

TOWPATH TRACKS

Newsletter of the Whitewater Valley Railroad
Connersville, Indiana USA

October 2025



October marks the start of our busiest season with four weekends and plenty of trains. The fall foliage special trains operate each Thursday and Friday. The trains leave Connersville at 10 a.m. and return after a two hour layover in Metamora.



Metamora is a crowded place during Canal Days. We have people on duty for crowd control during train movements.

The first weekend includes Canal Days. Metamora is filled with food and merchandise vendors and it is their largest event of the year. We run two trains to Metamora on Saturday and Sunday. One leaves Connersville at 10 a.m., and the other at Noon. This gives the early train passengers a four-hour layover. In Metamora the trains are combined and leave at 3:30 with all seven coaches and several cabooses. This is our largest train of the year, excluding Polar. On Saturday, there were 300 people on board for the return trip.

During Saturday's return trip, a group of three passengers asked the conductor where the train was going. After questioning the people it was determined that they simply got on the train just before it left Metamora and didn't talk to any of the crew. They were surprised to learn that the train was headed to Connersville and they'd have to arrange a ride back to Metamora.

In the middle of the month we run Wild West Specials on a Saturday and Sunday. These are generally well attended and the Circle D Rangers provide good entertainment for our passengers. Three weekends are devoted to Ghost Train which runs on Friday and Saturday evening. On Saturday the Metamora shuttle crew starts later in the day and then operates the Ghost Train in the evening.

Finally, the last weekend of October, we run the Pumpkinliner which makes four trips on Saturday and again on Sunday from Grand Central to the pumpkin patch located at Robinson's Campground. Once the October trips are over, we have two weeks to prepare for the first Polar Express train.



The Ghost Train crew takes a break before their trips begin.





Track Update

by: Nic McCoy

We made some repairs to the air compressor and side wings on our newly acquired ballast regulator. The side wings are used to form the shoulder of the ballast alongside the tracks. This forms a slight ditch beside the track that provides drainage. The ballast regulator and track tamper were used to finish the recent repairs to the shuttle track washouts.

The canal has been dredged at the farmer's crossing close to mile post 50. This is believed to be the plug that caused the backup of water that then flowed over the shuttle track and washed it out. The regulator and tamper are now in the shop so we can continue maintenance. Both pieces of equipment are in basically good condition. But, because of their age, they do require periodic maintenance.

The big news is the excavator now has a rotator and grapple. It has been used to lay out the rails for the switch that will lead to the lean-to adjacent to the shop. With all the materials staged nearby, it was a fairly easy task for one operator to get everything in place. This attachment can be used to handle rail and ties, even full bundles of ties. There is still a lot of learning to do, but it is an absolute game changer.

Once the switch rails are secured with spikes, the panel tracks that have been built by the boy scouts can be moved into place and connected. Eventually this track will go under the lean-to. However, it can be used immediately to store track equipment.

EXCAVATOR

Our new excavator attachment will tilt 30 degrees, and rotate 360 degrees. It has already been useful. It was built by the Steelwrist company who sent two technicians to install it.

TRACK VOLUNTEERS

Dave Bossert
Zach Frey
Jon Gipson
Nathan Hess
Ed Hollowell
Keiwoon Krause
Tyler Moore
Celeste Pence
Andy Schwering
Tony Schwering
Kerry Weller
Robby Weller
Travis Weller

Track inspections have been conducted weekly with few issues to report. We now have two operational speeders and those are used when inspecting the tracks. It's easy to see the tracks and ties from the speeder, and there's room to carry some tools. Railroads used speeders for many years, and we still find them useful. In October, the inspections will occur on Monday because we have trains running from Thursday through Sunday.

The only track issue during Canal Days was at the north switch at Leonard's siding. A crew ran through the switch which caused some damage, but did not place it out of service. It has now been upgraded to a spring switch which means that crews using the siding to run around their train will not have to operate the switch. The springs will allow the switch points to move as the locomotive travels from the siding to the main track. Then, the springs will return the switch points to the main line.

Advertising

Our Publicity and Social Media group is expanding how we advertise. As Facebook's audience has aged, we're exploring new ways to reach younger groups. We recently worked with Fox 19 television station in Cincinnati to produce some spots that will air on their morning show Xtra in the NATI.

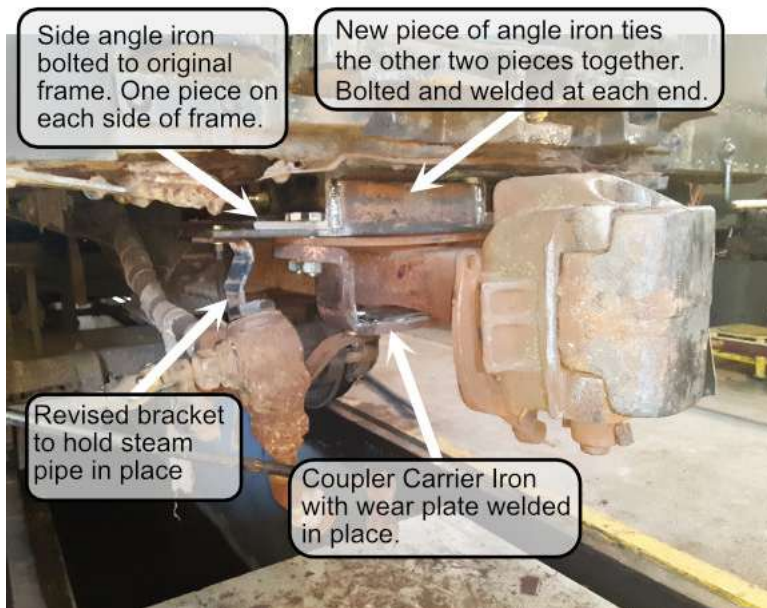
The Fox 19 crew spent a morning in Connersville interviewing volunteers about what happens at our railroad. The day began at Grand Central station where they discussed train operations and ticket sales. Then, more interviews were conducted at south Conn. This included talking about our maintenance activities, what it takes to get ready for the season, and also a discussion of track maintenance. To demonstrate, host Sarah White drove a spike on camera.

Two of the two minute and thirty second spots have aired and six more will be on the air in January through March. We hope to reach a wider audience with our message about the historic aspects of our railroad and the types of entertainment that we provide.

Shop Update

by: Tom Nitza

The rebuild of the frame at the north end of coach 4 has been completed and the car is back in service. This photo shows the major components, especially the 1/2 inch thick angle iron we bolted and welded in place to strengthen the frame. In addition to that work, we fabricated and installed brackets for the steam and air lines. The brake hose and angle cock were replaced.



On the south end of the car, we replaced the brake pipe hanger, air hose and angle cock, and completed installation of the crossover walkway between cars.

Engine 25: A crack in one of 25's trucks was widened with a carbon arc gouger and welded up. McCombs Fabrication in Connersville is working on the journal boxes for this locomotive.

Engine 709: An oil leak was repaired with a new seal in the oil crossover line for the engine. Stopping this leak will reduce oil consumption. We also replaced a gasket on the outlet pipe from the air compressor. The gasket blew out just as the train arrived at Grand Central on its return trip from Metamora, but 709 was able to get the train to the yard.

Engine 9339: The radiator shutters are open all the time. Work is underway to install a temperature-based operating system so they will normally be closed but open when needed. The components have been purchased and we are working on a mounting bracket.



Coach 11: The interior painting has been completed and the car was in service for Canal Days weekend. It made two round trips and the crew reported that the car rode well.

Coach 7: The south door, which slides into the wall, was jamming halfway open. With some difficulty, we removed the door and discovered that a mechanism intended to provide spring tension to help open and close the door had failed. A part of that mechanism was removed and the door was reinstalled. It operates much better but the bottom of the door also drags on the threshold. So, that's a repair for another day. This car also received a new angle cock and brake hose on the north end. This is just the highlights of the work completed since the last newsletter.



SHOP VOLUNTEERS

Dave Bosart
Carrick Dunn
Jerrilynn Feicht
Nancy Feicht
Hannah Hughes
Brian Kasper
Jim Nuxoll
Mark Sargent
Mike Scott
Ryan Scott
Tony Schwering
Al Smedler
Kaliga Thomas
Robby Weller
Travis Weller

Facilities Update

by: Brian Dershem

A main focus of our property improvements has been to improve our utility service and clean up the installation. We discovered that both a water supply line and a gas line ran under the building we purchased across the street. We think this happened when an addition to the building was constructed. Ohio Valley Gas and Connersville Utilities agreed to reroute those.

As part of the large-scale electrical upgrade, we asked Duke Energy to remove three poles which were no longer being used to supply our buildings with electricity. They replied by sending a crew and several trucks to complete the task.

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The good news is there was no cost to us for all of the utility work.



Work on the interior of our new building continues. We now have a temperature-controlled area to store the incoming Polar Express merchandise. When the building was constructed, it included a vault with concrete walls and ceiling. Shelving has been installed and it will be used to store artifacts and papers that we need to preserve.



We have an endowment fund at the Fayette Community Foundation in Connersville. Each year, based on investment income, a payout is available. In recent years we have reinvested the payout money. A healthy endowment fund provides future financial security.

Contributing to our endowment fund is an excellent way to protect the railroad's financial future. For more information use this contact:

Fayette Community Foundation

765-827-9966

givetofcf.com

Whitewater Valley Railroad Heritage Fund

Item Deaccession

We have several ex Swift mechanical refrigerator cars. We are planning to deaccession one from our collection. We wish to remove it because one door is damaged and not operational, and the car does not suit our long-term purposes. Members are invited to comment before it is offered to the public.

Meeting Schedule	
Board of Directors <i>(second Friday)</i>	
No meeting in November -- Polar Express	
No meeting in December -- Polar Express	
Member Meetings <i>(fourth Friday)</i>	
No meeting in November -- Polar Express	
No meeting in December -- Polar Express	
Meetings are held at 300 S. Eastern Ave. (Corner of Eastern Ave. and Route 121)	

SOCIAL MEDIA

YouTube
WhitewaterValleyRailroadOfficial

Instagram
Whitewatervalleyrrofficial

Facebook
Whitewatervalleyrr.org

Submit post ideas to:
whitewatervalleyrailroadsocial@gmail.com

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Dues: \$30 annually, or \$200 lifetime

The Whitewater Valley Railroad is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit operating railroad museum dedicated to preserving an historic branch line railroad, the restoration of railroad equipment, and the conduct of educational railroad programs.