



# CINDER S

## MARCH 2010



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Newsletter of the  
**PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER**  
**NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.**  
 Post Office Box 7302  
 Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302

**PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER, NRHS WEBSITE ADDRESS: [www.phillyNRHS.com](http://www.phillyNRHS.com)**

## Record Snows Blanket Region, Transit

by Frank Tatnall

Never before have Philadelphia and other cities in the Northeast suffered through a winter like this one! By the third week in February Philadelphia already had been buried by an amazing 71.9 inches of snow during the 2009-2010 season, the most ever in 125 years of record-keeping. The previous record holder was the 1995-1996 season when 65.5 inches were reported. On February 2 the famous Pennsylvania groundhog Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow and forecast six more weeks of winter, so the snowfall total may further escalate.

A murderers row of storms dumped 23.2 inches on Saturday, December 19, then 28.5 inches on Saturday, February 6 and—on top of that accumulation—another 15.8 inches four days later. A fast-moving “clipper” dropped one to two inches of snow in the suburbs on Tuesday morning the 16<sup>th</sup> but only an official 0.3 inch at Philadelphia International Airport. The February 6 storm was the second biggest in the City’s history, but because the blizzard of the 10<sup>th</sup> arrived on a Wednesday, it paralyzed the region even more than had the earlier weekend storms, compounding the problems for all forms of transportation. PennDOT said that it already had spent \$15.3 million treating roads and clearing State highways in southeastern Pennsylvania, while Peco Energy reported that the Wednesday onslaught was the most disruptive in terms of power outages since the ice storm of 1994. (On Saturday, January 30, the Philadelphia region had narrowly escaped even more misery when parts of South Jersey received up to eight inches but southeastern Pennsylvania saw just a light snowfall.)

### SEPTA

The relentless February storms were equal opportunity villains as highways, airlines and railroads all were heavily impacted—but SEPTA was especially hard hit. As the snow began to pile up on Saturday morning the 6<sup>th</sup> SEPTA officials decided to virtually shut down the rail and bus systems at 2 PM, giving the public just one hour’s notice. Before the curfew, many Regional Rail trains were delayed or annulled and service on a few lines such as the R7 Trenton and R2 Wilmington was suspended due to problems on the Northeast Corridor. A total of 381 out of 492 scheduled trains that day were annulled. There was some concern that passengers who had ridden SEPTA to the Philadelphia Auto Show at the Convention Center might be stranded in center city, but an announcement reportedly was made at the show warning of

the shutdown. Only the Broad Street and Market-Frankford Lines remained in operation, and they ran half-hourly all night rather than ending service just after midnight as is normally the case.

SEPTA said that the rationale for its unprecedented closure was to end service in an orderly manner before conditions forced a halt, sometimes under unpleasant or even dangerous conditions. The new policy was intended to avoid having trains and buses stuck in drifts, their passengers trapped for long periods, or passengers waiting at transit stops or stations for vehicles that never would arrive. Getting train crews and bus and trolley operators to their assigned locations also would be increasingly difficult. SEPTA’s new shutdown policy worked as intended, the agency reporting that no vehicles with passengers aboard were stranded in the storm. Very few autos braved center city streets and all flights were cancelled at the Airport.

By the next morning, Sunday, the skies cleared and progress had been made in clearing tracks and plowing the main highways. Air service resumed and some auto traffic could be seen, although many side streets and roads remained blocked—not to mention the thousands of driveways whose owners had not yet managed to clear them. Limited service on Regional Rail resumed around 6 AM and some trolley and bus lines began running again but with substantial delays due to icy streets, while the Norristown High Speed Line remained shut down. Mayor Nutter lifted the City’s state of emergency at 12 Noon. Service problems on Regional Rail continued into Monday morning with switch failures at “Arsenal” and “Newtown Junction” interlockings, creating numerous delays.

But, unbelievably, the worst was yet to come. Before the weekend was over, weather forecasters began warning that a follow-up storm would blast the northeastern states on Wednesday the 10th. And this one also would strike New York City and New England, which had largely escaped the earlier blizzard. On Tuesday SEPTA issued a somewhat equivocal statement that it might or might not cancel all services the next day, depending on how bad the storm turned out to be. “We’re going to keep the system running as long as we can,” said a SEPTA spokesman. “We will make an hour-by-hour decision.” The unspoken message was that SEPTA would get its customers to work but there was no firm guarantee it would get them home. The agency said it would try to give riders two hours’ notice of any service cutoffs via its website, Twitter account and the news media. (Continued on Page 3)

NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER, INC.  
Post Office Box 7302, Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302

*Founded 1936, incorporated 1973 as a 501c3 non-profit corporation*

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**MEETINGS:** 7:30 PM, third Friday of each month (except second Friday in December), at Faculty Club, Second Floor, Thomas Jefferson University Alumni Hall, 1020 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA. Dinner (optional) at 6:15 PM (\$20.00 per person), Meeting at 7:30 PM. No meeting July or August.

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES:** \$53.00 per person, which includes Chapter and National dues. Chapter-only dues \$17.00 per person per year. Membership applications should be forwarded to: Membership Chair, P. O. Box 7302, Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302. Membership in the parent National Railway Historical Society is required to hold Chapter-only membership.

**ADDRESS CHANGES** should be sent to the Editor at Post Office Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353. **PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER** and E-mail address so our Membership List is complete. We will notify the NRHS National Headquarters of the change.

*Cinders* is published 11 times a year by Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS, Inc. Correspondence regarding *Cinders* should be directed to the Editor at P. O. Box 7302, Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302. If your *Cinders* is received damaged or incomplete, contact the Editor at the address shown below for replacement.

**EXCHANGE COPIES** should be sent to: R. L. Eastwood, Jr., Editor, P. O. Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353.

## MEETING NOTICE

### FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 19, 2010

Faculty Club, Alumni Hall, Thomas Jefferson University,  
1020 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA (three blocks south of  
Market East Station)

#### **Dinner at 6:15 PM (\$20.00 per person), Meeting at 7:30 PM**

Parking in Wills Eye Hospital garage, 9<sup>th</sup> Street above Locust (\$6.00 after 6 PM), Parkway garage, also 9<sup>th</sup> above Locust (\$9.00 after 5 PM). There is a new underground garage directly across from the Jefferson Alumni Hall (entrance on 11<sup>th</sup> Street just above Locust) which is very handy. *(Please note that we are in the process of updating the garages and prices and this will be completed during the fall months.)*

On Friday, March 19, 2010, we honor one member receiving a 50-year NRHS membership pin, plus 28 others receiving 25-year pins.

Our program will be 8mm movies provided by West Jersey Chapter Member Russell Jackson. Among the titles to be screened, as time permits, are **Testing Metroliners, German Steam, Montreal Observation Trolley, Queensboro Bridge (NY) Railway, Subways of Europe and Munich Transport Expo 1965.**

The evening begins with our usual optional sit-down dinner in the Faculty Club, Jefferson Alumni Hall, beginning at 6:15 PM, at a cost of \$20.00 per person. **DINNER RESERVATIONS ARE MANDATORY and MUST BE MADE BY TUESDAY EVENING, MARCH 16, 2010 to National Director Larry Eastwood at 215-947-5769.** The entrée choices are **Roast Pork Loin or Chop** over champagne sauce, mashed sweet potatoes and grilled vegetables, **OR Sauteed Chicken topped with Mozzarella and asparagus**, new potatoes and cubed grilled vegetables, with Crustini garnish. Blueberry pie with whipped cream will be served for dessert. Tossed garden salad with marinated cucumbers, red onions and tomato, rolls and butter, and the usual beverages round out the meal. Why not come out for dinner before our meeting, as we honor our longtime members. It's an enjoyable full meal, plus informal and interesting conversation, and it's still priced at an affordable \$20.00 per person.

At our April 16 meeting, Member Ray Cooney is expected to provide an oral history on his long career which began with the New York Central Railroad, culminating in Conrail's Blue Room.

## MEETING CANCELLATION NOTICE

In the event of snow, sleet or freezing rain on a Philadelphia Chapter meeting day, Chapter officers will make a decision on whether to hold the meeting as scheduled. If in doubt, members should telephone 215-947-5769 after 12 Noon on the day of the meeting for a recorded advisory. Thank you.

## Notice of Annual Meeting & Election

Notice is hereby given of election of Chapter officers for the year 2010-2011, to be held at the Annual Meeting of Philadelphia Chapter, National Railway Historical Society on Friday evening, April 16, 2010, at the Faculty Club, Thomas Jefferson University Alumni Hall, 1020 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107, beginning at 7:30 PM.

Any member in good standing who is interested in service as President, Senior Vice President, Vice President & Treasurer, Secretary or National Director, may be nominated from the floor at the March 19 or April 16 meeting, or by placing your name in nomination by writing, before April 1, 2010 to: Mr. C. Bruce Irvin, Chairman, Nominating Committee, Philadelphia Chapter NRHS, 116 Linden Drive, New Holland, PA 17557-9490.

In addition to the election of officers, the floor will be open for discussion of such other business as is pertinent to the well-being of the Chapter. The Chapter's officers encourage the active participation of our members in its operations and management.

**Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS**  
**Board of Directors Meeting – Spring, 2010**  
**Tuesday, April 13, 2010**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Passenger Services Conference Room**  
**Amtrak 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station**

**All members of Philadelphia Chapter are welcome and encouraged to attend**

## Record Snows Blanket Region, Transit (Continued from Page 1)

Matthew Mitchell of DVARP told the *Inquirer* that he disagreed with the new policy. "It's just easing management's job...No one says this is going to be easy [but] part of the reason we invest in this rail system is so that we can count on it when the roads are bad." It's in times like these, he said, that SEPTA management "needs to realize that thousands of people are relying on them, and it's now more important than ever" to keep the system running. In its defense, SEPTA said that it wanted to avoid a repeat of the December storm when 166 vehicles—mostly buses—had to be towed, and scores of passengers were stranded for hours on a Norristown High Speed Line train that became stuck in the drifts. General Manager Joseph Casey wrote a letter to the *Inquirer* on February 17 explaining the new policy.

Right on cue, the huge nor'easter struck early Wednesday morning, and after a pre-dawn lull it intensified in the afternoon. Schools, government offices and the Airport were shut down in anticipation of the coming whiteout. PennDOT marshaled a fleet of 420 plow trucks and heavy machinery to battle the storm, and the City prepared its own snowfighting equipment. With just a mixture of rain and sleet to contend with, SEPTA operated reasonably well during the morning rush. Some delays were reported and eight trains were cancelled, but ridership was well below normal as thousands heeded the advice of City officials to stay home. As the day wore on and the snow returned with a vengeance, service deteriorated but Regional Rail kept running, although 100 more trains had to be annulled and some 230 were delayed out of 737 scheduled runs. Some express trains made local stops on the R5 Paoli-Thorndale line, R2 Wilmington service was cut back to Marcus Hook and R6 Norristown Line service was suspended.

Starting at 1 PM on Wednesday many city and suburban bus services were cancelled while others were detoured due to road conditions. Subway-surface trolleys continued to operate—some with detours—as did suburban Routes 101 and 102. On the Norristown High Speed Line with its third rail power source two-car trains were being operated as a storm precaution. But the line had to be shut down around 11 AM after three trains lost their third-rail shoes and became immobilized. (Unfortunately, SEPTA has disposed of all of its old Red Arrow plows and other snowfighting equipment.) At about the same time a tree fell across the NHSL tracks and, after the tree was cleared and power restored, service was resumed around 12:30 but later was suspended again. At 5 PM all bus service was shut down as was the Route 15 Girard Avenue trolley line. The Broad Street subway and Market-Frankford Line operated regular service, continuing through the early morning hours as in the previous storm.

Thursday the 11<sup>th</sup>, the "day after," also proved to be no picnic. On Regional Rail 214 trains were annulled and about 300 delayed, as the big digout slowly progressed. Service was suspended on the R6 Cynwyd, R7 Chestnut Hill East and R8 Fox Chase Lines, while the R1 Airport was running only half its normal schedule. Some R2 Wilmington trains were cancelled while others were cut back at Marcus Hook, R3 West Trenton trains were operating only as far north as Neshaminy Falls and there was no R5 service between Lansdale and Doylestown. Ridership was estimated at 25 percent of normal levels. Many trains crews had difficulty in getting to their reporting stations, further slowing service.

Subway-surface cars, as well as Route 15 and 101-102 suburban trolleys, were operating but fewer than 50 city and suburban bus routes were in service—some over shortened or detoured routes. Only local trains were running in the Broad Street subway but the Market-Frankford Line was operating normally. At 9:20 PM R3 train #387 struck an automobile which had been abandoned on the Woodland Avenue grade crossing at Morton station. This caused three trains to be annulled and two others were delayed, but #387 was finally able to proceed to Elwyn after being held at the scene for an hour and a half. Lead MU #178 sustained minor damage.

Friday the 12<sup>th</sup> presented additional challenges. Regional Rail continued to operate with delays, while about half of SEPTA's bus routes now were back in service. Philadelphia and some suburban schools remained closed, easing the burden on transit but center city was returning to normal. Mayor Nutter declared that "the City is back in business." R2 Wilmington trains continued to be turned back at Marcus Hook, apparently due to track restrictions on Amtrak. All trolley lines were running, but Route 11 cars were diverted to Chester Avenue between 49<sup>th</sup> and 58<sup>th</sup> Streets due to a water main break at 52<sup>nd</sup> Street & Woodland Avenue. The Norristown High Speed Line was operating local service only on 20-minute headways. SEPTA said that most of its parking lots had been plowed but the head-high piles of snow significantly reduced their capacity. It promised that contractors would be working over the Valentine's Day weekend to restore parking capacity at all stations. To help lure people back downtown, SEPTA announced reduced round-trip fares on Regional Rail, good during evening hours and over the February 13-15 and 20-21 weekends, as well as weekend cash fares of \$1 on the Broad Street and Market-Frankford Lines.

An *Inquirer* editorial in Friday morning's editions said that SEPTA "did a reasonably good job of staring down Mother Nature this week," but that it should review its new "one-way guarantee: We'll get you there but you're on your own getting back." During Wednesday's nor'easter the policy was used for bus routes only and two hours' notice was given before the 5 PM shutdown, while most rail routes continued to operate. But, echoing DVARP's Mitchell, the *Inquirer* declared that "for riders accustomed to SEPTA's braving even the worst storms, the policy was bad news." By Monday the 15<sup>th</sup> service still was suspended on eight city bus routes as a result of impassable streets, and on Wednesday, a full week after the storm, the last two lines, Route 2 on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets and Route 47M on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets, finally were restored. But many routes continued to use detours.

The newspaper's lukewarm commendation was printed just before Regional Rail passengers suffered through a major service disruption. Around 4:50 on Friday afternoon, February 12, SEPTA's Operations Center lost control of the key "16<sup>th</sup> Street Junction" interlocking in North Philadelphia, which caused a massive number of train delays and cancellations. It required 12 pages of the daily operations report to list all of the trains affected, before the interlocking was returned to full operation at 8:30 PM. R6 service to Norristown was suspended for two hours and numerous other trains were delayed for anywhere between 60 and 90 minutes as maintainers had to manually line the switches. Cause of the failure was listed as frozen air lines, resulting from a failed air drying system. Systemwide, the total number of annulled trains during the day reached 100, with more than 400 others delayed.

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## Record Snows Blanket Region, Transit (Continued from Page 3)

The stress of the storms finally took its toll on Regional Rail's aging MU fleet. By February 16 the shop count reached an unacceptably high 70, which caused nearly 20 trains to be shorted equipment with the inevitable crowding. Another side effect of the storm was reported on Sunday morning the 14<sup>th</sup>, when the #0 track at Fern Rock had to be taken out of service because contractors clearing the station platform shoveled large mounds of snow onto the track. And as late as February 19 Route 15 Girard Avenue still was using shuttle buses as piles of snow along the street were causing parked autos to foul the track area.

A bizarre incident unrelated to the storm occurred at 5:30 PM on Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup>, when NJ Transit P40 diesel #4800 on the rear of eastbound ACES train #7174 from Atlantic City caught fire on the Corridor just west of Morrisville. (ALP-44 #4405 was powering the train on the head end.) Flames erupted from the stack of #4800 (ex-Amtrak #812) with such intensity that they burned through the catenary over track #2, forcing Amtrak to de-energize all four tracks. Service was suspended for nearly two hours, after which both Amtrak and SEPTA R7 trains had to use #3 and 4 tracks while catenary over both #1 and 2 was being restrung. The burned wire reportedly dropped onto the roofs of the ACES cars, but only six minor injuries were reported as all 62 passengers and five crew members were evacuated safely. Eight R7 trains were annulled before the railroad was partially reopened at 7:15 PM, and seven Amtrak trains including Acela #2220 were delayed for up to three hours. Keystone #670 was trapped behind the disabled ACES on #2, its passengers later transferred to train #168. R7 train #9723, stuck on #1 track near Levittown, was reversed to "Grundy" interlocking at Bristol, but could not cross over to #3 due to snowed-in switches. Its passengers eventually were put on an eastbound Amtrak train. Cause of the stack fire was found to be a defective fuel injector which allowed a quantity of diesel fuel to be pumped into the cylinders and ignite.

### AMTRAK

The twin storms did not treat Amtrak kindly. As February began the railroad still was recovering from the severe snowstorm that blanketed Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia on January 30, a storm that bypassed the Philadelphia area. Most Regional service south of Washington had been cancelled over the January 30-31 weekend, along with several long-distance trains. Then, as the record-breaking blizzard approached on Friday, February 5, Amtrak again placed its "snow plan" into effect, cancelling all service south of Washington except for the Silver Service trains and the **Auto Train**. The **Silver Star** and **Silver Meteor** also made additional stops enroute.

The next day, Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup>, as the narrowly-focused storm dumped vast amounts of snow on Virginia, Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia (but not New York) all service south of Washington was cancelled, including the **Auto Train**. Numerous Regional trains and Acela Expresses were annulled between Washington and New York, as was the **Capitol Limited** between Washington and Chicago and the New York-New Orleans **Crescent**. The northbound **Auto Train** on Saturday was terminated at Richmond, VA, its passengers put up in hotels, rather than having them arrive at the Lorton terminal in the middle of a major snowstorm with nowhere to go in their automobiles. They finally arrived in Lorton on Monday to retrieve their cars.

Most of these cancellations were continued on Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup>, with all service south of Washington withdrawn as reports came in of downed trees and power lines along CSX's RF&P Subdivision between Washington and Richmond. Many more Regionals and Acelas were cancelled between Washington and New York on this first day after the storm. Those trains that did run, including some Harrisburg-New York Keystones and the **Pennsylvanian**, often encountered severe delays. Things did not get much better on Monday the 8<sup>th</sup> as most of the Sunday cancellations were extended both on and off the Northeast Corridor, with the exception of the Acelas and the **Crescent** which returned to operation. Part of the problem on the Corridor was Amtrak's inability to get all tracks open, forcing single or two-track operation in some areas. On Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup> many Acelas were again cancelled along with a few Regionals, and among the long-distance trains only the **Crescent** was operated.

On Wednesday the 10<sup>th</sup>, the day the second storm dropped anywhere from 15 to 20 inches on Northeast Corridor cities, Amtrak had a service plan which drastically cut both Acela Express and Regional frequencies along the Corridor. But the stations were as busy or busier than usual because the airports were closed and major highways in the region either were shut down or too dangerous to drive. Only three Acelas were operated in each direction between Washington and New York, while 16 Regionals were cancelled. In addition, 17 Keystone Service trains were annulled between Philadelphia and Harrisburg along with six others between Philadelphia and New York, although the New York-Pittsburgh **Pennsylvanian** did run. All services south and west of Washington were cancelled, with the exception of the New York-New Orleans **Crescent** and 171/176 the Boston-Lynchburg (VA) Regional trains, which operate over Norfolk Southern's mainline. These trains made their diesel/electric engine swaps at 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station to avoid delays in Washington. CSX's RF&P Subdivision was plagued by frozen switches, fallen trees and single-track operation in some locations. Local Virginia Railway Express commuter service on CSX was cancelled, which wasn't a serious problem since the City of Washington and the Federal government were virtually shut down for several days.

The day after the storm, Thursday the 11<sup>th</sup>, the same trains were cancelled on the Corridor and service south of Washington to and through Richmond also was not operated. Only four Keystone trains were run to and from Harrisburg, #641, 655, 644 and 656, as the center tracks (#2 and 3) as far as Paoli remained closed to traffic. But by Friday the 12<sup>th</sup> all Acelas and virtually all Regional trains were back in service as were all Keystone trains, although three Regional trains were cancelled between Washington and Richmond. Silver Service trains were restarted on Friday as was the **Carolynian** between New York and Charlotte, but the **Capitol Limited**, **Auto Train**, the New York-Savannah **Palmetto** and the New York-Chicago **Cardinal** did not resume until the next day. Full Corridor service also was restored on Saturday.

Locomotive and equipment breakdowns, switch failures and late turns added to Amtrak's weather-related delays. A few examples: On Saturday morning, February 6, train #660 out of Harrisburg stalled near Lancaster when engine #20 lost traction power. Following train #662 shoved the train to Lancaster station and took its passengers on board, incurring a delay of 84 minutes. Later that morning, Harrisburg-bound train #661 broke down near Middletown when AEM-7 #908 failed. Diesel #156 was sent from

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Harrisburg to tow the train to the station, with a two-hour delay. That same day train #88 stopped south of Baltimore station when HHP-8 #651 lost traction power. Two work train engines towed the disabled train to the station where its passengers were transferred to Acela #2212. Acela #2253 had to be terminated at Baltimore that afternoon when catenary power failed, and train #164 stalled south of Wilmington when HHP-8 #655 lost power. The train was towed to Wilmington where engine #654 from Philadelphia was added to the head end for the rest of the trip to New York (with a delay of three hours).

On Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup> Keystone train #620 has to be terminated at Parkesburg due to a power failure on AEM-7 #949. Following train #622 coupled to the disabled #620 and hauled it to Philadelphia, incurring a delay of nearly two hours. In the midst of the snowstorm around 8:15 AM on the 10<sup>th</sup> numerous signal power outages occurred between Aberdeen, MD, and Wilmington, which delayed several trains. At 1 PM the crew of train #95 with AEM-7 #945 reported a tree in the catenary south of Elkton, MD, and a few minutes later the train struck a tree lying on the #3 track at milepost 55.9 near Principio, MD. In backing up a pantograph was damaged but the train was able to get to "Davis" interlocking at Newark, DE, where it crossed over to #2 and proceeded south, four hours late. Other trains had to be held at Wilmington until #95 got out of the way and track #3 was reopened. Northbound train #56 **Vermont** was delayed at Wilmington during the snowstorm on the 10<sup>th</sup> due to a smoking traction motor on AEM-7 #953. The train continued at reduced speed to 30<sup>th</sup> Street where motor #906 was substituted, delaying the train for 50 minutes.

### NJ TRANSIT, PATCO

Like its counterparts at SEPTA, NJ Transit had many headaches in coping with these storms. When the first snow arrived on Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup>, NJT was forced to suspend all bus service in South Jersey. The emergency cross-honoring program was activated, allowing bus passengers to use their tickets and passes on the Atlantic City rail line as well as on River Line light rail trains without additional charge. But by noon, as the storm intensified, NJT said that River Line trains would be subject to 15-minute delays and the street-running operation between Walter Rand Transportation Center and the Entertainment Center in Camden was suspended. Bus service resumed on Sunday morning, subject to delays due to road conditions, but River Line trains continued to turn back at the Walter Rand Center. This very concentrated storm had little effect on the northern half of the State or on New York City, while dumping more than two feet of snow on parts of South Jersey.

PATCO maintained regular operations—or as close to it as possible—over the February 6-7 weekend, running trains every 15 or 20 minutes to keep the tracks and third rails clear. All trains made all local stops, and the same procedure was followed during and after the next storm on Wednesday the 10<sup>th</sup>. NJT, however, encountered major problems on Wednesday, suspending all bus service in South Jersey that morning and extending the shutdown statewide effective at 7 PM. This was the first time in memory that all NJT buses had been halted. Commuter rail trains ran on a greatly reduced schedule after 2 PM, with many trains combined or cancelled. The River Line ran every 30 minutes on a special schedule, subject to delays, between Trenton and the Walter Rand Center in Camden. The next day, Thursday, NJT operated fewer

trains, especially on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, due to various track and signal problems which forced some trains to be combined. Parking at many stations was restricted because of plowing operations and huge piles of snow. Bus service was sporadically restored Thursday morning throughout the State, as major highways were cleared of snow.

### FREIGHT RAILROADS

Freight railroads in the Northeast also took it on the chin. The January 30, February 6 and 10 storms created major problems for CSX and Norfolk Southern, as well as their shortline connections, with record snowfalls and whiteout conditions in some areas. As mentioned above, CSX's mainline between Washington, DC, and Richmond was especially hard hit, with many frozen switches, stalled trains and downed trees making freight movements difficult and forcing Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express to suspend operations over the normally busy route. CSX also was the victim of a massive freight train derailment on Saturday, February 6, along the steep Sand Patch grade west of Cumberland, MD. A 130-car eastbound coal train powered by just two locomotives lost its air on the hill and derailed 113 loaded cars, scattering them in jumbled heaps along the right-of-way. Crews had the unenviable task of cleaning up the mess just after some two feet of snow had blanketed the area. For the next two days CSX was forced to detour trains over circuitous routes, and Amtrak's **Capitol Limited** which uses the same line was cancelled.

Both CSX and NS warned customers that the doubleheaded blizzards would cause delays of at least 48 hours for freight deliveries. NS on February 6 invoked "force majeure," which means an event which cannot be reasonably anticipated (sometimes called an "act of God"), thus relieving the railroad of any contract penalties for late deliveries. Many freight trains were being held in terminals to avoid having them stranded in possibly inaccessible locations. Some semblance of normal operations resumed on Monday and Tuesday the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, but then were shut down again for the next two days as blizzard #2 struck the Northeast. NS even added a "photo gallery" to its website ([www.nscorp.com](http://www.nscorp.com)) showing pictures of trains snowed in at various locations. Several of the photos were taken at Abrams yard near Norristown by local NS Manager Rudy Husband.

Now that Philadelphia has broken every snowfall record in the books, just about everyone except skiers and snowboarders are saying "enough already." But there are a few more weeks of winter still to come, and any further weather events will be reported in the next issue of *Cinders*.

## What Happened to Pioneer III #155??

With the forthcoming delivery of SEPTA's Silverliner V cars in the coming months, and the retirement of the Budd and St. Louis Silverliners, the Chapter is attempting to maintain an all-time Silverliner roster.

Does anyone have information on former Pennsylvania Railroad Pioneer III #155, built by Budd in 1958. The cars were originally numbered 150-155, then under Penn Central as 294-299. One car, PRR 155, was off the roster by 1974, supposedly destroyed by fire. If any member has information on the events leading up to the 155's retirement, please contact the Editor. The remaining five cars (Silverliner I's) were ultimately numbered SEPTA 244-248.

# PHILADELPHIA

# EXPRESS



## FRANK G. TATNALL, JR.

**Editor's Note:** Frank Tatnall is on a winter vacation in a slightly warmer climate. As is his custom, he has remotely provided an abbreviated column for members, but has also provided the extensive storm story on P. 1.



### SEPTA TRANSIT

Public hearings on SEPTA's proposed operating budget for Fiscal Year 2011 will be held April 14-20 in all five counties in the SEPTA region. At this writing it is not certain on which date the Philadelphia hearings will be held. It's likely that a fare increase will be included in the new budget..... SEPTA's five-year Strategic Business Plan is now available on the website [www.septa.org](http://www.septa.org) under "Reports." A two-page executive summary boils down the 29-page document..... A 25-year-old man apparently died of natural causes while riding a Norristown High Speed Line train on Friday, January 29. His death occurred some time before the train arrived at 69<sup>th</sup> Street Terminal, but foul play was not suspected.

The winter storm of Thursday night and Friday morning, February 25-26, followed a northerly path across Pennsylvania and New Jersey, sparing the Philadelphia area which received far less snow than in previous storms. On Friday SEPTA reported numerous rail and bus delays and traffic on some major highways was slowed, but it was New York City that was buried by more than 20 inches. Some rail commuter operations as well as AMTRAK's Empire Service were severely impacted, and parts of New England were hard hit with hundreds of thousands of power outages. A number of Northeast Corridor trains were delayed and NJ TRANSIT suffered many disruptions to its rail and bus services, particularly in the northern part of the State. On Friday NJT cancelled several trains out of New York's Penn Station and bus service was suspended in North Jersey for nine hours, but most bus routes were restored by 1 PM.



### SEPTA REGIONAL RAIL

Those three Silverliner V pilot cars, #701 and 801-802, were unloaded from a ship at Philadelphia on Monday, March 1, and were to be trucked to SEPTA's Liberty yard. Evidently, that will be their base for the upcoming road tests..... The fourth of four weekends of bus substitution on the R1 Airport Line, due to maintenance work, was called off because of the heavy snowstorm that struck the City on February 6. It was rescheduled for February 13-14 but the second blizzard that week also forced a postponement, with regular train service operated instead. Work is to resume on the weekends of March 13-14, 20-21 and 27-28

.....R1 train #4157 bound for the Airport struck a deer just north of Eastwick station on Thursday evening, February 18, breaking an air connection on lead MU #362. That train was cancelled as was its turn #4258 and six other R1 trains were delayed. Trenton-bound R7 train #9723 killed a 45-year-old female trespasser around 5:25 PM on Saturday, February 27, just south of Croydon station on the Northeast Corridor. Two SEPTA trains were annulled and a number of other SEPTA and AMTRAK trains delayed.

The R3 West Trenton Line had several incidents last month. On Tuesday afternoon, February 7, a crewman making a cut in West Trenton yard let MU #299 get away and roll into the side of car #325 on the rear of train #4137. Another set of cars substituted for #4137 and an extra was dispatched to Woodbourne to represent following inbound train #4141. The next morning, MU #256 became uncoupled from the rear of R3 train #319 at West Trenton station. The car was left on the main track which caused delays to several other trains until 256 could be moved back into the yard. Train #4153 out of West Trenton injured a pedestrian at the Woodbourne Road crossing on Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup>. The train was annulled and passengers transferred to following #4157. For an hour and a half on Thursday morning the 18<sup>th</sup> the Operations Center lost control of four interlockings on the West Trenton line, delaying four trains.



### NORTHEAST<sup>TM</sup> AMTRAK REGIONAL

AMTRAK last month released its long-awaited fleet plan for the next 14 years, which includes the purchase of 1,200 passenger cars, 334 locomotives and 25 high-speed trainsets at a cost of \$11 billion. The plan envisions 780 new single-level cars, 420 bilevels, 70 electric locomotives, 264 diesel units and 25 Acela-type trainsets. Amtrak said the plan will "not only provide new and modern equipment for our customers but will also develop and sustain the domestic production capacity needed for the long-term viability of intercity passenger service in the United States." The new equipment would replace much of Amtrak's aging fleet while accommodating future growth in rail travel, which it conservatively estimates at two percent annually. Amtrak foresees acquiring about 100 new cars per year beginning in 2012, but funding sources were not identified. The first existing cars to be replaced would be the approximately 420 Amfleet I's, the 250 Superliner I's and the 90 or so Heritage cars inherited from predecessor railroads. Amtrak also reaffirmed its interest in diesel multiple-unit (DMU) railcars, such as those once offered by the Colorado Railcar firm (*Railway Age*, NARP).

President Obama's proposed Federal budget for Fiscal Year 2011 largely maintains the status quo for Amtrak and transit, while repeating last year's \$1-billion request for high speed rail. He asked that \$1.6 billion be appropriated for AMTRAK, which is \$598 million below Amtrak's request for \$2.2 billion. The major

## PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS

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shortfall is the \$539 million gap between Amtrak's request for \$1 billion in capital funding plus \$281 million for improvements required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Obama's recommendation for \$787 million (NARP)..... AMTRAK will host its third annual National Train Day celebrations at 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station and in Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles on Saturday, May 8. The Philadelphia event will run from 11 AM to 4 PM and feature numerous exhibits, a train equipment display and (only at 30<sup>th</sup> Street) a special "History of Baseball's Travel on Trains" exhibit. Admission is free.



We made the statement here last month that in recent memory passenger rail had not been mentioned in a State of the Union address until President Obama did so in January. We have been corrected by NRHS Vice President Walter Zullig, who reminds us that President Reagan in one of his State of the Union speeches declared his intention to get rid of AMTRAK, "because every time a train leaves the station it costs the taxpayers \$35".....Cliff Black, AMTRAK's longtime and well-known chief of communications, has announced his retirement on March 31, after 29 years with the railroad (*Trains*)..... The New Jersey Chamber of Commerce ran its annual AMTRAK special from Newark to Washington on Thursday, January 28, returning the next day. Newly-installed Governor Christopher Christie declined to participate, and the nine-car consist was shorter than in the past (West Jersey Chapter).

Another in the alarming series of recent trespasser deaths occurred at the R2 Norwood station just before 10:30 AM on Thursday, February 25. Two teenage girls reportedly stood in the path of southbound Acela Express #2151 which was traveling at the posted track speed of 110 mph. Authorities later determined that their deaths were the result of a suicide pact between the high school classmates. All AMTRAK and SEPTA service in the area was suspended for over an hour, and normal service was not restored until almost 1:30 PM.....Washington-bound AMTRAK train #173 struck and killed a male trespasser around 4:25 PM on Thursday, February 4, just east of Levittown station. Amtrak service on the Northeast Corridor was disrupted for two hours and nine SEPTA R7 trains had to be annulled while the investigation proceeded.

Perhaps AMTRAK's worst service failure during last month's snow emergency (see separate article elsewhere in this issue) was the breakdown of Richmond-bound train #195 south of Alexandria, VA, on Saturday, February 13. At 3:40 PM P42 locomotive #20 became disabled and its HEP power failed, causing the 111 passengers on board to be trapped for more than six hours, and without lights and heat for four hours and 45 minutes. Some passengers called for help on 9-1-1 but rescuers could not reach the train which was in an inaccessible location, also preventing buses from reaching the scene. (The same locomotive had broken down on Keystone train #660 just one week before.) Finally, after several attempts to bring in a rescue locomotive, train #99 ran south, coupled ahead of #195 and the combined train finally reached Richmond just before midnight (#195 seven hours and 45 minutes late and #99 six hours and 14 minutes late).

## CSX, NS, OTHER ROADS

New Jersey's simmering budget crisis has impacted NJ TRANSIT, to the tune of a \$33-million (11-percent) reduction in its State operating subsidy for the current fiscal year. Executive Director James Weinstein said that the agency is confronting the challenges resulting from the State's current \$2.2-billion budget shortfall. The prospects are even grimmer for Fiscal Year 2011 beginning this July 1, when the State is facing an \$11-billion deficit. Weinstein said that it is unlikely that New Jersey will be able to continue its historic level of operating support for NJT, resulting in a projected deficit for the agency of about \$300 million in FY 2011. "But we will not compromise on safety and service reliability, and we will not ask our customers to pay more at the farebox until we have identified every possible efficiency, and sacrificed internally."

According to press reports, Weinstein later said that NJT rail and bus riders will be paying higher fares when the new fiscal year begins on July 1. To help in the decision-making process, he announced that a series of public hearings will be scheduled. These will be held at several locations including Newark, Trenton, Camden and Atlantic City, in addition to an extended period of public comment on the agency's website [www.njtransit.com](http://www.njtransit.com). Governor Christie has assured New Jersey residents that he will not increase the State's relatively-low gas tax but made no such guarantee on transit fares. On February 12 he said that he wants NJT to improve its operating efficiency, revisit its "rich union contracts" and end "the patronage hiring that has typified its past" (*Weekly Rail Review, Railpace*).

As a result of the fire in P40 locomotive #4800 on February 13 (see snow story elsewhere in this issue), NJT has removed all four of its ex-AMTRAK P40's (#4800-4803) from service. The deluxe New York-Atlantic City ACES trains now originate and terminate at Penn Station in Newark, with an across-the-platform transfer for New York passengers. Power for the trains currently are PL42 diesels, which will not clear in the New York tunnels, while multi-level cab cars are used on the opposite end rather than an ALP-44 electric locomotive ([Trainorders.com](http://Trainorders.com)) .....Harold H. Geissenheimer, a longtime transit executive and former president of the Electric Railroaders' Association, died on January 7. Over a lengthy career he served as executive director of PORT AUTHORITY TRANSIT in Pittsburgh, general operations manager of CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY and general manager of the SAN FRANCISCO MUNICIPAL RAILWAY.....CANADIAN PACIFIC recently sent GP38-2 #7312, one of the few units still painted in Delaware & Hudson colors, to serve as its South Philadelphia switcher ([Trainorders.com](http://Trainorders.com)).

CSX and NORFOLK SOUTHERN have received grants from U.S. DOT's Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program announced last month. NS will get \$105 million to aid its ambitious Crescent Corridor project, a public-private partnership which will speed intermodal traffic from the Gulf Coast to the Mid-Atlantic region, including New York and Philadelphia. CSX will receive \$98 million toward its National Gateway freight initiative, designed to enhance intermodal service on major freight corridors between the East and the Midwest and along the Atlantic Coast. The Moynihan Station project in New York City, which would convert the former Farley Post Office Building into a new terminal for AMTRAK, NJ TRANSIT and the LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD, will get \$83 million in TIGER funding.



**MARCH 13, 2010:** 29<sup>th</sup> annual Canal History & Technology Symposium at Lafayette College, Easton, PA, sponsored by National Canal Museum. Subjects will include freight on Erie Canal, the Canal Era glass industry in Bucks County, mechanical iron ore unloading machines and other topics. For information, telephone 610-559-6613.

**MARCH 20:** 24<sup>th</sup> annual Railroad Show & Collectors Market at I. W. Abel Union Hall, 200 Gibson Street, Steelton, PA, sponsored by Harrisburg Chapter NRHS. Hours: 9 AM-3 PM. Show features model railroad items, railroad layouts, railroadiana sales, movies, seminars and exhibits. Donation at door: \$5 per person (children under 12 free). For information, telephone Mark Irvin at 717-732-3867.

**MARCH 20:** EastRail 2010 at Warren Hills Regional High School, 41 Jackson Valley Road, Washington, NJ, sponsored by United Railroad Historical Society. Numerous railroad slide and video programs will be presented. Admission: \$12 per person in advance or \$15 at door (children under 12 \$8 in advance or \$10 at door). Order tickets from URHS, 36 Banstead Way, Jackson, NJ 08527-4495, enclosing stamped, self-addressed envelope.

**MAY 23:** SEPTA Trackless Trolley Charter, sponsored by Friends of Philadelphia Trolleys. Trip departs SEPTA Frankford Depot (corner Bridge & Pratt) at 11:00 AM SHARP! Trip will cover all available portions of Routes 59, 66 and 75, including some non-revenue areas, before returning about 3:00 PM. No lunch stop will be made, and snacks and drinks will be

available for purchase on the trip. Fare: \$40.00 per person. Order tickets from: Harry Donahue, 103 Mulberry Court, Morgantown, PA 19543-8843, making checks payable to FPT, Inc. All proceeds from trip will go towards restoration of SEPTA PCC #2743 at Rockhill Trolley Museum to its 1959 green-and-cream. Further information available at [had2709@aol.com](mailto:had2709@aol.com).

**JUNE 21-26:** *Endless Mountain Rails 2010* NRHS Convention at Scranton, PA, celebrating 75 years of NRHS, sponsored by Lackawanna & Wyoming Valley Chapter, NRHS. Ticket orders are now being processed. Information received as of March 1 indicates that events 2220, 2230, 2240, 4120, 4130, 4140, 6130 and 6140 are sold out. In addition, both the Hilton Scranton Hotel & Conference Center and the Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel are filled. More than 724 have pre-registered for *Endless Mountain Rails 2010* and the reservations have been brisk, with L&WV Chapter looking to sell out many if not all events. For up-to-date information, visit the 2010 Convention website: [www.endlessmountainrails.com](http://www.endlessmountainrails.com). Don't delay!!!!

## Are You Paid Up for 2010??

Have you paid your 2010 NRHS and Philadelphia Chapter dues?? As of March 1, there were 45 members who had not renewed. For those members, this will be the last issue of *Cinders* which you will receive.

Anyone who has questions about his/her membership status should contact National Director Larry Eastwood at 215-947-5769 or by E-mail: [leatwood2@comcast.net](mailto:leatwood2@comcast.net).



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