

# NRHS

February-March, 2024



## IN THIS ISSUE

NRHS/Chapter News.....	1-2
PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS, by Frank Tatnall.....	2-6
Miscellaneous News.....	7
Trips and Activities.....	8

Volume 85

Number 3

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

**Chapter Website: [www.nrhsphiladelphia.org](http://www.nrhsphiladelphia.org)**



Hilton Promo Photo

## NRHS 2024 Convention at Harrisburg, August 26-31

NRHS has announced plans for the 2024 annual convention, to be held at Harrisburg, PA from August 26-31, 2024. Convention events are in the planning stages, but hotel reservations are now open.

The host hotel will be the **Hilton Harrisburg** located in downtown Harrisburg. The special NRHS member rate per night is \$134.00 plus 11 percent state tax. The phone number to make a reservation with a hotel agent is 1-717-233-6000. The Reference Code is **"Group Code 900"**. To make an on-line reservation with a hotel agent is [www.hilton.com/en/hotels/mdthhhf-hilton-harrisburg/](http://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/mdthhhf-hilton-harrisburg/). Type "900" in the Group Code field to receive the special rate.

Rooms must be booked by August 6, 2024 to receive the NRHS rate. Rooms booked after that date may be at a higher rate and subject to availability. Watch for E-mail updates on Convention events and schedule. Also, check the NRHS website for the latest information on the Convention and other NRHS activities. Plan to join your fellow NRHS members for a fun-filled week in Harrisburg, PA.

## Meeting Notice

**THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024**

SEPTA Elkins Park Regional Rail Station, Elkins Central Meeting Venue, 7879 Spring Avenue, Elkins Park, PA 19027.  
**PLEASE USE THE SPRING AVENUE ENTRANCE TO THE "ELKINS CENTRAL" MEETING ROOM. PLEASE DO NOT USE THE TRACKSIDE ENTRANCE. THANK YOU!!**

**MEETING START TIME: 7:00 PM**



Al Giannantonio is second from the left

Our program on **Thursday, March 21, 2024** will be presented by Al Giannantonio. Al had a long, successful career as a civil engineer and owned his own engineering firm. He did work one summer while in school as a fireman on the Pennsylvania Railroad. He is a former President of the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society and was a longtime editor of its *High Line* Magazine. He was formerly on the board of directors of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania and served as its president and later vice president. His program is about Thorndale, Pennsylvania and its neighboring coal wharfs, their history and how they operated. Al is shown second from the left on the photo below.

**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*

**CHAPTER WEBSITE:** For current Chapter information, as well as vintage views of Chapter trips and activities, visit website: [www.nrhsphiladelphia.org](http://www.nrhsphiladelphia.org)

**CHAPTER OFFICERS (Elected)**

President.....R. L. Eastwood, Jr. (215) 947-5769  
[reastwood2@comcast.net](mailto:reastwood2@comcast.net)  
 Vice President.....John Smith (215) 527-9380  
[jsmithsnf2012@gmail.com](mailto:jsmithsnf2012@gmail.com)  
 Secretary.....Marie K. Eastwood (215) 947-5769  
[mkecat@comcast.net](mailto:mkecat@comcast.net)  
 Treasurer.....Robert Young (215) 808-5136  
[Rob\\_young@verizon.net](mailto:Rob_young@verizon.net)  
 National Representative.....William Welk (215) 681-1957  
[welk899@gmail.com](mailto:welk899@gmail.com)

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS (Appointed)**

Editor.....R. L. Eastwood, Jr. (215) 947-5769  
[reastwood2@comcast.net](mailto:reastwood2@comcast.net)  
 Equipment Chair.....David R. McGuire (610)-544-2749  
[emd645e3@verizon.net](mailto:emd645e3@verizon.net)  
 Membership Chair.....Sheila A. Dorr (610) 642-2830  
[sheiladorr@gmail.com](mailto:sheiladorr@gmail.com)  
 Program Director.....Steve Ferrell (610) 812-1020  
[stfarrel@aol.com](mailto:stfarrel@aol.com)  
 Webmaster.....Daniel Knouse (814) 631-9436  
[djknouse@hotmail.com](mailto:djknouse@hotmail.com)  
 ZOOM Master.....Eric Dervinis (610) 613-2828  
[eric.dervinis@gmail.com](mailto:eric.dervinis@gmail.com)

**2023-24 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES:** Effective September 1, 2023, \$20.00 per person, which covers Philadelphia Chapter dues through December 31, 2024. (NRHS National membership dues for 2023 are \$50.00, billed directly by NRHS.) NRHS chapters bill their members separately for Chapter dues. Donation requests for Philadelphia Railfriends will be mailed during October, 2023 via separate mailing from *Cinders*. Anyone interested in becoming a member of Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS should forward remittance, payable to **Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS** in the amount of \$20.00 to Post Office Box 7302, Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302. Please be sure to include name, valid mailing address, telephone number and E-mail address, as applicable.

**ADDRESS CHANGES:** Send to Editor Emeritus at Post Office Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353. (Include your **CURRENT TELEPHONE NUMBER** and **E-MAIL ADDRESS** so our records are complete.) Beginning in early 2023, we will effect electronic delivery of *Cinders* to those who elect to receive same.

*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 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353. **EXCHANGE newsletters should be sent to:** R. L. Eastwood, Jr., Editor, P. O. Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353, or by electronic mail to [reastwood2@comcast.net](mailto:reastwood2@comcast.net).

**WANTED!!**

**Members are invited  
to submit short railroad or  
traction history articles (up to one  
page) for publication in *Cinders*.**

**Please contact:**

**R. L. Eastwood, Jr., Editor  
with complete details on articles to  
Post Office Box 353,  
Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353**

## Notice Annual Meeting/Election

Notice is hereby given of election of Chapter officers for the year 2024-2025, to be held at the Annual Meeting of Philadelphia Chapter, National Railway Historical Society on Thursday evening, April 18, 2023 at SEPTA Elkins Park Regional Rail Station, 7879 Spring Avenue, Elkins Park, PA 19027. The Annual Meeting starts at 7:00 PM, and the election will be held at the beginning of the business meeting.

Any member in good standing who is interested in serving as President, Senior Vice President, Vice President & Treasurer, Secretary or National Representative, may be nominated from the floor at the March 21 or April 18 meeting, or by communication before April 1, 2024 to Daniel J. Murray, Nominations Chairman, Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS, 745 Sunflower Avenue, Langhorne, PA 19047-3747. Dan's E-mail address is [WoodyWagon@live.com](mailto:WoodyWagon@live.com) or by phone to 215-208-7171. Nominations may also be submitted before April 1, 2024 to Marie K. Eastwood, Secretary, Post Office Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353 or by E-mail to [mkecat@comcast.net](mailto:mkecat@comcast.net).

### If your *Cinders* Arrives in Damaged Condition

If your *Cinders* arrives damaged or with pages missing, contact Editor Larry Eastwood at 215-947-5769 or [ayrestower@comcast.net](mailto:ayrestower@comcast.net) and a replacement copy will be promptly sent to you. The incidence of damage has been virtually eliminated through the use of envelopes for mailing each issue, although there is an additional cost involved.

### DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT AND/OR CORRECT E-MAIL ADDRESS?

*More and more Chapter members have changed their monthly delivery of CINDERS to electronic delivery. As of this issue, more than 87 members have signed up for eCINDERS.*

*You are hereby notified that, for the second time in less than a year the United States Postal Service has increased the price of a First Class stamp to 68 cents for the first ounce, First Class, effective on Sunday, January 22, 2024. This follows the increase from 63 cents to 66 cents which took effect on Sunday, July on Sunday, July 9, 2023.*

*It is more important now that we have on file your CURRENT and CORRECT E-mail address. To that end, we would ask that you E-mail your correct and current E-mail address to [mkecat@comcast.net](mailto:mkecat@comcast.net) upon receipt of this issue of CINDERS. We need to control the cost of mailing CINDERS to both members and, more importantly, to "exchange" newsletter recipients, from whom we have no revenue source.*

MARIE K. EASTWOOD, Secretary  
Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS  
March 1, 2024

# PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS

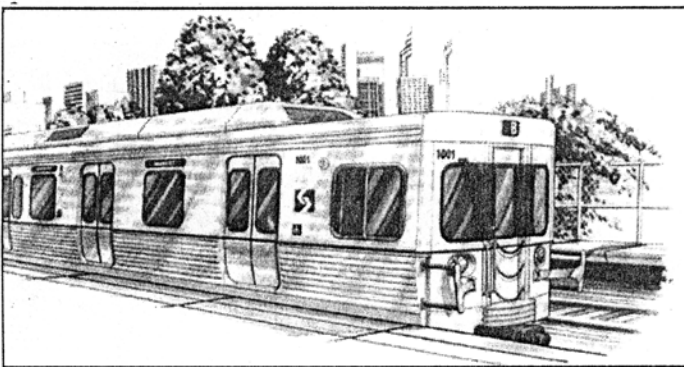


FRANK G. TATNALL, JR.

## SEPTA System

SEPTA last month elected a new board chair, Kenneth E. Lawrence, Jr., of Montgomery County, succeeding Pasquale T. Deon, Jr., who had served in the post for the past two decades (see January *Cinders*). Lawrence, 52, the previous vice chairman of the SEPTA board and a former county commissioner, is the first Black chair in SEPTA's history, with long experience as a public affairs professional. He currently serves as senior vice president at Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, and previously was a senior executive at Temple University and Merck & Company. Lawrence also has run his own public affairs consulting group. He proudly identifies himself as a life-long SEPTA rider and is said to know Governor Shapiro well from their days in Montgomery County government. Chester County Commissioner Marian D. Moskowitz was elected vice chair of the SEPTA board.

Lawrence and his management people will have their hands full in trying to avert a serious shortfall in funding over the next fiscal year. A looming \$240-million annual deficit could force SEPTA to raise fares by up to 30% and to cut service by at least 20%. In his 2024-25 state budget Governor Shapiro has said he will propose \$282.8 million in new funding for public transit, of which SEPTA would receive the lion's share. So support from the Philadelphia region will be vital in getting such a package through the Legislature. The money would come not from raising the current 6% state sales tax but by dedicating a larger share of it to public transportation.



SEPTA did get some good news last month when the Federal government awarded it \$317 million to be used toward the purchase of 200 new M5 cars for the Market-Frankford Line. It's been common knowledge for a long time that the present M4 fleet of 25-year-old cars built by Adtranz require high levels of maintenance to keep them running, including the frequent repair of cracked frames. SEPTA is evaluating bids for the new cars, the first of which would likely not arrive for at least five years after a contract is signed. The Market-Frankford subway-el is SEPTA's busiest line, and in the new Metro lettering scheme will officially be known as the "L."

SEPTA's much-heralded "Bus Revolution," which would redesign its sprawling bus network, took another hit last month. A special board meeting called for February 8 to approve the plan had to be cancelled after a member of Philadelphia City Council said that council members had not had adequate time to engage with their constituents on the plan. This objection came in spite of SEPTA's efforts over the past two years to hold many meetings to receive public input on the subject. Now a new series of public meetings will be scheduled, and one editorial writer in the *Inquirer* said that Council members "need to spend more time on the bus."

SEPTA has made a change in its fare policy long sought by riders. Effective Monday February 26, a passenger using a Key Card can now pay for a group of family or friends using the same card, but the multi-rider function must first be activated by SEPTA Customer Service.....The *Inquirer* in its February 15 edition ran a color photo of SEPTA #9014 decked out in red contact paper as the Route 10 "Love Trolley" for Valentine's Day. Its operator, Gary Mason, 60, has been decorating his cars for Christmas and other holidays since 1993—at his own expense. Two other specially decorated cars were also out there, one for Valentine's Day and another for Black History Month.

Violence on SEPTA was very much back in the news during January and February. Here is a summary of several events in date order:

Thursday 1/11—A 16-year-old boy was shot and fatally wounded on the eastbound platform of the Market-Frankford 15<sup>th</sup> Street station. Two other teenagers had begun shooting and the victim apparently was hit by a stray bullet. The shooters were arrested and charged with murder.

Friday 1/12—A trespasser was struck and killed around 8 PM by a westbound Market-Frankford train in the tunnel east of the 34<sup>th</sup> Street station. The train operator and 86 passengers were safely evacuated and shuttle buses were placed in service.

Thursday, 1/18—During an argument a 28-year-old homeless man was stabbed multiple times in the 15<sup>th</sup> Street station early that morning. The victim got to the hospital on his own where he was treated, while the assailant, also a homeless man, was arrested.

Saturday, 1/20—A 23-year-old driver was killed early that morning when he ran a red light and drove his car into the side of a Route 5 SEPTA bus. The accident happened at Frankford & Allegheny Avenues in Kensington, as the driver was being pursued by police. The driver and two passengers on the bus were not injured.

Saturday, 2/24—A 20-year-old man was shot and wounded while aboard a northbound Broad Street Line train just after it left the Hunting Park station around 9 PM. He was reported in stable condition at the hospital. The shooting happened during some sort of confrontation and a suspect was later taken into custody. Shuttle buses were used to bypass the station.

(Continued on Page 4)

# PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS

(Continued from Page 3)

Sunday, 2/25—Just five hours after the above shooting, a hatchet-wielding man attacked another man in the concourse near the 8<sup>th</sup> & Market subway station. The victim said he was struck six times and kicked in the face. He was treated at the hospital. Police managed to locate a man fitting the assailant's description on the street nearby and arrested him.

Monday, 2/26—Around 2:30 AM a man fell into the track area at the Broad Street Line City Hall station, and was electrocuted by the third rail. No information was released about why or how he gained entrance to the station. Buses replaced trains between Girard Avenue and NRG stations for the early morning trips but train service to NRG resumed around 6 AM, with some delays.

Tuesday, 2/27—A woman was struck and killed by Lansdale-bound Regional Rail train #516 at the Penllyn station about 7:30 AM. Service on the line was suspended for more than two hours, with some residual delays during the morning.

The Market-Frankford Line did have a few operational problems during February, two of them on the Frankford El. Around 10:50 on Monday night, January 29, a westbound train stalled near the York-Dauphin station. The crew thought it had derailed but inspection showed that "a mechanical problem" was to blame. The El had to be shut down in both directions until the scene was cleared early Tuesday morning. Passengers were evacuated from the stalled train along the catwalk. Two weeks later, at 2 AM on Friday, February 16, a work train derailed one car south of the Huntingdon station. No regular trains were affected at that early hour, but when service resumed shuttle buses were used to carry passengers between the Huntingdon and Spring Garden stations until around 8 AM.

After last year's snowless winter it was inevitable that the Philadelphia region would have a change of weather in 2024. There were two measurable snowfalls in January, the first one on Monday the 15<sup>th</sup>, which produced anywhere from two to four inches depending on the location. Some slick roads were seen the next morning but SEPTA had few problems, an exception being the Media and Sharon Hill trolleys which were bused for a time on Tuesday due to downed trees on the track. A bigger storm arrived on Friday the 19<sup>th</sup>, packing winds that caused drifting snow off and on all day. At the airport almost 90 flight cancellations were reported in the morning plus many delays. Several suburban areas received up to eight inches of snow, but SEPTA was not seriously affected other than facing the task of clearing hundreds of Regional Rail platforms. At least 30 bus routes were on detour Friday night.

A potentially troublesome storm arrived on Tuesday, February 13. Only two or three inches fell in many locations but some places to the north received up to eight inches. Winds caused blowing snow and many roads and streets in the suburban areas became treacherous during the morning, and some towns declared a state of emergency. Public schools in Philadelphia, as well as other schools and the University of Pennsylvania, opened two hours late, but SEPTA reported relatively few problems. Many flights were cancelled or delayed at PHL during the morning but were generally back on schedule in the afternoon. In Philadelphia the officially-recorded snowfall for the season up to the end of February totaled 11.2 inches, which was well below normal.

In December the State Legislature passed—and Governor Shapiro signed—a law that empowers the State Attorney General to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate and prosecute crimes committed on or near SEPTA property in Philadelphia. The law was obviously aimed directly at Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, who is widely seen as not being tough enough on criminals in the city. Krasner has since filed suit to block the law, contending that it illegally usurps the authority vested in him, but in February SEPTA entered the case to oppose Krasner's challenge. SEPTA, which has been plagued with violent crimes and other problems (see above), obviously welcomes any additional efforts to deal with and reduce the activities of criminals on its property. In filing its brief before the Commonwealth Court, SEPTA referred to the law, known as Act 40, as creating a "new role to supplement" the work of the district attorney. To date, however, the Attorney General has not yet appointed a special prosecutor to represent the State.

The 250 riders on Wilmington-Newark train #2500 suffered a very unusual delay on their ride to Philadelphia on Thursday morning, February 22. As the train was nearing 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station, it suddenly jolted to a halt around 7:30 AM, and there it sat for over two hours. The later explanation was that the AMTRAK control center had mistakenly routed the train onto a de-energized track at "Phil" interlocking, just two miles south of 30<sup>th</sup> Street, and the train could no longer move under its own power. By 8:40 a SEPTA rescue train had arrived at the scene and picked up the stranded passengers for a somewhat delayed arrival at their destinations.

Counter to its warning of a severe loss of funding in the next fiscal year, SEPTA has announced that it plans to add more trains to its Regional Rail schedules starting this fall. While RRD ridership is still well below pre-pandemic levels, management believes that passenger counts will continue to increase—especially with efforts on the part of some major employers and the City of Philadelphia to entice (or require) more absent staff people to return to their offices in center city. In a speech before a Chamber of Commerce luncheon on February 28, Mayor Cherelle Parker urged business leaders to follow her example and require employees to return to in-person work, especially in center city. She said that her administration soon will require all municipal employees to get back to their regular work sites.

A citizen-sponsored "Save the Train" lobby is one of the groups formed in Chestnut Hill and other neighborhoods to oppose what they believe is SEPTA's plan to discontinue the Chestnut Hill West rail line. Their concern is that if SEPTA is forced to cut service systemwide in response to a threatened loss of \$240 million in funding (see above), the West line will be one of the first to go. If SEPTA management believes that most former CHW riders would gravitate to the former Reading Chestnut Hill East line, that is a mistaken assumption, the Save the Train people say. SEPTA's own figures show that average weekday ridership on CHW is higher than on the CHE line, 1,752 passengers versus 1,573 (2022 figures).

SEPTA last month closed the ticket offices at 14 Regional Rail stations, effective February 2. A spokesman said that the closures were due to decreasing in-person sales, as more and more riders are using their Key Cards. St. Martins on the Chestnut Hill West line and the Chestnut Hill East station were among those closed.

(Continued on Page 5)



## PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS (Continued from Page 4)

The Conshohocken office was closed in November, but 56 other outlying stations will continue to offer in-person ticket sales, in addition to the five major stations in the center city area.....SEPTA offered extra weekday trains on the Lansdale-Doylestown and Paoli-Thorndale lines for the annual Philadelphia Flower Show which occupied the Convention Center March 2-10. As it does every year SEPTA ran enhanced weekend train service on those lines as well as on five other Regional Rail lines.

Around 7 AM on Wednesday morning, January 17, train #2303 was enroute from Norristown when it became disabled between the Allegheny and North Broad stations. Due to the 15-degree temperature that morning an insulator on the catenary had broken, which caused damage to the pantographs on all four cars. A rescue train was sent to the scene but it too was delayed by an interlocking failure near Jefferson station. When the rescue train arrived it could not be coupled to the disabled train due to an ice buildup, so the stranded passengers were asked to walk through the disabled train and into the rescue train, which then took them to the city after an almost two-hour delay. SEPTA issued a written apology to all of the delayed riders.....The Fox Chase Line had to be taken out of service around 8:30 AM on Thursday, February 22, due to overhead wire problems. Service was resumed later in the day.

SEPTA is looking to rent out some of its historic stations on the two Chestnut Hill lines for use by private businesses. Two of the boarded up stations are on the CH East line, Gravers and Mount Airy, and three on CH West, Carpenter, Tulpehocken and Upsal. All of them are listed on the city's Register of Historic Places. Gravers, built in 1879, has the distinction of being designed by famed 19<sup>th</sup> Century architect Frank Furness and also is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (*Chestnut Hill Local*) .....Train service on the Chestnut Hill West Line was suspended for the entire day of Sunday, February 18, to allow for removal of the ancient Duval Street pedestrian bridge. It was located between the Upsal and Tulpehocken stations.



# AMTRAK

The three-year delay in placing AMTRAK's new Acela trains in regular service may at last be coming to an end. The *New York Times* reported in January that the trains had passed a series of computer modeling tests required by the Federal Railroad Administration, and in January FRA okayed the resumption of testing on the Northeast Corridor. Amtrak said that these demonstration runs are "the next step in the safety certification that leads toward launching revenue service." As recently as early February one of the new Acelas, led by power car #2142, was spotted making a test run on the Harrisburg Line, a variation from the usual practice of testing the trains on the Corridor mainline. The delay in introducing the new nine-car trains has forced Amtrak to keep the aging first-generation Acelas in service beyond their intended lifespan. The need for parts to keep the original trains in operation has required cannibalizing four of the older trainsets.

Main Line officials in January were given a briefing on the next phase of PennDOT's Paoli Transportation Center project. The most important part of the remaining project is to build a new bridge to carry North Valley Road over the railroad at the east end of the Paoli platforms. This will replace the rickety 19<sup>th</sup> Century bridge at the west end of the station. Completion of the work, to be done in five phases, is expected by 2027 at a cost of about \$36 million. Already 19 buildings have been demolished to make room for the roadway's extension from Lancaster Avenue to the site of the new bridge (Jim Brazel).

AMTRAK in January issued a press release entitled "Ambitious 2024 Initiatives Propel Amtrak Ridership Growth," in which it outlines its goal of doubling ridership by 2040. To do this it will be "carrying out a massive major infrastructure capital program aimed to modernize and upgrade our infrastructure, stations, fleet and technology." But the document does not address the ongoing problem of equipment shortages on long-distance trains that limited the growth of that business in 2023. And while long-distance trains were Amtrak's only service that produced more revenue in Fiscal Year 2023 than in FY 2019 (\$580.4 million versus \$494.6 million), it did so with 15% fewer passengers (*Trains*).

As part of the above strategy, AMTRAK in December issued a multi-billion-dollar request for proposals (RFP) from railcar manufacturers to begin the replacement of the current inadequate long-distance fleet. This much-needed upgrading effort has already begun with the purchase of 125 ALC-42 long-distance locomotives from U.S. manufacturer Siemens, more than three dozen of which are already in service, and interior upgrades to 400 bi-level Superliner and 49 Viewliner cars costing \$28 million. Nearly 200 Superliners have already been "refreshed" at Amtrak's Beech Grove (IN) shops and are now in service and the Viewliner refresh will begin this year. Another 63 idled cars will be repaired and restored to service by the end of 2024.

AMTRAK has awarded a contract for the design and construction of a heavy maintenance facility near the Penn Coach Yard in West Philadelphia. This will be one of six major new facilities around the country intended for the maintenance and repair of the new Acela and Airo equipment, as well as the long-distance trainsets still to be ordered. Other announced sites for the new facilities are New York City, Boston, Washington, DC, and Seattle, as well as a presumably sixth location somewhere other than along the Northeast Corridor (*Trains*).

In a policy reversal AMTRAK now says that it will convert its fleet of Amfleet coaches used on all Northeast Regional trains to fixed-direction seating. Under this configuration, already common in Acela first class and on many state-supported trains (as well as in commuter trains), half of the seats will be permanently fixed to face toward one end of the car while the other half will face the opposite end of the car. This will save considerable time at train endpoints because crews will not need to rotate half the seats in each car to face in the opposite direction. The new Acela and Airo trainsets also will feature fixed seating.

Fixed-direction seating will allow some Corridor trains to be operated in push-pull fashion, using converted HHP-8 locomotives as cab cars. This will be especially handy at stub-end terminals like Boston and Washington. The Bombardier-Alstom HHP-8 electric units were delivered around the same time as the original Acela trains but proved unreliable and were retired as motive power after less than a decade of service. Amtrak recognizes that some of its passengers may not like to ride backwards, but they are considered a small minority (*Trains*). (Continued on Page 6)

# PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS

(Continued from Page 5)

As it often does when winter storms threaten, AMTRAK issued a warning of service cuts prior to the storm which arrived on Tuesday, February 13. But this time the relatively few announced cancellations were between New York and Boston, where the snowfall was predicted to be heavier. Corridor service between New York and Washington was not seriously affected.

Radnor Township last month installed overhead hanging signs on either side of the King of Prussia Road underpass of AMTRAK's Harrisburg line at Radnor station (see November *Cinders*). This is a very low 10-foot, 10-inch clearance tunnel which has trapped oversize trucks at least 127 times since 2008, often blocking the busy road for hours. After some consideration of how to deal with the problem, the township decided to hang bright yellow warning bars above the road at a height where they will strike the windshield of tractors pulling these trucks, thus giving the drivers an instant alert of the danger ahead.



A hostile takeover of NORFOLK SOUTHERN proposed by a group of investors has brought unpleasant memories of the much-reviled scheme known as Precision Scheduled Railroading. First introduced on CSX and then adopted to some extent by several other roads (including NS), the alleged purpose of the PSR model was to increase efficiency and thus save money—which of course would translate into higher earnings for Wall Street investors. Combining trains, closing hump yards, reducing personnel were the marks of PSR. Instead, it was soon found to be nothing more than a blatant attempt to cut expenses regardless of the negative effect that such cuts had on overall service quality and customer satisfaction. After suffering the ill-effects of PSR—namely the loss of much service-sensitive traffic—CSX and the other carriers reversed course and began improving their operations to regain some of the lost business. NS has already increased service levels and said that it would no longer lay off operating staff in down people to handle increased business when it did come back. And much of it has come back.

The activist group attempting to gain control of NS is known as Ancora Holdings, which wants to oust current CEO Alan Shaw and replace him with the former head of UPS. Its choice for NS chief operating officer is Jamie Boychuk, formerly VP of operations for CSX during its recent experiment with Precision Scheduled Railroading, who left the railroad in 2023 under unknown circumstances. Ancora reportedly has purchased a billion-dollar stake in NS. This effort to take control of the railroad's board of directors drew a strong response from the current board, which issued a rebuttal saying that "Recklessly chasing cost reduction at the expense of safety and service is not a winning strategy for creating sustainable shareholder value." Not surprisingly, several shipper groups including the National Industrial Transportation League issued statements opposing the Ancora bid, and the leaders of NS's own unions said they were adamantly against it. Martin Oberman, chairman of the Federal

Surface Transportation Board, said that such a takeover "would have a detrimental impact on the rail industry." NS of course is urging its shareholders to reject the new directors proposed by Ancora and instead elect NS's own slate of directors at the annual meeting in May (*Trains*).

As if NS didn't have enough to worry about after the much-publicized wreck at East Palestine, OH, last year, it suffered a much smaller—though still spectacular—derailment along the Lehigh River around 7:15 AM on Saturday, March 2. Media reports indicate that an eastbound merchandise freight train was stopped along the Lehigh River about halfway between Bethlehem and Easton, when a following train smashed into the rear of the first train, sending the two locomotives of the second train plunging into the river. A westbound train on the other track then struck some of the derailed cars from the second train, adding to the mess. Fortunately there were no hazardous materials involved and no reports of injuries to the crews, although some diesel fuel leaked into the river. The site of the wreck along the former Lehigh Valley mainline is in a lightly populated area so no injuries or property damage occurred except for that on the railroad itself. While the derailment blocked NS's main route to North Jersey and the Port of New York for a day or two, in order of magnitude this accident will cost the railroad almost nothing compared with the East Palestine disaster.

CSX last month unveiled the tenth heritage locomotive honoring its predecessor railroads. This one, the latest effort by the staff at Waycross (GA) shop, is ES44AC #1836 painted in the colors of the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac, which was founded in the year 1836. The previous nine heritage units represent the legacy of other roads than now make up parts of the CSX system, although a Pennsylvania Railroad unit is unlikely since CSX now runs little or none of the old PRR. (There is a CONRAIL unit numbered 1976.)

NJ TRANSIT has added to its own growing list of locomotives painted to honor predecessor roads such as the PRR and Erie Lackawanna. But the most recent special paint job is on dual-mode ALP-45DP #4508 which was wrapped to commemorate Black History Month in February.

The ancient private car *Loretto* was moved in January to its new home on the Colebrookdale Railroad at Boyertown, PA. Built by Pullman for Steel Magnate Charles Schwab in 1917, the heavyweight solarium sleeper has in recent years been part of the collection of the Railroaders Memorial Museum in Altoona. The car was moved by truck from Altoona over a two-day circuitous route to Boyertown. The museum deaccessioned the car—which was the first piece of rolling stock it acquired in 1975—because it does not conform to its core mission of telling the story of the generations of people who worked for the PRR in Altoona (*Trains*).

An unusual piece of news was received from Princeton, NJ, last month. For the first time in memory a person was killed by NJ TRANSIT's little "Dinky" train, the accident occurring around 2:15 PM on Friday, February 16 in Princeton. A first-year student at the University was struck by the inbound Dinky at the Faculty Road crossing, causing service on the four-mile line to Princeton Junction to be suspended for a time. None of the 30 passengers or crew on the train were injured. The future of the 2.7-mile Dinky line is still very much up in the air (see December *Cinders*).

## Friends of Northeast Philadelphia History



### Cannstatter Volkfest Verein

9130 Academy Road, Philadelphia, PA 19114

**Saturday, April 13, 2024**

**10:00 AM – 3:00 PM**

- Free Admission, All Are Welcome
- Historic Displays, Presentations on Local History
- Books, Prints, Photographs, and Other Historical Items Available

Facebook ~ 215-370-4626 ~ [nephillyhistory@gmail.com](mailto:nephillyhistory@gmail.com)

## Northeast Philadelphia History Fair Set for Saturday, April 13

The Friends of the Northeast Philadelphia History is pleased to announce the 2024 Northeast Philadelphia History Fair, which will be held on Saturday, April 13, 2024 from 10 A to 3 PM at Cannstatter Volkfest Verein, 9130 Academy Road, Philadelphia, PA 19114. The same setup of exhibits in the Grand Ballroom as was done at the 2022 History Fair will apply. As in the past, there is no fee for an exhibit space. Tables and chairs will be supplied free of charge. All is free and freely open to the public.

The History Fair is held biennially and sponsored by the Friends of Northeast Philadelphia History. Once again, Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS will be pleased to participate again this year. More details will be forthcoming

## Old York Road Historical Society Sets Non-Rail History Events

Our friends at the Old York Road Historical Society have scheduled near-future history lectures that may prove of interest to Philadelphia Chapter members. They are:

**Thursday, April 4, 2024:** Society Vice President Tom Wieckowski will present an illustrated lecture on John Wanamaker at the Huntingdon Valley Public Library, 652 Red Lion Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA on Thursday, April 4, 2024 at 12:30 PM. Wanamaker's exploits spanned what could easily be three careers: merchant, politician and civic activist. The program will cover the history of Wanamaker's ground-breaking stores and the exciting life of this notable citizen of Philadelphia and the Cheltenham Hills (Montgomery County) and the history of his estate, *Lindenhurst*, that was the center of many of his events.

**Wednesday, April 10, 7:30 PM in the John Barnes Room of Abington Friends Meeting.** This and the following lecture are sponsored by a grant from the Jenkintown Lyceum, "*Landscapes of the Lord's New Church*". The property of the Lord's New Church, located in Huntingdon Valley, across from the June Fete Fair Grounds, was the estate of the Rev. Theodore Pitcairn. In 1927, he purchased the former Mann farm with its 200-year-old farmhouse. He developed a unique complex of buildings and a small working farm reminiscent of estates found in the French countryside. Today, Theodore's estate is home to the Lord's New Church. Join Chris Mendel, Executive Director of the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust, as he presents a fresh look at the landscape history and development of this property.

**Wednesday, May 8, 7:30 PM in the John Barnes Room of Abington Friends Meeting.** In her new book, *Philadelphia's Strawbridge & Clothier: From Our Family to Yours*, Margaret Strawbridge Butterworth charts the 128-year history of Philadelphia's iconic department store through vivid stories from past employees. The department store branched out to suburban locales including Jenkintown beginning in the later 1920's. At the time of its sale in 1996, Strawbridge & Clothier was the oldest department store in the country with continuous ownership and management. Copies of the book will be available for sale and signing following the talk.

The John Barnes Meeting Room of Abington Friends Meeting is located at 520 Meetinghouse Road, Jenkintown, PA 19046-2934. If you need additional information, please contact the Old York Road Historical Society at 215-886-8590 or by E-mail at [www.oynrhs.org](http://www.oynrhs.org).



# FRIENDS OF PHILADELPHIA TROLLEYS' SPRING 2024 PHOTO EXCURSION



**DATE:** Saturday, May 18, 2024

**TIME:** 9:00 A.M to 4:00 P.M.

**EQUIPMENT:** Red Arrow Lines Center Door car #76

**LOCATION:** Electric City Trolley Museum, 235 Montage Mountain Road, Moosic PA 18507

**FARE:** \$60.00 per person

**DETAILS:** Join the Friends of Philadelphia Trolleys (FPT) and the Electric City Trolley Museum (ECTM) for a scenic spring photo charter along Electric City's former Laurel Line interurban railway. The trip will meet at 235 Montage Mountain Road, Moosic, PA 18507 (adjacent to PNC Field) promptly at 9:00 A.M. for a safety briefing and shop tour. The trip will depart at 9:30 A.M. with Red Arrow Lines Center Door car #76. We plan to have a two-car meet at Virginia Siding with Red Arrow car #80. We will have photo stops along the line and inside Crown Avenue Tunnel. All proceeds will go to ECTM for the restoration of former PRT/PTC/SEPTA PCC Car #2054.

To reserve a seat, please complete the form below and cut it on the broken line to mail in with your check:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/ZIP Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Tickets Requested: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail your completed check made payable to FRIENDS OF PHILADELPHIA TROLLEYS, INC., along with the completed form to: HARRY DONAHUE, 103 MULBERRY COURT, MORGANTOWN, PA 19543. Please note in the memo line of the check "FPT Photo Trip" and include your phone number on the check. **Reservations must be postmarked by May 8, 2024.**