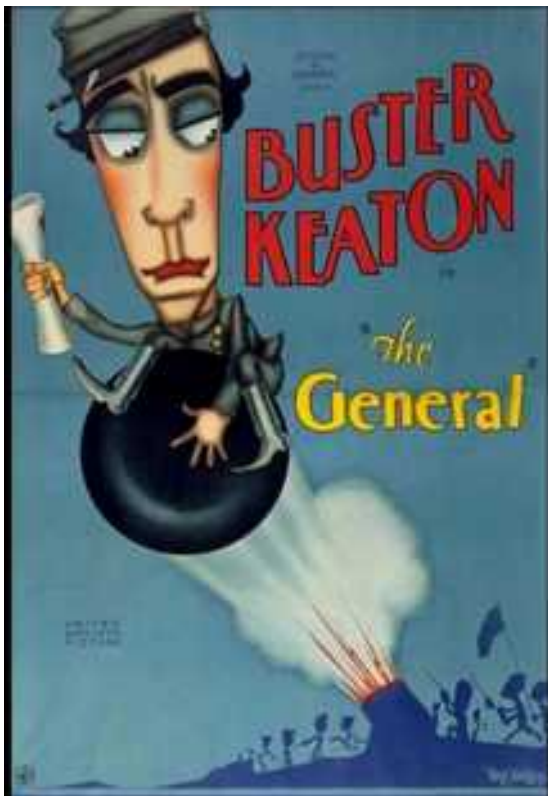


*North Texas Chapter –
National Railway Historical Society*



June Chapter Meeting:
“The General”
Starring Buster Keaton



After being rejected by the Confederate military, not realizing it was due to his crucial civilian role, an engineer must single-handedly recapture his beloved locomotive after it is seized by Union spies and return it through enemy lines.

When: Tuesday, June 3rd @ 7:30 PM
(Meet “N” Greet at 7:00 PM)

Where: Cotton Belt Room of the Chill Bar & Grill at 814 S. Main St (NW corner of S. Main St. & Dallas Rd), Grapevine, TX.
{Food will be available for purchase}



Link to Website:
<https://www.chillbardfw.com/>

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You're about to lose the only train service between Fort Worth/North Texas and Oklahoma that's run since 1999! *

- **Service on the Heartland Flyer will end as soon as June**
- **Last year this 1 round trip daily intercity train carried over 80,000 passengers**
- **No service means more than 50,000 vehicles go back on I-35**
- **TxDOT asked for supplement funding for the Heartland Flyer, the daily train between Fort Worth, Gainesville and Oklahoma City.**
- **The requested supplement and yearly operational allotment have been stripped from the budget – zero funding**
- **Ridership increased 14% last year to over 80,000 passengers**
- **Texas DOT and Oklahoma DOT partner on this intercity service and share costs**
- **Texas A&M Transportation Institute study shows the Heartland Flyer returns more than \$5 in benefits to North Texas for every \$1 the state spends**
- **Texas share of costs is about \$2.5 million plus a TxDOT exceptional item request of \$2.1 million**
- **Oklahoma and Kansas want to extend the passenger rail service to Kansas but if Texas pulls out that is in jeopardy**
- **No service is a black eye for future rail transportation corridors**

*TexasRailAdvocates.org is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that supports the smart development of freight rail and passenger rail in Texas (214) 803-7285.

The North Texas Chapter encourages everyone to contact their Texas State Senator and Representative as soon as possible about the possible loss of the Heartland Flyer.

Spotlight on El Paso, Texas Rails

This month, we will give a brief history of various rail entities that previously served or currently serve El Paso, TX. This also includes rail service at nearby Fort Bliss Military installation and the recently revived El Paso Trolley System. El Paso Union Station was also one of the first international train stations in the United States. Have you ever heard of the Burrito Lady? If not, you are about to find out who she is.

El Paso Union Station

El Paso Union Station is currently served by Amtrak including the *Texas Eagle* and *Sunset Limited*. The station was designed by architect Daniel Burnham, who also designed Washington Union Station in Washington, D.C., which was built between 1905 and 1906 and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. Among its contributions to the growth in El Paso, the Union Station was also one of the first international train stations and it helped with trade between the United States and Mexico.

The station served as a transfer point for several railroads. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe ran a train north to Socorro, Belen and Albuquerque. The National Railways of Mexico operated a train, "El Fronterizo", numbers 7 & 8, south to Chihuahua City in Mexico. The Southern Pacific Railroad operated trans-continental trains west to California, and east to Louisiana via Texas. The Texas Pacific and then the Missouri Pacific Railroad operated trains to Fort Worth, Texas.



El Paso Union Station is currently served by Amtrak and was opened in 1906.

In addition to Amtrak service, the station is served by Sun Metro local buses at nearby stops. There has been intermittent talk of resurrecting streetcar service across the border to Ciudad Juarez since the last trolley rolled in 1974.

The station's office space is occupied by the Texas Tech College of Architecture, which opened in 2013. Sun Metro was formerly headquartered in the space until it moved in 2014.

The second floor of Union Station originally served as a Harvey House Restaurant. Fred Harvey created a chain of restaurants in 1875 called Harvey houses. The main purpose of these restaurants was to serve hungry passengers that had been traveling long distances without food. These restaurants offered quality meals like lobsters, artichokes, and raw oysters for cheap prices. Harvey houses were run by young ladies. These young ladies were the Harvey Girls and they served passengers in a black dress and a signature long white apron. Harvey Girls were paid \$17.50 dollars per month for their work and were given a free room to stay in town.

Some sources state that El Paso Union Station prefers/preferred to be called El Paso Union Depot instead.



The station was designed by architect Daniel Burnham, who also designed Washington Union Station in Washington, D.C., which was built between 1905 and 1906 and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. Conflicting sources state the station was built between 1904 and 1905.

Photographs by Wayne Smith (2025).



El Paso Union Station has several historical designations.



El Paso Union Station is currently served by Amtrak including the *Texas Eagle* and *Sunset Limited*.
All Photographs by Wayne Smith (2025).



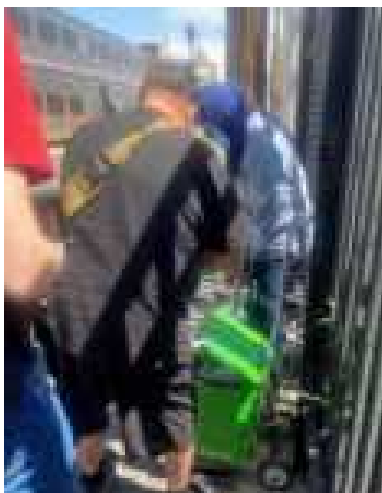
The Famous Burrito Lady

If you read about Amtrak in El Paso, seen YouTube videos about Amtrak in El Paso, read about El Paso Union Station or talked to seasoned rail travelers, you will have heard about the famous Burrito Lady hawking her product on the El Paso platform. Not only is she famous, but she is legendary. Her actual name is Juanita, but most only know her as the “Burrito Lady”. Your editor recently visited El Paso and

arrived by train. He had cash in hand and was ready to make a purchase upon arrival. It was even announced onboard the train about the Burrito Lady and the train was stopping long enough even for through passengers to grab a burrito or two. Dozens of people quickly lined up along the fence and Juanita was more than prepared. The burritos were freshly made and still warm while being kept in appropriate storage containers. Juanita has been doing this for years, meeting each train as it arrives in El Paso. She had the process down to an art and the line moved quickly. This particular day, she had bean and cheese or green chili and beef, price was \$3, your editor got two of the bean and cheese. So delicious. Your editor regrets to this day that he did not get at least one of each.



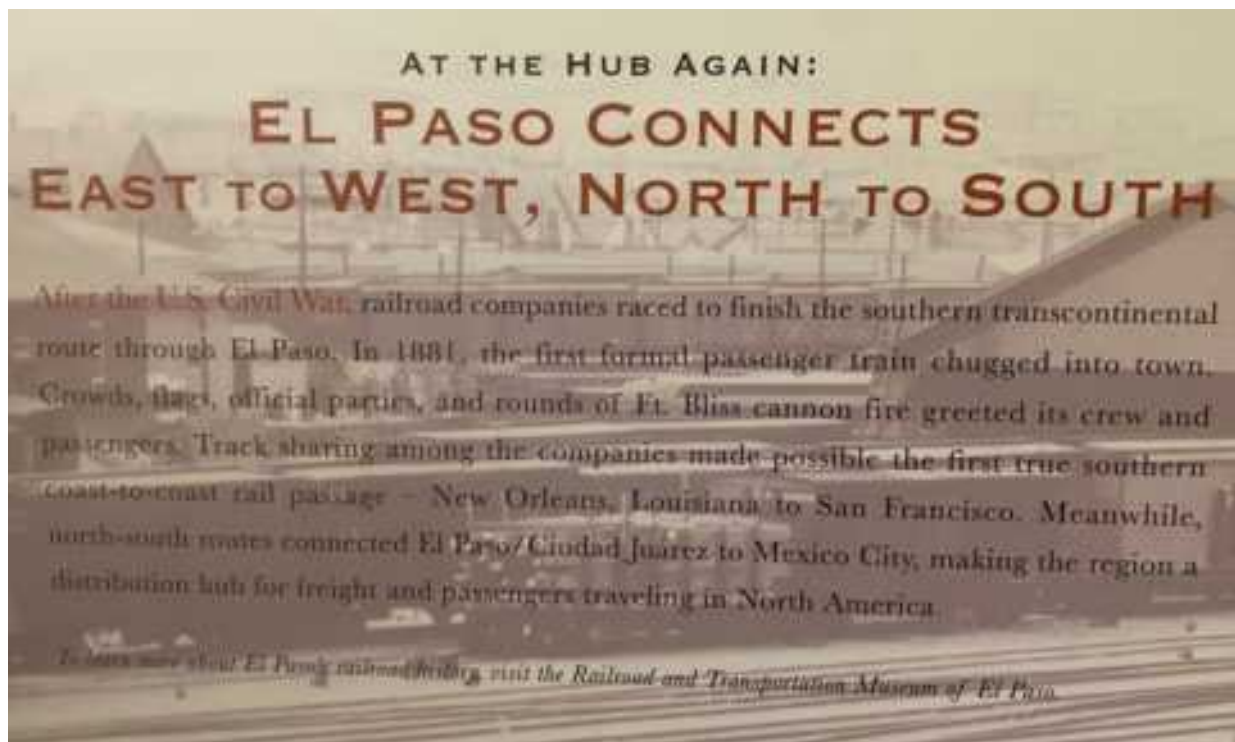
Amtrak passengers are lined up to buy fresh burritos from Juanita, the “Burrito Lady”! Your editor had already bought his burritos, so the line is shorter than it was. Patrons are asked to line up against the fence as to not impede passengers and crew that are not interested in purchasing the burritos. Yes, your editor took a picture of his burrito! Photographs by Wayne Smith (2025).



El Paso Museum of History



Several display panels at the El Paso Museum of History depict the early days of railroading in El Paso. Photographs by Wayne Smith (2025).





El Paso Connects East to West, North to South.



In this rare lithograph at the El Paso Museum of History, the *Santa Fe Demonstration Train*, shows the evolution of locomotives and rolling stock comparing “old” to “new”. This photo does not do it justice.

El Paso Street Cars

The El Paso Streetcar system uses a fleet of restored PCC streetcars that had served the city's previous system until its closure in 1974. It opened for service on November 9, 2018 after reconfiguring and constructing a new route. The system covers 4.8 miles (round trip) in two loops, serving Downtown El Paso and the University of Texas at El Paso along the way. The system was constructed under the authority of the Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority, but when the major construction was completed, around spring 2018, it was transferred to Sun Metro, for operation and maintenance.



The El Paso Streetcar system uses a fleet of restored PCC streetcars that had served the city's previous system until its closure in 1974. The trolleys run on a regular basis and there is no cost to ride it.



The El Paso Trolley is seen coming and going. Photographs by Wayne Smith (2025).



Historically, the cities of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez relied on a unified streetcar system across the Rio Grande which initially consisted of horse and mule-drawn trolleys, which were replaced by the first electrified street cars in 1902. In 1913, the first urban streetcar lines appeared. Between 1920 and 1925, there were 52 miles of trolley system, with 2.1 million passengers using the service in 1922. The increasing availability of the automobile led El Paso to abandon most of its streetcar infrastructure in the 1940s, with the exception of the international line, which was renewed with 20 PCC streetcars from San Diego in 1950.

The international line formed a complete loop, which operated in one direction. This made it perhaps the only streetcar line in which a passenger boarding in either city, and returning later to his starting point, had to pass twice through customs and immigration between two countries. This line abruptly ceased operations on July 31, 1973 as a result of a labor dispute.

On May 4, 1974, the last remaining cars in use made their final trips. They were taken to a desert area by the airport, where they eventually rusted and decayed.

City officials expressed their desire to preserve the history of El Paso by refurbishing the old PCC streetcars that once made their way through Downtown from 1949 to 1974. The city had about eight streetcars, which were stored in a desert area at the El Paso International Airport. These cars were originally manufactured in 1937 for service in San Diego, California.

Work to restore six cars to operating condition began in 2015 and was carried out by Brookville Equipment Corporation. The cars are painted in color schemes used by the previous El Paso streetcar system from the 1950s until its closure in the 1970s, with three different versions – representing the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, – used on two cars each. Modifications to the cars included the installation of wheelchair lifts, to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, half-diamond pantographs in place of trolley poles, and the addition of air conditioning. They have kept their original fleet numbers of 1504, 1506, 1511, 1512, 1514, and 1515.

The first of the restored streetcars, No. 1506, was received from Brookville on 19 March 2018. By mid-October, all but one of the six had been received. The last of the six streetcars to complete its restoration, No. 1511, was received on December 19, 2018.

The Railroad & Transportation Museum of El Paso (1857 El Paso and Southwestern Railroad's Locomotive #1)

Unfortunately, the museum is currently closed to the public as it moves to a new location. Your editor recently visited El Paso (March/April 2025) and called multiple numbers listed on various websites for more information, especially about the current location of the 1857 El Paso and Southwestern Railroad's Locomotive #1. Some numbers were non-working and when your editor was able to leave a voice message, no one bothered to return his calls inquiring about the museum or the current location of Locomotive No. 1. After more research, and after it was too late, your editor found the temporary location of Locomotive No. 1, but was not able to visit the locomotive. The Railroad and Transportation Museum of El Paso's main attraction is the restored 1857 El Paso and Southwestern Railroad's Locomotive #1, a rare example of a pre-Civil War steam engine. No information was found regarding the museum's new location or reopening date. See related photo on next page.

El Paso Locomotive FC

As a side note, El Paso also has a professional soccer team called the *El Paso Locomotive FC*.



El Paso & Southwestern Railroad No. 1 is a 4-4-0 type steam locomotive, preserved in El Paso, Texas. The engine was built in 1857 by Breese, Kneeland, and Company of Jersey City, New Jersey, and is the only locomotive built by that firm still in existence.

Fort Bliss Expands Railway Operations for Military Preparedness

Kristian Jaime
El Paso Times
April 28, 2025

Military preparedness at Fort Bliss was bolstered thanks to the latest groundbreaking of its rail yard expansion, designed to enhance deployment and readiness.

Fort Bliss leaders joined members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Rep. Veronica Escobar, D-El Paso, on Tuesday, April 22, to break ground on 4.3 miles of additional track built to accommodate 565 rail cars in 72 hours.

That represents a 40% increase in the freight capacity the post can handle, noted data cited by Fort Bliss officials.

"Fort Bliss is a major power projection platform," said Col. Brendan Gallagher, Fort Bliss Garrison commander. "That means we deploy forces across the globe and it's important to our mission. This rail expansion will enhance our ability to do that. Fort Bliss has a central role in mobilizing and demobilizing soldiers. Every year, we have about 45,000 to 50,000 mobilizing soldiers."



"This (project) ensures our military forces are able to mobilize quickly in response to emergencies, global conflicts, and evolving mission requirements.

While the construction is slated to last at least two years, a completion date was not specified. Yet the plans for such expansion have been the topic of conversation for what Gallagher recalled as a "couple of decades." The move to expand rail lines at the post solidifies its role in the nation's defense strategy, Gallagher noted.



The rail expansion project at Fort Bliss represents a 40% increase in the freight capacity the post can handle, noted data cited by Fort Bliss officials.

"This is being funded through the National Defense Authorization Act. This project went through the formal process, which is why it took some time to get to this point, but we're very excited that it's getting underway and that it will enhance the capabilities of Fort Bliss," Gallagher said.

Peter Matar, Southwest Program Manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Fort Worth District, explained that the expansion's official groundbreaking took three years to reach.

Matar characterized this project as one of the highest mission-critical projects for the U.S. Army. Its immediate impact would be on its rapid deployment capabilities.

"This (project) ensures our military forces are able to mobilize quickly in response to emergencies, global conflicts, and evolving mission requirements. Through this strategic investment, we're reinforcing our ability to have a strong and agile global presence," Matar said.

Matar explained that the work to bring the rail expansion to fruition started in May 2022 and involved "planning, coordination and collaboration."

The plans include:

- Extension and connection of dead-end tracks.
- Addition of north rail access to the Union Pacific track.
- Construction of new loading areas.
- Installation of field latrines and troop shelters to support sustained deployment and redeployment.
- Additional contracts will make way for storage units and an administrative building.
- Equipment and container repair sheds and a dedicated storage yard.
- Shade structure for additional support.



Escobar, who sits on the House Appropriations Committee and the Military Construction Subcommittee, echoed those sentiments, saying the project is extremely critical.

"Readiness is key to everything the United States military does and the most important facets of that is our people and our assets," Escobar said. "Fort Bliss is a premier global installation and in 2019, that's when the greatest advocates for this post brought this project to my attention. As we continue to work together, we'll be sure that we all continue to deliver for Fort Bliss."

In August 2022, Escobar hosted then-Under Secretary of the Army and El Paso native Gabe Camarillo on a tour of Fort Bliss and its critical assets. During his visit, Escobar also met with Fort Bliss leadership to discuss the importance of securing funding.

In 2023, she announced the approved amount of \$74 million for the rail yard through the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. In that same year, an additional \$44 million was earmarked to complete the rail yard at Fort Bliss.

TRAIN TIME & ROCKY MOUNTAIN EXPRESS EVENT

The Chapter's Special IMAX movie event on April 26, 2025 has come and gone. We sold at least 110 tickets and the event was a huge success. Many door prizes were given out thanks to a huge donation by Chapter Member AJ Roquevert, who also initiated the event. Many thanks to the committee and volunteers including AJ Roquevert, Skip Waters, Bill Long, Bob Kennedy, Kim Hays, Jon Shea, Jerry Nunn, Edwin Pegelow and Wayne Smith.



Chapter members are seen above preparing for the crowd of 110 patrons to enter the IMAX theatre.



Board Members Bob Kennedy (left) and Wayne Smith (right) are all set to manage tickets sold by the chapter. Photographs by Skip Waters.



Above Left: Chapter Member Edwin Pegelow (left) and Board Member Jerry Nunn (right) are seen setting up the North Texas Chapter National Railway Historical Society information table before the doors are open to the public. Above Right: Board Members Bill Long and Jerry Nunn (Yellow Vests) are putting the final touches on the Chapter's information table. Photographs by Skip Waters.



Above Left: Chapter Member AJ Roquevert is seen handing out a door prize to Chapter Member Gary Paquette (right) during intermission. With AJ's connection in the cinema industry, he was very influential in making this event take place. AJ also donated movie themed hats, T-Shirts and thermal cups as door prizes. Above Right: Attendees are seen enjoying the movies.

The following article promoting the chapter's event appeared in *Cowcatcher Tracks* April 2025:

Immersive Railroading

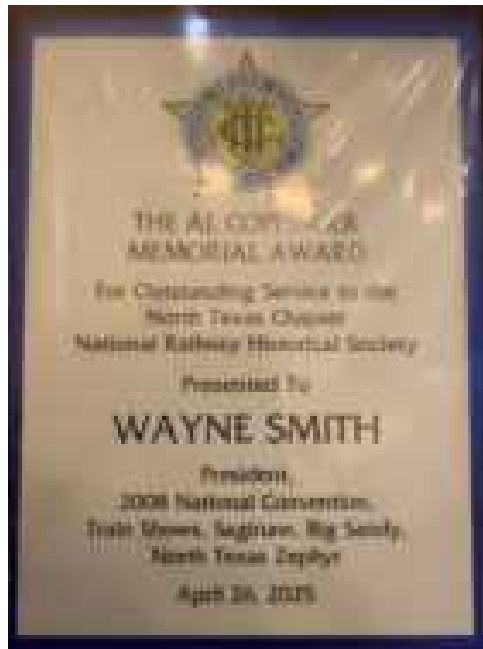
Two-fer Train Flicks. The North Texas Chapter/National Railway Historical Society is presenting an exclusive double feature of IMAX railroad films April 26 in Dallas. *Rocky Mountain Express* and *Train Time*, both directed by the award-winning Stephen Low, will play at Cinemark IMAX beginning at 9 a.m.

Rocky Mountain Express details the history of the nation's first transcontinental railway and accompanies a steam train ride through the Canadian Rockies. The film, released in 2011, captures Low's love of high-fidelity cinema and his fascination with the steam locomotive. Run time is 45 minutes.

Train Time immerses the viewer in a 43-minute ride with the crew of a BNSF freight train during an eye-popping, music-infused journey across America. To deliver the cargo, audiences experience the rugged beauty and vastness of the American landscape, revealing the brutal challenges of railroading as well as secrets of the art and science of running the greatest trains.

The films are captured in 15/70mm motion picture format. Tickets for both shows are \$16, paid to the North Texas Chapter, and must be bought by April 23 (no ticket sales at the door).

North Texas Chapter President Presented with The Al Coppinger Memorial Award:



During intermission at the IMAX event, National Representative Skip Waters presents Chapter President Wayne Smith with *The Al Coppinger Memorial Award* "For Outstanding Service to the North Texas Chapter National Railway Historical Society" including service as "President [2009-2025], 2008 National Convention [Volunteer Coordinator], Train Shows [Volunteer Coordinator], [24 Hours @] Saginaw, [24 Hours @] Big Sandy, [Newsletter Editor of the] *North Texas Zephyr*".



Above and Below: The IMAX movies scenes were larger than life. Photos by AJ Roquevert.





North Texas Chapter, NRHS
P.O. Box 600304 Dallas, Texas 75360
northtexaschapternrhs@gmail.com

May 1, 2025

Mr. Pietro Serapiglia
Stephen Low Company

Dear Mr. Serapiglia,

On behalf of The North Texas Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, we cannot thank you enough for your support, assistance and generosity for the use of the amazing IMAX films, *Train Time* and *Rocky Mountain Express* for our special film event on April 26, 2025 in Dallas, TX.

The event was extremely successful and we sold at least 110 tickets. A good time was had by all and the event went a long way in promoting our chapter and our purpose of railroad preservation and promoting railroad heritage to future generations.

Multiple positive comments were made about the quality of the two films, the amazing scenery, and the revelation of the brutal challenges of railroading as well as secrets of the art and science of running the greatest of trains.

Of special note is this message to one of our board members from Rollin Bredenberg. Mr. Bredenberg retired in 2016 as Vice President of Capacity Planning and Operations Research for BNSF. "Many thanks, Skip, for organizing and promoting today's IMAX event. I have wanted to see both of those features for a very long time, but probably would not have had an opportunity were it not for the NRHS special presentation".

Again, we sincerely thank you for making it possible for this event to take place!

Sincerely,

Wayne Smith, President/Editor
North Texas Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society

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Minutes of the May 2025 Meeting of the North Texas Chapter of the NRHS

The May 2025 meeting of the North Texas Chapter of the NRHS meeting was held on Tuesday, May 6 in the Cotton Belt Room of the Chill Bar and Grill in Grapevine, TX. There were 13 attendees.

President Wayne Smith called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

CHAPTER MEETING

Wayne Smith

The producer of the two IMAX movies the Chapter shown on April 26 waived the rental fee, thereby significantly reducing the Chapter's expenses. Wayne sent him a thank you letter [see Page 20] expressing our appreciation for his help. Thanks also go to A.J. Roquevert, Skip Waters, Bill Long, Bob Kennedy, and Kim Hays for their planning and implementation of the event. Thanks also to Jon Shea, Edwin Pegelow, and Jerry Nunn for manning the information tables.

On a recent business trip to El Paso, Wayne chose to take the Texas Eagle/Sunset Limited. Even though he was a coach passenger, the car was attached to the Sunset Limited, so he did not have to change trains in San Antonio.

Wayne had a chance to ride the El Paso's free trolley with PCC cars, and was able to purchase some burritos from Juanita the famous "Burrito Lady", a well-known vendor who meets every train that calls on El Paso to sell her burritos (for \$3 each) until she runs out.

Bill Long

The Heartland Flyer is in danger of being discontinued. The train receives operating funding from both Oklahoma and Texas. While Oklahoma has committed to funding next year's operations, Texas has not. If Texas does not provide their share of funds, the Flyer will cease operations on June 30. We are strongly encouraged to contact our state representatives and urge them to continue to support funding the Heartland Flyer.

The IMAX movie was a success. The Chapter made a small profit.

Skip Waters

Bill Long and Skip are looking at dates for the 24 Hours at Big Sandy event. Possible dates are August 30-31, September 5-6, September 12-13, or September 19-20. There are possible conflicts with some of the dates. We should decide soon so we can plan for the event.

The National NRHS has a new Comptroller. The comptroller and treasurer from the Fund helped get the Society finances in order to be reported to the board.

National recently sent inquiries to local Chapters, and about 20 chapters did not respond. The National NRHS is considering revoking the membership of those non-responsive local chapters, some of whom have only 1-3 members.

The National Convention will be held in Lansing MI July 12-17. Check the National NRHS website for other details.

October 3-4 are the dates for the 75th anniversary of the Milwaukee WI Chapter.

Bob Kennedy

Bob recently sent the Treasurer's Report. No comments were received.

Trains magazine is no longer making any DVDs. This was a decision of Firecrown Media, the new owner of Kalmbach publications. Since Trains is going out of the DVD business, this might be a good opportunity to purchase some Trains DVDs at a good price.

Elden Baker

Elden announced a National Train Day celebration at the Anna Depot on May 10.

Program

The evening's program was a DVD "Hot Spots: Tehachapi". Next month's program will be the movie "The General", starring Buster Keaton.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Submitted by Jerry M. Nunn, Secretary, North Texas Chapter, NRHS

Jon Shea - Out and About



Above: Interurban Street, Richardson. It marks the route of the Texas Electric Railway through Old Richardson.



Above: Interurban Street going south was the route of the Texas Electric Railway. It was a dirt road when the railroad was running. The building on the right is a closed Firestone store on the site of the Texas Electric Railroad station. On the left is the DART red line (ex SP).

Chapter Directory

North Texas Chapter Officers, 2025

- *President, Wayne Smith, 940-300-4407
- *Vice President/Programs, Jon Shea, 972-948-2413
- *Vice President/Trips and Events, Bill Long
- *Vice President/Communications, Vacant
- *Secretary, Jerry Nunn
- *Treasurer, Bob Kennedy
- *National Representative, Skip Waters,
wgcrush@swbell.net
- *Webmaster, Kim Hays, kimhays516@gmail.com
- *Zephyr Editor, Wayne Smith

Chapter Business Address: North Texas Chapter, NRHS,
P.O. Box 600304, Dallas, Texas 75360

Chapter Email: northtexaschapternrhs@gmail.com

North Texas Chapter site: <https://ntxnrhs.org/>

Facebook Page:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/409467244127/>

North Texas Zephyr (current issues): [The Zephyr Newsletter - North Texas Chapter, NRHS \(ntxnrhs.org\)](#)

Zephyr Archives: [Rail History Newsletters \(gogeocaching.com\)](#)

North Texas Chapter History

Founded and chartered in 1996, the North Texas Chapter is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) educational organization incorporated under the laws of the state of Texas. Emphasis of the chapter is activity, history, and enjoyment of railroading past and present. Meetings are usually held 7:30-9:30 p.m., the first Tuesday of each month. Visitors and newcomers are welcome.

Chapter membership includes our monthly chapter newsletter, the North Texas Zephyr. Currently, chapter dues are \$16, plus \$2 per additional family member. Payment may be made by check or paid online. By check - Mail a check payable to "North Texas Chapter NRHS" for \$16 (individual) or \$18 (family) and mail it to North Texas Chapter NRHS, PO Box 600304, Dallas TX, 75360. If your check does not clearly indicate who the member is, please add a note with the member's name.

Online - Visit the chapter's on-line store at
<https://ntxnrhs.org/store>

to pay by credit card or PayPal. A small service charge (50 cents for individuals, 75 cents for families) is added to your dues payment to cover processing fees. Learn about the National Railway Historical Society at www.nrhs.com

Doodlebug News Briefs



MKT Doodlebug M10

Tuesday, June 3rd, Chapter Meeting @ 7:30 PM
(Meet "N" Greet at 7:00 PM) – Program
Presentation: Video, *The General* with Buster
Keaton, at the Chill Grill, Grapevine.

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Wayne Smith, North Texas News Editor.

The North Texas Zephyr is the official newsletter of the North Texas Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. It is published monthly for the benefit of its members. Opinions expressed herein may not reflect the official position of the North Texas Chapter or the National Railway Historical Society. All content rights retained by original author. Every attempt has been made to comply with fair use and copyright laws.

Contributing to The North Texas Zephyr

We welcome submissions! The deadline for submitting material to the editor is the 12th day of the month in the month prior to the respective cover date. Please contact President Wayne Smith for more information. Time-sensitive news items will be given priority over general interest subjects. The editor reserves the right to edit, hold or omit material at his discretion.