

CINDERS

December 2025



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

Chapter Website: www.nrhsphiladelphia.org



MEETING NOTICE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2026

**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!!**

Both programs will be by Steve Ferrell on the history of the Paoli Local. Second will be a program on "Old Rivets" (GG1 #4800) at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania and what caused it to become in such a sorry state (plus ongoing plans to change this situation by the Friends of the Railrad Museum.

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

CHAPTER OFFICERS (Elected)

President.....	R. L. Eastwood, Jr. (215) 947-5769 reastwood2@comcast.net
Vice President	Steve Ferrell (610) 812-1020 stfarrel@aol.com
Secretary	Marie K. Eastwood (215) 947-5769 mkecat@comcast.net
Treasurer.....	Robert Young (215) 808-5136 Rob_young@verizon.net
National Representative.....	William Welk (215) 681-1957 welk899@gmail.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS (Appointed)

Editor.....	R. L. Eastwood, Jr. (215) 947-5769 reastwood2@comcast.net
Equipment Chair.....	David R. McGuire (610)-544-2749 emd645e3@verizon.net
Webmaster.....	Daniel Knouse (814) 631-9436 dknouse@hotmail.com

2025-26 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES: Effective September 1, 2025, \$25.00 per person, which covers Philadelphia Chapter dues through December 31, 2026. (NRHS National membership dues for 2026 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 November, 2025 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 \$25.00 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 effected 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.



Important Phone Numbers

Cinders lists below the telephone numbers which should be used to report suspicious sightings, emergencies or other conditions affecting rail operations, including trespassers, vandalism, fires, defective equipment, etc.

AMTRAK	800-331-0008
CSX	800-232-0144
CONRAIL Shared Assets	800-272-0911
NJ TRANSIT (NJ only)	800-242-0236
NORFOLK SOUTHERN	800-453-2530
PATCO Transit	856-963-7995
SEPTA	215-580-8111

(Members may wish to photocopy and or clip this notice and keep a copy in your wallet as you are out watching or riding trains. Please send corrections to the Editor.)

SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING!

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 reastwood2@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?

If you are not receiving **CINDERS** by electronic delivery, we recommend that you consider making this change now. For the fourth time in two years, the Postal Service has increased the one-ounce postage rate and this affects Philadelphia Chapter members who receive **CINDERS** by U. S. Mail.

The Postal Service snuck another SURPRISE postage increase to everyone, including its own employees on July 21, 2025 when First Class was hiked from 73 cents for the first ounce to 78 cents for the first ounce. There was no advance warning what so ever, either to employees, customers or news media.

More and more Chapter members have changed their monthly delivery of **CINDERS** to electronic delivery. At present over 100 members have signed up for **eCINDERS**.

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 upon receipt of this issue of **CINDERS**. We need to keep 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
November 1, 2025

PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS



FRANK G. TATNALL, JR.

SEPTA System

November was yet another hectic month for SEPTA, its riders, its management people—and all those worried government officials. The assorted crises described in the last issue of *Cinders* had been partially addressed but continued to cause headaches for everyone. Among the major issues was the all-out effort to restore “normal” service on Regional Rail, which shared headlines with SEPTA’s struggle to finalize a long-delayed contract with its largest union, Transport Workers Local #234. The TWU had not been shy about saying it was capable of calling a full-blown strike.

One possible strike date had come and gone, but at the end of November the threat of a work stoppage on transit still loomed over the negotiations. At the time union leaders said their members would remain on the job so long as productive talks continued on wage increases and the cost of employee health benefits. (A smaller union representing SEPTA workers on suburban lines would be expected to adopt any settlement agreed to by the TWU.) An actual strike, of course, would simply play into the hands of Republican politicians in Harrisburg, who earlier had refused to appropriate more funding for SEPTA to cover its fiscal year deficit. Part of their rationale was that SEPTA was not doing enough to improve its operations and thus save money.

Meanwhile, managers of the city trolley system were dealing with serious problems stemming from overhead wire issues. The newly-installed four-inch sliders on the trolley poles of city cars were found to be causing damage to the catenary wires in the center city tunnel. On October 14, 150 passengers had to be evacuated after four cars became stranded in the tunnel, then some 300 passengers were evacuated on October 22 after a second incident involving the overhead wire. The closure of the entire tunnel starting on November 7 was required to allow the repair and inspection of all five miles of wire in the tunnel. It was reopened on November 13, but by the end of the day another inspection forced a second closure of the tunnel through at least December 7, even though the older sliders had been reinstalled on all cars. During the closure periods service on the five West Philadelphia lines was diverted to the 40th & Market subway station. All 40 miles of the trolley overhead system now have undergone thorough inspections in compliance with an order from the Federal Transit Administration.

SEPTA has won a \$43-million Federal grant toward the purchase of 35 hybrid diesel-electric buses. Presumably, these would be part of the 247 hybrid buses which SEPTA planned to purchase (see October-November *Cinders*) but had decided to postpone because of capital funding problems. USDOT said the grant was included in the \$1.1-billion bus low-and-no-emission grant program that the government is awarding.....A 14-year-old boy was shot twice on the southbound platform of the Cecil B. Moore station on the Broad Street Line around 8:30 PM on Saturday, November 1. The boy was in stable condition at Temple Hospital while three people were in custody after the incident.

SEPTA transit ridership in October was down by 3% or 21,911 trips per weekday as compared with October a year ago. Average daily ridership was 779,701 unlinked trips, up 2% from the previous month. Ridership on Regional Rail was off by 7% or about 6,395 daily trips, which is not surprising given the ongoing shortage of cars and necessary cuts in service.....SEPTA last month started its new Holiday Pop-Up store to sell transit-related items at the center city headquarters building, 1234 Market Street. The store opened on “Black Friday” November 28, with hours noon to 6 PM on weekdays and 11 AM to 5 PM on Saturdays until December 24. SEPTA also will host its “Jingle Rails” interactive holiday experience in the lobby of 1234 Market from 10 AM to 2 PM every day beginning on Saturday, December 13. To see what’s available at the Pop-Up store and “Jingle Rails” go to shop.septa.org.

At the same time that they were working to resolve the labor issue, SEPTA managers were sweating out the problem of getting their 223-car fleet of Silverliner IV cars back in service on Regional Rail. As reported here last issue, the Federal Railroad Administration ordered SEPTA to inspect and repair all of the 50-year-old cars, five of which had caught fire when in regular service earlier this year. An intensive effort to service the cars within the mandated 30 days could not accomplish the task so the FRA granted SEPTA an additional two weeks to November 14 to finish the job. The FRA order specified 14 steps required in the inspection process, which included the installation of a heat-sensing detector in each car that would give advance warning to the crew of any potential electrical fire. At the FRA’s original October 30 deadline only 35 cars had actually been returned to service.

So beginning on Monday morning November 10 SEPTA was forced to cancel more trains, including 22 rush hour schedules on the Airport, Fox Chase and Chestnut Hill West lines. Trains on several lines were cancelled throughout the day, and annulments continued through the week. As of that Monday, 193 of the 223 Silverliner IV MU’s had been inspected but only 73 were back in revenue service, the others held over in the shops for additional repair work such as replacing cable and other hardware, adding insulation around the motors and installing those thermal detectors. The same rush-hour cancellations continued through Wednesday the 12th, but within a few days no more mass cancellations of Regional Rail service seemed necessary.

From late October through November and into early December SEPTA made a few relatively minor schedule changes to help release some extra cars. These included cutting back inbound morning trains #6505 and #6593 to originate at Pennlyn station instead of at Lansdale, and inbound #3702 and #3476 to originate at Clifton-Aldan station instead of at Media. On the Paoli-Thorndale line inbound #512 originated at Bryn Mawr instead of Wayne, and inbound #5210 at Wayne instead of Malvern.

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PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS

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Then it became obvious that not all of the Silverliner IV's could be equipped with the required thermal detectors by the new deadline of December 5. This was due to SEPTA's inability to secure a full complement of the devices and the necessary wiring, with the result that only about 150 of the 223 cars were ready to go back on the road. It was hoped that this shortage could soon be remedied, but full Regional Rail service would not be restored until at least mid-December.

Well then, what is SEPTA going to do about finding permanent replacements for all of these ancient Silverliner IV cars? Of course, there's talk about ordering new cars but that would mean getting a lot of scarce capital money from Harrisburg—not an easy task. Short term, some cars can be rented from other railroads, and in fact SEPTA is already leasing ten non-powered coaches from Maryland's MARC system, which were due to arrive at SEPTA during the week of December 8. But they need locomotives to pull them (which SEPTA does have).

Thousands of Regional Rail riders suffered through a really bad day on Tuesday, November 25, when around 4:15 PM an electrical failure stranded numerous trains in the 30th Street Station area and through the center city tunnel. Although power was restored within 15 minutes, three trains could not be restarted, one of them in the tunnel between Jefferson and Temple stations, and another with no passengers aboard was stopped in Suburban station. Rescuing the 200 passengers from the disabled train in the tunnel proved difficult after an effort to couple another train to it was unsuccessful, but passengers later were transferred to a Chestnut Hill East train. Finally, by 7:04 PM all disabled equipment was cleared but the impact on service continued throughout the evening. Several other trains not directly caught in the outage also were cancelled due to "excessive delays" from the power outage.

It finally looks like something will be done with the long-abandoned Reading rail viaduct in center city. Unused by SEPTA since the new tunnel was opened in November 1984, it remains in the ownership of the present-day Reading International, successor to the old Reading Railroad. Until now the current owner has not allowed any use or development of the historic stone viaduct which led to Reading Terminal, but that may be about to change. The Reading firm believes it still could be used for a railroad, but the Surface Transportation Board now has ruled that the viaduct is no longer under Federal railroad jurisdiction. It thus can be treated as regular private property, which has led the Philadelphia City Council to consider giving the City authority to pursue the viaduct acquisition through purchase, donation or by eminent domain. If so acquired, the city plans to convert it into a part of the adjacent Rail Park, similar to New York City's very popular High Line which was acquired from a railroad. As an historical note, Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS chartered the very last train to depart from old Reading Terminal, on November 6, 1984, using a consist of ex-Reading "Blueliner" MU cars. Rail Park now exists on a former Reading freight line along Noble Street, including a ramp that connects it directly to the track area atop the viaduct.

SEPTA at the end of the year will close ten more ticket sales offices on Regional Rail, now that there are so many electronic fare purchase options available. In addition to the Penn Medicine and Wayne Junction locations, other offices to be closed are all

located in suburban areas, although SEPTA said that waiting rooms and facilities at most of the stations will still be available. These can be entered by tapping one's Key Card or other SEPTA card in the card reader at the station doors.....Was there a "slippery rail season" this fall? In the past SEPTA has made it a big deal, talking about safety and trains possibly sliding past their station stops. This year there was only one posting on the SEPTA website, and that was it. So, maybe leaves falling on the rails are not considered a serious problem any longer.

AMTRAK has sent out a media release documenting its "Year of Records" in Fiscal Year 2025 that ended September 30. Among its accomplishments in spurring growth: 34.5 million miles in customer trips, a 5.1% increase over FY 2024 and an all-time record; total operating revenues of \$3.9 billion, a 9.1% increase over FY 2024; Amtrak passengers logging 6.9 billion miles, a new all-time high; a record \$5.5 billion in capital investments, up 25% year-over year; and three new train launches, the NextGen Acelas along the Corridor, the *Mardi Gras* service along the Gulf Coast; and the Chicago-Twin Cities *Borealis* which has hauled over a quarter million riders since its debut in 2024. And rolling out the new NextGen Acelas and Airo trains is planned for the coming year. "Amtrak's growth is a preview of what's possible when everyone is working together to help the American people to get where they want to go," said Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy. "The best is yet to come as we continue to build beautiful infrastructure to support this bright future of transportation."

AMTRAK suffered systemwide issues on Monday, October 20, due to an Amazon Web Services (AWS) network outage. Customers could not book new reservations or have payments processed, and other customer services were unavailable for a time but there were no reports that train operations were affected.....A man was seriously injured when he apparently jumped off the Amosland Road bridge and onto the AMTRAK tracks in Norwood about 11:30 AM on October 31. Nearby Amtrak employees assisted the man and he was taken by ambulance to Lankenau Hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

One of AMTRAK's brand-new Airo trainsets was spotted testing on the Main Line to Paoli on Tuesday, November 25. Beginning next year, the 83 dual-mode trainsets being built by Siemens—either electric or diesel-powered—should begin running in various regional and state-supported services, including the Northeast Corridor.

The PennDOT project team drafting a revised state rail plan held a virtual meeting on October 16 to allow for public comment. Pennsylvania is first among states in the number of freight railroads operating within its borders, third in total rail miles, 8th in carloads originated and 9th in freight rail employment. The plan, which focuses on freight rail traffic, was last updated in 2020, but there is considerable interest in rail passenger business as evidenced by the fact that most of the questions directed to the nine-member project team involved passenger service.

UNION PACIFIC and NORFOLK SOUTHERN plan to file their merger application with Federal regulators around December 16, according to a recent statement by UP CEO Jim Vena. But CPKC CEO Keith Creel told an investor conference on December 2 that "I don't think it's a fait accompli...people are grossly underestimating the complexity of what UP and NS are attempting

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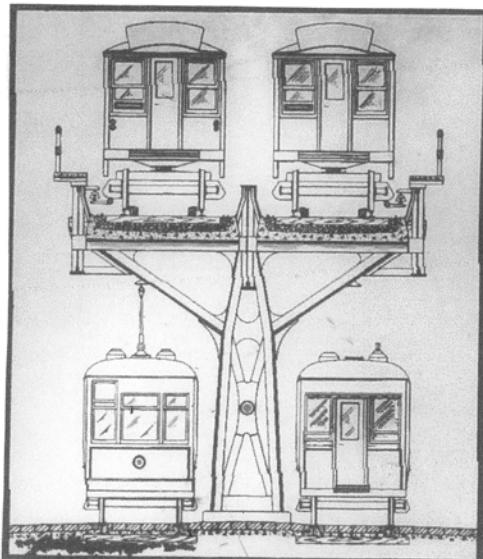
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to do." It is obvious to most industry people that creating the proposed transcontinental merger will require a herculean effort on the part of the two railroads and their supporters, versus tremendous opposition from its many opponents (*Trains*).

After writing this column for almost 50 years, I never miss an opportunity to thank all of my readers and wish them a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year!

Frank Tatnall



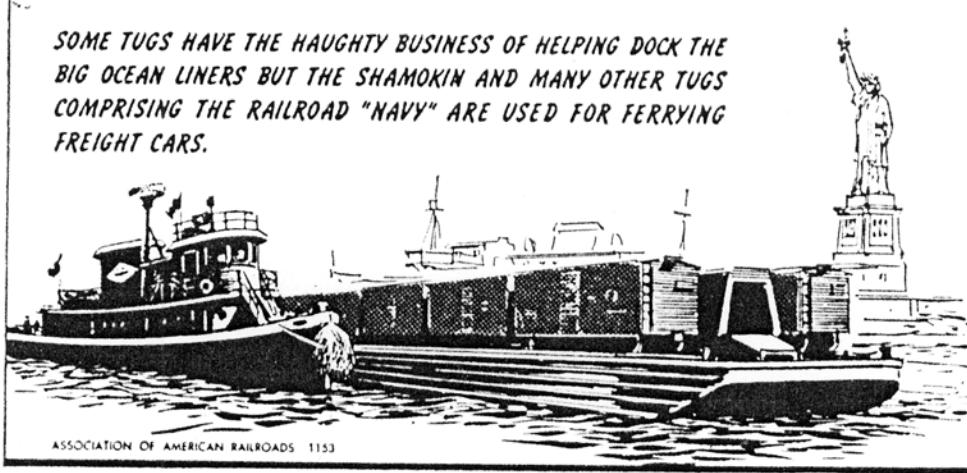
Rail oddities

FASTEST TIME IN THE 1953 INTERNATIONAL TUGBOAT RACE IN NEW YORK HARBOR WAS MADE BY A RAILROAD TUG--THE SHAMOKIN.



IT WON THE 2-MILE RACE DOWN THE HUDSON RIVER IN 9 MINUTES 38 SECONDS--ALSO WON FIRST PLACE IN 1952.

SOME TUGS HAVE THE HAUGHTY BUSINESS OF HELPING DOCK THE BIG OCEAN LINERS BUT THE SHAMOKIN AND MANY OTHER TUGS COMPRISING THE RAILROAD "NAVY" ARE USED FOR FERRYING FREIGHT CARS.



Railfanning along the Northeast Corridor At the Trenton Transit Center

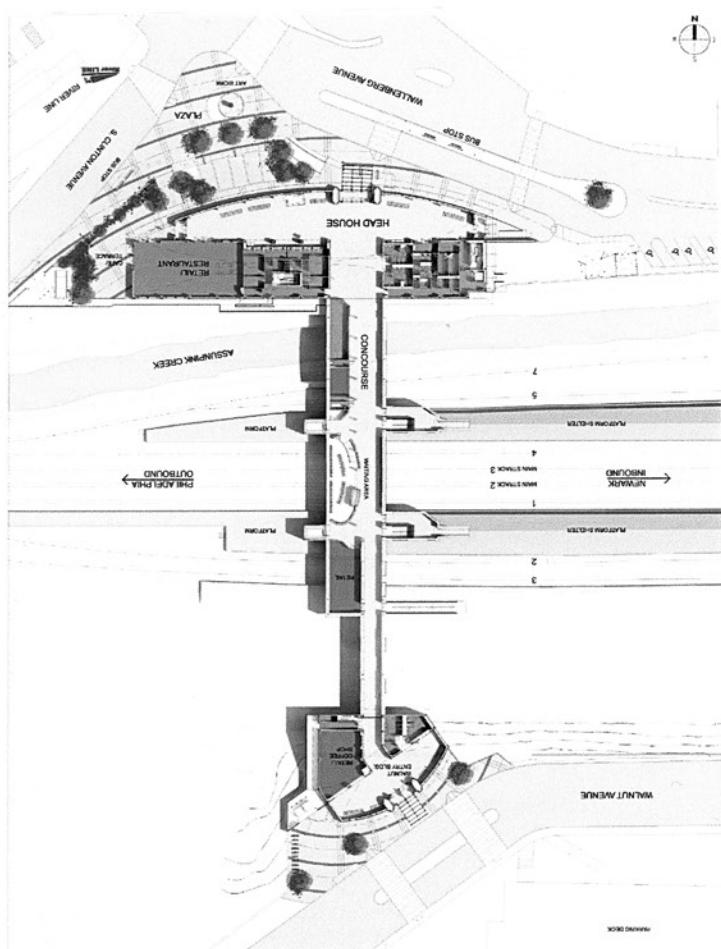
By Steve Ferrell

I enjoy switching trains at Trenton, NJ, and I especially love it if I have an hour or two at this great railfanning location. While there are some drawbacks at Trenton – a large homeless population and gross bathrooms, the different railroad viewing location options abound, all platforms are open (unguarded) for fans to go down and watch trains to arrive, depart or speed through.

The Acelas and Acela Next Generation trains speed through on the middle tracks that have no platforms. These are called Main Tracks 2 or 3. SEPTA trains usually arrive and depart on Track 5. This is handy for commuters switching from New Jersey Transit trains arriving from New York and continuing to Philadelphia and stations in between. Northbound Amtrak Northeast Corridor trains stop on Track One while southbound trains stop on Track 5. This allows transfers to local stations not served by Amtrak by Amtrak for both northbound and southbound travelers. Tracks 3 and 7 are unused and look like it.

New Jersey Transit trains travelling toward New York City use Tracks 1 and 2 (usually 2) and southbound trains use Track 4 before turning around or going to the yards. Unlike SEPTA, NJT operate quite long (8- 12 car) trainsets. If you go out of the station headhouse and turn to the left, you can observe the River Line light rail trains departing for and arriving from Camden, NJ.

Food is not a high point. The McDonald's outlet recently closed. They have a convenience store with sandwiches and an Auntie Anne's soft pretzels. At the other end from the headhouse is a fast food Italian place with seating. I have had pizza slices there and it is tasty. Below is a station diagram. On both platforms you can go to the south ends and get excellent views of NJT, Amtrak and SEPTA operations.



Amtrak's New Airo Trainsets, coming soon!

By Stephen Ferrell, pictures from Amtrak's promotional press release

"What is that?!" exclaimed several people on our last trip through Philadelphia's 30th Street Station! We noticed an unfamiliar trainset parked beside the four Next Generation Acela's in the yard outside the station. Further reading online informed us that this was a test train of the new Avila consists built by Sieman's in California. It was recently sent east for testing on the Northeast Corridor. These train cars are articulated, meaning they are permanently joined to form a unified, rigid structure. This configuration enables the unit to navigate curves with greater smoothness and efficiency compared to traditionally coupled cars.

I am looking forward to riding on one of the new Airo trainsets. Initially after testing, these connected units will be deployed in the Northwest on the Cascades line. Then, as more units become available, they will be deployed on the Empire Service, Northeast Corridor, Keystone lines and many more lines! While I love the comfortable seats of the current Budd built Amfleet I and I cars (now between 45 and 50 years old), these new cars look to be quite an impressive replacement for them.

Croydon Pennsylvania, who knew??

By Steve Ferrell

In July 2025, Ride with me Steve rail riding group took a short trip on SEPTA to Croydon, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. I did not think that it would make a decent article for the Dispatcher but later rethought this idea.



The group at the Dog-N-Bull in Croydon – photo by John Smith, taken by our server.



Business Class car

The Airo cars feature:

- Reduced travel times for many routes and are rated to travel 125mph.
- A seamless transition between locomotive power sources (see below)

- 5G enabled Wi-Fi.
- Greater accessibility with onboard passenger lifts and increased accessible spaces and enhanced with audible and visual messaging.
- Better and more readable indoor and outdoor signage for announcements.
- Choice of double or single seats for Business Class.
- Bigger panoramic windows for enhanced visibility.
- A café car with contemporary food service with self-service options.
- Dedicated individual seat power outlets and USB ports.
- Bigger seat tray tables, moveable headrests, dedicated cup holders, and a seatback tablet holder.



Coach Class car.

Here is the real improvement: These locomotives on the Airo can operate as a diesel-electric, electric with pantograph on the first passenger car, or battery power (for a limited time)! This allows operations on purely diesel routes paired with a Charger diesel locomotive on the front and on the northeast corridor and Keystone service, where the infrastructure allows operations using electric power! And these locomotives are far faster and more fuel efficient than any others that Amtrak previously operated. Indeed, they can reach 125mph on either diesel or electric operations.



Café Car

I am looking forward to riding the Airo consists on the Keystone line. The current Keystone service trains do not have café car service, and I am hoping that they include this service on the train sets serving this line between New York and Harrisburg. I look forward to getting a snack and a beer on my many rides to New York with my rail riding group: "Ride with Me Steve."