

# PGRS TRACKIN'

A stylized green train engine with yellow lights is positioned on a set of tracks that recede into the distance. The engine is integrated into the letter 'R' of the title 'TRACKIN'.'

Newsletter of the Piedmont Garden Railway Society

**December 2019**

Editor: Scott Williams

**Happy Holidays!!**



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**Winter Lights at The N.C. Arboretum** November 22, 2019 – January 4, 2020 6 – 10 p.m.  
Nightly



Experience Asheville's BRIGHTEST holiday tradition at Winter Lights at The North Carolina Arboretum. Walk through the Arboretum's gardens and enjoy unique displays and landscapes dressed in more than a half-a-million holiday lights. Perfect for the entire family, Winter Lights includes interactive games, a model train exhibit, free crafts, a nature-themed animatronic children's program and more! As the Arboretum's largest fundraising event, proceeds generated from Winter Lights help support the Arboretum's educational programs and exhibits year-round.

<https://www.ncarboretum.org/winter-lights/>

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**“All Aboard” The Polar Express at the N.C. Transportation Museum in Spencer, N.C.**



Inspired by the run-away hit movie, this holiday favorite comes to life as you and your family take a ride on The Polar Express.

Set to the music of the motion picture soundtrack, families are sure to enjoy their trip to the North Pole, complete with hot chocolate and cookies served on board the train. Passengers will then enjoy singing, dancing, and a reading of The Polar Express.

The journey begins Nov. 15 and runs through Dec. 22 on select dates. Exact dates, fares and excursion times are available by calling **704-469-5231**, or by visiting [www.nctrans.org](http://www.nctrans.org). Ticket prices for children (ages 2-11) range from \$32 to \$42 and for adults from \$38 to \$48

[https://www.nctrans.org/Events/PEX.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1qhRY6DSPQNpKX2GAHg1dJcJt6Vi3EtMQey2\\_ShwmVyrCG9fhdkz0Z4k](https://www.nctrans.org/Events/PEX.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1qhRY6DSPQNpKX2GAHg1dJcJt6Vi3EtMQey2_ShwmVyrCG9fhdkz0Z4k)

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### **Tweetsie Railroad, Boone NC.**



Celebrate the holiday season as **Tweetsie Railroad** transforms into a winter wonderland for **Tweetsie Christmas!** Enjoy a nighttime train ride among thousands of dazzling lights, meet Santa in his Gingerbread House, larger than life snowglobes to play in, a live Christmas show, and more!

Tickets are for a specific date and train ride time. A limited number of guests are admitted nightly, so advance tickets are strongly recommended. Adults: \$44, Children (age 3-12): \$38, Children 2 and under: Free

<https://tweetsie.com/plan-your-visit>

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## **THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride on the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad, Bryson City, NC**

<https://vimeo.com/328490570>

Over 90,000 guests rode THE POLAR EXPRESS™ with the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad in 2018 and we hope to see you in 2019! The 1¼ hour round-trip excursion comes to life as the train departs the Bryson City depot for a journey through the quiet wilderness for a special visit at the North Pole. Set to the sounds of the motion picture soundtrack, guests on board will enjoy warm cocoa and a treat while listening and reading along with the magical story. Children's faces show the magic of the season when the train arrives at the North Pole to find Santa Claus waiting. Santa will board THE POLAR EXPRESS™, greeting each child and presenting them with a special gift as in the story, their own silver sleigh bell. Christmas carols will be sung as they return back to the Bryson City Depot.

<https://www.gsmr.com/events/polar-express#.Xct1cW5FzIU>

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**Norfolk Southern to dispose of executive F units, other roster oddities.**



ALTOONA, Pa. – Norfolk Southern has put its A-B-B-A set of executive F unit locomotives up for auction, according to an assets-disposition bidding sheet distributed on Nov. 6 and obtained by Trains News Wire.

Regularly assigned to NS's office car train, the quartet was acquired in 2006 and rebuilt to GP38-2 standards by the railroad's Juniata Locomotive Shop in Altoona, Pa. Since then, they have been based in Altoona, along with the company's 20-plus office cars. The locomotives wear a version of the former Southern Railway black-and-gray F unit paint scheme, with an image of the railroad's thoroughbred horse on the nose of each A unit. The cars wear the Norfolk & Western's classic Tuscan red paint with gold lettering.

Southern, which merged with N&W in 1982 to create NS, was an early convert to diesel power, acquiring the demonstrator set of FT units that ran an 8,700-mile tour around the United States in 1939-1940. That performance widely proved the practicality of diesel-electric power in heavy freight service. Up to that time, it had been confined to lighter-duty passenger and switching service.

Built by the Electro-Motive Division of General Motors Corp. in 1952, the two A units, Nos. 270 and 271, began life as Baltimore & Ohio F7 locomotives. Rated at 1,800 hp, the A units were previously used by MARC, the Maryland Area Rail Commuter service. The B units, numbered 275 and 276 and rated at 2,000 hp, were built by EMD in 1950 for the Chicago Great Western.

The four were acquired during the administration of CEO Wick Moorman, along with three other Fs of Chicago & North Western, Canadian National, and Canadian Pacific heritage, which were stored for use as parts sources.

When NS acquired the units, it numbered the A units 4270-4271, as the highest-numbered Southern F7 unit was the 4269. The B units were numbered 4275-4276. Within the past year, the digit 4 was dropped from all four when NS's program to rebuild standard-cab General Electric C40-9 DC-powered units into 4000-series wide-nose AC44C6M AC-powered units grew to reach into the 4200 number series.

The A units featured a camera mounted in the windshield, to provide a closed-circuit signal to TV monitors back in the train. They are also equipped with positive train control.

The F-units led office car trains across the 19,500-mile, 22-state system, reaching New York, Chicago, and NS's headquarters city of Atlanta. They regularly made trips to the Masters Tournament at the Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Ga., each April, and to the Kentucky Derby in Louisville each May. During each event, the parked train served as a hospitality suite.

They also pulled "Blue Ribbon Special" employee appreciation trains in 2011. In addition, they proudly represented NS at events and celebrations such as "Norfolk Southern Days" at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, and the four-day "Streamliners at Spencer" gathering in 2014 at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, N.C.

The disposition is not a complete surprise. In September, an NS office car train operated from Altoona to Atlanta behind NS 8099, the company's Southern Railway green-and-gold heritage unit. It was the first time since the F-units made their 2007 debut that such a train ran without them. The office-car fleet includes a power car to provide head-end-power, so it can be led by a non-equipped freight unit.

Other locomotives up for sale at the same time include former Reading Co. EMD SW1001s Nos. 2104-2105; six former-Southern Railway EMD MP15s Nos. 2362, 2386, 2393, 2398, and 2403; modified EMD MP15E No. 2423; RailPower RP20BD gensets Nos. 100-101; RP20CD genset No. 3830; NS BP4 No. 999, a battery-powered experimental unit built by Juniata in 2014; and partially disassembled SD40-2 No. 3463 (former BN/CEFX No. 7083).

Auction bids close on Nov. 20. The railroad will deliver the F units to the successful bidder anywhere on its lines.

Norfolk Southern has not responded to a request for comment.

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### **MEMBER PHOTOS:**

**Once Again. I REALLY need you all to send me some photos! We want you to share your projects, big or small with our club members. We need to see what you are working on at your homes. Anything! Please!**

Send any idea, project, photo, something you found surfing on the Internet, etc., no matter how great or small you may think them to be to your newsletter editor. We all love trains so...if it's about trains, and you've got it on your computer, chances are you won't be the only person who might enjoy viewing it.

Send your input to: [srwavl@outlook.com](mailto:srwavl@outlook.com)

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**Trivia Question:** What railroad has run a Santa Claus/Christmas train distributing toys and goodies to residents along its route for over 76 years?

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### **Membership:**

Please consider sharing this newsletter with friends who might be interested and if they wish to become members ask them to contact our PGRS Secretary/Treasurer for a membership form.

Don Watson  
125 Mistletoe Trail  
Hendersonville, NC 28791

[docwatson@morrisbb.net](mailto:docwatson@morrisbb.net)

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### **Train Lovers Luncheons:**

The current luncheons are:

Columbus Area: Meets every Third Thursday of every month at [Rural Seed, 322 E Mills St. In Columbus,NC](#) @ 1:00 PM. Contact Pete Gendron: 954-812-6270

Greater Greenville Area: Meeting the first Tuesday of every month - at 11:30. [Meeting at the A&P Restaurant on Rte 14 in Greer](#). Contact Ken Majchrzak at: kemajchrzak@gmail.com or call Ken at: 864-385-4951

Meeting the 4th Thursday each month at 11:30 AM at **POST 25 restaurant** on Rte. 25 in Skyland, south of Asheville along the Hendersonville Highway. There is a separate room in the rear of the dining area. Contact Tim Wagner at: 828-712-9671 for more info.

Charlotte luncheons are meeting at [Bubba's BBQ](#) 4400 Sunset Rd. (exit 16, rte. I-77). at 11:30am on the third Tuesday of each month.

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\*\* A reminder from Terry Ketcham that PGRS club members are invited to come by the Apple Valley Model Railroad Club in Hendersonville **the last Saturday of each month** to run their large scale trains on the club layout from 10 – 2 pm. Track power, battery and live steam are all welcomed to run on their beautiful layout.

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**Trivia Answer:**

**Clinchfield Railroad ran the first Santa Train in 1943 in conjunction with the predecessor to today's Kingsport Chamber of Commerce. Initially the Santa Train consisted of a couple of extra cars added to the rear of the local passenger train that served the route between Kingsport and Elkhorn City, KY. When the scheduled passenger train ceased operation in the mid-1950s, the Santa Train continued as its own special train. The idea behind the Santa Train was to give to the children of the impoverished Appalachia region north of Kingsport which was connected by the railroad. The Santa Train marched on when the Clinchfield was absorbed into the Family Lines rail system in the 1970s and later the Seaboard System in 1982. And when the CSX mega-railroad was formed in 1986, the tradition lived on in magnificent fashion.**

**According to this post, the CSX Christmas train will run once again this year.**

<https://www.stichtingwig.nl/csx-christmas-train-2019.html>

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**Businesses associated with our club:**



**Peggy Keyes**  
Owner / Chief Conductor  
RightTrackTrainMuseum@gmail.com  
828.625-5551

**The Right Track Toy Train Museum**  
A non-profit museum to benefit Pancreatic Cancer  
research  
2414 Memorial Hwy (Rte 64/74)  
Lake Lure, NC 28746  
Find us on Facebook!



*Garden Railroad Design  
Old Trains Wanted*

**Jim's Train Sales**

**O & G Gauge New & Used Trains**

**Jim Hendley**

**Etowah, North Carolina 28729**

*Lionel, MTH, USA Trains, PIKO, LGB  
Bridgwerks Power Supplies, Bachmann  
Split-Jaw Rail Clamps, O & G Gauge Track*

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