

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for January 24, 2016. Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor dark and gloom of the Boiler Shop stays the MOW Team from the swift completion of its appointed rounds. So, with that creed in mind, let's get this update started swiftly.

The wind and the rain brought total darkness to the Boiler Shop on Tuesday as the power went-out. But, over in the Erecting Shop, spirits – and lights – were bright with the presence of Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Frank Werry, Gene Peck, Heather Kearns, Mike Harris, and Alan Hardy. More prep work was underway for the big rail replacement/up-sizing project due to commence on Saturday. Cliff, Mike H., Pat, and Frank set off on a safari through the Erecting Shop to seek elusive track-bolts of the correct size that will connect the new rails together. It proved quite a challenging hunt, indeed. But, the Team stalked and bagged sufficient bolts, lock-washers, and nuts for the project. Frank and Cliff then took them over to the super-fast whirling wire brushes to clean them up and lubricate the threads. Heather and Gene did maintenance work on the scarifier's. No one could complain about the accomplishments and outstanding efforts of the evening.

By Thursday, light was restored to the Boiler Shop – and none too soon. This meant Heather, Alan, Frederick Carr, Mike H., Cliff, and Frank wouldn't need to come up with contingency plans for getting our equipment out of the building on Saturday. Frank gathered the comp-joints, bolts, pneumatic impact wrench with sockets, timber-tongs, and tools loaded into the trusty Chevy Truck. Weedies Mike Taylor, and Dave Megeath continued their efforts to rebuild the 65-gallon spray-rig. Mike H. assisted with that project. Fred and Cliff started working on building new support brackets for the Fairmont derrick crane. The bases of the four supports had corroded from water collecting at the connecting points on the deck. As the weights of machines need to be stenciled on their sides, our licensed professional engineer, Mike H., volunteered his engineering and magical mathematical skills to calculate the derrick's weight. Using a hydraulic ram to lift the machine, he calculated the weight with an equation derived from the p.s.i. in the cylinder and the diameter of the cylinder rod. Mike found that it weighs slightly more than five tons. Considering it has a one-inch thick steel deck, that didn't surprise us one bit. A good evening, indeed.

A great big crew showed up on Saturday for the start of the rail-replacement project – 16 in all! Fortunately, a double ration of doughnuts was on hand for Alan, Clem Meier, Harry Voss, Heather, Pamela Tatro, Scott Morrison, two Chrises – Carlson and Machado, two Steves – Nemeth and Wilson, two Mikes – Florentine and Willis, Frank, Jose Gomez, and John Rexroth. Joining the Team were our good friends from the SSRR Signal Department, Dale Parker and Marc Pryor. With such a large crew, the EIC (Employee in Charge) had little to do – other than be bossy. The plan for the day was to begin the process for changing the rails between Front Street and Switch 14, the north switch at Miller Park. Currently, this stretch consists of 75-pound rail (weighs 75 pounds per yard) which is pretty small stuff. We're replacing it with 110-pound rail (much sturdier). The Team believes that the heavier rail will mitigate a myriad of problems in this area. For Saturday, the Team would pull ties at both the north and south ends of the work area, as the road-bed needs to be lowered because 110-lb. rail is an inch and a quarter taller than the existing 75-lb. rail. Then, the Team would assemble the new rails by bolting them together so that they would be all set to place as part of phase two of the project. On Saturday, we would not take-up any of the old rails, yet. Team Signals' Dale and Marc arrived on site first and took the Front Street grade crossing warning system out of service. Then they removed 12 bond wires at the joints and disconnected South Approach track wires. Steve W., Clem, and Mike W. donned huff-and-puff machines and forcibly removed organic debris from the track. Chris M. and Mike F. used claw-bars to removed spikes from the ties being pulled. Steve N., Frank, and Mike F. detached rail-anchors. Harry, in the back-hoe, grabbed the sticks of 110-lb. rail, which had been stock-piled there already. Jose and Pam used wire brushes to clean the rail ends. Chris C., in the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger, started pulling out ties. Jose, Scott, and Heather brought in the joint-bars to connect-up the rails. Scott and Alan lined up the joint-bars with the bolt holes in the rail while Mike F. and Steve N. used claw-bars to lever-up the rails for better alignment. Bolts were installed and Jose tightened them with a track wrench. The rail-mounted air-compressor was brought in and the pneumatic impact wrench hooked-up. Jose and Pam shared power-tool duty and spun the bolts tight with the compressed-air implement. Meanwhile, Chris M. was now taking a turn on the Jackson 125 pulling bad ties at the south end near the switch. John, who is on "injured reserve," acted as the Team's official observer. So much good work was being accomplished that it's hard to describe it all. By lunch time, the Team had more than a dozen ties removed and the east rail completely assembled.

Following lunch, the west rail was assembled. Steve N., Mike F., and Chris C. helped Harry in the back-hoe pull rails from the pile and set them out. It's a narrow area to maneuver through – especially when dragging and carrying 39-foot lengths of rail weighing upwards of 1,500 pounds. It's a testament to Harry's skills, as well as those of the Team who managed all these tricky moves safely. Once in position, Steve N., Scott, and Frank slathered grease behind the joint bars to assist with the thermal expansion of the rails. Steve W. and Jose bolted them all together. Then, the Team practiced its "Gandy-Dancing" and, in unison, shoved the newly assembled rails away from the track. The Team packed up and headed back to the Shop very pleased with the day's progress. We're right on target with this project.

This coming week, the Weed Team will gather on both Tuesday and Thursday for further adventures down on the Hood Line. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. The Tuesday and Thursday Shops crews will gather at or before 5 o'clock. Saturday, a special train is scheduled so, we've decided it's not a good idea to be ripping rails out of the ground that day because of the whole "no track, no trains" issue. So, we'll work on other important projects instead. The [rail replacement resumes on February 6th](#). That's the day the east rail will be replaced. Thanks so much to the dedicated crews of the MOW Team and Team Signals for all your efforts. Together, we're building a better railroad!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris C., and Richard.



Frank cleans up bolts with the wire brush



Heather oils the scarifier's work-head chain



Fred takes on removing the derrick crane's support brackets



More management than you can shake a stick at: Mike T. and Mike H. work under the watchful eyes of Heather, Alan, and Frank



Mike H. uses a hydraulic cylinder to lift the derrick to take readings as part of his weight-measurement calculations



Mathematical magic under way...



Chris M., and Mike F. start pulling spikes



Marc Pryor and Dale Parker remove bond-wires in the south approach at Front Street



Clem forcibly removes organic debris occupying the track



Alan attaches the rail-tongs to a stick of 110-lb. rail which Harry in the back-hoe will drag into position



Mike F. and Steve N. remove rail-anchors



Alan marks ties for Chris C. in the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger to pull out...



...Then they take the 125 for a "spin"



Steve W. cleans of the end of a rail...



...As does Pam



Chris M. takes a turn on the 125 with Chris C. as guide



Mike F. lines-up the rail-ends of the new rails that Harry in the back-hoe positions



Steve N. nips up the track while Scott and Alan apply joint-bars



Jose first tightens-up the bolts with the track wrench...



...Then brings in the power



Alan, Scott, and Steve W. position the joint-bars at the next rail



Pam with the pneumatic impact wrench tightens bolts extra tight



Chris M. pivots the rail with a lining bar to align it with the joining rail



Alan and Heather chisel-off bond wire welds



Harry pulls the first rail for the west side into position



Steve, Scott, and Frank apply grease behind joint-bars before they are bolted up. Heather continues the organic debris dispersal



Steve N. guides the next rail into position. That's nearly 1,500 pounds of rail Harry is moving with the back-hoe



Heather implements GCOR 6.32.2-Item A and SSRR General Order 2016-6-Item E as Frank pilots the Kalamazoo and work-train across Front Street



Gandy Dancin': The Team uses lining bars to move the replacement rail away from the track



The tidied-up work-site as we pack up to head back to the Shops