

THE FEVR FLASH

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEBRASKA RAILROAD MUSEUM

1835 N. SOMERS, FREMONT, NE 68025, JULY, 2014

POINTS OF CONTACT:

The **Nebraska Railroad Museum** (www. FremontRailroad.com) address is 1835 N. Somers Ave., Fremont, Nebraska, 68025, with voice and fax access at 402- 727 -0615.

BACK ISSUES:

Back issues of the FLASH and links to numerous railroad related sites may be viewed at www.FremontRailroad.com.

NOTE: YOU NEED TO HAVE NRM MEMBERSHIP TO CONTINUE RECEIVING THE FLASH.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

(Note: the following is not the official meeting report and only summarizes the activities. Only the approved meeting minutes sent to NRM members is the official report.)

The NRM Board of Directors met at the NRM Depot in Fremont on **July 9, 2014** for the regular monthly meeting. (The meeting was postponed for one week)

All BOD members were present.

The treasurer's report was approved.

The entity which received the letter authorized by the BOD at the last meeting relative to the donation of some property in Nebraska City **provided** a response.

Apparently there will **not** be any consideration by the entity for such a donation until next year. It was suggested that perhaps the purchase of the property in question for a minimum legal sum might be considered if a donation is not possible at present.

The departmental reports were discussed.

ATRRM MEETING:

The Fall 2014 Association of Tourist Railroads and Railroad Museums will hold its Conference in Tyler, Texas **November 6-8**. There are two pre-conference days offering an opportunity for an evening dinner train on the Texas State Railroad in Palestine, Texas, on November 4 and on November 5 to Dallas which includes a visit to the Museum of the American Railroad.

There will be tours and seminars and a wide variety of **commercial** displays the next three days. The interested reader can find more information on the Internet.

(Your editor attended the Fall, 2004, TRAIN conference in Kansas City. There is a great deal of information to be gained at such an event, but even more important is the opportunity for meeting people who

may become resources in the future.)

BOD **President** David Fachman will represent NRM at the event. He will travel by AMTRAK from Omaha with a short bus connection to the Texas Eagle and another bus connection from that train from just east of Dallas to Tyler.

AIRCRAFT IN THE RIVER:

On July 3, the Montana Rail Link had a 19 car derailment on an embankment above the Clark Fork River, losing three of six **Boeing 737** fuselages into the river and leaving the other three adjacent to the track. These were on the way to Renton, WN, for final assembly from Wichita, KS, having passed through Nebraska on the way. The cost of this derailment will be high.

This railroad is now under **private** control since 1987 and is about 900 miles long with connections to the BNSF at both terminations and with trackage rights on the BNSF to Spokane. The eastern end of the line is just east of Billings, connecting again with the BNSF.

The line is part of the former **Northern Pacific** railroad which, along with the Great Northern, the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy, and the Spokane, Portland, and Seattle was merged into the Burlington Northern in 1970.

All of these were owned in one way or another by the late **James J. Hill** – known as the “Empire builder”. This merger had been attempted four previous times but legal issues had always been encountered.

(This railroad became the Burlington Northern Santa Fe following the merger with the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway in 1996 and later was again renamed as the BNSF Railway in 2005. Investor Warren Buffet currently is the BNSF owner.)

The MRL line is a convenient **“short cut”** for westbound BNSF thru traffic coming from the south since the other westbound route is near the Canadian border. The line came under MRL control in 1987. MRL picks up and delivers varied freight commodities from towns along the line. Apparently, coal from Wyoming is being transported, probably for export overseas, since there is news of climate conscious citizen protests.

Modernization of equipment has occurred with purchases of **new** locomotives starting in 2005. The

locomotive roster is all EMD.

There are two tunnels on the route – the Mullen west of Helena under the continental divide and the Bozeman near the town of that same name. It was at the entrance to the Mullen tunnel that a major **accident** occurred on February 2, 1989. With a winter temperature of about -30 F 48 freight cars were set out on a siding near the tunnel entrance to allow for a change in locomotive order. Unfortunately, no hand brakes were set and at the low temperature the brake air soon bled off.

The freight cars entered the main line and rolled down hill into Helena, the location of Montana’s state capital. The cars hit a parked work train and there was a fire and **explosion**. The fire fighting was extremely hampered by freezing fire hoses. Power outages produced extensive long term damage as plumbing froze in the town. No lives were lost.

Previous **derailments** on the line were in 2013 and 2009 – again with no loss of life – but undoubtedly not as expensive as the July 3 one. MRL was recognized as BNSF’s short line of the year for 2013.

(Editor: It should be noted that the MRL track is a part of mountain railroading – the track is often located on a narrow ledge carved out of a mountain side – and subject to all the problems that brings. The derailment mentioned here and the deadly one in Quebec shows what happens if safety procedures are not followed – setting a sufficient number of hand brakes to hold the train when the air runs out.)

OIL BY RAIL:

For Nebraska, **resolution** of the almost five year sequences of events surrounding the XL pipe line which is still pending approval will determine the extent of rail transport of crude oil.

In May, the US Department of Transportation gave an **emergency** order that would require railroads to notify local emergency responders in areas affected by the transport of more than one million gallons of oil – about 35 tank cars. This came shortly after a derailment in Virginia spilled crude into river.

A possible rail to pipe line transfer point might be **Steele City**, Nebraska.

(Information sources- Internet, Omaha World-Herald – May 8, July 7)