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November 2026

Newsletter of the Whitewater Valley Railroad
Connersville, Indiana USA

Where Will the Money Come From?

Unfortunately, the flood took away our highest-earning months, October, November, and December; but we had enough cash on hand to pay our ongoing bills for the short term.

However, the money on hand will not last forever, and it certainly will not be enough to rehab our buildings and make 18 miles of track operable. Our section of Indiana was declared a federal disaster zone, which makes Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) money available. Our application has been accepted and we have had several meetings with FEMA representatives. They have toured the entire railroad and inspected our buildings.

The rebuilding process will be broken down into manageable projects and, as each is completed, we will be reimbursed up to 75%. We are responsible for the balance, but volunteer hours can be used to partially offset the amount we owe. This is why it is so important that you report all flood related volunteer hours to Lindsey Brooks (lindsey.brooks@whitewatervalleyrr.org).

We have applied to the Small Business Administration (SBA) and are waiting for approval for low interest loans that we can use to pay expenses while we wait for reimbursement.

Of course, monetary donations will also hasten the railroad's return to operation. But, above all, our volunteers will play an essential role in rebuilding the railroad just as they have improved and operated our railroad for over 50 years.



Whitewater members shown on the Madison Railroad locomotive's running board helped staff the fund raising passenger runs: Paul Hillman, Jake Cline, Chip Coburn, Tom Bookout, Kaliga Thomas, Tony Schwering, Ben Sawyer, Andy Schwering, Renee Casper, Amber Casper.

One interesting donation came in the form of an excursion on the all-freight Madison Railroad in southern Indiana. They ran several two-hour excursion trips, and also sold tickets on two deadhead moves to position equipment. All revenue from tickets, donations and concessions was donated to the Whitewater Valley.

Operations

We have had motor car operations in Metamora and the Phantom trains were the last events for the year. Both the railroad and Metamora are working their way back from the flood.



We ran the Phantoms of the Canal Road motor car rides in Metamora prior to Halloween. The trips ran on six evenings and included colored lights and spooky music during the ride. The trips left every 30 minutes for a 20 minute ride. Flood damage to equipment and track prevented us from running the regular Ghost Trains, but the Metamora vendors appreciated our presence, and the trips also generated much needed revenue.



Phantom

The train consisted of two powered cars and three trailer cars. All together, they held about 26-28 riders and two drivers.

Track Work Continues

Our track crew has appreciated the mild fall weather. They have worked from Sixth St., which is one block north of Grand Central Station, down to Eastern Avenue. This section of track has new ties where necessary, washouts have been filled,



Tie Replacement

The tie master is at work just north of Grand Central Station. The operator has replaced some ties and is now using a pneumatic tool to drive the spikes.

new ballast has been spread, and it has all been tamped at least once. In some areas the regulator has been used to form the shoulders of the ballast and the broom on the regulator has been used to push excess rock from between the rails.

The Washington D.C. Metro had several ballast cars listed for auction. We were the successful bidder for two cars, and one has been delivered. These cars were designed for the specific purpose of depositing ballast on each side of the rail. Each car has an engine driven hydraulic system that controls the doors on the bottom of the car. As a locomotive pulls the car at slow speed, an operator walking alongside controls dumping the ballast. When approaching a

Ballast Cars

We've been looking for ballast cars for some time. This was an opportune time to find some at auction.



crossing, the operator can stop the flow of ballast and then restart it at the other side of the crossing. The first car delivered was in excellent operable condition and was immediately put to work hauling and dumping ballast. One thing became clear fairly quickly, the engineer had to carefully control locomotive speed to ensure that the ballast was dumped evenly.

The track crew was able to start as soon as the car was delivered because the shop forces had completed putting two rebuilt traction motors into NAVY 1 and it was operable, but only at half power until two more motors are replaced. The track crew is continuing south. The track recovery productivity should increase now that all of the key track equipment is operable, we have a more efficient means of transporting ballast, and the FEMA reimbursement will provide cash flow to fund future efforts.

Ballast Regulator

The regulator is grading alongside the track. In this area it's grass and the grading will level out the dirt displaced by inserting new ties.



Shop Update

The big news is that we now have an operating locomotive. Prior to the flood, this locomotive was out of service because one of the traction motors shorted out. We had two replacement motors on order. When they came in, we jacked up the locomotive and replaced both motors on that truck. Originally, we felt that we could clean and dry the other two motors which would put the locomotive back to 100%. However, our do-it-yourself drying operation has not produced results, so we'll have to order two more traction motors and install those. In the meantime, we'll run it as is because it is the only operating locomotive, and it's busy helping with track rebuilding and moving equipment in and out of the shop.



Traction Motors

The excavator is pulling an old traction motor out and it will then put in the rebuilt motor.

We have begun disassembly of the brake rigging on 532 in preparation for replacing all six traction motors. We can use the existing motors as trade-ins for rebuilt motors. While doing this work, it was discovered that there was water in the axle roller bearing housings. More inspection will be needed to decide on a course of action.

Finally, the vestibule on coach six has been completed. All rusted out areas have been renewed and new diamond plate flooring has been welded in place and painted. Once McCombs has built the replacement steps, we'll install those which will complete work on coach six.

The first car in the shop to remediate flood damage was the side dump car. This was prioritized because it's essential to rebuilding our track structure. The brake valves were replaced and then the brake cylinder piston was removed. As expected, water had gotten into the cylinder and rust had formed. The cylinder was cleaned and then polished with a hone in an electric drill. The hone is the same diameter of the cylinder and has dozens of small polishing stones that made short work of cleaning up the cylinder surface.

The last step was to lubricate the cylinder with grease and install the piston assembly. Installation takes several people because of the weight and the need to carefully guide the rubber packing cup into the cylinder without bending or tearing it. This same process will have to be completed for every car before it goes back into service. The shop will certainly be busy.



Traction Motors

This work will need to be completed for each of our five operating locomotives.



Whitewater Jackets

You can order a charcoal Whitewater jacket embroidered with your first name and the Whitewater logo. The jackets are from Cintas and have a 65% polyester/35% cotton twill outer shell with a liner. It can be machine washed and tumble dried on low.



Sizes & Prices:

XS-XL - $55

2XL-3XL - $60

4XL-5XL - $65

6XL-7XL - $70

You can order them by emailing or calling Charlene at Grand Central:

officemanager@whitewatervalleyrr.org
765-825-2054

Deadline for orders is Wed. January 6, 2027

Jackets can be picked up at Grand Central once the embroidery is completed

IF ONLY WE KNEW...



If only we knew how and when this will all end. Right now we have key elements in place: volunteers, equipment, and funding. The buildings have been stabilized, but much remains to be done before we begin rebuilding. We have one locomotive operating, and are working on the second. Track rehabilitation is ramping up, and we are positioned to increase productivity. The next step is, hopefully, to be ready to run a few Santa trips in December. These will not be Polar Express, but will be a return to train operation. The trips will be short with two cars. But, it will be a milestone.

However, at this point this is a goal we are working toward, but we realize we may not achieve it in December. However, given our current trajectory, we will have some operations in 2027. There's a lot of major track work ahead, and each piece of equipment must be brought into the shop to repair flood damage. We ask that you continue to support the railroad as you are able. As an organization we will return to full operation in the future and have quite a story to tell.

Meeting Schedule

Board of Directors
Second Friday of the month @ 7:00 p.m.
Grand Central Station, 455 Market St.

Member Meetings
Meetings will be held online, frequency determined by the need to communicate our status as it changes.

SOCIAL MEDIA

YouTube
Whitewater Valley Railroad Official

Instagram
Whitewatervalleyrrofficial

Facebook
Whitewater Valley Railroad



Submit 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.