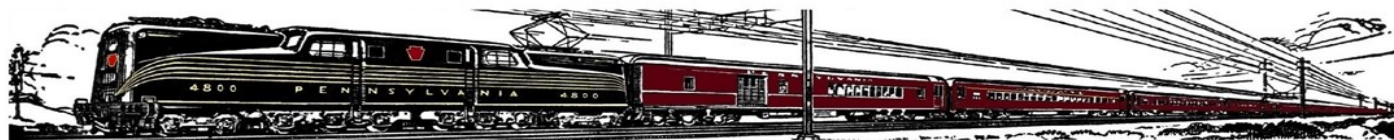


LANCASTER DISPATCHER

1935-2025



LANCASTER CHAPTER, INC., NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 59 NUMBER 9

DISTRICT 2—CHAPTER WEBSITE: WWW.NRHS1.ORG

SEPTEMBER 2025



Waiting on the Train....

PRR MP54 on the Paoli Local Strafford PA, March 27th, 1970

PhotocCredit: Lancaster Chapter Member Fred Schneider



Railway News Flash

By Steve Ferrell

Gathered from press releases and revised for this publication

- Union Pacific will acquire Norfolk Southern for \$85 million. This will create the first transcontinental railroad in the United States! The hope is that the merger will be completed by 2027. Of course, this merger must meet with the approval of regulators.
- AmeriStarRail has proposed a train that offers coast-to-coast trips, carrying passengers and truck drivers and their tractor trailers. They plan to offer service for passenger's cars (like the auto train) and charter buses. The new line would use the route of the Pennsylvanian and the and the Southwest Chief and could be ready to start operations in May 2026.
- Ross Rowland, famous steam preservationist died on July 19th after a battle with cancer. He was 85 years old.
- PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson) is making a major \$54 Million investment in Hoboken Terminal. The project includes restoring all platforms to concrete and putting in new energy efficient lighting.
- A partnership between New Jersey Transit and developer LCOR, plus Hoboken has started construction on a major renovation of Hoboken Terminal in July 2025. The plan is to revamp the building along with Warrington Plaza situated just outside the building. New amenities include an outdoor market place plus restoration of the terminal's second floor, which had been closed for decades.
- On July 29th, the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania officially broke ground on their new Roundhouse. Included in this project is the renovation of their historic turntable.
- Amtrak announced that it will finally begin operating their Acela II NextGen trainsets on August 28th. They will begin using five of the 28 sets and gradually phase the rest in through 2027.
- At Washington D.C. Amtrak has added a new track and boarding platform for both Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express (VRE). Track 22 is located at the lower level of Union Station and previously served as a storage track.
- Steamtown will hold Railfest 2025 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of steam locomotive Grand Trunk Western No. 6039 and the 30th anniversary of Steamtown's public opening. Highlights include train rides, exhibits, activities, and family-friendly programming.
- With all the threats from SEPTA about shutting down or reducing service to Wilmington (among many other lines), the state of Delaware is renewing its interest in a proposed Delaware controlled passenger rail line. This line would run from Wilmington to Salisbury and Berlin, Maryland. Would running to Philadelphia be out of the question?
- Ironically, with impending major service cuts, SEPTA reported its highest ever customer satisfaction scores ever in their quarterly Customer Satisfaction Survey since 2023!

THIS MONTH ON THE PENNSY**PRR, PRSL & LIRR EVENTS IN SEPTEMBER**

Source: Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society (permission of Christopher Baer, PRRT&HS).

September 27, 1916 PRR Board appropriates \$1.5 million to acquire property for large new freight yard between Waverly and Newark Bay Bridge; authorizes replacing all arch-bar trucks on tenders of passenger locomotives.

September 14, 1921 PRR President Rea informs Lehigh Valley Railroad President E.E. Loomis that PRR will not renew its agreement for LV use of Penn Station.

September 4, 1926 Labor day exodus from New York; PRR operates 75 extra trains.

September 2, 1931 PRR agrees with the Consolidated Gas, Electric Light & Power Company of Baltimore, the Pennsylvania Water & Power Company, and the Safe Harbor Water Power Company for electricity from their Susquehanna River hydroelectric dams for the PRR electrification between Perryville and Washington.

September, 1931 Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company adopts assembly line techniques to build motors of 90 Class P5a electric locomotives for PRR.

September 21, 1931 PRR stock falls to 30 cents on Philadelphia Stock Exchange; lowest since 1878; then rallies to 36 cents and closes over 33 cents.

September 27, 1936 New York Zone operates its first "Off the Beaten Track" excursion, running New York-Trenton behind a GG1, thence to Columbia via the Trenton Cut-Off and New Holland Branch, thence to Perryville via the Port Road and return to New York.

September 27, 1941 Last run of CNJ Blue Comet after years of operating losses; CNJ exits the New York-Atlantic City passenger market, leaving only PRR service; CNJ abandons all passenger service south of Lakehurst and Barnegat.

September 19, 1946 PRR VP in Charge of Traffic Walter S. Franklin testifies before the ICC that the PRR is experiencing the worst year in its history with a deficit for the first 7 months of \$27 million after carry-back credits.

September 11, 1951 Lima Works of Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton Corporation turns out its last locomotive, PRR center-cab 2,500 HP transfer unit No. 5683; all locomotive work is concentrated at Eddystone.

September 30, 1956 PRR begins moving the reactor vessel for the Shippingport nuclear power plant from Hagerstown Yard to the plant site on the Kobuta Industrial Track (formerly the New Cumberland Branch); vessel is delivered on Oct. 6; is largest high & wide shipment over PRR, 12'-11" wide and 17'-7" above rails; weighs 153 tons; carried on an F-38 flat car with six empty flats for extra brakes.

September, 1961 PRR inaugurates TrucTrain TT-23 between Kearny and the Deep South.

September 1, 1966 PRR agrees with Wawa & Concordville, Inc. to operate weekend steam excursions for two years between those points on the Octoraro Branch.

September 16, 1966 SEPTA announces comprehensive \$457.7 million, 10-year capital program, including \$168.9 million for commuter rail; Phase I is to include 50 cars for PRR and 31 for Reading, a new PRR MU car shop, the Center City Commuter Connection, and extension of Reading electrification beyond Hatboro; Phase II will include replacing all PRR MP54's and most Reading MU cars and expanding station parking lots; Phase III is to include high-level platforms and extending the Norristown Line to Washington Square.

September 22, 1971 ICC denies Penn Central's petition to discontinue all passenger service west of Harrisburg and Buffalo, and between Boston and Albany.

Take a ride on the Paoli Local! – Part four, the Penn Central, Conrail and SEPTA years

By Stephen Ferrell



Drawing of MP44 Electric Multiple-Units at Wayne Station drawn by Jim Rose – Courtesy of the Artist



Penn Central GG1 with long distance passenger train at Paoli – Photo courtesy of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania

In 1968, Penn Central was born, a merger of Pennsylvania Railroad, New York Central and later the New York and New Haven Railroad. It was not a match made in heaven. There were problems from the start with the merger of lines with different philosophies and a workforce difficult to combine.

The Penn Central Years were fraught with mismanagement and lack of track and equipment maintenance. Corners were cut and service for the customers was not particularly good. Penn Central applied its undistinguished coat of green paint on some of their MP54's to add further indignity to these proud old workhorses. GG1's passing through had the Penn Central worm PC insignia on each side of the locomotives replacing the proud Pennsylvania Railroad lettering.

In 1976, after the bankruptcy of Penn Central, Conrail assumed operation of both the former Reading and Pennsylvania Railroad's commuter lines. They were always complaining to the SEPTA, who was technically in charge of these lines (which Conrail and their employees operated for them) never reimbursed them enough to even break even on commuter operations. In 1976, Amtrak took control of the Northeast Corridor Service and the Keystone Line (that serves Paoli) to Harrisburg from Penn Central as part of the process to create Conrail. MP54's were painted with bright SEPTA colors and served until 1981,



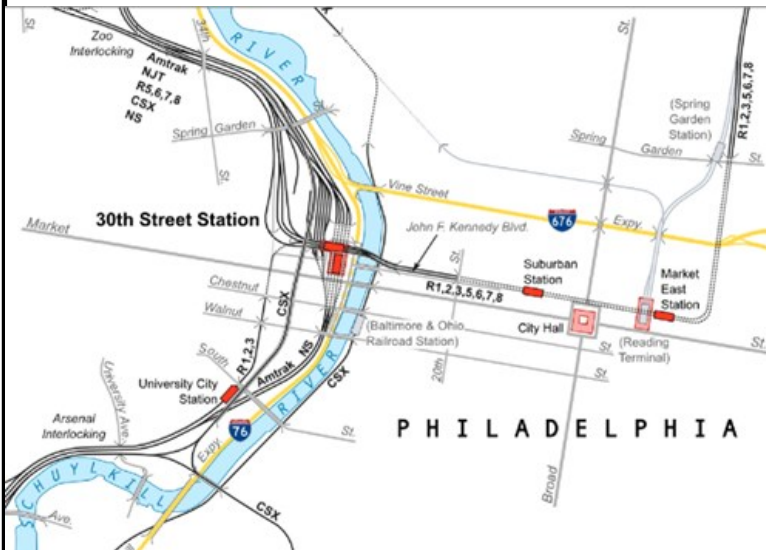
Silverliners with both Penn Central and SEPTA insignia's at Paoli. Photo courtesy of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania



Westbound MP54 consist at Paoli – Slide courtesy of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania

Take a ride on the Paoli Local! – Part four, the Penn Central, Conrail and SEPTA years (continued)

The Northeast Rail Service Act of 1981 was approved allowing Conrail to finally turn over commuter operations to SEPTA by 1983. By 1984, the new commuter tunnel was completed and opened in center city Philadelphia. This connected the former Reading and Pennsylvania Railroad commuter operations. Suburban station became a through station. A brand new and beautiful station was opened east of Suburban Station underground and near the former and now closed Reading Terminal. The former terminal and its famous arched roof would be transformed into the new Philadelphia Convention center. Now commuters boarding could board a Silverliner or a former Reading Blueliner, their old workhorses which would serve until 1990!



Above: Map of the Center City Connection tunnel



Above: Jefferson Station (former Market East)

SEPTA opened two new yards and shops to service the Paoli line in Frazer in 1988 and Overbrook in 1995. They closed the Paoli yard and car shop in 1995 after it served for 80 years. For two years after, the Paoli yard was the location of a major superfund site to remove dangerous PCB chemicals that were used as coolant for the motors for the Electrical Multiple Unit cars. They are now classified as a dangerous carcinogen!

After Frazer yard opened, SEPTA began running a few trains to Parkesburg, which was 45 miles from the city center! With the better commuter service provided by SEPTA, ridership increased by 35% from 2000-2017. The transit authority purchased seven sets of push pull trains from Bombardier and used AEM7 electric locomotives to power these wonderfully comfortable consists. Today these units are powered by ACS-64's. They became quite popular with commuters as they ran express at rush hour.

SEPTA took delivery 120 of the new Hyundai-Rotem Silverliner V cars with their operation starting in 2013 after many delays in production. Cracks in their truck frames were discovered three years later and they had to be removed from service for repairs.

During 2017, SEPTA ordered 45 bi-level commuter railcars from CRRC, a China owned company. The contract was terminated due to the company's failure to deliver any of the cars despite being four years behind schedule and 50 million over budget.

Take a ride on the Paoli Local! – Part four, the Penn Central, Conrail and SEPTA years (continued)

In 2019, SEPTA opened the new Paoli Station (pictured, right). This facility features ADA accessibility features, modern passenger amenities and a high-level center platform for boarding. This platform can be reached by elevators and stairs from either side of the tracks. The existing station building is still used for a waiting room and ticket counters for Amtrak and SEPTA.



In October 2024, Amtrak began a project to upgrade the electrical power system along the Harrisburg line. Crews will construct new transmission lines and replace old catenary structures. The project includes tearing down the existing Bryn Mawr substation and building a new one that will also function as a traction power substation. Work is scheduled to be completed in 2027.

The Future:

There are many variables as this article is being written concerning the future of the Paoli local and the Paoli-Thorndale line. Currently, during June of 2025, SEPTA is negotiating with the Pennsylvania State Legislature for a significant increase in funding to cover potential severe losses coming out of covid where federal funding kept the rail lines operating. They have a draconian plan to cease services on the Paoli-Thorndale, Wilmington and Trenton lines by January 1, 2026, should funding not materialize. Other major cuts are also included in the plan including major cuts in bus routes.

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Frank Tatnall and Roger Thorn, The Main Line to Paoli, for the Tredyffrin-Easttown History Quarterly, Volume 54, Number 3, Summer 2018.



PRR Train # 42, The Rainbow, at Paoli in January, 1936. Photo by Lancaster Chapter Member John J. Bowman Jr., collection of Chapter Member Fred Schneider.

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.

We went because a fellow rider, Dan Murray, recommended a restaurant near the SEPTA station on the Northeast Corridor. The restaurant, the Dog-N-Bull Taphouse and Kitchen, a wonderful place for beer that was also a fantastic place for great pub food. All 12 riders that came on the trip genuinely enjoyed their meals and drinks and decided that we wanted to return there again!

The surprise was how hugely enjoyable it was to railfan on the Croydon Station's southbound platform before returning to Philadelphia and transferring to our homebound trains. During the short 30–40-minute wait for our train we observed two Acela's, one Keystone service train, two Northeast Corridor and two long distance trains! Of course, we also saw a couple of SEPTA Silverliner IV's.

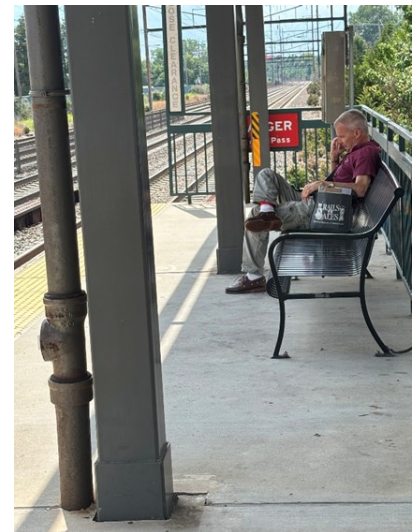
Indeed, a fun day and a short one for the Ride with me Steve crew!



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



Above: Amtrak Keystone Service train and SEPTA Silverliner IV – Photo by John Smith



Above, center: Southbound Amtrak Northeast Corridor train. Right: Tom Fluck checking his scanner at Croydon – Photos by John Smith



Left: Northbound Silverliner IV approaching Croydon Station – Photo by Jim Donohue

The 614 Greenbrier being restored to operational status at Strasburg Rail Road

By Steve Ferrell, pictures by John V. Smith



On June 8th 2025, the former Chesapeake & Ohio Clas J3a, 4-8-4, number 614 arrived at the Strasburg Rail Road for an extensive Restoration. This was after a move on the rails involving Norfolk Southern and Strasburg Rail Road locomotive #90, from Clifton Forge, Virginia. This powerful locomotive was built by Lima Locomotive Works in 1984 and is indicative of the last notable examples of steam technology. Nicknamed the "Greenbrier," it served on Chesapeake and Ohio's premier passenger routes and freight lines.

The RJD America LLC group recently purchased the locomotive from Ross Rowland and Iron Horse Enterprises and plans to return it to operation. Currently Strasburg Rail Road's Shop is assessing the condition and doing mechanical inspections. They then plan to do boiler repair, flue sheet replacements, staybolt installation and safety gear work. Following that intense work, they will overhaul the running gear and tender tank plus upgrade brakes, water, and fuel systems.

This large steam locomotive has an interesting history after serving for a brief time on the C & O railroad. Retired in 1952, this large steam locomotive was put back into service briefly in 1955 before being returned to storage. It was sent to the B&O museum in Baltimore in 1975. Ross Rowland traded The Reading Company's 2101 for the 614 as the 2101 had been damaged in a roundhouse fire. It subsequently operated in 1980 as the Chessie Safety Express. In 1985 this locomotive was used to haul coal trains in West Virginia as part of an experiment to see if a modern steam locomotive could be developed (it could not!). Its last major appearance was leading a series of excursions on New Jersey Transit during the 1990's. After this restoration, the plan is to operate the locomotive at various heritage railways and special events.



Above: The 614 after inspection work began and its jacket was removed.



Above: The 614 boiler, firebox, and cab view after inspection work began and its jacket was removed.

August 28th, Start of the Next Generation Amtrak Acela II trainsets



The first Northbound Acela II Next Gen Trainset, at Croydon, PA (photo by Chapter Member John Smith)



**LANCASTER CHAPTER, INC., N.R.H.S.
ANNUAL BANQUET
FRIDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 21st, 2025
HERSHEY FARMS RESTAURANT
240 HARTMAN BRIDGE RD., STRASBURG, PA 17579**

**JOIN US AT HERSHEY FARMS RESTAURANT FOR A WONDERFUL EVENT
WITH GREAT FOOD AND THE FRIENDSHIP OF YOUR FELLOW CHAPTER
MEMBERS. MAKE THIS YOUR FIRST EVENT OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON!**

6:00 PM - DOORS OPEN - NO EARLY ENTRY

6:30 PM - DINNER SERVED—FAMILY STYLE

**7:30 PM PROGRAM: This year's Lancaster Chapter's Annual Banquet Speaker
will be: Richard Stewart, owner of the famous Pullman car "Francis L. Sutter."**

THE ANNUAL BANQUET COST FOR 2025 IS \$35.00 PER PERSON

**TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE OCTOBER CHAPTER MEETING OR YOU MAY MAIL THIS COU-
PON.**

ALL TICKET ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7th, 2025

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

NO. OF SEATS _____ @ \$35.00 EACH = TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: LANCASTER CHAPTER, N.R.H.S.

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**C/O TOM SHENK
11 MARQUIS COURT
LITITZ, PA 17543**

CELL - 717-314-4448

"INSIDE THE BACK PAGE"
UPCOMING LANCASTER CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

SEPTEMBER 13, 2025 — SATURDAY, 10:00 PM—4:00 PM CHRISTIANA HERITAGE DAY. TROOP REENACTMENTS, WAGON AND TRAIN RIDES, SPEEDER RAIL CAR EXHIBITS, HOUSE TOURS AND MORE. FOOD TRUCKS AND BBQ DINNERS.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2025 - SUNDAY, 3:00 PM ANNUAL CHAPTER PICNIC AT CHRISTIANA FREIGHT HOUSE
10 RAILROAD AVENUE, CHRISTIANA, PA 17509

BBQ CHICKEN AND DRINKS PROVIDED. PLEASE BRING A COVERED DISH AND YOUR PLACE SETTING. BRIEF MONTHLY MEETING TO FOLLOW.

SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2025 MONDAY, 7:00 PM. BOARD OF DIRECTOR PLANNING MEETING AT THE FREIGHTHOUSE.

OCTOBER 19, 2025 - SUNDAY, 2:00 PM. LANCASTER CHAPTER 90TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AT CHRISTIANA FREIGHT HOUSE. CAKE, ICE CREAM AND SOFT DRINKS PROVIDED. REGULAR MEETING TO FOLLOW.

NOVEMBER 21, 2024 - FRIDAY, 6:00 PM ANNUAL CHAPTER BANQUET AT HERSHEY FARMS (See page 10)

**CHAPTER MEETING - ANNUAL STRASBURG RAILROAD TRAIN RIDE
SUNDAY, AUGUST 17th, 2025**

The August 2025 meeting of the Lancaster Chapter of the NRHS featured our traditional annual train ride at the Strasburg Rail Road, Sunday August 17th. There were 34 members on the ride and at the meeting that followed.

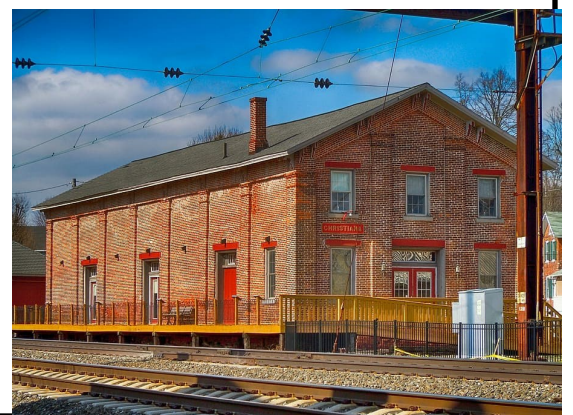
The group gathered at the SRC for a 4:00 PM trip to Paradise and back.
The weather was great, warm with a comfortable breeze present.
On the way back to reality (Strasburg) the skies began to darken...could this be the end?
We were greeted by a heavy downpour and gusty winds as we pulled into the station.
The group quickly exited our open-air car and entered a closed coach.

At 4:53 PM President Tom Shenk called the meeting to order.
The meeting was brief due to the weather.
Richard Rutledge gave a quick treasurers report and will have our 2026 budget prepared soon.
Tom and Richard reviewed our banquet plans (details page 10).
Others gave a brief summary of other upcoming events also published in this newsletter (above).

At 5:15pm the meeting was adjourned due to the weather.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Fluck, Secretary



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NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

LANCASTER CHAPTER, INC., N.R.H.S.
SEPTEMBER 21, 2025 - SUNDAY, 3:00 PM
ANNUAL CHAPTER PICNIC
CHRISTIANA FREIGHT HOUSE
10 RAILROAD AVENUE
CHRISTIANA, PA 17509

LANCASTER CHAPTER, INC.
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