

# The Track Car

*The Official Newsletter of West Coast Railroaders Group*



## **2025 Scheduled Track Car Excursions:**

**April:** Roaring Camp R.R.

**June:** Goose Lake RY.

**October:** Nev. Southern RY.

**November:** Roaring Camp R.R.

**More track car excursions coming in 2025! Visit our website for regular updates!**



EIC #3 Job Briefs With EIC #1 At Gold Hill, NV During WCRG's July 2024 V & T R.R. Motorcar Excursion.



Photo Credit: Adam Weidenbach Photography

## **President's Message**

Welcome once again to our newsletter! Another fantastic year is behind us as we prepare for another year of exceptional service to our host railroads. Moving into 2025, our commitment to safety and our values of supporting the communities we operate in will continue to be our most passionate ideals and goals. From helping individual railroaders in need, to local charitable fundraisers, we will strive to make a charitable impact throughout the coming year and beyond.

As always, our commitment to operating safely on our host railroads begins with a culture of safety at the top. This culture is evident with every task we perform, every excursion we host, and every excursion participant that operates on a WCRG excursion. We will continue, as professional railroaders, to offer the safest motorcar excursions possible, along with our on-track equipment services. Our approach to safety is simple: provide everyone with the knowledge and tools they need to succeed, offer educational instruction on how to apply that knowledge, and provide operational oversight to ensure success in the field. This commitment to safety is personal for our entire management team. We look forward to the opportunities in 2025 as we continue to lead the safest and most qualified track car organization in the rail industry. I thank everyone, from our host railroads, to our excursion participants who have placed their trust in us. We will continue to strive for excellence, safety, and our commitment to the communities we serve.

Stay safe and see you on the rails,

Ken Marty


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## WCRG's Latest Safety Advisory 2024-02 "Position of Switches/Clearance Point"


WCRG's latest Excursion Participant Safety Advisory highlights the importance of ensuring switches and derails are lined for the intended route before passing the clearance point during WCRG excursion operations. WCRG's Track Car Excursion Operating Rules & Standards Rule 449 reads in part:

Track car operators must ensure that switches are properly lined for movement before passing through switches. Do not pass clearance point until WCRG personnel or railroad employee has lined switches for the intended route.



**WCRG EXCURSION PARTICIPANT  
SAFETY ADVISORY 2024-02**

**"Position of Switches/Clearance Point"**




Track cars operate over numerous switches during excursion operations. Track car operators must ensure that switches are properly lined for the intended route before passing through switches and/or derails. Additionally, track cars must not foul an adjacent track or pass the clearance point until WCRG or railroad personnel line all switches connected to the movement for the intended route.


"Clearance Point" is defined as: The location near a switch or turnout beyond which it is unsafe for passage on an adjacent track. Clearance points are often marked with yellow or white paint on ties or rails, or with signs, reflectors, or other markings. Clearance point may be referred to as "fouling point" on some host railroads.

Stopping clear of clearance points prevents accidents, injuries, and equipment damage due to close clearance impacts/collisions.


Refer to WCRG Track Car Excursion Operating Rules & Standards "Operating over Switches and Frogs" for further clarification.




**INCORRECT OPERATING PRACTICE:**  
Switch Lined for Adjacent Track,  
Track Car Fouling Adjacent Track.



**CORRECT OPERATING PRACTICE:**  
Switch Lined for Track that  
Track Car is Occupying.



**INCORRECT OPERATING PRACTICE:**  
Switch Lined for Orange Track Car,  
Yellow Track Car Fouling Adjacent Track.



**CORRECT OPERATING PRACTICE:**  
Track Car and Railcar Clear of  
Yellow Painted Clearance Point.

WCRG Excursion Participant Safety Advisory 2024-02 07/2024  
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## Mechanical Defects-MT19 Axle Failures



Broken Axle Assembly



1. Broken Axle At Keyway

On a recent WCRG excursion, a Fairmont MT19 experienced a rear axle failure, breaking at the sprocket/center bearing housing. The operator felt the rear axle "jumping around" while moving forward. The operator took the safe course, stopped the movement, inspected the track car, and notified the Employee in Charge for further instructions. Fortunately, the track car was deemed safe to tow back to the set-off point a few miles down the track.

Fairmont MT19 rear axles are known for breakage, with Fairmont aware of the design defect. The breakage does not affect belt drive M19 track cars. Several "fixes" are available to reduce the possibility of an axle failure, including stronger axles, keyless sprockets, updated sprocket hubs, and dual idler pulley setups. These upgrades have varied success rates. The reality is that if you own a Fairmont MT19, chances are it is not if, but when the rear axle will fail. Many factors, including age, use, loads, and prior repairs/upgrades, can contribute to rear axle failure rates as well.

Given the known rear axle failures of these track cars, WCRG now carries a special axle coupler that allows the axle to be clamped together in the event a rear axle breaks at a location that is far from the set-on/set-off location. This coupler captures the axle shaft at the break and allows the track car to be safely moved without the possibility of derailment or other mechanical damage occurring to the track car. This also allows the track car to be towed at a reasonable speed safely back to the set-off point.

Inspecting your rear axle for straightness, keyway wear, sprocket looseness, and other defects can help prevent a rear axle failure during excursion operations.



Axle Coupler For Field Repairs

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## Blue Signal Protection For WCRG Excursions



Blue Light & Tag On Control Panel



Blue Flag Between Rails

Blue signal protection is a universal railroad rule used to protect railroad employees who are working on railroad equipment. Blue signal protection is used not only in North America but also by railways around the world, similar to how red and blue lights are used in law enforcement internationally. Blue signal protection signifies that workers are on, under, or between rolling equipment. It consists of blue flags displayed between the rails, on rolling equipment, on track cars, or other railroad equipment—basically, any railroad equipment that rolls.

Blue flags are displayed as cloth or similar material, as a sign, and/or a blue light (lit or extinguished). Blue signal protection is often used in yards where trains are staged during inbound and outbound safety and brake inspections, in designated engine servicing areas, as well as in car shop repair areas. During WCRG excursions, you may encounter a blue flag between the rails or on a track car. When a blue flag is between the rails, a track car must not pass the blue flag. When a blue flag is displayed on a track car, the track car must not be moved or operated.

Blue signal protection is often used to protect the excursion group in designated engine servicing areas, such as the engine servicing facility in Virginia City, NV, during WCRG's Virginia & Truckee Railroad excursions. Blue signal protection protects the excursion group during the layover. The excursion group will not be moved until it is safe to do so. Blue signal protection can only be removed by the group that placed it, such as the Employee in Charge or the locomotive servicing facility manager. Blue signal protection protects railroaders and excursion participants alike. Railroad employees and excursion participants understand not to operate or move the excursion group until the protection is removed.



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## WCRG Helps Another Railroader In Need



**Renee And Daughter Aubree**



**Get Well Soon Shout Out**

Railroading is a dangerous occupation. Railroaders are reminded of that every time they climb onto a locomotive to perform service. Unfortunately, Union Pacific Railroad's "Conductor Renee" was injured in October 2024. Renee works out of Union Pacific's Sparks, Nevada yard. For Matt Parker, WCRG's Manager of Operating Practices Northern Region, this was more than just another railroader getting injured; Renee is a fellow coworker and personal friend. Matt is also a Union Pacific employee, working as an engineer out of the Sparks, Nevada terminal. With only a few weeks before the final excursions of 2024, WCRG reached out to Roaring Camp Railroads to inquire about the possibility of donating the excursion fees from the November 2024 excursion to Renee. Leatha Brown, who schedules Roaring Camp events, quickly went to work getting the event approved and the excursion fees authorized for donation.

With only a few weeks of planning, the excursion became the Roaring Camp Railroads "Conductor Renee" excursion fundraiser. Matt and Gail McClure, Matt's sister, hit the fundraiser "out of the park," planning several special activities during the excursion. Matt and Gail made a large poster that read "Feel Better Soon, Conductor Renee," along with pictures of Renee. Matt also "patched" (referring to renumbering a locomotive that was acquired through mergers) SLPX 1968 to RLTX 1986 to reflect Renee's initials and year of birth. The day of the excursion was perfect; sunny skies followed overnight rain that had moved out of the area. Several guests rode along to show support for Renee. Railroaders from Union Pacific, Amtrak, and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroads, both active and retired, joined the excursion group from Felton to Santa Cruz and back.

During the job briefing, Matt talked about how hard-working Renee was, as well as being a single mom to an 11-year-old daughter. Matt also "passed the hat" during the job briefing, collecting over five hundred dollars! Patricia Lollis, a former Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe engineer, rode along with retired Union Pacific engineer and manager Ben Ritter in Ben's Fairmont MT19 motorcar. Patricia was one of the first female locomotive engineers hired in the 1970s. By the end of the excursion, Patricia and Ben had shared plenty of "war stories" from their many years on the railroad. At the Santa Cruz stop, the excursion group gathered at the lead motorcar for a special "shout out to Conductor Renee" video. Excursion participants shouted, "Get well soon, Conductor Renee!" WCRG has helped many people in need over the years. With this being personal for Matt, both Matt and Gail worked extremely hard to make this special in every way for Renee. Job well done, team!



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## A December To Remember In 2024



**Excursion Group With Deputy Peay**



**BNSF 9161 Passes The Excursion**

It was a December to remember as WCRG kicked off the 2024 holiday season with two fantastic events. On December 7th, 2024, WCRG returned to the Quincy Railroad for a special holiday excursion fundraiser. Hosting an outdoor event in Quincy can be tricky, as the weather is very unpredictable in December. However, after a series of storms the week before, the weather was perfect for the excursion. This fundraiser was in partnership with the Plumas County Sheriff's Department Employees Association's Helping Hands Program. The Plumas County Helping Hands Program helps people in Plumas County with everything from food donations to toys and more. For the excursion, toys and monetary donations were collected for children up to age 15. WCRG worked with Deputy Chandler Peay throughout the planning stages to ensure all the toys would be delivered to the program before Christmas. Officer Peay arranged to bring a patrol car to the Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) Mill to pick up the toys during the excursion. He also took a motorcar ride over the railroad before heading back to the station with a squad car full of toys. Everyone attending the excursion was proud to support the Helping Hands Program and give back to the local community that WCRG visits often during the excursion season.

On December 21st, 2024 WCRG returned to the Union Pacific Railroad's Sparks, Nevada terminal for the Santa on a Train event. Organized by local management in partnership with the Union Pacific Employees Club, the day's festivities included hot beverages, cookies, and, of course, Santa Claus himself arriving on a vintage EMD GP40-2! As the locomotive pulled up to the yard office, kids of all ages waved as Santa arrived and took photos with him. Motorcar rides were also available for employees and their families. With Santa needing to head back to the North Pole, the event wrapped up for the day. Another highly successful event!



**Santa Arrives On UP 1372**



**Motorcars At UP's Sparks Terminal**

## **WCRG/REPS Test & Tune Kicked Off The 2024 Excursion Season March 30th, 2024**



**Brandon LeChance's S2H**



**Desmond Praetzel's MT14**

WCRG partnered with the Railroad Education & Preservation Society (REPS) to host another "Test & Tune" event in Lone, CA, on March 30th, 2024. Excursion participants, both new and returning to the hobby, came from Oregon, Nevada, and California to take part in the daylong event that offered operational time, mechanical assistance, as well as a turntable clinic. Shunt kits were also available and installed on excursion participants' motorcars. Two new operators, Ron Domoe from Minden, NV, and Brandon LeChance from Redding, CA, had the opportunity to operate their motorcars for the first time in a relaxed environment with plenty of time for questions and answers regarding everything from operating on an excursion to simple maintenance. Brandon LeChance had the opportunity to operate his newly acquired Fairmont S2H motorcar, learning quickly that mastering the timing, fuel, and throttle controls can be a handful, but also rewarding as the vintage two-stroke operates perfectly down the track. Ron Domoe learned the basics as well, operating his Fairmont MT19 motorcar that he recently purchased. Returning excursion participant Desmond Praetzel had the opportunity to operate his Fairmont MT14, which had been in storage for several years.

The turntable clinic proved to be helpful to everyone. One motorcar was found to be missing the Willits modification. Another motorcar with a home-built turntable was found to have unsatisfactory repairs from a previous failure and was not allowed to operate on future WCRG excursions until correctly repaired. Opportunities such as the Test & Tune give operators a chance to identify and correct these defects before bringing a non-compliant motorcar to a WCRG excursion.

As the day wrapped up, it was a huge success for everyone. Several people driving on the adjacent highway stopped in to see the motorcars, including a Union Pacific Railroad signal maintainer, who was called out to repair an automatic crossing warning device malfunction on the nearby lone industrial lead. A big thank you to Larry, Tom, and Jim from the REPS crew for once again partnering with WCRG to bring this important event to our excursion participants.



## Roaring Camp Railroads Excursion April 27th, 2024



Excursion Group At Felton



Excursion Group At Santa Cruz

WCRG returned to the Santa Cruz, Big Trees & Pacific (Roaring Camp) Railroad on April 27th, 2024, for our annual spring excursion from Felton to Santa Cruz. Fantastic spring weather greeted excursion participants as they arrived from California and Nevada to operate over one of the most scenic lines in Northern California. New excursion participants, as well as returning excursion participants, were excited to get back on the rails after another harsh West Coast winter. Set-on was efficient, with everyone set-on in plenty of time for camaraderie before the job briefing. Turntables were checked for compliance, including height, ignition interlock function, and the required Honeywell 1LS1 switch by Steve Hart, our newest Employee in Charge. Steve has been a longtime excursion participant, and is one of our safest and most knowledgeable operators. Steve was a perfect fit to step up to the Employee in Charge role. With the Beach Train departing the yard at Felton, it was time for the morning job briefing. With a lot of information to cover, the briefing started with Manager of Operating Practices Matthew Parker speaking to the group, then the "mic" was turned over to Steve Hart, who gave a rundown of the operating plan for the morning trip to Santa Cruz and back. With the briefing complete, it was time to load up and depart for Santa Cruz.

With the Beach Train running 15 minutes ahead of the excursion group, the excursion departed Felton. Rolling through Rincon, a new switch has been installed, leading to a new spur. Long abandoned, Rincon had auxiliary tracks here many decades prior. Arriving at Highway 9, the group bunches up for the Highway 9 crossing circuit. With the rear car caught up to the group, the excursion safely proceeds through the crossing with the protection of the automatic crossing warning devices stopping traffic on this narrow, winding road. Arriving in Santa Cruz, the group once again bunches up for the numerous downtown crossings. The group slowly and safely proceeds through the crossings, reaching the tunnel. Proceeding through the tunnel, the wet winter is evident, with water nearly up to the top of the rails, as well as dripping from the ceiling. Popping out of the tunnel, the excursion group proceeds onto the street running down Chestnut Street to the Santa Cruz wye.

Arriving at the wye, the excursion group was turned and positioned toward Depot Park for a 20-minute break. At Depot Park, local residents, as well as tourists, gathered to check out these "unusual vehicles," as one visitor stated while talking with the owner of the motorcar. With the rest stop over, it was time to depart for Felton. Running 30 minutes ahead of the Beach Train's Santa Cruz departure, the group had plenty of time to safely stay ahead of the following train. Departing Depot Park, numerous people pulled out their phones and took pictures and videos of the group departing. Proceeding onto the Chestnut Street trackage, excursion participants were greeted with waves from all directions. Waves came from passing automobiles, pedestrians, and even people waving from the early 20th-century homes that lined Chestnut Street.

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## Roaring Camp Railroads Excursion April 27th, 2024 (Continued)



Excursion Group At Felton



Excursion Group At Rincon

Returning through the tunnel, water continues to drip from the ceiling, pelting open-top motorcar operators as they slowly traverse the tunnel. Through the tunnel, the excursion group proceeds again through the numerous crossings downtown before starting the steep climb out of Santa Cruz. With the group beginning to climb the grade, trees begin to hide the vibrant sunshine as the group makes its way past giant redwoods. Downed trees and erosion next to the track are another reminder of the extremely wet winter the area had experienced. Arriving back at Felton, the group turned, and then the excursion was secured into a spur track for lunch. A derail and WCRG effective locking device with a "Do Not Operate" tag protected the excursion group until the afternoon departure. With the lunch break over, it was time for the afternoon job briefing. After the briefing, the excursion was ready to proceed to Santa Cruz. The group departed Felton just behind the Beach Train. Proceeding over the San Lorenzo River bridge, pedestrians were everywhere making their way down to the river. A few pedestrians with nothing on were quite surprised to see rail traffic after expecting to be secluded in the forest with their partner. Beach towels quickly came out for cover.

Reaching Rincon, the marker of the Beach Train comes into view. The group decides to take a short break to allow the train to get further ahead of the group, with plenty of time for snacks off the push-car. Once again underway, the group approached Highway 9. With the automatic crossing warning devices again activated, the group proceeds through the crossing. Arriving in Santa Cruz, the group safely proceeds through downtown again, and onto the Santa Cruz wye. Arriving at the wye, the group stops at the west end wye switch. Excursion participants were then instructed to cut out shunts to avoid unnecessary automatic crossing warning device activation onto Pacific Avenue. With the group around the wye and stopped at Depot Park, the excursion participants were instructed to cut in shunts for the duration of the excursion.

With the break finished, it was time to depart Santa Cruz for Felton. The group got underway 25 minutes ahead of the Beach Train, with plenty of space between the group and the train. Off the street running and through the tunnel, the group proceeded through the last downtown crossing before starting the climb to Felton. Rolling through the trees, pedestrians waved as the excursion passed numerous groups of people enjoying the warm spring weather. Pulling into Felton, the excursion was on time, with the Beach Train still 30 minutes behind the group. With the returning train being the last train of the day, the excursion group was able to make another trip to the Santa Cruz city limits and return, giving excursion participants a rare evening trip through the redwoods. The evening trip was fantastic; the low light conditions made for a majestic and almost magical ride through what could be described as a "Magical Forest," popping out of the trees after crossing over the San Lorenzo River bridge on the approach to Felton. Back at Felton, everyone was safely set-off by 8:00 p.m. Several excursion participants gathered at the local Round Table Pizza, a favorite stop each year after another memorable day on the rails!

## Sierra Pacific Industries Quincy Railroad Excursion May 4th, 2024



Excursion Group Outside Of Quincy



Excursion Group At The SPI Mill

WCRG's annual spring Quincy Railroad excursion was held on May 4th, 2024. Wet and wild weather greeted excursion participants during a cold spring storm that brought heavy morning rain, which changed to snow in the afternoon. In past years, this excursion had experienced warm, sunny weather. Rain gear and warm clothes were necessary throughout the entire excursion. The heavy rain didn't dampen spirits as excursion participants set-on at the Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) Mill in Quincy. With all motorcars set-on, the excursion group was staged just behind the Quincy Railroad's two EMD SW1200 locomotives at the shop building in preparation for the morning job briefing. Excursion participants were able to utilize the shop office for the job briefing, which was much welcomed by everyone to get out of the cold, wet weather. With the job briefing complete, the excursion group departed Quincy. As the group got underway, rain pounded the roadbed, with water running down both sides of the tracks. Just outside of Quincy, a planned photo stop was made just before Chandler Creek. During the photo stop, one motorcar decided it didn't like the rain and began to give the operator trouble. After diagnosing the problem, it was narrowed down to a fuel restriction in the fuel bowl. Cleaning out the fuel bowl got the motorcar running again.

Underway again, the group started up the heavy grade to Quincy Junction. Rain was hitting hard, causing excessive wheel slip as the motorcars fought the grade to the top. At the top, excursion participants grabbed a snack and drink off the push-car. Unlike past stops at Quincy Junction, the rain had caused everyone to take cover in their motorcar during the short break before returning to Quincy. Departing Quincy Junction, excursion participants were reminded over the radio to take it slow proceeding downhill, as stopping distances were increased with the wet rail conditions. Arriving back at the mill at Quincy, the group quickly turned and made another round trip before breaking for lunch. After lunch, the group job briefed, then proceeded out of the mill, headed for Quincy Junction. Rain was still falling hard, and the ambient temperature was dropping.

Arriving at Quincy Junction, the rain changed to snow, with big flakes drifting in the air. The excursion participants were in awe as most had never operated a motorcar in the snow. After a quick break to take pictures and videos of the snow during the suspended operations, the excursion was active again and on the move back to Quincy. Arriving back at Quincy, the group turned for one last trip to Quincy Junction. Snow was now hitting the valley floor and starting to stick to the motorcars. Departing the mill, rail cars stored on the adjacent track were gathering snow. Proceeding across the open valley, the mountains were turning into a winter wonderland. Arriving at Quincy Junction, the ambient temperature continued to drop. It was quite colder than the first morning trip. With everyone ready to proceed back to Quincy, the excursion departed Quincy for the last time. Snow was still falling, and the skies were becoming darker. Just before 4:00 p.m., everyone arrived safely back in Quincy. With everyone loaded up, the excursion was officially finished, ending as wildly as it started!

## Goose Lake Railway Christmas For kids/Toys For Tots Excursion Fundraiser June 22st-22nd 2024



WCRG returned to the Goose Lake Railway June 21st-22nd, 2024, for another action-packed excursion over the former Southern Pacific branch line, now owned by the County of Lake. This excursion was a fundraiser for Christmas for Kids/Toys for Tots Lakeview. Excursion participants came from several western states to participate in the two-day excursion. Warm weather greeted excursion participants during Friday afternoon's trip from Lakeview to Goose Lake State Park and return. The Friday afternoon trip to Goose Lake State Park is always a favorite for excursion participants and allows plenty of time for dinner in Lakeview with fellow excursion participants. On Saturday, the excursion started with a thorough job briefing, outlining the day's operations. With the train running several hours ahead of the excursion group, the railroad was clear all the way to Alturas. With everyone ready to depart, the excursion backed out of the service track and onto the main track for departure. Underway, the excursion proceeded through downtown Lakeview. The town was quiet on this Saturday morning, with only a handful of vehicles driving through town.

As the excursion proceeded through the open range, cattle looked on as the excursion passed numerous ranches. Around a few curves, Goose Lake State Park came into view, the first rest stop on the excursion. After a fifteen-minute break, the excursion was underway again, with the next stop being Davis Creek. En route to Davis Creek, the excursion climbed Sugar Hill. The steep grade received the name Sugar Hill after a wagon hauling sugar from Yreka to Fort Bidwell broke down on the long grade in that vicinity and scattered the precious sugar all over the hillside. Dropping off Sugar Hill, the excursion descended back into the valley floor and into Davis Creek. Arriving at Davis Creek, the excursion stopped for another break, allowing porta-potty use and time to grab a cold drink and snack off of the push-car. Underway again, the excursion proceeded through the last open range of the area, as the Pit River Canyon was just ahead.

Arriving at Alturas, the excursion group turned at the California Agricultural Inspection Station. With all the motorcars turned, the excursion proceeded up to the Chimney Rock Travel Center for lunch. With lunch over, the excursion got back underway to Lakeview. Outside of Alturas, the excursion stopped at the Chimney Rock Historical Monument for a group photo in front of the monument. With the excursion back underway, the group headed out of the Pit River Canyon and arrived back at Davis Creek for another rest stop. At Davis Creek, the ambient temperature had reached the high 90s. Fortunately, mature trees provided cool shade for the group's rest stop. Underway again, the group continued back over Sugar Hill and dropped into the valley floor. Arriving at the last rest stop, Goose Lake State Park, excursion participants grabbed snacks and drinks for the remaining hour trip into Lakeview. Underway again, the town of Lakeview came into view. Arriving at Lakeview, motorcars were set-off and loaded up, concluding another unforgettable experience on the Goose Lake Railway.

## Western Pacific Railroad Museum UP 4014 Big Boy Celebration Excursion July 10th, 2024



Excursion Group At Portola



Passengers Load Up To Ride

WCRG has a professional working relationship with several museums, including the Western Pacific Railroad Museum (WPRM) in Portola, California. When news broke that the Union Pacific "Big Boy" 4014 was coming to Portola on July 10th, 2024, we were honored to be invited to take part of this special, if not historic, event. The UP 4014 is the largest steam locomotive ever built. When you hear "world's largest," that term doesn't resonate until you see this locomotive up close. WCRG had several motorcars attend the event. While WCRG has provided rides for the museum's guests in the past, the number of people who attended this event surpassed anything anyone could have imagined. With the event opening to the public at 9:00 a.m., automobiles were backed up all through town to get to the museum. With the UP 4014 staged, steamed up, and on display, people started pouring into the facility. Shortly thereafter, a long line formed at the motorcar rides registration table.

Railfans couldn't wait for a ride on a motorcar around the balloon track. After signing in and a quick briefing on safety, including the prohibition of electronic device use while moving, railfans loaded up, all smiles and ready for the quick round trip down the track. As the motorcars staged for loading and unloading, railfans looked over the different motorcars. Everything from the different colors to the different engines intrigued the riders. Dave McClain's Fairmont MT19 was the biggest hit, with its distinctive Mars light and classic Southern Pacific Nathan P3 locomotive horn. By noon, the group had already carried over one hundred and fifty people. With a one-hour break for lunch, the motorcar group enjoyed the camaraderie of railroaders and railfans alike at the Mountain View Cafe in downtown Portola. Everyone eating was there for one thing—the UP 4014! With lunch over, the line of railfans waiting for a motorcar ride was overwhelming. Gail McClure worked her magic getting everyone registered and loaded into the motorcar of their choice.

By 4:00 p.m., the line was still forming, even with near record-high temperatures nearing the century mark. By 5:00 p.m., we had surpassed three hundred riders. Truly unbelievable. The projected museum attendance was around two thousand, but by the number of people on the museum grounds, it may have been much more. As the event started to wind down, a few railfans came back for a second ride. We recognized a few of the returning riders, including one younger child sporting a WCRG hat. He rode on our May 2024 WPRM excursion, and he was so excited to ride that we gave him a hat. With the motorcars finishing at 6:30 p.m., the motorcar group had one last group of riders—Mr. Ed Dickens and crew. Mr. Dickens is the locomotive engineer for the UP 4014 and is a "folk hero" in the railfan community, as well as one of the most admired railroaders of modern times. It was an honor to have Mr. Dickens aboard. With the sun setting to the west behind the UP 4014, the last motorcar was loaded up, and the event was officially over. What a memorable day on the rails it was for everyone who attended.

## Virginia & Truckee Railroad Honor Flight Nevada/Stephanie Parker Memorial Excursion Fundraiser July 19th-21st, 2024



Excursion Group At Tunnel Two



Excursion Group At Scales

WCRG's annual Virginia & Truckee Railroad Honor Flight Nevada/Stephanie Parker Memorial excursion took place July 19th-21st, 2024. This three-day excursion is always a favorite with our excursion participants, often cited as the "best in the west excursion" by many. Excursion participants from five western states took part in the excursion. Friday offered a special evening trip from Virginia City to Tunnel Two and return. Participants enjoyed the evening trip down the mountain to the tunnel entrance, pulling inside enough to get out of the setting sun. The trip back to Virginia City gave operators the chance to operate at night, but not in complete darkness for safety reasons. Saturday offered a full day of excitement, with a thorough job briefing starting at 7:15 a.m. With a lot of information to cover, Matt Parker, Manager of Operating Practices, explained to the excursion group the day's opening plan. For this excursion, steam trains were once again running. Our excursions hadn't run with steam trains since the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the job briefing complete, the excursion was ready to follow the steam train to Eastgate. As the train departed, the excursion proceeded behind it, preparing to stop at Scales for a planned memorial stop to honor Stephanie Parker, who we lost to COVID-19 in 2021. Arriving at Scales, participants gathered around the memorial plaque as flowers were prepared to be laid adjacent to the plaque. As the Employee in Charge held the flowers, a butterfly landed on one of the bouquets. It was a truly memorable moment for all. After a moment of silence, the excursion was underway for Eastgate. Upon arriving at Eastgate, the steam crew was preparing to service the locomotive. The excursion held the main track for the crew to finish and back the locomotive into the siding for the group to proceed down the main to allow the group to turn the motorcars at the crossing. With everyone turned and ready to proceed, the train whistled off, and the group departed behind the train to Virginia City. As the excursion proceeded out of Eastgate, the railroad crossed U.S. Highway 50. The steel bridge across the highway was once a railroad bridge in Southern Nevada, repurposed for the reconstructed Virginia & Truckee line.

Through Mound House, the railroad again started the heavy climb out of the valley floor to Virginia City. From this point, it's all uphill, where man and machine battle to overcome gravity. Two-stroke and four-stroke alike are working hard to climb the grade, ranging from 2.2 to 3.6 percent. Arriving at Virginia City, the group proceeded into the yard for lunch. With the lunch break over, the excursion group prepared to depart Virginia City for Eureka, ahead of the steam train. With the last motorcar on the main track, the switch was lined normally, and the group proceeded out of town. Upon arriving at Eureka, the group turned and prepared to proceed to Eastgate to meet the steam train. As the excursion got back on the move, dark clouds were forming from the southwest. Troubled skies loomed overhead.

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## **Virginia & Truckee Railroad Honor Flight Nevada/Stephanie Parker Memorial Excursion Fundraiser July 19th-21st, 2024 (Continued)**



**Excursion Group At Scales**



**Excursion Group At Haywards**

Upon arriving at Eastgate, the group held the main track for the steam train to arrive. The sky was turning black overhead, and what was an ambient temperature of nearly 100 degrees had suddenly dropped to the mid-70s. With the train approaching Eastgate, excursion participants safely waited for the train to clear before getting ready to depart for Virginia City. Raindrops began to fall as the clouds thickened. Proceeding back to Virginia City, the excursion rode the edge of the storm, running ahead of it with just a few drops of rain along the way. Upon arriving back at Virginia City, the excursion group was secured for the night in the yard. Excursion participants, veterans, and invited guests were then treated to a BBQ dinner in Virginia City. Everyone enjoyed the dinner as they watched the wild weather continue over the region for the remainder of the evening.

Sunday morning started out with Jon Yuspa, founder of Honor Flight Nevada, attending the job briefing, passing out hats and pins for everyone. Jon spoke of the upcoming Honor Flight trips that were planned and how the Honor Flight network provides these trips free of charge to all veterans from every branch of service. With the job briefing complete, Jon waved the excursion group out of Virginia City, snapping some great photos of the group. With the group underway, the excursion proceeded to Eureka, the next planned stop. Arriving at Eureka, the group turned and enjoyed the morning sun as it rose out of the Carson Canyon. The Carson River is still flowing fast; snowmelt from the Sierra Nevada mountains feeds this waterway all year. Back underway, the group proceeded to Eastgate. The steam train was preparing to depart at 10:00 a.m. for Virginia City.

A few late passengers ran through the parking lot to catch the train before departure. They made it just in time as the train whistled off and departed. The group departed a few minutes behind the train as rail fans who often follow the train waved at the group. While motorcars are a regular sight on the railroad as WCRG provides fire patrol to the railroad, seeing this many motorcars operating together is unusual. Climbing out of the Mound House valley, the group had a picturesque setting; the steam train was on the opposite side of the mountain, working hard to pull the grade. The group was separated by a one-mile stretch of track, although looking across the valley it appeared to be miles away. Arriving at Scales, the excursion group stopped behind the steam train. A regular stop for the train, the crew inspected the bearings for excessive temperature as well as lubricated the running gear for the rest of the trip into Virginia City.

***Continued on next page***  
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## Virginia & Truckee Railroad Honor Flight Nevada/Stephanie Parker Memorial Excursion Fundraiser July 19th-21st, 2024 (Continued)



Excursion Group At Eastgate



Excursion Group At American Flats

Back underway, the group climbed through the cut at Overman Pit. Once the site of a mining operation, this massive hole was filled to allow the railroad right-of-way to be rebuilt for current-day operations. Arriving at Virginia City, the excursion group proceeded into the yard for lunch. With the group returning after their lunch break, they held one last job briefing and prepared to depart Eastgate ahead of the steam train. With the diesel train arriving back into Virginia City, the excursion group was given authority to occupy the main track after the arrival of the diesel train and proceed to Eastgate. The group was again underway, with the next stop being Tunnel Two for some relief from the heat. Upon arriving at Tunnel Two, the group pulled into the tunnel and stopped at the west end, with the lead motorcar at the tunnel entrance. Everyone enjoyed the cool temperatures and shade the tunnel provided from the extreme heat the excursion had dealt with all weekend. After a 30-minute break, the excursion was back underway to Eastgate.

Proceeding through Haywards, the tracks are high above the Mound House valley. Off in the distance, the skies were again turning dark, a repeat of the previous day. As the excursion arrived at Eastgate, thunder, lightning, and rain were approaching from the west. A few minutes passed as the whistle of the steam train could be heard approaching Eastgate. As the train arrived, the excursion group prepared to immediately depart. Departing Eastgate, the storm was getting closer, with lightning bolts striking the ground very close to the group. Proceeding to Virginia City, the excursion encountered light rain as the storm followed the group up the hill to Virginia City. Arriving back at Virginia City, the excursion group safely set-off, and everyone loaded up for the trip home. With the last motorcar loaded, the rain finally caught up and began to fall. A wild finish to a wild weekend!



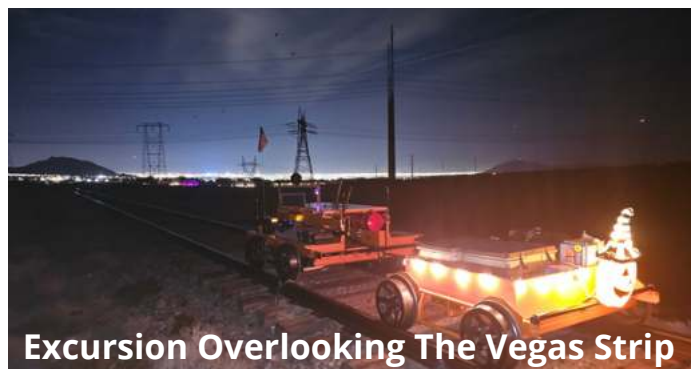
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## Nevada Southern Railway Rebecca Wellet Memorial Excursion October 25th-27th, 2024



Laying Flowers At Henderson



Excursion Overlooking The Vegas Strip

WCRG returned to the Nevada Southern Railway October 25th-27th, 2024, for our annual Halloween-themed motorcar excursion. In 2024, the excursion became the Rebecca Wellet Memorial Excursion, in honor of Rebecca, known as the "Railroad Jewel" in railroad circles. Rebecca joined our Nevada Southern Railway excursion in October 2023 and unfortunately passed away shortly after that. Wanting to keep Rebecca's memory alive, WCRG decided that our annual October Nevada Southern Railway motorcar excursion would become a memorial each year to Rebecca. This would be a way to honor and remember our friend, who touched so many lives. The excursion got underway Friday afternoon, with the group setting-on and preparing for an evening trip to Henderson. The Friday evening trip to Henderson included a special stop at the end of the track to remember Rebecca, which involved laying flowers and observing a moment of silence. Rebecca's friends Belva, Ruth Ann, and Jinny traveled thousands of miles from Texas and Oregon to attend the excursion.

Upon arriving in Henderson, a bouquet of flowers was handed to Belva to place at the base of the rail in front of the lead motorcar. A moment of silence was then observed. After the moment of silence, Belva spoke about the friendship the girls all shared. Other excursion participants also spoke about how Rebecca touched their lives through her stories. After the memorial stop, the excursion group proceeded back towards Railroad Pass, stopping to overlook "The Strip." This stop allowed for a stunning view of the Las Vegas Strip as it lit up with lights from every direction. After enjoying the night scene, the excursion resumed for Boulder City. Back at Boulder City, the excursion group was secured for the night in the yard. Another special event was planned for the evening: a memorial dinner at Railroad Pass Casino honoring Rebecca. Besides Belva, Ruth Ann, and Jinny, Rebecca's sister-in-law Connie and two nephews also joined the dinner. The dinner was a fantastic gathering for everyone, including some who met for the first time that evening. Everyone had a wonderful time telling stories about Rebecca. A group photo of everyone at the dinner concluded the evening's festivities.

Saturday morning started with a thorough job briefing with the railway's train crew and excursion participants. While WCRG has been operating over the railway for many years, this would be the first time operating into Henderson ahead of the train. With everyone having a clear understanding of the day's operations, the excursion was ready to depart ahead of the train for Henderson. With temperatures already warming up, it was going to be a hot day. Luckily, the push-car was restocked in the morning with ice, water, and sodas. Departing the depot, families were already filling the parking lot, with children waving as the excursion left. Off the platform and rolling onto the crossing circuit, the shunted excursion group activated the automatic crossing warning devices, protecting the excursion group as they proceeded through the Yucca Street crossing.

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## Nevada Southern Railway Rebecca Wellet Memorial Excursion October 25th-27th, 2024 (Continued)



**Memorial Dinner At Railroad Pass**



**Bones Grabs A Snack!**

Proceeding to Henderson, the excursion passes several bicycle and walking paths. As the motorcars pass by, pedestrians and cyclists alike wave as each motorcar goes by. Passing through Railroad Pass, the old railbike turnaround point comes into view. While railbikes had been operating on the line for several years, they were not in operation this year. Climbing the grade to the Interstate 11 bridge, the lead car passes the location of the old derail where operations ended before the bridge opened just weeks earlier. Several years in the making, this was new track that excursion participants had waited to operate on for years. Over the bridge, a new crossing had been placed into service, protecting the frontage road as well as the nearby bicycle and walking paths. Past the crossing, the railway drifts downgrade into Henderson. One could not help but wonder how trains struggled up the grade in the 1930s to bring supplies to the Hoover Dam, the sole reason the railway was originally constructed.

Arriving in Henderson, a derail separates the Nevada Southern Railway's operations from Union Pacific Railroad's operations. Just down the line, Union Pacific serves customers with numerous commodities. At the derail, the excursion group radios the train crew to inform them that the excursion has arrived and is stopped and will remain stopped until the train arrives. Not long after, the train arrives in Henderson, stopping a safe distance from the rear motorcar. The excursion group then follows the train back to Boulder City. With several round trips complete for the day, it was time to ride the Halloween Express train. Excursion participants loaded up for a festive ride to Railroad Pass and back. The railway always puts on a fantastic train ride for families of all ages. With the train ride complete, it was time for the excursion group to depart for Henderson on a special evening trip. The warm temperatures made for a spectacular trip to Henderson, stopping just over the Interstate 11 bridge for another incredible view of the Las Vegas Strip.

Looking across the Las Vegas Valley, the world-famous Stratosphere towers over the skyline. Some of the excursion participants had been at the top of the Stratosphere just a few days prior. As the group proceeded back to Boulder City, the lights of Railroad Pass were overshadowed by the glow of the Las Vegas Valley behind the mountain. Arriving back in Boulder City, the excursion group was secured for the evening. The evening was not quite over yet, as The Friends of the Nevada Southern Railway group hosted a pizza party just down the street. Several excursion participants joined the fun, with the railroad stories getting pretty "tall" before closing the place down! On Sunday, the excursion group enjoyed another three round trips to Henderson. With the last motorcar set-off early in the afternoon, the excursion was officially over. The fun did not end there, though, as several excursion participants enjoyed a special theater performance of "Back to the Future the Musical" Sunday evening in downtown Las Vegas. A perfect ending to an unforgettable weekend. We know Rebecca would have approved!

## Niles Canyon Railway Excursion November 3rd, 2024



Excursion Group At Niles



Excursion Group At Sunol

WCRG returned to the Niles Canyon Railway on November 3rd, 2024, for another hybrid rides for the public excursion. Always a favorite fall excursion, this event followed the Roaring Camp Railroad excursion the day before. Excursion participants enjoyed sunny skies and warm temperatures throughout the day. Set-on was at the usual end of the track at Niles. Adjacent to the set-on track is Union Pacific Railroad's Niles Subdivision. During set-on, the excursion group "rolled by" several trains, including the "MOAOA," a local that operates from Oakland to Milpitas and back, as well as Amtrak Capitol Corridor Train 724. With everyone set-on, it was time for the job briefing. The day's operations were thoroughly covered, including instructions for passengers on personal protective equipment such as glasses, safety vests, and hearing protection. Electronic device regulations were also discussed, as passengers were not allowed to use electronic devices during the round trip to Brightside.

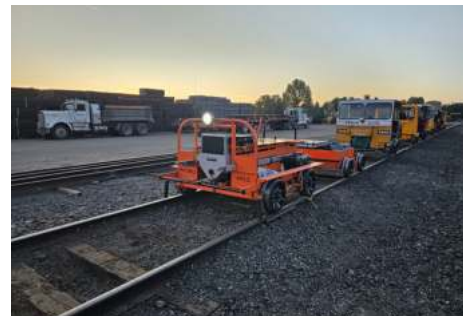
The excursion group also welcomed a new excursion participant, Brad Jones. Brad had just completed a rebuild on his Fairmont M14 motorcar. Manager of Operating Practices Matt Parker check-rod Brad during the excursion, offering tips and instructions to safely operate on WCRG excursions. At the depot, passengers lined up early for the first trip to Brightside. With three trips scheduled, all were sold out for the day. A handcar was also on display and operating for passengers to ride on the adjacent station track. Tuka Gafari, the handcar's owner and a former locomotive engineer, brings the handcar to many special events around Northern California. With the first group loaded, the excursion got underway to Brightside. Upon arriving at Brightside, the excursion group was met by the vintage Magnetic Flagman swinging back and forth to protect the crossing into the yard. Excursion participants enjoyed snacks and drinks from the push-car, always a favorite with kids and adults alike.

Back at Niles, passengers unloaded as the next group grabbed safety vests and glasses, as well as hearing protection, and began to load up for the second trip to Brightside. Everyone enjoyed the round trip to Brightside and back. One particular passenger was very interested in trains. Eight-year-old Alvin and his mom rode the third trip to Brightside and back. With the third trip complete, the excursion prepared to depart for the excursion participant only trip to Verona and back. As the group was getting ready to depart Niles, Alvin and his mom looked over all the motorcars and weren't quite ready to go home. Noticing Alvin's interest in the motorcars, the Employee in Charge spoke to his mom and invited them to join the group for the trip to Verona. Alvin was more than excited to ride again. Underway, the excursion group encountered a "sleeper." Tuka's handcar had tagged along behind the rear motorcar to be cut off at Sunol. At Sunol, the group stopped to quickly cut the handcar off and continued to Verona. At Verona, the group turned and got underway for the trip back to Niles. Proceeding through the canyon, the sun set behind the hills, reminding excursion participants that they were running out of daylight. Back at Niles, set-off began just before dark. With the last car set-off, the night security lights turned on, and the excursion officially ended. Another fantastic day on the rails!

# Photo Highlights 2024



# Photo Highlights 2024 (Continued)



# Photo Highlights 2024 (Continued)



# Photo Highlights 2024 (Continued)



# Photo Highlights 2024 (Continued)



# **West Coast Railroaders Group**



***WCRG is the only organization providing trained, professional railroaders on every excursion we host, because there is nothing better than a qualified railroader on the job.***

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