

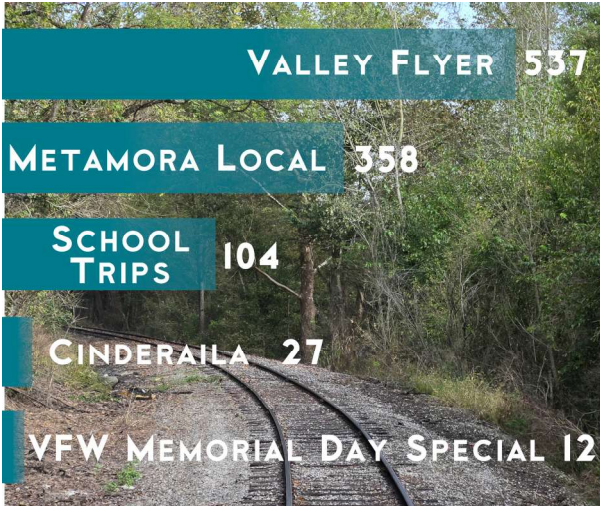
TOWPATH TRACKS

Newsletter of the Whitewater Valley Railroad
Connersville, Indiana USA

June 2026



May Ridership

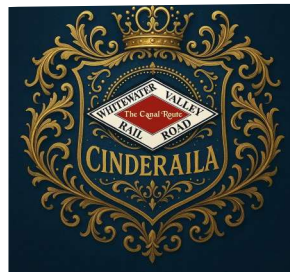


CUSTOMERS

It's important to remember that we provide entertainment for our passengers, even if it's simply a round trip to Metamora. We are always looking for ways to provide entertainment value.

School Trip ridership was down from last year, but the Metamora Local is doing very well. Strawberry Festival weekend in Metamora was very busy for the Local. Cinderaila attendance was low, and we're discussing ways to boost brand awareness to increase ridership for the next trip later this summer.

The Cinderaila story begins prior to boarding, and then everyone attends the "ball" on board the train. Passengers interact with the prince and we've even had adults volunteer to try on the slipper. Finally, after returning to Grand Central, the prince finds Cinderella and the slipper fits, bringing an end to the story.



ENTERTAINMENT

Cinderaila certainly provides entertainment, and the Circle D Rangers do as well when they ride our Wild West Specials. We will also have a combined pizza and trivial pursuit train.

On Thursday May 14th, we hosted Laurel Elementary first grade students and third through fifth graders from Saint Nicholas in Sunman, IN. Both groups boarded the train in Laurel and, during the trip to Metamora, the students learned about the historical aspects of the Whitewater Valley and about the transportation provided by the canal and the railroad. After some activities in Metamora, including a tour of the Mill and the locomotive cab, The Saint Nicholas students boarded buses to return to school. The Laurel group then rode the train back to Laurel.

Railroad Receives Award



To borrow a phrase from a movie, the Whitewater Valley Railroad has received a "major award." Rail Events, the organization that oversees licensing of the Polar Express brand, gave us the 2025 Polar Bell Award for the Best Community Event. We receive many positive comments from our passengers, and it's also nice to know that Rail Events thinks highly of our Polar Express trains.

Muncie & Western # 8

Muncie and Western #8 has been on display for several years adjacent to Dearborn Tower. This locomotive was built in 1946 by the General Electric Locomotive Works in Erie, PA. The Muncie and Western was the plant railroad for the Ball Brothers Glass Manufacturing Company. At one time, they were the largest producer of mason jars in the country. The railroad even had its own box cars with the Ball logo to transport their product. That facility was closed years ago and the buildings have been torn down.

continued on next page

The Ball Corporation moved to Colorado and no longer produces home canning jars. They transitioned to become one of the world's largest producers of aluminum beverage cans. Currently, Newell Brands manufactures "Ball" jars and lids, under license from the Ball Corporation. Originally their glass plant was in Muncie, IN, but production and distribution has been moved to various sites across the country.



We have decided to explore the feasibility of restoring #8 to operation. We know that it had water-leak issues in at least one of the cylinders. Our approach at this point will be to work with the company that originally manufactured the diesel engine, Cooper Bessemer, to see what parts support they may be able to give us. That's always an issue when working on historic railroad equipment. The answer to this question will help us to craft a plan on how best to proceed.

The next step will be to seek funding for the project from the Ball Brothers Foundation. Their submission deadline is in July, and we don't have enough information to make a detailed application this year. We intend to be ready next year with a detailed scope of work, budget, and time-line. If you have an interest in working on preparing the grant submission, send an email to editor@whitewatervalleyrr.org.

M&W #8

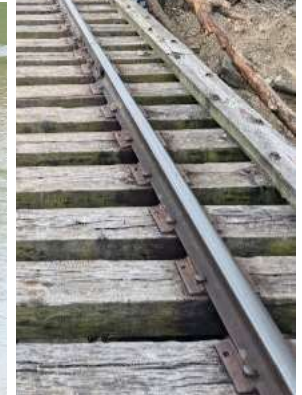
In the photo on the left, the engine room doors have been lubricated so they will open freely. Now, we'll be able to perform a closer inspection.

WAREHOUSE

The photo at the bottom of this column shows the Ball warehouse in 1954. Plenty of box cars are being loaded with product for distribution.

Track Update

Earlier this year we had a large amount of downed trees removed from the abutments of the Laurel Bridge. Trees that have fallen in the river make their way downstream and then become lodged against the south piers of the Laurel Bridge. This causes other trees and debris to jam up, thus changing water flow. In spite of earlier efforts, the trees started piling up again. To



prevent another major logjam, we decided to bring in Davis Towing and use them to clear things up.

They used one of their rotator wreckers to drag the trees up the embankment and create a pile clear of the bridge. We are hoping that doing this several times each year will be more cost effective than hiring the excavating company, and will help keep the water flowing around the bridge abutments.

The switch that will allow track to be laid into the lean-to adjacent to the shop has been completed. The track crew has been working on it, and this year's scouting merit badge participants also put in some spikes to further the project.





This undated photo was taken on the Whitewater Division of the New York Central, in Connersville. A derailed box car is on the left. The wreck train has arrived to put the car back on its trucks. The train most likely came from Cincinnati and contains not only the steam operated crane but other support cars as well. If this was the only problem, the wreck crew would have made short work of it.

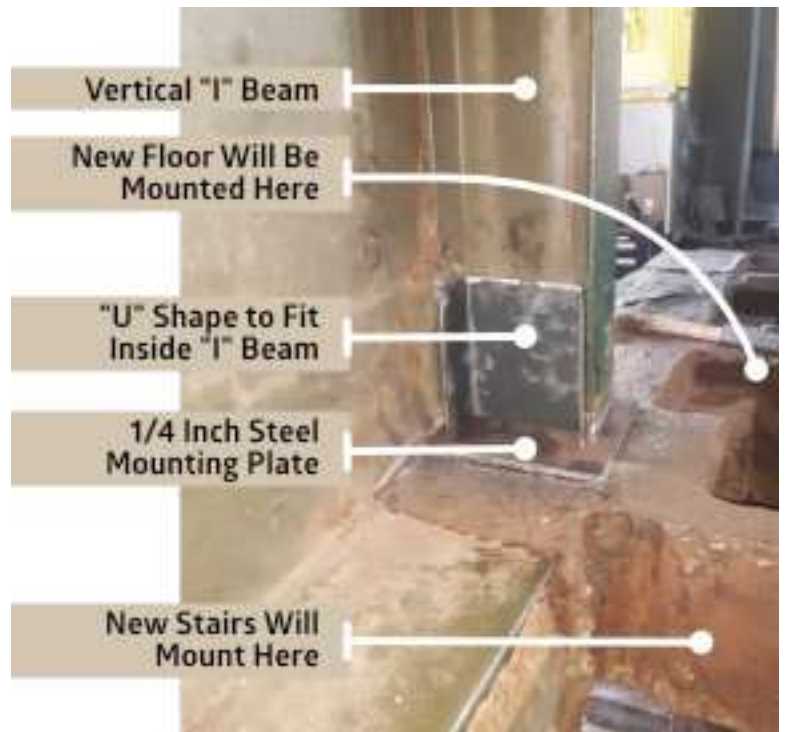
As far as the location, the wreck train is on the main line which we currently use. The other track was located where house track one is currently positioned, which is the west lead into the shop. The road in the background is highway 121.

Shop Update

Engine 9339 was suffering from low oil pressure so we took an oil sample. The results of the oil testing revealed that there was some fuel in the oil, but not an extraordinary amount. However, the test also revealed that the oil was thinner than it should be. One likely explanation is that the low oil pressure was the result of two factors: slight fuel dilution, and worn bearings that need thick oil to maintain pressure. We drained the engine and refilled it with new 50 weight motor oil. In the photo below we're pumping oil from a 55 gallon drum into the engine using an air driven pump. The engine holds nearly two

55 gallon drums of oil. Also in the photo, Ryan Scott is on top of the locomotive inspecting the intake and exhaust valve rockers. One set was not receiving oil as it should, so Ryan was cleaning and using compressed air to blow out oil passages. The locomotive is now back in service.

The south vestibule of coach 6 was badly rusted, and the floor plates had been buckled upward by the rust. The rear wall has two vertical "I" beams which had rusted out and were no longer attached at the bottom. The photo shows the steps we are taking to add new steel to this area to strengthen things. The new pieces will be welded in position and then new steel will be welded onto the floor. The final step will be the installation of new steps.





Forward or Back?

In this photo the brakeman has just lifted the uncoupling lever to separate the locomotive from the train. Would the brakeman tell the engineer to go forward, or to move backward? The key to answering that question is the letter “F” near the steps on the locomotive. That designates that this is the “Front” of the locomotive. So, in this case, the brakeman will tell the engineer to back up to move away from the train.

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulation §229.11 requires that “The letter “F” shall be legibly shown on each side of every locomotive near the end which for identification purposes will be known as the front end.” Some locomotives, such as our NAVY 1, don't have a clear front or back, since the cab is in the center. Also, in the early days of diesel locomotives, some railroads ran the engines with the long hood forward. Their thinking was that this provided better crash protection. So, to avoid confusion, locomotives are marked with an “F”.



Flashback: 532 crossing the Laurel Bridge during the January, 2026 photo charter train.

Meeting Schedule

Board of Directors *(second Friday)*
 Friday, July 10th @ 7:00 p.m.
 Friday, August 14th @ 7:00 p.m.

Member Meetings *(fourth Friday)*
 Friday, July 24th @ 7:00 p.m.
 Friday, August 28th @ 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

Towpath Tracks is published by the:
 Whitewater Valley Railroad
 P.O. Box 406
 Connersville, IN 47331
 765-825-2054
 www.whitewatervalleyrr.org
 © 2026 Whitewater Valley Railroad

President: Andy Schwering
Superintendent: Travis Weller
Editor: Tom Nitza
Photography: Tom Nitza,
 Phillip Reiboldt, Justin Newhall, Travis Weller
Proofreader: Gene Gardner

Questions, comments, submissions:
 editor@whitewatervalleyrr.org

Membership questions:
 membership@whitewatervalleyrr.org

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.