


## Telegraph Memorial Garden Update

The Memorial Park Garden was set up to honour those that were members or supporters of the West Coast Railway Association or anyone in the rail industry whose relatives, friends or associates would like to be remembered.

Tony and Deb Dathan came up to the park last fall to place some momentos in memory of Tony and John's father: Colin Dathan. Colin was a long time member and Director of the WCRA and volunteered in many capacities over the years. Ed note: My best memories of Colin, being from the British Isles, were his signature Bermuda shorts and knee high socks he wore almost 12 months of the year. And for years, he would be the 'ticket checker' at the Day Out with Thomas line up for the train. If you didn't have tickets for that particular departure, there wasn't a chance of getting past him to get on board an earlier departure (since all were sold out in advance).

The Garden is located inside the MinRail loop at Mason Station. If you would like to honour someone with a placement at the Garden, please contact Bob Philip at [bob@wcra.org](mailto:bob@wcra.org) for further details.



## **White Pass & Yukon Route Railway arrives in Squamish**

Building the “White Pass & Yukon G-gauge Railroad Exhibit” for the Railway Museum of B.C.  
Dave Jones, WCRA Volunteer, November, 2024

### **Carl Vanderspek model railway rides again**

Roughly 4 years ago I started volunteering for the West Coast Railway Association at the Railway Museum of BC in Squamish, first helping restore their outdoor G gauge layout and servicing locomotives. Through this connection, I was asked if I'd like to help with the acquisition of an enormous model railway located in a basement of the late Carl Vanderspek of Burnaby BC. Carl, an entrepreneur and major benefactor of the museum, had passed away and all of his vast railroading collection was donated to the museum. The main part of this was a massive 3000 square foot indoor layout which modelled the famous White Pass & Yukon Route up north, running from Skagway to Whitehorse, famous for being a key component of the gold rush of the late 1800's. Packed within a 40' x 65' space was models of both Skagway and Whitehorse town areas and a massive central mountain range in between, circled by hundreds of feet of track, with one peak reaching the 12' ceiling.

The layout was originally built 30 years ago by a team from Bragdon Enterprises from California who spent months onsite creating the whole thing, plus other technical people wiring up a complicated DCC system with block control to run the trains. Carl's collection included 25 locomotives – all customized and “aged” with WP&Y logos – and over 500 pieces of rolling stock. In the middle of COVID times for two years, I was part of a group of museum board members Bob Philip, Singh Biln, Kyle Miller and volunteer Dave Walmsley, who painstakingly disassembled the layout into pieces and hauled it to Squamish.

### **Setting up the new home**

Once we decided on locating the layout in a side room in the “Car Shop” at the museum, I started prepping the space over the summer of 2023, with the help of a couple of museum staff members and GVGRC member Ron Scott. I spent lots of time on a cherry picker and dealing with knot-filled wood walls. After a summer of wall boarding, painting and adding replacement lighting, I started work to rebuild the layout in April of this year. As the guy who had cut the scenery to pieces, I was the only one who knew how to put it back together! I got a lot more than I bargained for, as the scenery pieces had been stuffed into a hot metal container and as they were made from a sandwich of window screening, bubble wrap and a synthetic rubber/plaster mix, there was damage and warping from heat over the summer.



Packing a 40 x 60' layout into a 20' by 35' room was a major logistical challenge. I had to section the main mountain range into a U-shaped affair and build the Skagway town portion from scratch. I also cut down and re-welded the support framing by 18" to lower the whole layout and track so kids could better see the trains. I had never done any modelling of this scale before, so it was a bit of a challenge!



David Jones atop the mountain layout



Layout closer to completion

## Bringing the new layout to life

Carl's original layout was incomplete in many ways, mainly in that it was lacking historically identifiable structures in Skagway, there were no trestles, and the famous cantilever bridge built in 1901/1902 – there was only a “placeholder” for these. I first added a double track bridge I donated which leads into Skagway. Three other new trestles were added next, followed by the cantilever bridge. I puzzled over the 120-year-old bridges engineering diagrams for a while – with intricate lattice work girders – in G gauge the 250 plus foot main span was 9 feet long. What could I model it with? Then memories of my childhood “Erector Set” (like Meccano) came back with its girders closely resembling these. With the Museum's approval I snapped up a couple of hundred 6” to 12” long girders from eBay and built the bridge out of it. Kids visiting the museum are enthralled to see the train cruising across it now, and there are a couple of tunnels as well. Credit goes to Ron Scott for helping with painting, detailing and doing a great job on the track ballasting.



Ron Scott ballasting the road bed

## Skagway Town Centre



## Skagway

For Skagway I added some interesting historical portions such as the Gold Rush cemetery – using headstones I created on my 3D printer – and the White Pass Ticket Office. There is also the Skagway Harbour area for which I've contributed a G gauge Mississippi style sternwheeler model boat. In July we received some awesome route map banners, a poster and some photos from the actual WP&YR marketing office who donated to our cause. The banners help explain what is modelled on the layout. After 350 hours of work, burning through close to 300-foot-long glue sticks and a couple of black bear encounters the exhibit is now open the public. Kids can activate the trains themselves to run it from Skagway over the mountain range and back, on a 200 ft loop of track.

I am proud to have added this exhibit for the enjoyment and education of museum guests, many of whom have ridden the real WP & YR railroad as tourists.

## CURRENT RAILWAY NEWS

### High Speed Rail Corridor

The U.S. Department of Transportation has granted nearly \$50 million to further study the idea of building a high-speed rail line that could carry people from Vancouver, B.C., to Portland, Ore., in roughly two hours.

The vision for a 'Cascade Corridor' with rapid transit linking the region and its innovation economy has been around for more than a decade. Over time, its supporters have expanded to include tech companies such as Microsoft and local, state and national elected leaders. The hoped-for trains would travel at speeds of up to 250 miles per hour. But progress on the idea has not been fast paced.

Back in 2017, Microsoft gave \$50,000 to a \$300,000 effort led by Washington state to study a high-speed train proposal. In 2021, officials from Washington, Oregon and British Columbia signed a memorandum of understanding to form a committee to coordinate the plan.

Then one year ago, the Cascadia route was accepted into the federal Corridor Identification and Development Program, managed by the FRA to take the first step in creating plans for the line. (TO)

### CPKC

The railroad will receive some much-needed motive power help starting in 2025 with a 170-unit order of new locomotives from Wabtec.

The railroad has been heavily spending on capacity work across its combined system to support new traffic and motive power has been in short supply to move tonnage across its network. The order consists of 170 ET44ACs with delivery expected to be spread across a number of years considering the large amount of rebuild orders Wabtec already has committed to. Road numbers and reporting marks for the new power hasn't been disclosed yet.

The ET44ACs will join an existing fleet of 33 ET44ACs, eight of which have recently joined the roster. These eight were a canceled Baffinland Iron Mines order in Canada that were selected from General Electric's field test units. The other 25 ET44ACs were purchased new before the merger by Kansas City Southern in 2019. The 25 former Kansas City Southern units are the most reliable power on CPKC's roster and are performing very well. Prior to the merger in 2023, Canadian Pacific had been the lone holdout across Class I railroads in adding Tier 4-compliant locomotives, not purchasing new units for over a decade before the CPKC merger.

It instead opted to rebuild existing GE and EMD AC traction locomotives, the latter of which were long stored on the railroad. Canadian Pacific's SD9043 MAC fleet was rebuilt to SD70ACUs in 2019 and 2020, adding 60 additional units to Canadian Pacific's active roster. Canadian Pacific's last new power purchase was in 2012 when it bought 30 ES44ACs from General Electric.

On Dec. 22nd, a westbound loaded CPKC train running on CN tracks (re: directional running) derailed in the Fraser Canyon due to a rock slide near Boston Bar BC. It started with rocks sliding from an existing slide between the highway above and the river below with the ledge holding the railway sliding away. A total of 8 to 10 grain cars slid down along the river shoreline. One grain car had floated down river so they were apparently empty. The line was re-opened by CN MOW crews the next afternoon. (VP)

## CN

On January 14th, the Surface Transportation Board approved the combination of CN and Iowa Northern Railway Company. The decision allows CN to combine IANR's 175 route miles with CN's nearly 20,000-mile rail network as early as February 13, 2025. A combined CN-IANR will offer single-line service to better connect grain, fertilizer, renewable fuels, and industrial markets to CN's North American network. (TRNS)

## VIA

On Dec. 9th, VIA announced it will re-equip its long-distance, regional, and remote-service trains with new single-level equipment including dome cars for its flagship train: The Canadian. VIA Rail's 70-year-old Budd-built stainless steel fleet is a testament to its durability and design. But nothing lasts forever, as the venerable Budd cars have served well beyond their useful lives.

It was expected VIA Rail would follow Amtrak's lead as Amtrak looks to replace its aging bilevel long-distance fleet. It was assumed that VIA would simply have its next generation equipment tacked on to whatever Amtrak ordered. Instead, VIA has apparently leapfrogged ahead of Amtrak.

Now, with funding approved in Ottawa and the promise of new equipment on the horizon, VIA Rail is making a statement: The Canadian is here to stay and it's getting a 21st-century makeover worthy of the last great streamliner. And although plans call for domes, VIA's Park series 9 round end observation cars which have been an iconic exclamation point on the end of the Canadian, VIA says they would be too expensive to build today. And VIA's plan is to equip only the Canadian with domes.



Plans call for every car type to feature an abundance of glass that should create an open feeling inside, while offering passengers great views outside, particularly in the panorama lounges that feature couches, tables, and floor-to-ceiling wrap-around windows.

Dining cars will get the wraparound treatment, too. But unlike Amtrak, the Canadian will “have a full kitchen, allowing our chefs to prepare tasty meals using fresh ingredients, with an emphasis on local produce”.

VIA also seeks four different types of sleeping cars. A room sleeper’s compartment will accommodate two people, with facing seats by day and upper and lower bunks at night. All rooms in the 'accessible sleeper' will be able to serve people with disabilities. The berth sleeper will be an 'all-section car' and will cater to economy passengers who want more overnight comfort than coach but don’t want to splurge for a private room. And the 'Prestige' sleepers at the other end of the budget spectrum will feature large rooms with fold-down double beds. (OC)

### **FRA approves first autonomous Rail Car Test Program**

The Federal Railroad Administration will allow Parallel Systems to test its autonomous, self-propelled flatcar system on a pair of Genesee & Wyoming short lines in Georgia.

In August 2023, the Los Angeles-based Parallel and the G&W railroads sought FRA permission to test the battery-electric container cars, which take aim at short-haul intermodal markets. The FRA attended a demonstration at the MxV Rail test facility in Pueblo, Colo., and conducted a public hearing.



“The Board has determined that granting the Petitioners’ request for relief for the purpose of performing the testing, related to the petition for a pilot test program, is in the public interest and consistent with railroad safety,” Karl Alexy, the FRA’s associate administrator for railroad safety, wrote in a Jan. 16th letter to Georgia Central Railway President James Irvin. (TRNS)

## **A LOOK BACK in our ARCHIVES**

### **WCRA Newsletter – September 1980 Association News**

Entertainment at our Sept. 30th meeting at 19:30 hours at the VIA/CN station will be a real highlight: slides and 'back stories' of the travels of Art Bain in search of steam across the US. MCM (Craig) chaired the meeting and tried to beat the record he set for 'shortest business meeting' set the previous month but just missed it. A letter from 'Transpo 86' was read thanking the association for its interest and possible participation if the event happens. The 'bottle' raffle was won by 'Rockin' Ron Pajala and the 'case of suds' raffle was won by Philip Pool.

Our one day excursion on the E&N that will cover the entire line on Oct 5th for a cost of \$38.50 which includes a chartered bus leaving from the Queen E theatre at 07:30 to catch the NB Dayliner out of Nanaimo at 10:50. Price includes a box lunch to be provided at Courtney prior to departing SB to Victoria. We will board our charter bus at 17:30 to travel to Swartz Bay to catch the 19:15 ferry and be back at the Queen E at 21:00 hours. Get your tickets from Gary Oliver and the tickets are moving fast with only 47 seats available.

### **Editorial**

The past couple of months have heard assorted expressions of frustration ranging to disgust by many WCRA members. The reason: the seemingly impossible task of organizing and actually running a steam excursion up the Fraser Valley line of the BC Hydro Railway in 1980 behind BC Rail's #3716 or #2860.

It seemed, at the outset of the project, that things started rolling well early enough. There was good support from the membership in terms of volunteers to assist with the planning and operation of the proposed excursion. Agreement in principle was obtained from BC Hydro as early as a year ago. Then started the seemingly impossible task of getting locomotive and consist confirmation from the Provincial Government. Frustration mounted, #3716 became #2860, yet we carried on. WCRA members rode BC Hydro freights to pick photo spots and familiarize us with the line and the excursion committee got down to the finer details like on board concessions etc. Still no final approvals. In late July, the OK finally came. The scrambling then begun to set a date, fix costs and ticket prices. Advertising time became extremely short at this point. Before costs were fixed, however, the road blocks started.

The Royal Hudson suddenly 'wasn't available' for the September weekend we had booked. We re-scheduled to the October Thanksgiving weekend. Then we found that BCH's Kitsilano trestle had been re-evaluated re: weight capacity and that even a 'dry' Hudson exceeded the new load limits. It appeared that could be worked out by diverting over CP to CN and then to New Westminster so work proceeded until we then found out that the New Westminster rail bridge would be closed for repairs over that weekend! And the final blow came from BC Rail when they stated both locomotives would be busy over the Thanksgiving weekend! And to cap off our situation, we heard how the Alberta Pioneer Railway Ass'n acquired CNR #6060, leased a consist and within 30 days sold out five trips each carrying 1000 passengers! Thus many of our members were disgusted with our situation. We don't plan to give up moving forward and will work toward a trip this spring. We need to thank our members who put so much time into the planning for this event.

### **BC Hydro Railway**

SW900 #942 has taken a 'leave of absence' from her duties at Carrall St. Yard. She is the last of original GE's still in service. #941 and #943 were just sold.

A runaway Seaspan barge damaged the Annacis Island (combo road and BCH rail) bridge disrupting rail service to the island for 36 hours. BC Hydro operates four trains a day over the 26 year old trestle.

### **BC Rail**

On August 24th, M630's #704 and #723 derailed in the NV yard. The units were pulling a potash cut on the Vancouver Wharves 'lead' when they and the first hopper behind them, came off the tracks resting diagonally across the road bed. Minor damage to the trucks and two mobile cranes were called in to re-rail them.

After more than 20 years of operation, the West Van 'Blue Bus' downtown connection with the daily BCR RDC train has been discontinued. Now you have to take a cab.

BC Rail's #3716 will be a Movie Star. She is back in Drake Street after a summer of subbing for the Royal Hudson on a few occasions and is being dressed up for a movie called 'The Grey Fox'. The movie is being produced by Mercury Pictures and is the 1905 era story of Bill Miner, the train robber. Rail footage will be shot on the BCR main line and also some footage shot on the Lake Whatcom Railway. The BCR locomotive is being 'converted' to coal with the conversion consisting of a welded heavy steel coal bin atop the tender.

**(Look Back - cont'd)**

A 'stack extension' will also be added and the locomotive will retain its CPR lettering. The two car train will consist of CP Rules Instruction car #59 and CP Business Car #32. The two coaches are being converted to wooden sided coaches by adding vertical wood siding over their steel exterior and lettered CPR. Mercury Pictures wants the era to look as realistic as possible. All this work is being done at Drake Street with a Sept. 20th deadline. Filming will be done at Parksville, Clinton, Kelly Lake, Cranbrook and Fort Steele.

The Royal Hudson's season isn't over yet. Although Sept. 14th was the last regular season run from North Van to Squamish. She will not be returning to Drake Street until at least till mid October. Premier Bill Bennett and his 19 member cabinet will be off on a 'whistle stop' tour of BC on BC Rail. Cabinet meetings will be held en route in Williams Lake, Prince George and Prince Rupert in addition to many stops along the way at smaller centres. The purpose is to give the cabinet an insight into BC's transportation needs and the challenges of northern development.

**CN**

The old CN steamship dock at the foot of Main Street is up for sale. The structure was the arrival and departure point for CN Coastal Steamship services for years, until the last sailing of the S.S. Prince George in 1974. Since then, the site has had several restaurant ventures, none of which have been successful. As the entire waterfront is currently being 're-vitalized', it is hard to see anything happening to it except to be demolished.

CN has placed an order for 20 new 3200 HP HR616 locomotives with Bombardier (MLW). They will feature a 16 cylinder prime mover and are expected to be similar in appearance to the late MLW M630's.

CN's Track Inspection Car 'Sir Sanford Fleming' has been busy travelling CN's line to Prince George and Prince Rupert.

**CP**

CP Rail has sold its 50% interest in the Northern Alberta Railway to Canadian National. The transaction, once approved, would give CN total ownership of the NAR. The NAR operates about 925 miles of trackage from Edmonton into various regions of northern Alberta. CP will still retain established traffic rights over the line as part of the deal.

For its role in a new CP commercial, the eastern entrance of the Connaught Tunnel was spray painted white, and the lettering recesses done in black cardboard(!) so they would stand out better.



The new commercial's theme is 'We're proud of yesterday, but planning for Tomorrow'.

CP has ordered 500 new covered hopper cars for potash service from Hawker - Siddley Canada. The 100 ton cars will be delivered between December, 1980 and February 1981 at a total cost of \$27 million. This order will increase CP's covered hopper fleet to 6900.

CP is 'borrowing' BC Rail's mid train control car RCC7 for testing and was seen in service EB out of Coquitlam on August 18th, at Banff on Labour Day weekend and at Alyth yard in Calgary the same weekend.

Chop nosed CP Rail RS-3 #8427 passed through Vancouver enroute to new owner Crown Zellerbach on Vancouver Island.

CP's 'Princess of Vancouver' will end service in mid-October 'for the winter'. But speculation is that this could be the end of CP freight service to the island.

Major bridge projects involving deck replacement are under way on CP Rail's mainline bridges at Pitt River and Kanaka Creek (Maple Ridge). The existing steel girder deck sections are being replaced with new steel and concrete sections and gravel ballast. Work is being done on Mondays and Thursdays using floating or regular cranes to replace sections. As a result, Via trains on those days will be re-routed on CN rails from New Westminster to Matsqui.

### **Metro Transit**

A meeting behind closed doors resulted in no hope of a decision on Light Rail Transit in Vancouver within the next month. The GVRD will be meeting with Municipal Affairs Minister Bill Vander Zalm for a series of meetings in mid October.

### **VIA**

Via's Super Continental #4 on Sept. 3rd, was spotted crossing the Pitt River bridge with an interesting lash up on the front end: a CN SD40, a VIA F9B, a VIA FP 9A and a CN GP9 with 18 coaches.

The first of VIA's 21 LRC (Light Rapid Comfortable) train sets is set for delivery in August 1981. The total order at Bombardier is for 21 locomotives and 50 coaches. The new train sets are capable of 125 mph but will start at a lower speed of 95 mph. They are lighter than conventional passenger coaches and incorporate a special banking system that allows the higher speed on the existing mainline.

The initial route is likely Toronto-Montreal for testing and remaining close to the manufacturer's facilities.

VIA still has 73 passenger cars that still require large blocks of ice for their air conditioning in the summer months. But it is becoming harder and harder to find suppliers of large blocks of ice. This is a challenge for western Canada routes as the only four suppliers of ice the size required are all located in Ontario and Quebec.

### **AMTRAK**

When Amtrak's 'Montrealer' hit a gravel truck at a crossing south of Montreal on Aug. 18th, 13 people were injured but none seriously. Eight of the eleven coaches were derailed with some of them overturning. It was fortunate nobody was seriously injured or killed. It took three days to clear the wreckage.

During the 'beer strike' in BC, many were heading to Blaine WA to pick up their suds causing long line ups at the border. So Skyline Travels Jack McLaren had a 'Blaine-storm' of an idea – the 'Blaine Beer Transportation Package'. For \$8.50, you got a Greyhound bus from Vancouver at 14:45 or 18:15 hours to Blaine, picked up your suds, and returned on the Pacific International at 22:17 hours!

The Superliners currently on the Pacific International will disappear soon to be re-assigned south to inaugurate permanent Superliner service on the 'Desert Wind' and 'The San Francisco Zephyr'. So it looks like the PI will revert back to Amfleet equipment.

Amtrak is operating 'football specials' from Portland to Seattle (with a special connection from Eugene) for the Seattle Seahawks home games for the rest of the season. It has become extremely popular as evidenced by the train departing Portland on Sept. 7th with BN#6584, AMTK #290, 252 and 215 and 15 Superliner coaches!

### **Alberta's 'Jubilee Express'**

As mentioned above in the Editorial, the Express ran five very successful trips: each one with a different route; Edmonton to Camrose, Edmonton to Whitecourt, a one way trip to Calgary (return by bus), Calgary to Drumheller and Calgary to Hanna AB.

The history of CN #6060 is quite interesting. Built in 1944 – the first of the last 20 steam locomotives built for CN at MLW. The 'Mountain' 4-8-4 rolls on 73" drivers and worked in the east until 1955 when she was converted from coal to oil and transferred to CN's Western Division.

**(Look Back - cont'd)**

She was retired in 1962 and put on display at Jasper's National Park. But in 1972 she was returned to service by CN and # 6015 replaced her on display. Her CN excursion career came to an end in July, 1980 and on August 5th, she headed west, purchased by the Alberta Government and started a 'new life': a home and schedule with the APRA in Edmonton.

**Kettle Valley Railway Society Update**

As the rails come up through Myra Canyon, a report prepared by the consultants leaked stating that the tourist railway could have made money. The Cumberland Group was commissioned by BC's Travel Industry Development program to study the possibility of a successful tourist operation. It reported that although it would take a capital outlay of \$13 million to upgrade the line and purchase a train set, 'A Kettle Valley Scenic Railway' could have an excellent chance of paying its overhead and even make a modest profit, if managed efficiently. And it would "assist in drawing more people to the Okanagan". However, the figures provided by Provincial Secretary Evan Wolfe were much higher: \$25 million! And as the rails come up, the irony is the line was in fairly good shape with upgrades done in the recent years including new ties etc.

**A Potential 'Steam Extravaganza'**

Word has it that the new Sacramento State Rail Museum will try to arrange a steam extravaganza to celebrate its official dedication of the facility in April, 1981. Current plans are to have UP #8444, SP#4449, RH #2860 (as part of her US spring tour) and 2-3 museum steam locomotives. If UP has completed its rebuilt of Challenger #3985 in time, she will double head with # 8444!

**The 'Discovery Train'**

Canada's Discovery Train was in the area the first part of September offering tours of Canadian history. Visitors rode through ten display coaches (ex American Freedom train cars) on a moving belt! The train was open from 12:00 to 20:00 hours Sept. 3-7 in Port Coquitlam in the west end of the CP Rail Yard and in Richmond from Sept. 10-14. On Sept. 15th, it left from Coquitlam for Penticton behind CP SD40-2's \$5769 & #5715.

**UBC Course 'Beyond the Last Spike'**

The University of BC is offering an eight day night school course on railways with different speakers each Tuesday. Speakers include our own member Fritz Lehman, Barry Sanford, Robert Turner and Mark Wilson (writer with the Vancouver Province).

**CREDIT LINES:**

Editor: Craig McDowall Distribution:  
Jeremy Davy ISSN 1204-072X  
RMBC News Vol. 64 - Issue 4

**Contributors:**

TRNS (Trains Magazine)  
TO (Trainorders.com) (  
OC (Ottawa Citizen)  
VP (Vancouver Province)

Note: WCRA volunteers:: Do not forget to send your volunteer hours for 2024 and send to [donna@wcra.org](mailto:donna@wcra.org). Deadline is February 28th, 2025.

Send news contributions direct to 404 Bury Lane, West Vancouver, B.C. V7S 1K3

On the Internet to: [news@wcra.org](mailto:news@wcra.org)

Phone news to (604) 926-4851

Check us out online at: [visitrmbc.org](http://visitrmbc.org) Contact us: Heritage Park: 604-898-9336  
CN Roundhouse & Conference Centre: 604 898-9336

**Back Cover Photo: CPKC new paint scheme. Photo by: Russ Grycan  
Taken on Dec. 12th at McCracken at MP121.8 on the Shuswap Sub**



Published by the West Coast Railway Assoc.-[visitrmbc.org](http://visitrmbc.org) ISSN 1204-072X  
P.O. Box 2387, Stn. Main, Squamish, B.C. V8B 0B6 Canada Post, Canadian  
Publications Mail Sales Agreement #40007853 Vol. 64 Issue #4