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Southeast Limited

Birmingham multimodal station

By Ralcon Wagner, TRAINS magazine Published: March 12, 2014



The westbound *Crescent* stops at Birmingham. Photo by Ralcon Wagner

After years of negotiations, Birmingham has seen the ground-breaking ceremony for the city's new intermodal transportation hub. The facility will be served by rail, intercity bus, and local transit. It will combine the existing Amtrak and Greyhound stations along with the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority's Central Station transit hub.

The \$30 million structure will be more than two blocks long and occupy the site of the former Louisville & Nashville station, demolished in 2007; the current Amtrak station area; and the existing, gold-domed Central Station transit center. It will be located on Morris Avenue between 16th and 19th streets, where the ceremony was held March 7.

This is a great step for Birmingham and brings various forms of transportation under one roof. We have seen this happen in Greensboro, N.C.; Meridian, Miss.; and larger cities such as Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.," says National Association of Railroad Passengers Chairman Robert J. Stewart. "These facilities have proven to boost economic development."

The current station has been in use by Amtrak since the early 1970s. Soon after passenger service was taken over by the national carrier in 1971, it was forced out of the modern former L&N station and relegated to the former baggage room. Passengers walked down a narrow corridor to access the small waiting room from the street. **Continued page 2**

Ridership on the Crescent has risen in recent years, resulting in passengers sitting on bags or standing until train time. Although efforts to make the small waiting area more pleasant with an occasional coat of paint and the addition of televisions has helped, Amtrak's subterranean station in Birmingham is not entirely user-friendly. Patrons with mobility challenges have to use an exposed freight elevator to access the platform on the upper level.

The news that construction has finally started on the Multimodal Terminal, as it's referred to locally, is a victory for both Birmingham and Amtrak riders. When the facility opens in mid-2015, it is expected to be a catalyst for growth and redevelopment of the surrounding area.



Access to the current Birmingham station is through this street-level entrance. Photo by Ralcon Wagner



Passengers wait in the current Birmingham station. Photo by Ralcon Wagner

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Trains News Wire EXCLUSIVE: Mechanical inspection complete on ACL 4-6-2 No. 1504

By Steve Glischinski, Published: March 11, 2014, TRAINS



No. 1504 undergoes an inspection prior to its cosmetic restoration. Photo by Project Return to Glory

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Contractor Diversified Rail Services has completed an extensive mechanical inspection of Atlantic Coast Line 4-6-2 No. 1504. The locomotive, owned by the city of Jacksonville and displayed at the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center, will be cosmetically restored.

The North Florida Chapter of the NRHS, working in conjunction with three other railroad history groups in northern Florida, is coordinating efforts to rescue No. 1504 with its “Project Return to Glory.” The grants will fund the project’s first phase, which focuses on the engine’s appearance and stabilization.

Mark Frazier of M&M Consulting, project manager on Project Return to Glory, says the inspection was extensive. “We opened up the smoke box, removed the valve heads, went in the firebox and cleaned it out, opened the steam dome, and opened the section of jacketing above the firebox,” Frazier tells Trains New Wire. There was also some “spot” ultrasonic testing on the boiler to determine its condition. A quick visual inspection of the tender reveals it has extensive damage, some of it received when the engine was in regular service.

“What we found is the locomotive is in very good condition,” Frazier says. “It is a low mileage locomotive since the last major shop work has been done. We found that running gear work was done at Waycross (Ga.), I believe in 1949. We saw axles and pins that had been changed. The boiler inside is in very good condition. It had been fired up – it was not the ‘zero miles’ locomotive we had been told that it was, but it is very low mileage. The running gear looks really good – we could not see any major problems with it. The valves look like they have new rings in them, with no rust damage. The smokebox has minor water entry damage down the stack. We also found that it has a one-piece, welded steel, 7/16-inch firebox that has been replaced in one piece and is in very, very good shape.” Frazier says the intense inspection was to determine the exact condition of the Pacific. “We went in with the attitude we were going to find out the story and history of the 1504, and what we were able to tell was it’s a good machine,” he says. “We did the inspection to find out what the locomotive was.” The last work on the locomotive was conducted in 1989, when the asbestos boiler lagging was removed, a new boiler jacket installed, and it was repainted. According to Frazier, CSX paid to have the asbestos removed. “I can’t give CSX enough praise for how this locomotive has been taken care of in Jacksonville. It’s obvious that they’ve taken care of it. Living here in Northeast Florida, CSX is a good corporate neighbor; they do an awful lot of good for the community,” he says. “What we can tell from the work that was done in 1989 until now is that the deterioration has slowed substantially. It appears any deterioration to this point happened when it still had asbestos lagging on it. But they did re-jacket the locomotive, so that was kind of like having a building over it,” Frazier says.

This spring the restoration will proceed with repainting, installing new windows, and putting a new locking roller door

on the back of the cab to secure it. Frazier says Diversified Rail Services needs one week where the Convention Center does not have major events so it can set up in the parking lot and do the painting. The tender will get patches over any holes in it, the jacketing will be repaired, and new ACL lettering applied. The display will also be lighted with high efficiency LEDs. The headlight and marker lights will be illuminated at night as well. Frazier says the group hopes to have the cosmetic work done by May 1.

The locomotive is the recipient of Trains Magazine's 2013 Preservation Award of \$10,000, which CSX Corp. then matched for the cosmetic restoration. This marked the first time a Class I railroad has partnered with the magazine to match the award. The National Railway Historical Society previously named No. 1504 to a list of the nation's most endangered railroad landmarks. Donations for the project can be mailed to North Florida Chapter – NRHS, P. O. Box 16493, Jacksonville, FL 32245-6493.

Sympathy Notices - Editor, Jim Smith

It is with sorrow that I announce the loss of two long time members of the Southeast Chapter of the R&LHS.

On January 10th, Jim Wilk, age 69, of Macclenny, FL passed away. Jim and his brother, John,, were co-owners and operators of the family business, the Wilk Forwarding Company. He loved trains, was an avid model railroader and collected railroad books and memorabilia, including original train paintings by the late Ted Rose. He loved going to Colorado and riding on the narrow gauge trains. I had the privilege of riding with Jim on a private caboose trip on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. Jim also helped our chapter publish a reprint of R&LHS Bulletins number 86 and 88 which told "The Story of the Florida Railroads". Jim also arranged special financing for the printing of the books.

At his "Celebration of Life" a poem was given to everyone along with a photo of Jim. A portion of the poem (no author noted) is printed below:

"Heaven's train has come 'a callin'
The conductor tells me "time to go"
The train whistles a fluted sound and up eternity's track we'll go
I've found my seat now on the train
My ticket's punched and handed back
After searchin' my heart and face I find it reads:
"First Class to Heaven by Christ's atoning Grace".

Another long time member was Ed Mueller, age 90, of Jacksonville, who passed away on April 11th. Ed worked for the Highway Research Board in Washington DC and the Department of Transportation in Tallahassee. In 1970 he became the first Florida Secretary of Transportation. Ed served in the Navy from 1943-1945 and the Naval Reserves for 20 years. When he retired from the Navy he was a Lieutenant Commander.

Ed had many interests and hobbies, but his real love was history, particularly about steamboats and trains. He has written several books and produced many DVDs on both subjects through our chapter. Ed always enjoyed attending the various train shows where he sold books, DVDs and just chatting with friends.

Both Jim and Ed will be missed...

HELP WANTED

The *Southeast Limited* newsletter is seeking a new editor. Jim and Cliff have worked on publishing the SEL for many years and are willing to assist the new editor during the learning process. The job involves securing material for the newsletter, a technical background to set up and print the material, and then send it to our members via both the internet and Post Office plus updating the our website. This position (which can be done by one person) is open to all members of the Southeast Chapter. If you are interested, please contact Jim at: annwoore@yahoo.com.

Announcements:

June 5-8, R&LHS Convention, Ely, Nevada, home of the Nevada Northern Railway.

June 12th, regular Southeast Chapter meeting date.