

# Whistle Stop

Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432

(423) 753-5797

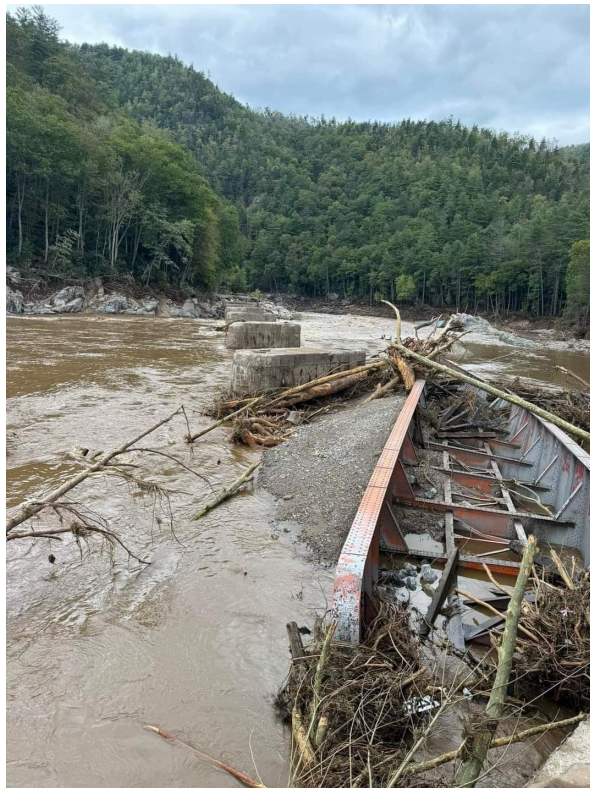
[www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org](http://www.wataugavalleyrrhsm.org)



Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

Volume 44 No. 11

November 2024



## *Disaster Strikes Blue Ridge Railroading*

Last month two powerful storms combined to deliver a devastating blow to area homes and towns; our railroads did not escape the devastation as the photo of the CSXT (ex-CRR) bridge at Poplar, NC testifies. More text and photos to follow.

## *October 28<sup>th</sup> General Membership Meeting*

The next WVRHS&M meeting will be held Monday, October 28, 2024 at 6:30pm at the Chuckey Depot Museum, 110 South 2<sup>nd</sup> St, Jonesborough, TN. Our program this month will be on the "Virginia Creeper" and will take us back to the end of steam and beginning of diesel power on the line. This program promises to be great and informative.

## *Member Notes*

Please keep Gary Price, Lois Tilley, Jack Maloney, Fred Phofl and Claire Savail in your thoughts and prayers for various reasons.

If anyone knows of a member that needs a card, thoughts for various concerns, or to request that one of our members or family be reported for various concerns in the *Whistle Stop*, email a request to [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com) or [wataugavalley.membership.com](http://wataugavalley.membership.com).

### **HISTORIC JONESBOROUGH TRAIN SHOW HAS BEEN CANCELED**

Due to all the damage from Hurricane Helene in Washington Co. TN., it has been decided to cancel the Historic Jonesborough Train Show until 2025. We look forward to a great show coming to Jonesborough next year.

### **CHRISTMAS GALA**

Our Annual Christmas Gala will be held on Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at the **Kingsport** Food City on Eastman Road. The speaker will be railroad historian Ron Flannery and the cost will be \$15.00 per person. Mark your calendar for the special event. More information will be in next month's newsletter ; a reservation form will be mailed out with the election ballots.

### **UPCOMING 2025 OFFICER AND BOARD MEMBER ELECTIONS**

All current members are running for re-election. Additional nominations will be taken from the floor at the October General Membership meeting. Ballots will be mailed out November 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **2025 MEMBERSHIP DUES**

Membership Dues statements for 2025 will be sent by US mail in November. Dues for 2025 remain the same as this year's dues: Individual Membership: \$ 20.00; Family Membership: \$ 5.00 per family member. Membership benefits include 12 issues of the "*Whistle Stop*", Watauga Valley's newsletter; membership in the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum; participation in all Museum functions and events.

## *Display in the Block*

*by Les Billings*

Due to the gravity of this month's news regarding the damage caused by Hurricane Helene, Les has graciously relinquished newsletter space to that topic. Also, as a result of the significant reduction in area rail traffic, and a desire to maintain his high standard of work, Les has chosen to scale back from a monthly column to periodic offerings. *Whistle Stop* thanks Les for his entertaining articles in the past and looks forward to his sharing his railfanning adventures in the future.

## *Chuckey Depot / Museum*

We getting ready to schedule host training sessions for anyone in WVRHS&M who is interested in hosting at the Chuckey Depot .If you would like to attend one of the host training sessions, please call our office at (423) 753-5797 or email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com).

## *In the News*



### *Some Railroad Tracks are Closed Indefinitely*

[By Destinee Patterson, WRAL-TV, Raleigh, NC] In a trip through western North Carolina's mountains, railroad tracks are now snarled - ripped from the ground. Some remain suspended, hanging from the mountainside.

Helene's storm surge caused severe damage to two major railroads in the region: CSX and Norfolk Southern.

According to their respective websites, CSX carries anything from rolled paper to appliances to food products, while Norfolk Southern ships construction and farm machinery. The U.S. Department of Transportation said they are part of an \$80-billion industry that makes up 27.9% of U.S. freight, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration.

Restoration to Norfolk Southern's AS line from Newport, TN, to Asheville is expected to take at least another three months. The company announced it expects to reopen that portion of the line by January 31, 2025.

From Asheville to Old Fort, however, there is no timeline for restoration at this point. "Due to the remote nature and mountain topography of the region, coupled with the conditions following the storm and subsequent flooding, Norfolk Southern teams have had difficulty assessing damage along portions of the line around Asheville and over Black Mountain, where much track has been completely destroyed," according to a news release.

Norfolk Southern reports 21,500 feet of track washed out, over 50,000 feet of track damaged by scour, over 15,000 feet of fill failures and slides and multiple bridges damaged in its initial damage assessments.

"That's not something that can be fixed overnight," said North Carolina State University professor Brad Ashbaugh.

The same is true for the CSX railroad from Spruce Pine to Erwin. The company says it does not know when the track will reopen.

Ashbaugh is an industrial engineering professional and an expert in business management. He calls the track destruction a 'logistical nightmare.'

"When the railroads are washed out, you can't get those shipments in," he explained. "With many of the roads washed out as well, it's a logistical nightmare to get goods into those areas, or if they're producing things that the rest of the country needs to get things out."

As crews work to restore their rail lines, Ashbaugh said supply chain delays could happen.

"Can that increase delays? Yes. Can it increase costs? Also, yes," he said. "With supply chains getting leaner, any delays can cause shortages."

Ashbaugh said the industry is capable of dealing with the disruptions. He said railroad companies reroute traffic to go around the affected areas. Therefore, he said issues are inevitable for the areas directly impacted by Helene.

However, he expects delays to be minimal for other parts of the country.

“Because there are other ways to get goods and services to areas that are not affected by Helene, I don't see those delays being significant, except for, of course, those folks that do live in that area,” he explained.

The Association of American Railroads said freight railroads “are adapting to a world shaped by climate change.

Tuesday, the association noted it was utilizing some of the strategies to prepare for natural disasters, such as Helene and now, Milton:

- 24/7 weather monitoring.
- Clearing debris from ditches and culverts along corridors to ensure proper drainage.
- Relocating locomotives, elevating track infrastructure and removing sensitive electronic equipment before floods.
- Parking rail cars full of heavy materials on a bridge before a flood to weigh it down helps counteract forceful water capable of moving a bridge from its support beams.
- Instituting high-water detectors that send notifications about track conditions.



## *CSXT SANTA TRAIN ON SCHEDULE*

CSXT 2024 Santa Train's 110-mile journey from Pikeville, KY, to Kingsport, TN, will run as scheduled on November 23.

## *Mechanical Department Report*

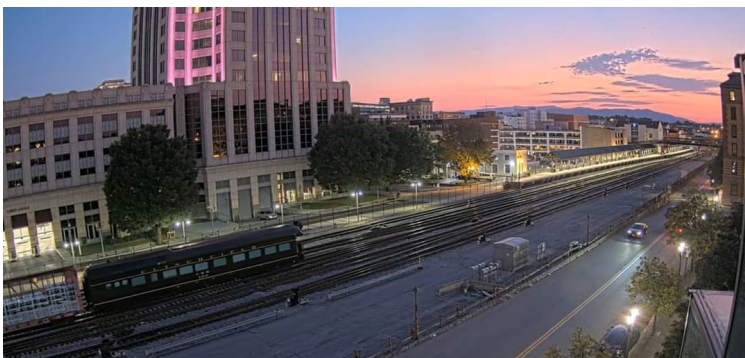
*by Art DeVoe*

If you would like to volunteer at the Spring St. Coach Yard on Tuesdays or Saturdays, please call (423) 753-5797 or email [wataugavalley@gmail.com](mailto:wataugavalley@gmail.com). There are projects for everyone; hope to hear from you.

### **ROLLING STOCK and EQUIPMENT**

“Moultrie” diner (WATX 400), “St Augustine” coach (WATX 500), “Powhatan Arrow” coach (WATX 539), and “Clinchfield 100” office car: all four cars are at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in service.

“Crescent Harbor” (WATX 2351) sleeper/lounge: at Spring St. Coach Yard in Jonesborough for upgrades.



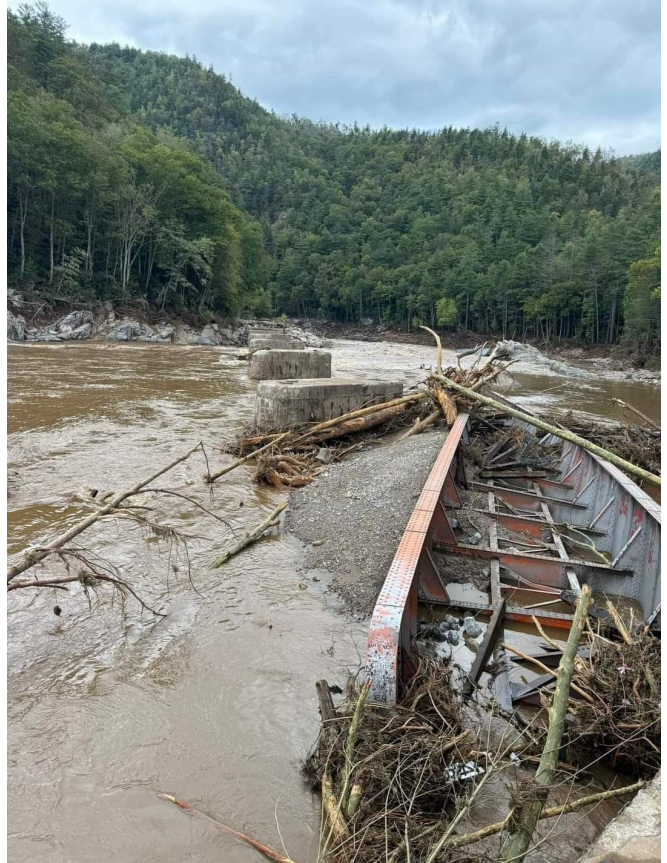
**Car 100 leaving Roanoke  
on train 134.**

# *Helene's Destruction*



**Top: CSX bridge at Poplar, NC before Helene.**

**Right: Afterwards.**



**CSX at Relief, NC**



**CSX bridge over Nolichucky River at Chestoa, TN.**

**CSX at Brush Creek**



**Slide at MP 198 on the "CRR Loops".**



Left: NS Yard at Asheville. What looks like a tug boat pulling barges is actually a train.



Above: NS at Marshall, NC along the French Broad River.



Spruce Pine, NC



**CSX (CRR) station at  
Spruce Pine, NC**



**Bridge at Old Fort, NC**



**Along the Toe River**



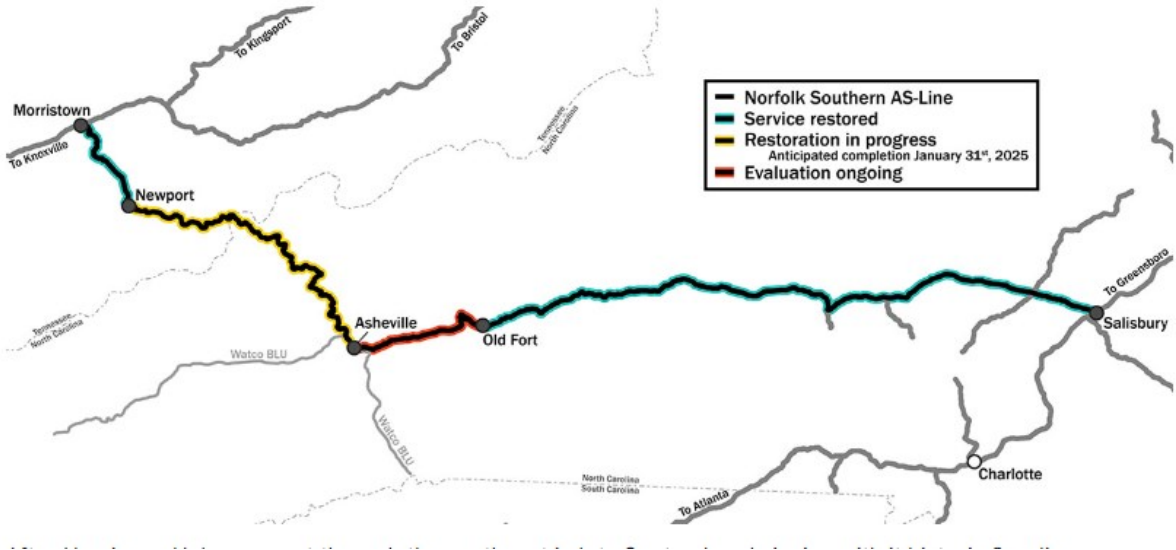
# The Recovery Begins

Work crews have reached Spruce Pine with repairs from Spartanburg. Spruce Pine is receiving attention to get out the mica material for computers that go by rail. Crews are now working on the Erwin End and the gorge. Recovery map below from NS.



Photos from CSXT

## Recovering from Hurricane Helene a Team Effort at NS



## *Whistle Stop*

Published Monthly by the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum

P.O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN 37605-0432

[whistlestop.editor@gmail.com](mailto:whistlestop.editor@gmail.com)

Opinions or viewpoints are those of the writer and may not necessarily reflect those of the organization members, officers or directors. Items of interest are welcome and will be credited to the author; however, because of space constraints, all submissions are subject to editing. Permission to reprint *Whistle Stop* articles with the exception of photographs is granted if proper credit is given. Reuse of photographs must receive permission by the editor and the photographer.



**Watauga Valley RHS & Museum**  
**P.O. Box 432**  
**Johnson City, TN 37605-0432**

**TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL**