

# *THE SWITCHLIST*

OLD NORTH STATE CHAPTER  
NRHS

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## August Meeting

*For the most part, we of the Old North State are a flexible bunch. We do not insist that our programs be devoted only to one narrow scope of railroad subjects. This has the great advantage that we are constantly learning, and thus staying fresh and youthful (which is better than staying young). True to form, this month's program will be devoted to the Pennsylvania Railroad. We'll have a DVD of trains on Horseshoe Curve, and Art Peterson will bring along some of his slides of locomotives and trains on the Pennsy. Do join us on August 10, our regular second Tuesday.*

*Our location will be our regular venue, Red Hot and Blue at 6615 Falls of the Neuse Road in the Falls Village Shopping Center on the west side of the road. It is 2.4 miles southwest of I-540 and 3.5 miles northeast of I-440 (exit 8). If you are coming from I-440, you will find it easier and less congested to turn right onto Sandy Forks Road, the second right after Millbrook, then left into the Falls Village parking lot. Our meeting room has been reserved from 6:00 PM, but is typically available around 5:30 PM. After dinner together, the program will start at 7:00 PM.*

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## July Meeting Report

Well, now we know Gray Lackey better than previously, since he shared some of his interests other than trains when he brought us his White Pass & Yukon program. Trucks fascinate him, and he had some really big rigs from the Yukon region to show from his travels there. The primary focus, of course, was the narrow gauge WP&Y and its steam and diesel trains. Gray covered both the trains that serve the tour ships and the special chartered trains that he got to ride and photograph.

As is always the case, many of us had questions and comments on what was new and fascinating to us. Once again, that made an evening together even more enjoyable. Thanks so much for sharing your travels with us, Gray!

# OF INTEREST

**Charlotte, NC** has won federal funding for the construction of a new streetcar line, and the \$25 million grant is being hailed as a catalyst for new development. Mayor Anthony Foxx, a streetcar backer, said that the project will provide sorely needed jobs for Charlotte.

The award comes from a livability grant program that is funding transit projects nationwide. The 1.5 mile line is the first segment of what will eventually be a 10-mile line from Beatties Ford Road to the Eastland Mall. The line will be built over the course of two decades at a cost of \$500 million.

Other cities receiving money for streetcar projects include Chicago, St Louis, Cincinnati and Dallas.

**Boston's MBTA** has placed an order for 20 new commuter locomotives from Motive Power Industries. The agency's fleet contains many older units, and the new units will replace the older units as they are delivered.

Originally, the agency had wanted to order up to 56 units, but there were no other purely US builders that could bid on the order, which would have reduced the price per unit. Germany's Vossloh AG was ready to bid, but they wanted to build two prototype locomotives at a plant in Spain, and the "Buy America" provisions that apply to such bids scuttled their involvement.

**New Jersey Transit** will purchase 100 additional multilevel cars and 10 new dual-mode locomotives from Bombardier. The purchases come as part of the capital budget of \$1.35 billion, and are part of NJ Transit's efforts to upgrade its fleet to handle more passengers and improve reliability. The agency's board hopes to eventually roster 300 multi-level cars and more than 50 dual-mode diesel-electric/electric locomotives.

Also on the agenda for the future is the extension of the Hudson-Bergen light rail line to 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Bayonne, NJ.

One no-cost improvement that is being tested on NJ Transit is "quiet cars". Beginning September 7, certain cars on each train on the Trenton, NJ to New York City route will be designated and identified as cars in which loud conversation and cell phone use is prohibited.

In use on Amtrak trains and on several other commuter lines, the cars rely primarily upon passengers to gently remind people of the policy; if needed, a conductor can be called to order a loud passenger to be quiet or to move to another car.

The quiet car is the most often requested service, (obviously others find cell phone conversations annoying, too) and it can be readily implemented. Bravo for NJ Transit!

**Greenwich, CT** has a station that never served any trains. That's not too surprising, because there were never any tracks at the station. The station and an associated mill of the Hawthorne Woolen Mill were built at an existing textile mill complex in the 1870s.

Located in what is now the Glenville neighborhood of Greenwich, the depot and mill building now are part of a commercial and retail complex. When built, the depot was to have been served by a railroad platted on an 1867 map that would have connected Port Chester, New York and Ridgefield, Connecticut. Those plans were eventually abandoned.

**Grand Central Terminal** is the place to go if you want to see a \$20 million jewel in plain sight. If you have ever passed through that famous building, you have certainly seen the clock with four faces that sits atop the information booth. It is a perfectly accurate clock that is synchronized with the atomic clock at the U.S. Naval Observatory. And, because the clock's faces are all made of opal, it was recently appraised at \$20 million.

Grand Central boasts of several other systems that interact with travelers, one of which is a highly efficient lost-and-found department. If you were to visit there, you would, not surprisingly, find cell phones, umbrellas, backpacks and laptop computers. You would also find toy train sets. But lost-and found here has an enviable 80 percent rate of return, while the typical rate at most such departments is 30 percent. Why the profound difference? Grand Central's system is the answer.

When any item is found or turned in, clerks in the department, personnel in the terminal or trainmen on the trains know to quickly ask a series of questions about when it was found, on which train, what car number, what seat in the car, or whether it was in an overhead rack. They also want to know the brand and/or type of item.

The real secret of the department's success, however, lies in the doggedness with which clerks try to track down items' owners. Clerks will go through bags and purses, looking for identifying features. If there's a credit card or a driver's license in a bag, it's easy, of course, but many don't have such things. So, often, the clerks will resort to calling numbers on business cards left in jacket pockets to see if the contact knows the owner, or call the last-dialed numbers on a cell phone for the same reason.

And it's not just cell phones, purses, and jackets that turn up here. There's also artificial limbs, basset hounds, and a great deal of technology. Along those lines, 100 percent of laptops are successfully returned to their owners.

Since staffers are entering a great deal of salient details about found items into a computerized data base, the public can now go online and enter information on what they have lost. If there are matches, they are invited to come to lost and found and provide any final details.

Typically, everyone must provide details to prove that an item is theirs. But there was one time when an elderly woman came in looking for her dentures. When she saw what appeared to be them, she popped them into her mouth and said "yeah, it fits."

Enough said!