

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for December 4, 2016. Polar Express is in full swing and so is your MOW Team. Let's get this update going before it the full swing is swung.

It was darn-right chilly inside the Erecting Shop on Tuesday. But, Pat Scholzen, Anthony Filamor, Cliff Hayes, Joe Margucci, Matt McCracken, Mike Harris, Frank Werry, Gene Peck, Harry Voss, Chris Carlson, and Alan Hardy brought warm spirits for an evening of good MOW fun. Cliff is working to make a new latching system for the tie-shear's "kickers" (which kick-out the ends of old ties after it has sliced them in threes). The current latches are latching so, while Cliff and Alan surveyed the situation and worked on a design plan, Mike H. and Chris C. fired-up the shear to deploy the kickers. But, they wouldn't deploy. Although the hydraulic system engaged, no air-pressure seemed to be getting to the valves to actuate them. Troubleshooting the problem kept Chris C. and Mike H. busy for the rest of the evening. Meanwhile, Joe, Matt, and Anthony headed over to Old Sacramento to fix a wobbly switch-stand problem at the House Track Switch reported by our trusty track inspectors. The solution was to pull the spikes supporting the stand, plug the spike-holes, and re-spike the stand. Anthony pulled the stand's spikes while Joe and Matt drove plugs deep into the head-block. Then, Matt re-spiked the stand. This did the trick, for now, and now the stand is stable again. But, more work on the head-block will need to be done. It was a good evening of accomplishment all around.

Thursday, Joe, Weston Snyder, Mike H., Frank, Chris C., Heather Kearns, and Alan made good use of a windy evening in Erecting Shop. Heather and Weston headed over to Old Sacramento to replace the red-circle switch-stand target on the House Track switch with a yellow-diamond. When the stand was damaged some weeks ago, a red-circle target had been installed as a temporary measure. But, red-circle targets are reserved for Mainline switches. Weston had restored a spare yellow-diamond target and he and Heather got it in place. As the ballast-regulator would be used on Saturday (which was behind the Kalamazoo tug in the Erecting Shop), Chris C. and Frank switched it out so it would be up front and go. Mike H. and Chris C. continued their efforts at fixing what was ailing the tie-shear. By testing various air-valves, they found a faulty air-valve in the cab. They fixed it, fired-up the shear, and everything worked as it should. Over in the Boiler Shop, Joe fixed a problem with the hitch-wires of the white trailer. Frank and Weston loaded the cracked wing-rail and a replacement rail for the frog at Switch 19 into the truck. After several years of it being out of service, the frog is being repaired. But, a new wing-rail needs to be professionally milled to fit in the frog structure. So, it's being taken to a machine shop to be shaped. Once fixed, the south switch on the east siding at Baths will be reactivated. With that, the Team called it an evening.

Of course, Saturday started with plenty of doughnuts. But, Santa had left a stash of magical Polar Express jingle bells for the Team. Not surprisingly, Alan, Michael Florentine, Clem Meier, Anthony, Heather, Steve Nemeth, Weston, Chris C., Matt, Joe, Pam Tatro, and Chris Machado could hear them ring – obviously, they believe. A track-raise near Mile Post 1 to remove a "dip" in the track was the plan of the day. Joe and Mike F. arrived early to get the truck loaded with the necessary tools. Conductor Heather conducted Chris C. in the ballast regulator over the UP Main from the Shops. Anthony got the tamper opened and Mike F. piloted it down the line. Matt hopped on the A-6 motorcar and pulled the work-train consist down the line. At MP 1, Chris C. ran the ballast-regulator through the work-site with the plows deployed to cut-down the windrows and spread the rock evenly between the rails. Pam, Weston, Heather, Clem, and Chris M began digging "pockets" under the rails to insert jacks. Steve and Alan set up the spot-board and "rabbit" (used for measuring the raise). Joe laid down at the "rabbit" and guided the lift. Matt, Anthony, and Weston followed Joe's signals and cranked on the jacks, lifting the west rail to the appropriate height. Steve and Chris C. measured the cross-level and jacked the east rail even with the west. Mike F. brought in the tamper and, with Alan and Chris M. guiding, tamped each tie to the new level. As the track was raised and tamped, the jacks would be pulled and shuttled down the line in a hop-scotch fashion to the next area for raising. The Team was working like a well-oiled machine and by lunch time, the area had been raised, lined, leveled and surfaced. It looked great. In the afternoon, Polar Express coopted several Team members for service. So, those who remained retreated to Old Sacramento where they adjusted Switch 2, the House Track switch, which had become exceedingly difficult to throw. Matt, Joe, Weston, Chris C., Mike F., Steve, and Alan cleaned debris out of the switch, changed the position of the connecting rod and got it back in working order. Chalk-up another success to your MOW Team! A great day, indeed, for a great Team!

As you might have predicted, this week, the Team will gather on Tuesday and Thursday in the Erecting Shop at or before 5 o'clock. Saturday, the magic bells will ring doughnut time promptly at 8 o'clock a.m. More MOW fun is promised!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris C., and Richard.



Cliff and Alan work on a new locking-latch for the tie-shear's kickers



Anthony pulls spikes at Switch 2 as Joe and Matt stand ready to plug and re-spike the stand



Matt drives spikes into the newly plugged spike-holes at the switch



Mike H. checks air-pressure at various valves as he trouble-shoots the tie-shear's problem



Joe repairs the hitch-wires on the trailer



Frank loads the cracked wing-rail from Switch 19 into the MOW truck



Frank uses the rail-saw to cut the rail being milled for replacing the cracked wing-rail to its proper length



Weston and Frank load the replacement wing-rail in the truck ready to head out for milling



Weston replaces the red round switch target at Switch 2 with a yellow diamond



Chris C. working to cure the ailing tie-shear



The ballast regulator is deployed



Chris C. in the regulator plows windrows of rock



Anthony and Matt spot the A-6 motorcar and work-consist on the Clunie Siding



Weston and Pam dig pockets under the rails for jacks to be inserted





Heather and the Team prepare the rails for raising



Joe peers through the "rabbit" towards the "spot-board" to measure the raise and directs the Team manning the jacks



Sometimes, it takes a little effort to raise the track as Matt and Chris M. demonstrate...



Joe signals to Anthony, "Keep jacking!"



Alan directs Mike F. in the tamper as Clem and Chris M. manually operate the actuators for the work-heads



Chris M. takes over guiding the tamper as Weston and Anthony prepare to pull jacks



Track triage: Matt nips up a tie (that didn't lift when the rail was raised) as Chris M. re-spikes it



In the afternoon, the Team adjusts Switch 2