

# Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum  
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Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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This stunning promotional photo finds a Great Smoky Mountains Railroad train crossing Fontana Lake in Western North Carolina. Our September 14<sup>th</sup> excursion over this route was a big success. We had 24 passenger cars on our train pulled by three locomotives. Nearly 800 happy passengers were on board.

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## *October 25<sup>th</sup> General Membership Meeting*

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on Monday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 6:30 pm at the Chuckey Depot / Railroad Museum, 110 South Second St., Jonesborough, TN (at the railroad crossing). Our program this month will be on the Clinchfield Railroad steam engines, presented by Ralph Clarke and Brad McCroskey. Bring a friend out and enjoy an evening of railroading revisiting the Clinchfield. This will be our 15<sup>th</sup> General Membership Meeting in the depot during the pandemic and everything has worked out fine. Masks are recommended per Town of Jonesborough.

*Member Notes*  
*By Edna Kay Carter*

No new members to report.  
Hope everyone is enjoying this beautiful, fall weather.

**WATAUGA VALLEY Christmas Dinner / 40th Anniversary Event**

The Watauga Valley General Membership voted at the September General Membership meeting to hold our Christmas Dinner / 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event on December 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am at the Food City Banquet Room, 920 N. State of Franklin Rd., Johnson City, TN. The program will be a photo review of our events over the past 40 years. Details of the event and sign-up information will be sent out soon.

**2022 OFFICER AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATIONS**

The Nominating Committee will be presenting the slate of candidates for the upcoming election. Nominations will be taken from the floor at the November General Membership Meeting. **BALLOTS WILL BE MAILED OUT VERY SOON.**

**2022 MEMBERSHIP DUES**

Membership Dues statements for 2022 will be e-mailed or sent by US mail in November.

Dues: Individual Membership \$ 20.00  
Family Membership \$ 5.00 per family member

Benefits: 12 issues of the "Whistle Stop", Watauga Valley's newsletter.  
Membership in the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum.  
Participation in all Museum functions and events.

*2021 WVRHS&M Train Excursions*

**Autumn Leaf Scenic Hiwassee River Train Excursion**



The Watauga Valley Hiwassee Gorge River had an excellent day to afternoon during the passengers had a

Railroad Museum sponsored our Excursion on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021. We operate the trip on a beautiful Saturday leaf change in Delano, TN. All our great time riding the loops and gorge.

## *Chuckey Depot / Museum*

Attendance at the Chuckey Depot / Museum has been good while meeting all the Covid Virus requirements of the State of Tennessee and Town of Jonesborough. Visitor numbers are higher than expected.

There have been several training sessions conducted for Host positions at the Chuckey Depot / Museum; every one of our members have enjoyed the class which is conducted by Heritage Alliance of Northeast Tennessee. We are planning training sessions in the coming weeks; sure would like to have more volunteers to help out at the museum a day or so a month. You will meet some great people while promoting our railroad history. If interested, please call Mike Tilley (423) 335-1100 to sign up for a class.

### **Automatic Train Control System**

We are happy to announce that the Automatic Train Control System (ATCS) is up and running in Marion VA on the Norfolk Southern New River Line. This can be viewed on the ATCS board at the Chuckey Depot Museum in Jonesborough. Member Bob Mushet is working on installing Broadcastify on 4400 foot-high Holston Mountain. From the tests that Bob has performed, we should reach as far west as Knoxville. The radio will include CSX Kingsport and Blue Ridge Districts and Norfolk Southern's A Line and the New River District. All the action can be heard on our web site when Bob gets it hooked up.

## *Mechanical Department Report* *by Jim Magill and Art DeVoe*

Thanks to everyone on the Mechanical and Cleaning Committees for their hard work: Jim Magill, Art DeVoe, Don Findley, Jim Sutterlin, Cline Knowles, Jim Smallwood, Mike Tilley, David Denny, Jan Edwards, Gary Lombardi, Jim Smallwood, Rick Chinouth, and Frank Gricus (hope someone wasn't forgotten.) All the work you have done over the past year on our passenger cars keeps them running in fine fashion.

Track work to replace old ties and leveling the track will get started in late November.

If you would like to volunteer at the Jonesborough Coach yard, please call the WVRHS&M office at (423) 753-5797 and a leave message; we will call you back.

### **ROLLING STOCK**

**"Crescent Harbor" sleeper / lounge (WATX 2351):** back home in Jonesborough.

**"Powhatan Arrow" coach (WATX 539), "Moultrie" diner (WATX 400): "Clinchfield 100" office car (WATX 100), and "St Augustine" coach (WATX 500):** all four cars in service at the North Carolina Transportation Museum on the following:

## **THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride** **The Magic Returns!**

**November 12-13, 19-21, & 26-28 and December 3-5, 9-12, & 14-23**

"Well, are you coming?" Inspired by the hit movie, this holiday favorite comes to life as you and your family take a magical trip on THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride! Have a question? Contact the museum for general information at (704) 636-2889 or info@nctransportationmuseum.org.

## *In the News*

### **GSMR TRAIN DERAILMENT**

[WLOS, Asheville] An investigation is underway after several Great Smoky Mountains Railroad cars derailed while filled with passengers over the weekend in Swain County.

News 13 has heard the accounts of several people onboard and what the railroad is saying so far about the cause.

The Great Smoky Mountains Railroad (GSMR) train derailed Saturday, Oct. 9 on its way from the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC) to the main depot in Bryson City.

The trains are busy this time of year, with thousands coming to enjoy the fall season. One passenger onboard at the time of the derailment tells News 13 hundreds of people were onboard the steam engine excursion.

She writes, "Multiple cars derailed, our car being one of them. It was unsettling given that our car was leaning slightly, and we were over Lake Fontana."

Another passenger wrote to News 13, "The tracks underneath the cars folded over causing them to the derail. It took hours for them to get us back to Bryson."

In a statement to News 13, Railroad Vice President and General Manager Kim Albritton, said, "No major damage occurred and GSMR is hopeful that all repairs and inspections will be completed by the end of day on Tuesday. The exact cause of the derailment is still being investigated. GSMR is still currently operating a train from Bryson City to Dillsboro which is unaffected and departing daily."

Albritton says no passengers were injured and everyone was transported safely by bus or train back to Bryson City.

"He just said it was derailed. It's 11 cars and that was it," says Jim Mumblo, visiting the area from Florida with his wife Kathy.

They came by Monday, hoping to ride the train to the NOC.

"They just said, 'are you here for the 2 o'clock?' And we said 'yes.' And they said 'well, it's cancelled,'" Kathy recalls.

"They said that the engine was in the rear of the train pushing it and because of all the storms that had recently come through, the tracks had kind of separated," Kathy added.

Even without the train ride, they say they'll still enjoy Bryson City.

"It's nice being here," Kathy says.

"We're just going to wander around a little bit, maybe grab some lunch. look at the museum and then head back to Jacksonville," says Jim.

The vice president and general manager of the railroad says refunds have been offered to all the passengers onboard at the time.

## *N&W No. 611 to Remain at Strasburg Rail Road*



Photo credit: Trains

[Trains News Wire, October 8, 2021] Norfolk & Western Class J locomotive No. 611 will remain at the Strasburg Rail Road this winter, undergoing an annual inspection and maintenance, following the conclusion of its operations on the Pennsylvania short line.

The Virginia Museum of Transportation's 4-8-4 had operated at Strasburg since May, wrapping up its schedule of excursions, cab rides, and other events on Oct. 3. It was the locomotive's second appearance at Strasburg, following a shorter stay in 2019.

"The Museum's partnership with Strasburg Rail Road Co. has worked exceptionally well," Virginia Museum of Transportation President Will Harris said in a press release. "We are thrilled to have an opportunity to operate 611 and continue the heritage of steam railroading for new generations to experience."

While remaining at Strasburg, the locomotive will undergo a required Federal Railroad Administration inspection of the boiler's flexible staybolts and caps. Future plans "will be published through official channels when appropriate," according to the press release.

"It's been an honor to host 611 at the Strasburg Rail Road again, and it's been a privilege for tens of thousands of our guests to experience such a significant locomotive right here in the midst of beautiful Lancaster County," said Steve Barrall, the Strasburg's vice president of guest experience.

## *CSX to Serve New Ford Plants in Tennessee, Kentucky*

[Bill Stephens, *Trains newsletter*] CSX Transportation will be in the driver's seat for rail traffic related to Ford Motor Co.'s massive new electric vehicle and battery plants planned for sites in Tennessee and Kentucky.

This week Ford announced it would develop a 3,600-acre mega campus called Blue Oval City northeast of Memphis. The facility will build the next generation of F-series battery-electric trucks and, in conjunction with SK Innovation, make batteries for electric vehicles. As one element of a plan to make the \$5.6 billion campus carbon neutral, parts suppliers will be located on site to reduce the need for transportation.

CSX serves the site in Stanton, Tenn., which spans 6 square miles and is sandwiched between the railroad's Nashville-to-Memphis main line and Interstate 40.

In Glendale, Ky., alongside Interstate 65 and CSX's main line linking Louisville and Nashville, Ford and SK Innovation will build BlueOvalSK Battery Park to produce batteries for electric Ford

and Lincoln vehicles. The \$5.8 billion facility will span 1,500-acres on property CSX designated a megasite in 2010.

The Tennessee and Kentucky plants are expected to begin production in 2025, with a combined 11,000 new jobs. Ford’s investment – the largest ever in the U.S. for electric vehicles – is part of its plan to sustainably mass-produce affordable battery-powered vehicles. Ford expects up to half of its vehicle production to be electric vehicles by 2030.

“We’re excited to see innovative industrial development continue to gain momentum in Tennessee. As the most fuel efficient railroad in the U.S. and the most environmentally friendly mode of transportation on land, CSX welcomes Ford Motor Company to the Memphis Regional Megasite, and salutes their landmark investment for a more sustainable future,” the railroad said in a LinkedIn post.

A CSX spokeswoman was unable to provide a statement about the new Ford plants or how much traffic they might generate for the railroad.

## *Progress Rail, NS Unveil First GP34ECO*

[Trains News Wire, October 8, 2021]  
Progress Rail and Norfolk Southern have unveiled the first GP34ECO locomotive, built for yard and intermediate operations to meet Environmental Protection Agency Tier 4 emission standards.

The locomotive, intended to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by 90% compared to older locomotives, is currently undergoing testing for EPA certification. It is powered by a 3,000-hp 12-710 EMD engine and is the first to use a diesel exhaust fluid/selective catalytic reduction aftertreatment system for line-haul locomotive applications.



Photo credit: Progress Rail

Norfolk Southern assembled the locomotive core at its Juniata Locomotive Shop in Altoona, Pa., and worked with Progress Rail and Caterpillar on final assembly, engine, and aftertreatment system work. It also features a new crashworthy cab and new cab electronics.

“In recent years, we have collaborated with Progress Rail to upgrade more than 100 locomotives that power our road and terminal operations,” Tom Schnautz, Norfolk Southern vice president of Advanced Train Control, said in a press release. “This new locomotive is another step forward in our modernization journey, and we look forward to achieving Tier 4 emissions certification.”

Since 2008, Norfolk Southern and Progress Rail have repowered 50 locomotives specifically for the ECO line. The units offer lower emissions, fuel savings, and other efficiencies, and each and replace two older, less-efficient locomotives.

The unit will be placed in service in Harrisburg, Pa., later this year, with NS and Progress working to ensure field testing meets final emissions certification requirements.

## *NS to Reopen Louisville Intermodal Terminal*

[*Trains News Wire*, September 29, 2021] Norfolk Southern will reopen its Louisville intermodal terminal to handle international containers from Virginia ports.

“With continued strong growth in the Louisville intermodal market, Norfolk Southern is pleased to announce that we will be adding terminal capacity to this growing market through the reopening of our intermodal terminal in Louisville, Ky.,” NS said in a service advisory today.

The terminal — which was closed this summer as NS shifted traffic to its Appliance Park intermodal facility in Louisville — will reopen on Oct. 4 to handle inbound traffic from Norfolk International Terminals and the Virginia International Gateway in Portsmouth.

The Port of Virginia has been handling record container volume for the past year. NS intermodal volume is up 7% this year.

## *East Broad Top Progress*

[Kevin Gilliam, *Trains New Wire*] With a golden spike ceremony on Sept. 16, an East Broad Top train returned for the first time since 2011 to the wye and picnic shelter at Colgate Grove, the long-time terminus of the tourist railroad. The hope is for regular passenger trains to begin operating to Colgate Grove by the end of 2021.

The railroad has also partnered with the neighboring Rockhill Trolley Museum for combination tickets to the railroad, the shops, and a trolley ride. The EBT will operate through October and will be operating Christmas trains in 2021.

In the coming years, the operable track for excursions will be expanded, and steam will return. Crews working in the roundhouse are busy getting EBT 2-8-2 No. 16 restored to operable condition. No. 16 last steamed in 1956, and never operated during the tourist era. Named “Nick” in honor of Nick Kovalchick, who saved the railroad in 1956, No. 16 will be the first of the five steam locomotives on the property to return to service.

## *From the Vault ...*

Mike Tilley passed along these two snapshots of our 1986 excursion over the CLINCHFIELD to Elkhorn City, KY. This was the first trip for our coach “*Clinchfield*”, now the “*St. Augustine*”.



*Display in the Block*  
*by Les Billings*



CSX 509, leading a mixed freight manifest approaching Sutphin Road crossing at the base of Buffalo Mountain on a sunny Sunday afternoon. This is one of only two crossings in Carter County for CSX. I met a nice farmer on this outing and we had a good talk before the train came by. He was riding his tractor over the crossing to finish cutting his hay.

This little jewel appeared on NS 127 on Sundy June 6<sup>th</sup> this year as I was preparing to host at the Chuckey Depot Museum. It is approaching the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street crossing in Jonesborough, westbound. GMTX 9000 is a GATX lease unit with Providence & Worcester and Vermont Rail System markings. It is a EMD SD60 Unit.



This colorful Kansas City Southern locomotive came through downtown Johnson City on the morning of July 30<sup>th</sup>. It was the 3<sup>rd</sup> unit on 16T heading eastbound. I was standing on the old Clinchfield depot platform, just outside of my work, Summers Industrial. I saw it come through Jonesborough on the Chuckey Depot camera and waited about 20 minutes and took a little break and captured it as it passed by.



On a little trip to Bluff City, I was able to catch NS22A as it goes over the bridge on Silver Grove Road. It was just about the cross over South Holston River, on its way toward Johnson City.



On a trip back from Nashville, I stopped and visited the Bulls Gap Train Museum. I purchased a T-Shirt or two and hoped a train would pass by. But as you can see, none were in sight. So, I decided to capture this shot from the crossing as if I were the train. You can see the signaling in the background.

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## TROLLEY CAR RIDES AT THE CRAGGY MOUNTAIN LINE IN ASHEVILLE



WVRHS&M is inviting all our members to come out on Saturday November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 1 pm and ride the rails of the Craggy Mountain Line for a 4-mile trip over the Craggy Mtn to Riverside Park in Asheville. The cost is \$5.00 per person which includes the Trolley Ride along with a tour of the engines, cabooses and other equipment at the Craggy Mountain. The Craggy Mountain Line is located at 111 North Woodfin Avenue, Asheville, NC 28804. Please mail your check to Watauga Valley Railroad Museum, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605. Deadline to send in your fare is Tuesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>. No reservations can be

taken on the day of the trip.

Directions to the Craggy Mountain Line: from Johnson City it's approximately a 1-hour drive. Take I-26E towards Asheville then take Exit 24 (Elk Mountain Road / Woodfin exit) and follow signs to the railroad. Everyone will have to drive the short distance over the mountain on their own. If you get lost, we will provide you with a phone number to call to aid you in getting to the Craggy Mountain yard.



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**TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL**