

Chapter 1 : Table of Contents: Encyclopedia of North American railroads /

The bad news is that this was a bit off the mark, for being dubbed the Encyclopedia of North American Railroads. My expectation was that this would be the ultimate guide to North American railroads, from A to Z.

BNSF Railway double stack freight train in Wisconsin Historically, on routes where a single railroad has had an undisputed monopoly, passenger service was as spartan and as expensive as the market and ICC regulation would bear, since such railroads had no need to advertise their freight services. However, on routes where two or three railroads were in direct competition with each other for freight business, such railroads would spare no expense to make their passenger trains as fast, luxurious, and affordable as possible, as it was considered to be the most effective way of advertising their profitable freight services. Its lobbying efforts were hampered somewhat by Democratic opposition to any sort of rail subsidies to the privately owned railroads, and Republican opposition to nationalization of the railroad industry. The proponents were aided by the fact that few in the federal government wanted to be held responsible for the seemingly inevitable extinction of the passenger train, which most regarded as tantamount to political suicide. The urgent need to solve the passenger train disaster was heightened by the bankruptcy filing of the Penn Central, the dominant railroad in the Northeast U. The Act provided that Any railroad operating intercity passenger service could contract with the NRPC, thereby joining the national system. Participating railroads bought into the new corporation using a formula based on their recent intercity passenger losses. The purchase price could be satisfied either by cash or rolling stock; in exchange, the railroads received Amtrak common stock. Any participating railroad was freed of the obligation to operate intercity passenger service after May, except for those services chosen by the Department of Transportation as part of a "basic system" of service and paid for by NRPC using its federal funds. Railroads who chose not to join the Amtrak system were required to continue operating their existing passenger service until and thenceforth had to pursue the customary ICC approval process for any discontinuance or alteration to the service. At the time, many Washington insiders viewed the corporation as a face-saving way to give passenger trains the one "last hurrah" demanded by the public, but expected that the NRPC would quietly disappear in a few years as public interest waned. Similarly, to preserve a declining freight rail industry, Congress passed the Regional Rail Reorganization Act of sometimes called the "3R Act". The act was an attempt to salvage viable freight operations from the bankrupt Penn Central and other lines in the northeast, mid-Atlantic and Midwestern regions. Another law, the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of the "4R Act", provided more specifics for the Conrail acquisitions and set the stage for more comprehensive deregulation of the railroad industry. The freight industry continued its decline until Congress passed the Staggers Rail Act in, which largely deregulated the rail industry. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. October Main article: Rail freight transport Freight railroads play an important role in the U. According to the British news magazine The Economist, "They are universally recognised in the industry as the best in the world. They carried billion ton-miles by which doubled to 1. In, there were Class I railroads. Today, as the result of mergers, bankruptcies, and major changes in the regulatory definition of "Class I", there are only seven railroads operating in the United States that meet the criteria for Class I. As of [update], U. Although Amtrak qualifies for Class I status under the revenue criteria, it is not considered a Class I railroad because it is not a freight railroad. In, the U. There were 33 regional railroads in Most have between 75 and employees. In, there were local line haul railroads. They generally perform point-to-point service over short distances. They perform pick up and delivery services within a certain area. Traffic and public benefits[edit] U. To compete effectively against each other and against other transportation providers, railroads must offer high-quality service at competitive rates. In, within the U. North American railroads operated 1., freight cars and 31, locomotives, with, employees. The average haul was miles. The largest Class 1 U. Intermodal traffic was 6. The largest commodities were coal, chemicals, farm products, nonmetallic minerals and intermodal. Other major commodities carried include lumber, automobiles, and waste materials. Coal alone was Intermodal is the movement of shipping containers or truck trailers by rail and at least one other mode of transportation,

usually trucks or ocean-going vessels. Intermodal combines the door-to-door convenience of trucks with the long-haul economy of railroads. Rail intermodal has tripled in the last 25 years. It plays a critical role in making logistics far more efficient for retailers and others. The efficiency of intermodal provides the U. The vast majority of the 22, or so miles over which Amtrak operates are actually owned by freight railroads. By law, freight railroads must grant Amtrak access to their track upon request. Passenger trains in North America interactive map The sole intercity passenger railroad in the continental U. Commuter rail systems exist in more than a dozen metropolitan areas, but these systems are not extensively interconnected, so commuter rail cannot be used alone to traverse the country. Commuter systems have been proposed in approximately two dozen other cities, but interplays between various local-government administrative bottlenecks and ripple effects from the " global financial crisis have generally pushed such projects farther and farther into the future, or have even sometimes mothballed them entirely. The most culturally notable and physically evident exception to the general lack of significant passenger rail transport in the U. The corridor handles frequent passenger service that is both Amtrak and commuter. The subway system is used by one third of all U. Privately run new inter-city passenger rail operations are under development. Brightline is a higher-speed rail train, run by All Aboard Florida. This would be the first passenger trains to serve Tulsa since Iowa Pacific operated test runs on the route in Car types[edit] The basic design of a passenger car was standardized by By the main car types were: First passenger cars and early development[edit] The interior of a Pullman car on the Chicago and Alton Railroad , circa The first passenger cars resembled stagecoaches. American mail cars first appeared in the s and at first followed English design. They had a hook that would catch the mailbag in its crook. As locomotive technology progressed in the midth century, trains grew in length and weight. Passenger cars grew along with them, first getting longer with the addition of a second truck one at each end , and wider as their suspensions improved. One possible reason for this difference in design principles between American and European carbuilding practice could be the average distance between stations on the two continents. While most European railroads connected towns and villages that were still very closely spaced, American railroads had to travel over much greater distances to reach their destinations. Building passenger cars with a long passageway through the length of the car allowed the passengers easy access to the restroom, among other things, on longer journeys. Dining cars first appeared in the late s and into the s. At first, the dining car was simply a place to serve meals that were picked up en route, but they soon evolved to include galleys in which the meals were prepared. The carbody was made of stainless steel in , it is seen here at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago in The cars of this time were still quite ornate, many of them being built by experienced coach makers and skilled carpenters. With the s came the widespread use of stainless steel for car bodies. The typical passenger car was now much lighter than its "heavyweight" wood cousins of old. The new "lightweight" and streamlined cars carried passengers in speed and comfort to an extent that had not been experienced to date. Aluminum and Cor-ten were also used in lightweight car construction, but stainless steel was the preferred material for car bodies. By the end of the s, railroads and car builders were debuting car body and interior styles that could only be dreamed of before. The roomette featured a large picture window, a privacy door, a single fold-away bed, a sink and small toilet. As a result, the railroads soon began building and buying dome and bilevel cars to carry more passengers. Shown here is a Tri-Rail coach, a regional commuter rail system in Florida. Similar cars are used in California by Metrolink. Carbody styles have generally remained consistent since the middle of the 20th century. While new car types have not made much of an impact, the existing car types have been further enhanced with new technology. Starting in the s, the passenger travel market declined in North America, though there was growth in commuter rail. The higher clearances in North America enabled bi-level commuter coaches that could hold more passengers. These cars started to become common in the United States in the s. While intercity passenger rail travel declined in the United States during the s, ridership continued to increase in Europe during that time. With the increase came newer technology on existing and new equipment. The Spanish company Talgo began experimenting in the s with technology that would enable the axles to steer into a curve, allowing the train to move around the curve at a higher speed. The steering axles evolved into mechanisms that would also tilt the passenger car as it entered a curve to counter the centrifugal force experienced by the train, further

increasing speeds on existing track. Today, tilting passenger trains are commonplace. The money will also be used build new stations and platforms. High-speed rail in the United States Rolling stock reporting marks[edit] Every piece of railroad rolling stock operating in North American interchange service is required to carry a standardized set of reporting marks. Marks whose codes end in X such as TTGX are used on equipment owned by entities that are not common carrier railroads themselves. Marks whose codes end in U are used on containers that are carried in intermodal transport , and marks whose codes end in Z are used on trailers that are carried in intermodal transport, per ISO standard Most freight cars carry automatic equipment identification RFID transponders. Typically, railroads operating in the United States reserve one- to four-digit identification numbers for powered equipment such as diesel locomotives.

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