

TOWPATH TRACKS

Newsletter of the Whitewater Valley Railroad
Connersville, Indiana USA

May 2026



District Spring Camporee

A Boy Scout camporee is a district or council-level camping event bringing multiple troops together for a weekend of themed activities and fellowship. During the last weekend of April we hosted the Hoosier Trails Council from the Bloomington, Indiana area. The theme for the weekend was completing the requirements for the Railroad Merit Badge.

The scouts stayed at Robinson's Whitewater River Campground Friday night. Saturday morning they were transported to our facility by train. There were 380 participants including adult leaders. During the day, the scouts visited 14 different stations for 20 minutes each to get information about different aspects of railroading. This is a list of the topics discussed:

- Air Brakes
- Diesel Tours
- Handcar
- Model Railroads
- Operation Lifesaver
- Railroad Jobs
- Railroad Safety
- Railroad Video
- Signals
- Steam Locomotive
- Speeders (Motor Cars)
- Switching
- Track Work
- Timetables

To complete the requirements, they had to purchase a ticket and take a trip on a train. That requirement was completed on Sunday. They received their tickets at Grand Central Station. Then, during the trip to Metamora, they completed the written test and 222 merit badges were earned.



On Sunday, some Cub Scouts also boarded the train for the ride, bringing the total number of passengers to 498, which is larger than our Polar Express trains. The merit badge event is booked through 2030.



There are more than 135 merit badges relating to sports, crafts, science, trades, business, and future careers.

HANDCAR

This is always popular. Several Scouts propel the handcar using muscle power up the hill and then coast back to Eastern Avenue.



Above: Here the scouts are learning about air brakes. They also got to see an actual demonstration. Upon command, the engineer would apply and then release the brakes so the scouts could see them function.

TRACK WORK

No Scout weekend would be complete without some track work. Spikes are being driven into the new track leading to the shop.



Spartan Service Day

Wednesday May 6th was Spartan Service Day in Connersville for students from Connersville High School. In the morning, students were bused to various locations around the city to perform community volunteer activities. We had 151 student volunteers at the railroad. They worked at the following tasks: shop work, property maintenance, trash train, caboose restoration preparation, track work, and equipment organization. At 11:30 they boarded buses to return to school. This is an annual event, and we will be participating again next year.



TRASH TRAIN

The trash train stopped at various points to pick up and bag trash. This was deposited on our flat car and brought back to South Conn.



COACHES

All of our coaches were given a thorough cleaning including seats, windows and floors. They're now ready for the 2026 season.

 **Reid Health** has donated an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) to be placed in Grand Central Station.

Bridge Parapet

Last year some repair work was done on a bridge north of Metamora at a location we call Triple Crossing. At this point, the railroad curves and crosses the same road three times. In this area the canal also makes several very sharp turns.

When the railroad was built, they followed an easier route. Because of that, several small bridges were constructed where the railroad crossed the canal. These are stone structures built on top of wooden supports. The bridge piers were then topped with railroad rails. Parapets were then constructed to hold back the roadbed and gravel ballast that support the tracks.

Last year a stone mason did some repair work to one of these bridges. The final step in the bridge repair was to pour a new concrete parapet and then backfill with gravel to complete the project. That work was recently completed by our track crew.



Bridge Parapet: A barrier along the edge of a bridge designed for containment

The rails have been placed on top of the stone piers and the concrete forms are in place on top of the rails. Just out of sight to the left is the road which the concrete delivery truck will use. The distance was too far for the delivery chutes on the concrete truck. The concrete was poured into the bucket of our excavator and then dumped into the wooden form.



This is the finished project. Our hi-rail dump truck is in the background. It was used to transport the gravel. The bed swivels sideways so the gravel could be dumped to the side.

NARCOA Visits

The North American Railcar Operators Association (NARCOA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and operation of railroad equipment historically used for maintenance of way purposes. On Sunday, April 19th, thirty-one members were in Connersville with their “speeders” to take a round trip to Metamora.



The speeders are transported by trailer to get to the host railroad. In Connersville they unloaded at Grand Central Station since there's a large paved parking area. At one time, railroads used this type of conveyance for their track crews. There was a small amount of room for tools and room for four riders. However, they could tow a four wheeled cart behind if they needed more supplies. These have been replaced by hi-rail equipment which is a highway vehicle with railroad wheels.

COACH 6

In this photo the welds holding the floor plate in position have been cut. Lifting up the plate has revealed quite a bit of rust damage which is what we expected to find.

Shop Update

We have completed the locomotive inspections. No major problems were discovered. There were some brake shoe replacements and the usual traction motor brush replacements. The air leakage was excessive on 9339, and we spent quite a bit of time tracking down and repairing multiple leaks. In fact, we got the brake pipe leakage down to zero. The maximum allowed is 5 pounds in one minute. One of the crews that used 9339 marked down a 1/2 pound leak on their train air brake test form because they could not believe the air gauge needle didn't move at all.

Coach 6 is the big project in the shop right now. There's an extensive list of repairs, but the



SPEEDERS

Speeders are not only historic, they're useful and we use ours regularly. The speeder makes it much easier to get a close up look at the track when doing an inspection.

largest is the south vestibule. There's quite a bit of rust damage and we're still working on getting everything removed so we can assess exactly how we'll repair it. It is repairable; it's just a matter of coming up with a plan and welding in quite a bit of steel. After that's completed, we'll put a new floor plate in the vestibule.

We also plan to work on the air system on this car, some window work, four new steps, and work on the doors so they operate easily.



Metamora was platted in 1838. To celebrate this event, current day Metamora rolled back time to recreate a sense of what it was like. They started out the day with actors recreating scenes of the original platting, the arrival of the canal and boats, and the washing away of the Duck Creek Aqueduct and its replacement. They also celebrated Barnes Brothers Mill being built, and to cap it off, the arrival of the railroad. Everyone was encouraged to dress up in period correct clothing for the event.

We started off the event with the Valley Voyager leaving Grand Central Station at 10:00 a.m. During the trip, President Andy Schwering presented passengers with a detailed Canal history as they made their way to Metamora. Unfortunately, Mother Nature had caused an early green-up and many of the locks and features were not visible. In all, 27 passengers made the early trip into Metamora to spend a 4 hour layover taking in the event. In Metamora there were many demonstrations such as sap boiling, honey, and 1838 food options. Member Stacy Hillman was there making authentic corn husk dolls. Many other members dressed up in 1838 outfits to set the scene of a bustling canal town.

Meeting Schedule	
Board of Directors	<i>(second Friday)</i>
Friday, June 12th @ 7:00 p.m.	
Friday, July 10th @ 7:00 p.m.	
Member Meetings	<i>(fourth Friday)</i>
Friday, June 26th @ 7:00 p.m.	
Friday, July 24th @ 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.