

BLUE RIDGE DISPATCHER

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COVID-19 restrictions are slowly being lifted, but not quickly enough to comfortably allow for the Blue Ridge Chapter to hold its regular monthly meetings in June or July. We're aiming to hold a meeting on Wednesday, August 12. Chapter member Fred Mayer is scheduled to bring the program. In the meantime, please enjoy this wonderful photo taken on May 9, 1959. Howard Gregory and his cousin Henry Nicholas happened to be in Roanoke the day Y6a 2156 was about to be shipped to the museum in St. Louis and captured this scene. More photos taken the same day are included in this issue of the BRD. The 2156 is scheduled to begin the trip back to St. Louis as this is being typed following the expiration of the five-year lease that brought the 2156 to the VMT.



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Lynchburg, Virginia



You're invited!

**Join us on Saturday, June 20th for a FIVE locomotive
Parade of Steam!**



Start time: 9:30am

Watch from the Cass Parking Lot!

Enjoy a FREE up-close look of FIVE steam locomotives at once!

**Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad's season will officially kick off on
July 4th with departures from Cass and Durbin!**

www.CassTrain.com

Thanks to Wayland Moore for forwarding this news item —

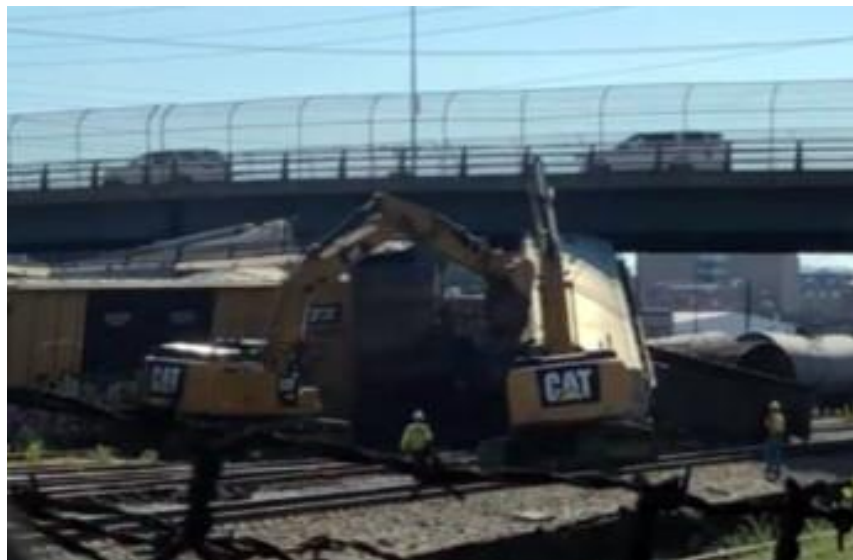
Greetings, all,

The beautiful passenger car seen in the WDBJ7 video will make an excellent addition to President Eisenhower's private car that the C&OHS received last year. Scroll down to the highlighted link to the WDBJ 7 story. Congrats to Tom Dixon and the C&O HS staff! Great acquisition!

<https://www.wdbj7.com/content/news/Co-Railway-Heritage-Center-gets-new-train-car-570415981.html>

Stay well, Norris Deyerle

Derailment in downtown Roanoke! NS train M5T derailed about 18 cars under the 5th Street bridge in the wee hours of June 7. The bridge was closed for a period of time while engineers (not locomotive) checked on its structural integrity. Below are two images of the clean-up operation. Your Editor was in Roanoke on June 9 and instructed his chauffeur to drive across the bridge before returning to Lynchburg. From his vantage point it looked like all the cars had been removed. Channel 10 in Roanoke has some good video of the clean-up and comments from onlookers. <https://www.wsls.com/news/local/2020/06/07/breaking-train-derailed-in-downtown-roanoke-under-5th-street-bridge/> Take a look.



VMT to reopen on Thursday, June 11, 2020.

The Virginia Museum of Transportation is excited to announce they will be reopening on Thursday, June 11th, 2020. This date has amazing significance to VMT as it is 6.11 – the number of their beloved, iconic Class J 611 locomotive.

VMT has been closed to the public due to COVID-19 since March 17th and in the interim have been preparing the venue and offering dynamic virtual content under the banner of “VMT GO” with live tours of exhibits and online activities available on social media and their official website, www.VMT.org.

“It’s great to be back! We have missed our beloved VMT community very much and are looking forward to seeing them again.” Don Moser – Interim Director: Virginia Museum of Transportation.

VMT will be following Phase 2 restrictions including but not limited to a 50 person maximum capacity, encouraging social distancing, face coverings when indoors and sanitation of surfaces by staff.

VMT has reduced admissions in lieu of certain exhibit closures due to Phase 2 restrictions. Admission will be \$8 for adults, \$6 for seniors, \$4 for age 3-18 and under 3 are free.

Adjusted hours will be Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-5pm.

For further information please contact

Mendy Flynn Virginia Museum of Transportation, Inc.

303 Norfolk Avenue SW Roanoke, VA 24016 540.342.5670 ext 106

Class Y6a 2156 returning to St. Louis

After spending five years in Virginia at the Virginia Museum of Transportation, former Norfolk and Western Y6a steam locomotive No. 2156 will soon return home to St. Louis. The 2156 was leased to the Virginia Museum of Transportation by the St. Louis museum in May 2015 in exchange for the Virginia museum’s EMD FTB demonstrator diesel. The steam locomotive was pulled dead-in-tow to Roanoke, arriving in time for the return of N&W Class J 611 to operation in late May 2015.

Built in 1942 in Roanoke the 2156 is one of only two N&W 2-8-8-2s that survive. Its arrival in Roanoke of the Y6a marked the reunion of N&W Class J No. 611, the 2156 and N&W Class A No. 1218, the first such reunion of N&W’s three famed locomotive types built in Roanoke in more than 50 years.

Reports coming out of Roanoke this week indicate the 2156 is prepped for its return and is scheduled to leave in the morning of June 10, 2020.



Pictured above is the 2156 on May 12, 2015, just a few miles outside of Roanoke as it nears the end of its move from St. Louis. Your Editor was on hand in Salem, VA, to witness its passage. In a real surprise to the handful of people present the 2156 arrived on former Virginian Ry. rail.

Amtrak workforce reductions in the works - Amtrak is taking steps to reduce its workforce by as much as 20% in fiscal year 2021 due to the expected slow recovery in ridership that's been decimated by the coronavirus pandemic. Amtrak has already reduced train service and frequency and has taken other cost-cutting measures in response to the 95% decline in ridership and revenue that began in March, but further reductions are needed in response to an expected, sustained period of depressed demand, William Flynn, Amtrak's new Chief Executive Officer said. Amtrak reported its best financial performance on record during the fiscal year that ended in September 2019, but that is just a memory now.

“ Congress expects Amtrak to operate like any other business – and while they have supported us with emergency funding for FY 2020, they are not going to support us endlessly to run mostly empty trains,” Flynn said in the memo reported by the Wall Street Journal.

“Our first step will be to offer incentives for voluntary separations and retirements before we resort to involuntary separations,” he continued. This has caught the attention of your Editor!



Nothing special here. Just train 147 arriving in Lynchburg on June 6 under a moody sky. Although the passenger count has inched up a bit since COVID restrictions have eased, the numbers riding are still way below what they were before things began to contract in March. The Regional continues to operate with seven cars. Since Memorial Day a third coach and a second sleeper have been seen running on the Crescent. Maybe summertime will bring out more travelers.



2156 remembrances from 1959

On Saturday, May 9, 1959, my cousin, Henry Nicholas, and I visited Roanoke and just coincidentally we found 2156 still on the property just prior to shipment to the St. Louis museum. 2156 was clean and freshly painted in stark contrast to the many other dead steam locomotives in the "scrap line" awaiting their final fate!

Thankfully, N&W was more welcoming to railfans at that time as compared with the necessary security precautions in place today. We were free to tour the roundhouse and yard, where Henry took the photo of me in 2156's cab.

While we are all grateful that 2156 was preserved, it is regrettable that at least one Y6 was not saved in Roanoke to accompany 611 and 1218 in the VMT.

To the left are photos taken that day as it was leaving dead-in-tow behind GP9s 510 and 517.

As you can see, there is an excited 15-year-old railfan photographed in the fireman's seat who remains a railfan to this day!



Howard Gregory

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