

NRHS

WISCONSIN CHAPTER

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SPARKS AND CINDERS

Our purpose as members of Wisconsin Chapter—National Railway Historical Society is to gather, preserve and disseminate information, both historic and current, pertaining to railroading in Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest.

Preserving Wisconsin Railroad History for 74 Years

Visit the Chapter Webpage www.nrhswis.org



UP #2953, originally CNW #6804 SD40-2 leads train MRPIT westbound at North Lake, WI on May 25 2003. Photo by Tom Hoffmann

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Wisconsin Chapter Meeting Schedule

Upcoming chapter events

March 1 2024 Tom Hoffmann's lookback at 2003.

April 5 2024 Ed Kohler presents A glance at the New York Ontario & Western

Monthly meetings are held in the lower level of the North Shore Congregational Church at 7330 N Santa Monica Dr. in Fox Point. The church is handicap accessible. For more up to date information on meetings and speakers, and also any weather cancellations, check the chapter's webpage at www.nrhswis.org.

Doors open by 7:00 pm, so arrive early to socialize. Meetings start at 7:30pm sharp. Please bring a friend! Our meetings are live-streamed on the Zoom platform. Connection details are shared with chapter members and other interested persons via email the day of the meeting, or before. To ensure you are made aware of this info, we must have a working email address on file - send yours to president@nrhswis.org.

If you have a program idea please contact Program Chair Dave Nelson at engine1385@aol.com

The Big Picture is your page!

We've changed the format of the Sparks & Cinders back page, giving us room to run a large photo. Member submissions are solicited. Please send one or two of your outstanding pictures to Keith Schmidt, editor@nrhswis.org.

Sparks & Cinders is published by and for the members of the Wisconsin Chapter, Inc., National Railway Historical Society monthly except for July and August. The Chapter meets at the North Shore Congregational Church, 7330 N Santa Monica Blvd, Fox Point, Wisconsin, on the first Friday of each month, except June, July and August, at 7:30 p.m. The Wisconsin Chapter is a not-for-profit corporation, affiliated with the National Railway Historical Society and the Wisconsin Historical Society, organized to preserve the history of railroading in Wisconsin and the surrounding area. Additional information is available on the chapter's website, www.nrhswis.org.

Membership in the Chapter is open to anyone having an interest in any aspect of railroading who is also a member of the NRHS. Paying \$20 annually to the Chapter will entitle you receive Sparks & Cinders. Paying the National dues of \$50 to the NRHS will entitle you to membership and subscriptions to the NRHS Bulletin and NRHS News. Full NRHS membership is required to participate in chapter business discussions and to vote in annual chapter elections. All address changes should be sent to Mike Yuhas membership@nrhswis.org (or via USPS at PO Box 070758 Milwaukee, WI 53207).

Wisconsin Chapter officers are: Keith Schmidt, President; Ward Wells, Vice-President; Tom Marcussen, Secretary; Tara Grudzielanek, Treasurer. Directors: Dan Grudzielanek, Mike Yuhas, Andrew Roach, Ralph McClure and Neal Wegner.

Contributions to Sparks & Cinders should be sent to Editor Keith Schmidt at editor@nrhswis.org (or USPS at PO Box 070758 Milwaukee, WI 53207) by the 15th of the month to be considered for the following month's publication.

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Meeting Summary for February 2 2024

NOTE—This is a summary of the minutes for the annual business meeting. The full minutes will be posted on the chapter website www.nrhswis.org soon.

Welcome

Wisconsin Chapter Vice President Keith Schmidt was presiding from our in-person meeting site at the North Shore Congregational Church in Fox Point. He started the meeting at 7:30 pm. He put the meeting agenda up on the screen. He greeted and welcomed all of those in attendance. He reminded everybody that only those who are also members of NRHS National are legally Chapter members, and therefore eligible to vote or run for office. A quorum is 5 percent of members. All eight current officers and directors were present. That is a quorum.. There were 16 in the church basement, and 34 (and increasing) remote Zoom attendees. He therefore called the formal business meeting to order at 7:32 pm.

Business Meeting

Keith introduced the current Chapter officers and directors.

The minutes of the 2023 annual business meeting were posted online and the floor was opened for discussion. Hearing none. Motion by Mike Yuhas to approve, second by Tom Hoffmann the motion was approved.

Treasurer's Report was presented by Tara Grudzielanek. See the report on page 5 of this issue. There were no questions on the report so it was approved as presented. Subject to audit. Membership Report by Mike Yuhas. We have 122 Chapter members and subscribers current through the end of 2024. Two more joined this week. Our third presenter Matt Brozowski is our newest member. Renewals are still continuing to come in. We have 46 members from 2023 who have not yet renewed.

We sadly lost two members who passed away: Thomas Rogers of Greenfield, and long-time member Jay Lentzner of Montana. A moment of silence was observed in memory of them. There were no questions on the report and it was accepted as presented.

From the President

Continued from Page 2

A Chapter Board meeting was held on Monday, January 15. A recommended slate of nominees was established. Any members of both national NRHS and the chapter are free to run for any office at any time.

The Board nominated Keith Schmidt for President. Keith opened the floor for other nominations. There were none. Tom Hoffmann moved that the nominations for President be closed. Al Lederman seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The Board nominated Ward Wells for Vice President. He had agreed to serve in that capacity. There were no other nominations. Tom Hoffmann moved that the nominations for Vice President be closed. Bill Krohn seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Ward Wells becoming Vice President created an opening for another Director on the Board. Former Director Ralph McClure volunteered to return to service on the Board. All four other incumbent Directors (Dan Grudzielanek, Andrew Roach, Neal Wegner, and Mike Yugas) had volunteered to remain on the Board. Keith Schmidt opened the floor to other nominations. There were none. Tom Hoffmann moved that the nominations for Directors be closed. Cathy Wegner seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Tom Hoffmann nominated incumbent Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek to serve for another term. She accepted that nomination. There were no other nominations from the floor. Tom Hoffmann moved that the nominations for Treasurer be closed. Dave Nelson seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Secretary Tom Marcussen had expressed interest in serving for another term. Mike Yugas nominated Tom for Secretary. There were no other nominations from the floor. Dave Nelson moved that the nominations for Secretary be closed. Tom Hoffmann seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

There were no contested offices. Tom Hoffmann made a motion for a unified ballot to declare the above Board-recommended slate elected. Mike Yugas seconded the motion. The motion was presented to the membership for an up-or-down vote. It passed unanimously—by voice vote in the church basement, and show of hands / thumbs up in Zoom. There were no “Nay” votes, or other signs of opposition, from any source. The above slate was declared to be elected. All new officers and directors assumed their new duties effective immediately.

New Business

Keith again announced that the chapter has been granted 501c3 tax exempt status. Donations to the chapter are now tax deductible. Dues are NOT deductible. Proper legal receipts will be provided for any donations. A BIG THANK YOU to the financial committee for the work that they did to accomplish this.

2025 is the 75th Anniversary of the Wisconsin chapter. Keith would like to see a proper celebration. Some ideas proposed

- 75th Anniversary logo maybe incorporating the diamond and other important logos
- Various trips and other activities
- Produce some “swag” using the new logo.

A meeting will be setup in February to help with organizing the 75th anniversary

Thank You for allowing me to be the President of the chapter. It will be a pleasure to serve. I am hoping to keep things going forward and continue to build on what is already happening.

One thing I would like to do is work on the 75th Anniversary of the chapter. 75 years is a big accomplishment for any organization, especially run by volunteers. I am looking forward to some special events and other items. If you are willing to help with any part of this it will take a dedicated group to make things happen. Watch for announcements about an upcoming organizational meeting.

We have had some unusual weather for February in Wisconsin. Hopefully you were able to get out and enjoy some of it. Maybe you were trackside taking in some railroad action. If not get out and enjoy it while you can.



meeting summary continued

Keith apologized for the lateness of Sparks and Cinders. Due to some postal issues with the address labels the issue arrived very late. Hopefully March will be better. The business meeting was adjourned.

The three presentations from “Movie Night” were excellent. All three presenters did a great job.

On Friday March 1 Tom Hoffmann will present “20 Years Ago”

On Friday April 5 Ed Koehler will present “New York, Ontario & Western

There were 16 people in attendance in the church with 68 devices logged in on Zoom.

Upcoming NRHS National Events

Here's some advance notice on 2024 NRHS events - save the dates!

NRHS is holding an annual conference in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in May. Advisory Council and NRHS Board meetings are scheduled for Sunday, May 5. A special inspection trip on Iowa Interstate is being planned for Monday, May 6. The trip will include a tour of the IAIS locomotive shop and a nearly 80-mile rare-mileage trip on a portion of the former Rock Island mainline.

The NRHS annual convention will take place in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, August 26-31. Included are trips to Strasburg (a ride on the Strasburg Railroad and a visit to the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania), the East Broad Top, a trip behind Reading 4-8-4 2102, a meeting day, and more.

These opportunities are open only to members of the national NRHS organization. All NRHS members will receive full details of the events. To join NRHS, visit www.nrhs.com.

Last call for 2024 renewals

If there is a pink highlight on the mailing envelope of your copy of S&C, this is your LAST ISSUE unless you renew right away. For about the price of a good lunch, you can keep Sparks & Cinders arriving every month. Renew online for \$21 at www.nrhwis.org, or send a \$20 check to Wisconsin Chapter NRHS, PO Box 070758, Milwaukee WI 53207. The Wisconsin Chapter thanks you for your support.

Look Back at 2003 by Tom Hoffmann Friday March 3 2024

Join us on March 1 when the Wisconsin Chapter's monthly program will feature the newest installment of our longest-running annual feature, the 20-year look backs of member Tom Hoffmann. Tom's selection of colorful images from 2003 focuses on a year that saw him go far afield for trackside action. In addition to his usual railfanning haunts in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan, Tom traveled to Ohio, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Colorado, and California: 12 states in all, where he captured mainline trains of CP, CN/EJ&E, UP, NS, BNSF, CSX; short lines and regionals such as Wisconsin & Southern, Belt Railway of Chicago, and Indiana Harbor Belt; passenger trains of Amtrak, Metra, and Caltrains; and various industrial/grain elevator locomotives as well as historic depots and railroad museums. All images are 35 mm slides that have been digitally scanned. Hat tip to Dave Nelson for digitizing Tom's legacy media.



Westbound UP #4113 at Ogallala Nebraska July 4 2003. Photo by Tom Hoffmann



BNSF #4481 westbound at Ravenna Nebraska July 7 2003. Photo by Tom Hoffmann

2024 Chapter Board Members

Congratulations to those members elected to Chapter board positions and directors positions. Here are the executive board and directors for 2024

President Keith Schmidt
Vice President Ward Wells
Secretary Tom Marcussen
Treasurer Tara Grudzielank
Board of Directors
Dan Grudzielanek
Andrew Roach
Ralph McClure
Mike Yuhas
Neal Wegner

Thank you for serving in these positions and keeping the chapter running. Keith Schmidt—President

CP #2816 "Final Spike" Tour Announced

The Empress 2816, a 4-6-4 Hudson-type steam locomotive built in 1930, will make 11 stops between Calgary and Mexico City:

Calgary, Alta. | April 24
Moose Jaw, Sask. | April 28
Minot, N.D. | April 30
St. Paul, Minn. | May 3
Franklin Park, Ill. | May 8
Davenport, Iowa | May 10
Kansas City, Mo. | May 18
Shreveport, La. | May 24
Laredo, Texas | May 28
Monterrey, Mexico | May 31
Mexico City, Mexico | June 4

Public events will be held in multiple cities across the network, kicking off in Calgary on April 24. Steam tour events will be held in Moose Jaw, Minot, St. Paul, Franklin Park, Davenport, Kansas City, Shreveport, and Laredo. At these stops, the public will have the opportunity to see the 2816 up close, learn more about the locomotive and CPKC's history and enjoy the Puffer Belly Express mini-train, a quarter scale steam locomotive model. In Mexico City, the 2816 will be spotted for public display.

For more information and to view the full schedule, visit <https://www.cpkcr.com/en/community/final-spike-steam-train>



CP #2816 at Brookfield Depot 06-16-2004 Photo by Keith Schmidt

Treasurer's Report

2023 NRHS Treasurers Report

Opening US Bank Checking Balance 1/1/2023 \$3,091.62
PayPal account Opening balance as of 1/1/2023 \$1,719.74
Total \$4,811.36

Deposits to Checking \$7,725.29
interest checking \$0.36
Total receipts \$7,725.65

Cash receipts sources

Total Dues/donations via check & Paypal/Square less fees \$3,598.64
Banquet Receipts including \$500 sponsorship Wheel Rail Seminars \$2,520.00
Transfer opening Paypal to checking \$1,719.74
Total \$7,838.38

Cash/ Checking accounts end of year balance as of 12/31/2023

US Bank Checking \$293.17
Landmark Credit Union Checking \$3,254.58
Paypal-phasing out \$0.00
Chase CD account opening balance as of 1/1/2023 \$28,594.08
Landmark Credit Union accounts opened May 2023- Chase CD closed funds moved to Landmark
Opening Amount End of Year Amount
Landmark Credit Union 18 month CD \$17,000.00 \$17,422.41
Landmark Credit Union 2 year CD \$11,000.00 \$11,255.58
Landmark Credit Union Savings \$100.00 \$100.02
Landmark Credit Union Checking \$500.00
Heartland Fund opening balance as of 1/1/2023 \$81,618.96
Heartland Fund Year End Balance as of 12/31/2023 \$95,601.73



With temperatures hovering around 0 degrees, Amtrak P42-9B No. 58 leads Hiawatha Service train 338 across Waterford Ave. in Milwaukee. 1/16/2024 Photo by Dan Grudzielanek

Do You Know ?

by Dave Nelson

On Milwaukee's south side, from west of Clement Avenue to east of Lincoln Avenue, the C&NW (now Union Pacific) goes over or under some 16 streets and highways (plus a pedestrian overpass at 31st Street) with no grade crossings at all. This article is about how that came to be.

The Chicago & North Western built an ambitious double track belt line that formed almost a perfect rectangle around all of metropolitan Milwaukee: the lakeshore line north through Saint Francis past Jones Island, the Erie Street yard and the lakefront depot, extending north to Wiscona. Until about 1929 there was a cut-off in Shorewood that stretched from Capitol Drive northeast



through Whitefish Bay to Fox Point where it joined with the lakeshore line heading to Green Bay. From Saint Francis the belt line headed

west past Chase Yard and Mitchell Yard to Belton Junction in West Allis, then turned north to Butler Yard, where it branched west on the Adams Line to the Twin Cities, but also due east to connect at Wiscona and Fox Point with the line north to Green Bay. It was used by freight and passenger trains. Milwaukee's varied topography and the presence of other railroads added to the expense of constructing this line.

The belt line from St. Francis west went through an industrial/residential area with an intense grid of city streets and many grade crossings. Chase and Mitchell Yards helped feed those tracks with trains -- there were about 100 trains a day -- and



many grade crossing accidents and casualties resulted. In 1912 the Wisconsin Railroad Commission was petitioned to

"do something" about the C&NW's dangerous south side belt line grade crossings, and in 1917 the Railroad Commission ordered the C&NW to construct either track depressions to go under those streets, or elevations to go over them. Due to the World War, this work was delayed until 1922. It created considerable disruption to the railroad, citizens, and business.

The scope of this project, given the technology of the era, remains impressive. In just 3.6 miles, eleven grade crossings were to be eliminated. Streets needed to be depressed where the railroad was being elevated. A new channel for part of the

Kinnickinnic River had to be dug. Complicating the project was the fact that between Chase Yard (long since torn down) and Mitchell Yard (closed but intact) 23 industry sidings needed uninterrupted service during the project. Moreover, the Commission's order dictated that two important arterial streets could not both be closed



simultaneously. A trench up to 100 feet wide, two miles long, and 10 to 24 feet deep had to be dug, but not all at once. To keep the railroad running one track would be lowered to half depth while the second track

was used, then the second track would be lowered to half depth while trains ran on the first track, then the first track would be lowered to full depth and re-laid while trains ran on the second track, which itself would then be lowered to full depth. 420,000 cubic yards of earth were removed, some deposited around Chase Yard, some filling low spots at Forest Home Cemetery, and some used to raise the tracks west of Mitchell Yard. Quicksand and high water tables presented their own challenges. Initially the C&NW tried to rely on ground frost to keep the earth in place, but after some cave-ins, in the second phase of work an elaborate system of special concrete retaining walls was installed, and even today concrete retaining walls (now covered with graffiti) can still be seen along the line. The walls, bridges, and culverts used 55,000 cubic yards of concrete.

The project cost the C&NW \$1,500,000 in 1924 which would be \$25,733,844 today, but labor and environmental costs would make the amount much higher. As part of the Railroad Commission's order, the City of Milwaukee paid \$350,000 and the Towns of Lake and Greenfield paid \$70,000 for any work beyond the railroad's right of way. The railroad and the industries shared the costs of restoring industry connections to the new right of way. Of course, the railroad realized benefits from lowered grades, no grade crossings (manned by 20 flagmen back then), and higher speeds. Because the project



largely put the railroad more or less out of sight of most residents, the scope of the project is largely invisible today, but I photographed the retaining walls while riding the Union Pacific

Operation Life-saver train in 2014, and have taken other railfan photographs from overhead bridges. I also found photos from when the project was completed.

Sources for this article include G.A. Saint, "Track Depression and Elevation, Milwaukee, Wisconsin," North Western Railway System Magazine (Vol. II, No. 6, June 1924). Mr. Saint was an assistant civil engineer for the C&NW at the time.

From the Archives

March 1954—70 Years Ago

A special excursion train, using steam power all the way, will be operated over the Milwaukee Road to Madison on Sunday, May 23. Sponsored jointly by the Milwaukee Chapter – NRHS and the Milwaukee County Historical Society, the special will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first train between Milwaukee and Madison which ran on that date in 1854. Short stops will be made at Waukesha and Milton, while longer layovers are scheduled for Janesville and Madison, where steam engines will be spotted for photographers. Ticket price: \$5.00.

March 1959 - 65 Years Ago

On the CB&Q: Contrary to popular opinion, all Q steam is not dead eleven or twelve months of the year. Six days a week, four 4900-series locos steam up and haul loads from the coal mines to the washer to the main line inter-change in southern Illinois

March 1964 - 60 Years Ago

The diesel-electric rotary snowplow built by the NP in 1956 was used for the first time this year when record-breaking snows made a ride on both the Great Northern and Northern Pacific a memorable occasion.

March 1969 - 55 Years Ago

C&NW began operating trains 121-206 with bi-level equipment on February 3, ending use of conventional equipment north of Milwaukee....Ex-NKP No. 759 will not go through Chicago with the High Iron Co.'s Golden Spike Centennial Limited because no railroad will run it from Chicago to Omaha. Apparently it will run via Decatur and Kansas City....The Flying Scotsman steam locomotive will be brought to this country in September to pull a train exhibiting British manufacturers' products.

March 1974—50 Years Ago

The long-delayed Chicago-Dubuque Amtrak run, financed in part by the Illinois DOT began operation on February 14. The train is named The Black Hawk....Ex-Southern Railway 4-8-2 No. 4501 will be active in 1974, but only in the South....The Menomonee Falls Historical Society has purchased the Milwaukee Road depot in the village and moved it to the Old Falls Village at Pilgrim and Town Line Roads....A ski-masked bandit held up a C&NW train and got away with \$20. He stopped the "owl" commuter train Jesse James-style by placing a red flare on the tracks between Barrington and Fox River Grove. After the train stopped, the bandit, armed with a sawed-off shotgun, demanded money from the conductor, who had opened the door to get out to protect the train.

March 1979—45 Years Ago

Amtrak operations were severely affected by a wreck on the Milwaukee Road main line just north of Sturtevant which closed both main tracks. Some trains were annulled and passengers were bussed between Chicago and Milwaukee. Later, some trains ran via the C&NW between Chicago and Milwaukee....On February 17, the Milwaukee Road put a 40 mph speed restriction on the line between Portage and Milwaukee account ice buildup under the rails. Currently there is only one stretch of track between Hastings and Milwaukee where a train can operate at the timetable speed of 70 mph – the east-bound track between MP 130 and MP 123.

March 1984 - 40 Years Ago

All of the problems have now been overcome and Steamtown, USA, is scheduled to begin its move from Bellows Falls, Vermont, to Scranton, Pennsylvania, in June or July...Rio Grande power has been working its way east from Kansas City to Chicago over the Milwaukee Road in December and January

March 1989 - 35 Years Ago

The Grand Canyon Railway has announced that it will begin service between Williams, Arizona, and the Grand Canyon with steam power in April, 1990. The 61-mile line was operated by the AT&SF before abandonment in the early 1960s....WICT is now using the ex-Milwaukee Road J-line between Janesville and Fox Lake, Illinois. A few weeks ago Wisconsin Central was surprised to learn that no cabooses were included in the purchase of Lake States Transportation (Soo Line) and they had to return all cabooses on the property, including No. 17, already repainted in WC colors.

March 1994 - 30 Years Ago

Conrail will be the third major railroad to operate AC traction locomotives in freight service, placing orders with EMD for 4 - SD70MI-AC 4000 hp units and with GE for 4 - AC4400-CW 4400 hp units. BN and UP have also ordered AC units. BN has placed a multi-year order for 350 units from EMD, the largest purchase in railroad history. UP opted for GE units....Conrail has unveiled an experimental high-visibility paint scheme for improving grade crossing safety. Three locomotives have been painted bright chartreuse from the running boards down. Scotchlite™ reflective tape and strobe lights have also been applied.

March 1999 - 25 Years Ago

During 1998, WC track crews installed 433,500 crossties, 563,500 tons of crushed rock ballast, and 101.6 miles of new welded rail. An additional 1,070 miles of track was resurfaced. Shop forces overhauled 16 locomotives and serviced 1,437 cars – 719 were upgraded significantly.

continued from below:

A Midwest Regional Coordination Meeting for the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative will be held in Chicago on March 13....A meeting will be held on March 27 in Racine to discuss the proposed Metra Racine extension and an update on Madison rail service....The Escanaba ore dock ended its ship-ping season on January 24 with the loading of the Joseph L. Block. The same vessel opened the season on March 13, 1998

March 2004 – 20 Years Ago

Wisconsin Chapter is planning an excursion on the East Troy Electric Railroad on April 24. The excursion will utilize former South Shore Line Car No. 30...Ex- Milwaukee Road No. 261 will visit Milwaukee on June 22 and 23....CP 4-6-4 No. 2816 will doublehead with ex-Milwaukee Road No. 261 on a St. Paul-La Cresent excursion on July 3. (This excursion was part of the activities at the 2004 NRHS Convention – ed.)

March 2009 – 15 Years Ago

Following a tortuous fight, Canadian National Railway took control of most of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway late on January 31. The deal follows more than a year of sparring with opponents, and ends speculation EJ&E owner U.S. Steel Corp. might refuse to extend an expired deadline on its offer to sell. Announced last September, the deal enables CN to route trains around congested Chicago to connect its Wisconsin Central, Illinois Central, and Grand Trunk Western properties.

March 2014 – 10 Years Ago

January 29th Bill Bedell a local railfan and photographer passed away suddenly at work. Bill was an excellent photographer with a vast collection of slides. Bill was also a fan of Great Lakes Shipping and trucks. Bill was the "Unofficial Official of Jones Island". An open house at Spec Machining near Madison WI showed off the work being done on the restoration of the CNW #1385 steam locomotive. The #1385 is owned by the Mid- Continent Railway Museum in Baraboo, WI. Work is still progressing on the restoration.

March 2019— 5 Years Ago

Earlier this week, Union Pacific announced it has completed a successful hydrostatic test of the boiler on Big Boy No. 4014. That is the kind of news that says, "without doubt, this engine is going to run again, and soon." Until you get that test completed, there's still the potential for more boiler work. Once, it's over, the heart of the engine is beating once more. With the March 2019 Sparks and Cinders a new font was used called "Banschrift" for easier reading. Also the "From the Archives" section went from two columns to the present 3 columns.

The Big Picture



Wisconsin & Southern train L249 (North Milwaukee-Ackerville turn) approaching Ackerville at Hillside Road. 2/1/2024 Photo by Dan Grudzielanek