

THE WINNEBAGOLAND WHISTLE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WINNEBAGOLAND DIVISION
MIDWEST REGION – NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 54, ISSUE No. 2

SUMMER 2021

"No matter how strange or bizarre your model may be, rest assured that there was once a prototype." — John Allen

COVER PHOTO:

Rail technology company Wabtec has demonstrated an electric locomotive that could help lessen the environmental footprint of heavy-haul freight services. The company's battery-powered FLXdrive locomotive was used as part of a hybrid system over a three-month trial, where it reduced the fuel consumption of the entire vehicle by 11 percent.

Photo courtesy Wabtec.



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Superintendent's Report

Sharing our Dreams, by Phil Herman

The summer season is upon us and it is that short window of time in the upper Midwest when we can venture outdoors without bundling up, a time when model railroading takes a backseat to many other activities. Which feels like a new phenomenon after a year in which modeling never stopped. As we wrapped up the 20-21 modeling season I felt there was a renewed excitement as some areas of the country were opening up and a few train shows were finally held. In our area Titledown Train Show was held in April after taking 2020 off. Our division held our first in-person Board of Directors meeting at the Strawberry Fest train show in Waupaca. I attended both and it was wonderful to see many familiar faces in person.

Bob McGeever, the newly elected president of the Midwest region, was present at our directors meeting. Much of the discussion was centered around the changes we've seen over the past year. The NMRA saw a drop in membership across all regions during the past year—not surprising as in-person events were cancelled and many of us faced financial uncertainty about the future. For some that was reason enough to take the year off and forgo renewing their membership. But how many of those former members will rejoin in the future remains to be seen.

We are seeing the results of decreased membership as the WISE Division recently announced that 2021 Trainfest has been cancelled. This cancellation is not completely related to the pandemic; the membership of the WISE Division did not feel it could take on the financial risk or had the membership that could commit the time needed to put a big show on. For many that was the one annual event they would mark on their calendar. Trainfest is not the only show with its future at risk.

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Superintendent's Report

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The question I ask is; is the hobby shrinking? I have not found any one metric that gives a definitive answer. Observing our current climate, my conclusion which you can agree or disagree with is “no.” Is it growing? The evidence is not clear, but looking at the number of manufacturers and the exciting new products being released things appear healthy. Sure, we have lost a few manufacturers but for every one that has disappeared at least one new one has taken its place. While supply chain shortages are hitting almost every market my guess is some hobby manufactures have had the same problems, as many new product releases have been delayed. Despite that it seems that the amount of releases has increased and demand has allowed manufacturers to even raise prices. Although some of the increase in costs is the demands for more highly detailed, road specific, ready-to-run models. When considering the cost of purchasing a high-end HO scale locomotive or piece of rolling stock, the diesel sound locomotives list prices have topped \$300 and seeing a piece of rolling stock at \$40-60 is common. While it seems model retailers are following a similar trend to other specialty retailers, many online hobby stores are increasing their warehousing space while some brick and mortar stores have closed.

How do these trends relate to NMRA membership numbers? During my time serving on the Board the question has always been how does the NMRA retain members and attract new members. The NMRA does a lot of things that enhance our hobby from establishing industry standards to insuring events. But to those who are considering the benefits of NMRA membership, those are a hard sell. I think the changes we have seen over the past year could present an opportunity. The changes in how we communicate have brought modelers together that may live in different parts of the world. Could the NMRA be relied on as more of a platform for connecting modelers globally? We have a very diverse hobby from scale, genre and era. This global communication allows those in remote areas to collaborate with others. A great testament to this is the new NMRA Global Director Gordy Robinson, who resides on Burray Island off of Scotland. My conclusion is the evolution the hobby is going through is being driven mostly by changes in technology. That makes it difficult to determine if the hobby is growing. How does the NMRA fit into this new environment and can the organization take advantage of these changes or at least maintain its membership numbers?

Similarly, our division has always been challenged in reaching those in the less populated areas. An event we started this year that we plan to continue is the **WLD Workshop Wednesday**. The last event was changed to a Zoom platform which seems to be the most commonly

(Continued on page 3)

View From the Cab

Your Editor

Yes you're getting the Summer issue of the Whistle a little later than usual, my apologies. Between my work schedule, (non-COVID) illnesses running through the family, and squeezing in as many memories as we can for our kids, my editing duties here have gotten a bit of a short shrift.

Before I get much further I wanted to confirm that **Titletown Train Show 2022 has been scheduled for April 9-10 next year**. Attendance was down in our new venue this last April, probably because of people on both sides of the COVID pandemic: those still apprehensive to go out in large public gatherings, as well as those pushing back on the mask requirement. But by-and-large attendees were respectful, vendors were happy with the sales, and the show stayed in the black. As a result we're staying pat in the KI Convention Center, though be aware that because events like corporate functions and weddings get more advance booking priority, our annual dates may move around a bit on the calendar year-to-year.

The WLD Board did have an in-person meeting earlier this summer at the Strawberry Fest Train Show in Waupaca, which was back to form after taking a year off. Felt good to see everyone, and the new MWR President Bob McGeever was the distinguished visitor who regaled us all with interesting “inside scoop” from around the state, including his SCWD Division and the WISE Division's struggles with Trainfest.

As Phil notes in his column, we have committed to a **Fall Meet October 2nd** (see the form at the end of the issue), an **Operating Session November 5th**, and another **Workbench Wednesday via Zoom on September 22nd**, so it should be easy to stay active in the Division... let's get together!

Finally, I know a lot of you have a chosen scale that works best outdoors, so during these precious summer days it is prime time... for the next issue why don't you send me some photos and commentary of your garden railroad or live steam setup. We don't often get to tour those unless you have a section that goes thru a tunnel into your garage or basement shops!

Meanwhile enjoy the rest of your Wisconsin summer and early fall, and hope to see you at a WLD event soon!

Keep on trainin! — Todd tbushmaker@sbcglobal.net

Lawyers on a Train...

Three lawyers and three engineers are traveling by train to a conference. At the station, the three lawyers each buy tickets and watch as the three engineers buy only a single ticket.

“How are three people going to travel on only one ticket?” asks a lawyer.

“Watch and you’ll see,” answers an engineer.

They all board the train. The lawyers take their respective seats but all three engineers cram into a restroom and close the door behind them.

Shortly after the train has departed, the conductor comes around collecting tickets. He knocks on the restroom door and says, “Ticket, please.” The door opens just a crack and a single arm emerges with a ticket in hand.

The conductor takes it and moves on.

The lawyers see this and agree that it is quite a clever idea so, after the conference, they decide to copy the engineers on the return trip and save some money (recognizing the engineers’ superior intellect).

When they get to the station, they buy a single ticket for the return trip.

To their astonishment, the engineers don’t buy a ticket at all.

“How are you going to travel without a ticket?” says one perplexed lawyer.

“Watch and you’ll see,” answers an engineer.

When they board the train the three lawyers cram into a restroom and the three engineers cram into another one nearby.

The train departs.

Shortly afterward, one of the engineers leaves his restroom and walks over to the restroom where the lawyers are hiding. He knocks on the door and says, “Ticket, please.”

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Superintendent’s Report

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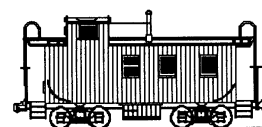
used platform. We held two of these online events, the first in February and the second in May. Our next **WLD Workshop Wednesday** is planned for **September 22nd 7-9pm CST**. We tentatively plan to have this online event on a bi-monthly basis but could change that depending on participation. We had 25-30 participants in May and a number hailing from outside our division. A benefit of this event is the participants and presenters can be from anywhere. James Knabb, a young modeler from Texas presented at our last event. At the same time the Midwest region is compiling a list of clinicians. This will aid in helping us offer a diverse and fresh lineup.

In addition to these online events we also plan to resume in-person events. Right now the Division’s in-person **Fall meet is planned for Neenah, October 2nd and the operating session in Waupaca on November 6th**. Going forward the plan is to keep the annual events similar to what was held in the past. The Board also discussed the annual operating session which has been very stagnant with a small handful of members who take part. Most members seem to show interest in participating in Operating sessions but the attendance does not reflect this. So keep watching our Facebook page and website for possible format changes in 2022 or 2023.

In Closing I’d like to congratulate **Wally Rogers** the 2020 recipient of the **Jerry Nichols Award**. This award was given out at our June Board meeting. Next time you see Wally thank him for all the time he has given to our Division...thanks Wally!



Until we meet again, “Proceed on signal indication, Phil out.”



CN-KCS Latest

Canadian National Railway's more than \$30B planned purchase of Kansas City Southern is more likely to be rejected by the U.S. regulator that is deciding on the fate of the deal, according to a survey.

The U.S. Surface Transportation Board could any time decide if it will allow the voting trust structure that Canadian National is asking for approval of the deal. Rival bidder Canadian Pacific, which originally struck a deal with Kansas City Southern, won approval from the STB for the voting trust in May.

Wolf Research analyst Scott Group in a July 19 note wrote that he expected the STB to rule on the voting trust structure around the end of July.



More than half of the respondents in a small survey of investors/analysts done by Seeking Alpha in recent days said that the deal was likely to be rejected, while a few saw a 50/50 chance of approval.

If the deal is rejected by the regulator, Kansas City Southern shares may initially trade to about \$249/share, representing about 7% downside from the current share price, according to the survey. Answers ranged from a low of \$210 to a high of \$270.

All respondents, except one, in the survey expected that Canadian Pacific would be back for a deal with KSU if the STB rejected the Canadian National deal, with at least one expecting a higher bid than CP's original offer. One respondent said he didn't expect the current Biden administration would approve any North American railroad M&A.

If the transaction is approved by the STB, Kansas City Southern shares may trade to \$305, representing 14% upside from the current level, according to the investors and analysts surveyed. Answers ranged from \$290 to \$310. If approved, the deal would still need Mexican regulatory approval.

"We believe the stock implies very low chances of the STB approving the CNI-KSU voting trust, and thus, we believe risk/reward for the stock remains favorable from here," Wolfe's Group wrote in note a few weeks ago.

Trackside Photo



The photo is from the Divisions 2017 Operating session at Joel Weeks Great Northern in 1969 layout. Pictured is a westbound freight preparing to leave the Great Northern's busy Wilmar, MN yard.



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Hobby Shop**

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Battery-Electric Locomotives Coming?

Various Reports

PITTSBURGH, May 17, 2021 – Wabtec Corporation (NYSE: WAB) announced today a rail industry first as its FLXdrive battery-electric locomotive delivered more than an 11-percent average reduction in fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions for an entire train. It is the equivalent of over 6,200 gallons of diesel fuel saved and approximately 69 tons of CO2 emissions reduced.

These outcomes are the result of a three-month pilot with BNSF Railway, the largest railroad in the U.S., where the FLXdrive, the world’s first 100-percent battery locomotive, was put to the test in revenue service across more than 13,320 miles of hilly terrain in San Joaquin Valley, California – a territory surrounded by mountains. The region is classified as a non-attainment area, where the air quality is worse than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

“The FLXdrive battery-electric locomotive is a defining moment for freight rail and will accelerate the industry toward low- to zero-emission locomotives,” said Eric Gebhardt, Wabtec Chief Technology Officer. “It builds upon the rail industry’s position as the most efficient and sustainable mode of transportation. Building on our long history of pioneering train energy management technologies, this demonstration of coupling 2.4 megawatt hours of battery storage into the mix fully validated our assumptions for the potential for this next generation technology to further drive efficiencies and greenhouse gas reductions. At more than 6 megawatt hours, Wabtec’s next version of FLXdrive technology will have an opportunity to reduce fuel consumption and emissions by up to 30 percent – putting the industry on the cusp of a once-in-a-generation improvement in energy savings and emission reductions.”

The California pilot program was part of a \$22.6 million grant from the California Air Resource Board awarded to Wabtec, BNSF and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The 430,000-pound FLXdrive in the pilot boasts 18,000 lithium-ion battery cells. The battery locomotive charged at the rail yard and recharged during the trip through regenerative braking. The FLXdrive manages the overall train energy flow and distribution through its Trip Optimizer system, an intelligent cruise control system programmed through artificial intelligence to respond to every twist and grade of the track in the most energy-efficient way possible.

The top spec Tesla Model 3, by way of comparison, has a capacity of 75 kWh – that’s 32 times smaller than the FLXdrive. Needless to say, this system will require a serious charging station.

Wabtec’s next step is to build a second-generation locomotive with a battery capacity of more than 6 megawatt hours – a level of energy that can reduce a locomotive consist’s fuel consumption and carbon emissions by up to 30 percent, even while hauling several thousand tons of freight in a mile-long train. A fleet of second-generation FLXdrives will be commercialized and could enter supply chain routes in the next few years.

Wabtec’s goal is to develop the next generation of zero-emission locomotives. The company has a clear path to power new locomotives – and repower existing locomotives – with batteries, hydrogen internal combustion engines, and hydrogen fuel cells. It is part of Wabtec’s vision for the rail industry to play a key role in building a clean energy economy and reduce carbon emissions globally by up to 300 tons per year.

Sept. 22nd 7-9:00pm CST

Presented on: **zoom** 

Join us for: *WLD Workbench Wednesday*

Layout Tours, Clinics and Much More!



Passenger rail must get back on track in Wisconsin

Renewed plans for passenger rail service to Madison and other Wisconsin cities are encouraging, though we've been disappointed by similar promises before. Fingers crossed that this time will be different.

Amtrak recently published a map showing new high-speed rail lines connecting communities across the country. Locally, Madison would land a station with easy access to Eau Claire, Green Bay, the Twin Cities and Milwaukee.

This isn't the first time that officials have dangled fast and convenient passenger rail connections. A decade ago, Democratic state and federal officials announced a high-speed rail line between Madison and Milwaukee. Lots of potential travelers got their hopes up, only for Republican Gov. Scott Walker to reject more than \$800 million in federal funding for the project.

Then in 2014, a group of rail enthusiasts floated a route between Madison to Chicago. They hoped to raise private sector support to pay for it. The dream floundered again.

Nothing is guaranteed this time, either. Amtrak's map is a vision of what could happen by 2035, not what will happen. Hearings and conversations about where rail should go must proceed. Then public officials will face the hard work of figuring out how to pay for it all.

Amtrak published the map partly in response to President Joe Biden's proposal to spend \$2 trillion on infrastructure and other programs. The proposal includes \$85 billion to improve and expand

the nation's rail network. It would be a great start, but only a start.

America lags far behind much of the rest of the industrialized world when it comes to passenger rail. Catching up will be expensive, but the benefits could be tremendous.

Rail travel can be more efficient than cars and reduce congestion. It also generates less greenhouse gas emissions than road vehicles and planes. Rail travel can reduce the need to build expensive new highways. Trains are safer than driving. They can be a convenient, affordable option for business and leisure travelers.

New rail lines could carry freight, too. Connecting Madison to a speedier national rail network would make this region even more attractive to economic development.

Most trips on Amtrak now are slower and more expensive than by car, especially if it's a family trip. As long as that's the case, train travel will be a tough sell to Americans. Yes, rail offers other benefits, such as not being behind the wheel. But it has downsides, too, such as not having a car at your destination.

A sweet spot must be found where trains are faster than driving and cheaper than flying. Hitting it will require high-speed routes, new investment and lines. Buildout must focus on modern rail technology, not expanding the old model.

Amtrak has provided a vision worth pursuing. Maybe that starts with a massive infrastructure bill. Maybe it's through some other funding. Wherever the money comes from, let's not allow the dream to end in disappointment again.



Team Track

Division Officers

Phil Herman	Superintendent
Todd Bushmaker	Asst. Superintendent
Scott Payne	Paymaster
Vern Ehlke	Chief Clerk

Board of Directors *(terms thru 04/2022)*

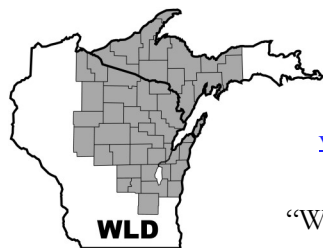
Division Officers (above) PLUS:

Wally Rogers	Joe Lallensack
Dave Nitsch	Dave Allen
Mary Eiden	Mike Eiden
Rich Hopfensperger	Paul Mastalir

Committee Chairs

(Asst. Supt.)	Property Manager
Todd Bushmaker	Whistle
Marv Preussler	Achievement Program
Wally Rogers	Membership
Phil Herman	Clinics
(At-will, current meet)	Convention Chair
Paul Mastalir	Company Store
Scott Payne	Operating Sessions
David Allen	Model Contest
Joe Lallensack	Photo Contest
Vern Ehlke	Technology
Paul Hillmer	Social Media
Michael Eiden	Webmaster
Rich Hopfensperger	Hobby Shop/Model Club Liaison
Paul Mastalir / Mike O.	Scout Coordinators
(At-will Volunteers)	Financial Review

Note that these positions need not be Directors; any member in the Division may chair or participate in these committees!



www.wld-nmra.com

Facebook:
"WinnebagoLand Division
NMRA"

Timetable

Please note that these events are subject to the fluid COVID-19 situation. Check with each individual event.

- August 19-21** NMRA Steel Mill Modelers SIG
Southgate, MI
- Sept 22, 7pm** WLD Workbench Wednesday
(Zoom; watch email for info)
- Sept 25th** WLD BOD meeting, 10:30am
SLHTS Archives, Appleton
- Oct 2nd** WLD Divisional Fall Meet
Best Western Bridgewood, Neenah
[See flyer this issue]
- Nov 6th** WLD Operating Session
Waupaca Area - watch for details



Division Merch

Check your closet and see if it is time for a new WinnebagoLand Division shirt. Available through the Division website store with a link to the shop for you to direct order.

Also available is a visor cap with the train curving around the edge! Nice additions to your list this year.



Just a few of the HO-scale WinnebagoLand boxcars left; let Paul Mastalir know how many and he will work out getting them to you. His phone is (715) 853-7274, or email him at mastalir54166@yahoo.com.

2021 NMRA Winnebagoland Division Fall Meet



Saturday Oct. 2nd, 2021 at 8 AM – 5:30 PM
Best Western Premier Bridgewood Resort Hotel
1000 Cameron Way, Neenah, Wisconsin 54956

2021 Spring Meet Timetable

- 8:00am – 8:45am: Meet Registration
- 8:45am - 11.45am: FOUR back to back clinics featuring
 - Richard Cooke - Resin Casting
 - Chris Heili - TBD
 - Fred Firkus - Vehicle Kitbashing
 - Luke Lemmens - TBD
- 12:00pm - 1:30pm Lunch, Division meeting and awards
- 2:00pm – 5:30pm Layout Tours

*Bring your models
to show off or
enter in the
modeling
contest!!!*

*Show off your
railroad
photography
skills – bring your
pics for the photo
contest!!!*

**Paul's Badger Mid Western
PVMRC
NMRC
Emory Luebke**

**Mike Paltzer
Randy Williamson Pennsy
And more in the works!**

2021 Spring Meet Registration (Checks Payable to Winnebagoland Division)

NAME: _____ **NMRA#:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone #:** _____

Meet Registration Fee (Members \$8.00, Non-Members \$10.00) \$ _____

Boxed Lunch (\$15.00) Sandwich, side & Dessert. Choose (one) from the following:

Ham Sandwich _____ **Turkey Sandwich** _____ **Veggie Wrap** _____ \$ _____

For more info visit www.wld-nmra.com **Total:** \$ _____

Return this form and Payment by 9/22/2021 to
 Phil Herman
 5123 Wild Meadow Drive
 Sheboygan, WI 53083