

TOWPATH TRACKS

Newsletter of the Whitewater Valley Railroad
Connersville, Indiana USA

April 2026



We are becoming very active in submitting grants for various projects. We have submitted requests, but none have been approved. This is an area that we want to concentrate on because it's a good way to fund improvement projects for the railroad.

Our social media presence is increasing and we're posting more content. We have increased our presence beyond Facebook to include YouTube and Instagram in order to reach different audiences. This has really been driving our ticket sales. You might want to take a look at a recent post on YouTube which is a railroad version of the Olympic sport of curling. Our site is: Whitewater Valley Official

We are adding a new train to the schedule called the Valley Voyager. On the first Saturday of each month the Metamora shuttle will leave Grand Central Station at 10 am to haul passengers to Metamora. This will give those passengers a four hour layover in town before they return on the Valley Flyer at 3:30 pm. The shuttle crew will then run their regular schedule of short trips in Metamora. Previously the shuttle had deadheaded to Metamora to begin their day. On the first Saturday of each month, Metamora is planning a special event such as 1838 Day, Strawberry Festival, and Bluegrass Festival.

We are planning on having Navy 1 painted in dark gray and applying graphics of the Navy Seal as well as a commemoration of the country's 250th birthday.

Dearborn Tower has developed an 8 inch lean to the west. We believe this has happened because the structure was cut in half in order to move it. This weakened the wall structure enough that the lean developed. We have hired a contractor to straighten the building and apply bracing to hold it in place.

Election Results

After Andy's report, the Board of Directors election was held. The four incumbents, Tom Nitza, Rob Rogers, John Sprinkle, and Travis Weller were unopposed and were reelected.

Graduation Train

The final day of our annual training class includes the presentation of certificates to the participants. This takes place at Grand Central Station. After gathering at the front of the locomotive for a group photo, everyone boards the train for a round-trip to Metamora. The train makes frequent stops along the way to cycle people in and out of the cab so they can experience the railroad from that perspective.

They are now eligible to work in train service as a student brakeman, although some may choose to volunteer in another capacity. We look forward to working with these new volunteers in whatever capacity they choose.

GRADUATION

The group posed with the train crew before boarding the train for a round-trip to Metamora

Meeting and Election

The March member meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by president Andy Schwering with 26 members attending. He reported on current events at the railroad, and these are some of the topics:



AGE GROUPS
The participants were divided into three age groups.

BOARDING
Everyone brought their Easter baskets to hold the candy they found at the Easter egg hunt

Whitewater Valley Railroad. We had a total of 1,092 passengers. The rain held off until the last two rides. The last ride we had Ellsworth meet the kids at Grand Central after the Easter egg hunt.

There was a lot of volunteer help before and during the event. Thanks for everything that was done to make this event successful!



Easter Bunny Express

by: Beth Schwering

We operated four trains to the campground Bunny Patch for kids 0 to 9 years old to hunt Easter eggs. Kids who got the golden egg presented the paper at Grand Central Station for an Easter basket full of goodies! We also had an Easter egg hunt for the local campground kids in between runs. All kids had the opportunity to meet Ellsworth, the Easter Bunny of the

Event coordinator: Beth Schwering

Making prizes: Beth Schwering, Rose Schwering, Katie Rogers, and Denise Myers

Filling eggs: Charlene Hymer

Cleaned coaches: Mike Kreiger

Prep on Friday: Mike Bostelman, Andy Schwering, Tony Schwering, and Rose Schwering

Office: Stephanie Combs and Joanie Rogers

Ellsworth: John Sprinkle

Ellsworth Seamstress: Michelle Anderson

Ellsworth's Driver: Rob Rogers

Easter Bunny Patch: Beth Schwering, Sam Schwering, Katie Rogers, Michelle Anderson, Owen Rogers, Mary Schwering, Travis Nobbe, Rose Schwering, Jeremy Rogers, Sean, Lisa, and SJ Gammon

Train Crew:

Engineer: Chip Coburn

Student Engineer: Lee Williams

Student Conductor: Lee Drake

Brakeman: Mike Bostelman

Student Brakemen: John Lord and Michael Sutton

Car hosts: Five girls from Connersville High School arranged by Lindsey Brooks

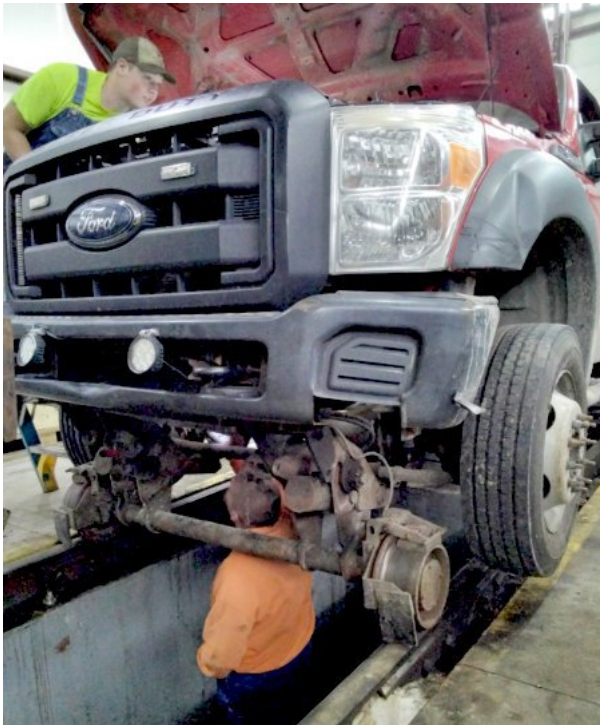


ELLSWORTH
Ellsworth was on hand to greet the kids as they returned from the Bunny Patch.

Shop Update

We've made quite a bit of progress on locomotive inspections. It takes about 24 man-hours for each inspection plus any time to repair problems discovered. Fortunately, we've only had to make some minor repairs so far and 709 needed two brake shoes. Also, we completed an oil change on Navy 1. At this point 709 and Navy 1 are finished and ready for service.

We were working through the list of checks with the engine running on 9339 when we discovered that it had a brake pipe pressure leak. We used soapy water to wet joints along the pipe to find the leak sources. Once those are repaired, we should be able to complete the inspection. That will only leave 532 to be inspected.



The red high-rail truck paid a visit to the shop and was parked over the pit. The charging system was not working correctly and they needed to trace the wiring from the alternator on one side of the truck to the computer on the other side. To do this, they needed access underneath. It was finally determined that one wire had a fault and that it was not possible to access the wiring harness to replace it. So, the decision was made to run a new wire which solved the problem. The truck is now charging as it should. No more dead batteries.

In order to properly align the track, the tamper pushes a "light carriage" ahead of it to determine

VOLUNTEERS

Dave Bossart
Patrick Butler
Carrick Dunn
Jon Gipson
Mike Scott
Ryan Scott
Tony Schwering
Kaliga Thomas

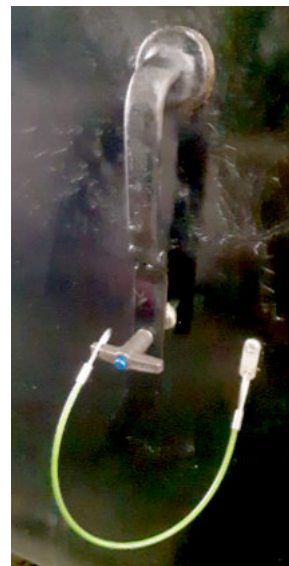
MACHINING

Ryan Scott is checking the diameter of the new light carriage axle. Having a lathe available really simplifies some tasks.



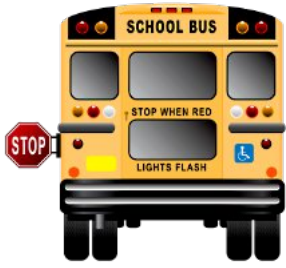
OVER THE PIT

Having a pit available allows us to easily perform tasks that would otherwise be difficult or impossible. In this view you can see the front rail wheels on the truck.



Late last year the battery box door on Navy 1 came open on the way to Metamora. The door collided with a bundle of ties and was torn off the locomotive.

Fortunately, other than broken hinges, the door didn't suffer any damage. To avoid a future occurrence, we welded an extension on the door latch handle and pinned it into the door itself. Now the handle cannot move unless the pin is removed.



Field Trip

On Friday, April 10th, we ran a train for a field trip of forty-nine kids and two adults from East Central Middle School in Brookville, Indiana. They had finished reading Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* and wanted to take a train trip. During the trip to Metamora they reenacted some scenes from the book.

Upon arrival they ate lunch, toured Metamora, and then boarded school buses for the return trip.

Annual Rules Test and Luncheon

Saturday April 11th was the annual rules test and discussion which is a requirement for all operating crew members. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) mandates that we conduct this training to ensure that our crews are conversant with our operating rules and timetable instructions. The training also includes on-track safety which sets forth the rules under which track maintenance takes place. The rules meeting serves as a refresher to our crews before they begin our busy season.

At the conclusion of the meeting, we adjourned across the street to Elmhurst to enjoy a luncheon. The entree was provided by the railroad and the balance of the meal was carry-in. The luncheon was a chance to enjoy fellowship before we concluded the day's activities. Although, for some it was time to go back to work on the railroad completing tasks which prepare us for the season.

After sixty-seven years, steam passenger train service on the Whitewater Division of the Big Four has been discontinued as of October 5, 1931. A gasoline-electric train was put into service over the same route and will serve all the towns between Cincinnati and Connersville. The new train consists of two coaches for passengers and a power car. Only a few years ago three passenger trains each day made the run. (Editor's Note: This last remaining train was discontinued in March, 1933. Mail and express were then routed by truck.)
Dearborn County Register, October 8, 1931

Meeting Schedule

Board of Directors (*second Friday*)
Friday, May 8th @ 7:00 p.m.
Friday, June 12th @ 7:00 p.m.

Member Meetings (*fourth Friday*)
Friday, May 22nd @ 7:00 p.m.
Friday, June 26th @ 7:00 p.m.

Meetings are held at 300 S. Eastern Ave.
(Corner of Eastern Ave. and Route 121)

SOCIAL MEDIA

YouTube
Whitewater Valley Railroad Official

Instagram
Whitewatervalleyrrofficial

Facebook
Whitewater Valley Railroad

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.