

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for August 18, 2013. Unmitigated progress is the theme of this update. So, let's progress quickly to the week in review.

Tuesday, Cliff Hayes, Gene Peck, and Pat Scholzen finished the repairs to the brakes of the man-lift. Heather Kearns got the cab-door with its new glass installed. This concludes the needed repairs to the man-lift. It's ready to return to action when the mighty Weed Team reconvenes from summer recess. And, the timing is perfect. Purple Martin mating season ends in just two weeks and there are lots of trees that need chopping! Also on Tuesday, DJ Chapman cleaned the water tank on the chipper. Bill Myer and Dennis Noble fixed the horn on the loader. Mike Harris and Brian Cameron restarted work on restoring the "new-old" tamper that we acquired last year. The plan is to merge the best features of both tampers to create one super-fantastic machine. The evening crew consisted of Dave Megeath, Heather, DJ, Alan Hardy, and Chris Carlson. We fired up the tamper and ballast regulator and headed down the line. Heather and Dave were the tamping team while Chris and DJ plowed rock with the regulator around MP 2.25. We tamped the ties we changed out the previous Saturday. But, as the work-heads descended into the ground, in many areas, they were hitting hard dirt. Ultimately, more rock is needed so that we can do a track-raise in this area. Nonetheless, it's so much better than it was. Without doubt, we accomplished a great deal and declared it another successful evening for your MOW Team.

Thursday, while Chris and Alan were in the SSRR Managers' Meeting, over in the Shops EIC Mike H., Brian, and Cliff managed to remove the entire work-head assemblies off the "new-old" tamper. They will be switched-out with those on the existing tamper. This was a very complicated (and heavy) operation but major accomplishment in the overall effort towards greater and more efficient mechanization. Kudos to Mike, Cliff, and Brian for their incredible dedication!

Saturday was a hot and muggy day. John Rexroth, Virginia Baron, Steve Nemeth, Clem Meier, Mike Florentine, Frank Werry, Harry Voss, Chris, Alan, and Heather made for a super-fantastic MOW Team. After a thorough review of doughnut policy (thanks to Harry and Chris), we headed out on the line to burn doughnut energy. Once again, we were working between MP 1.0 and MP 1.4 pulling out all those rotten ties – many of which dissolved into splinters – and replacing them with extra heavy hard-wood ties. We're using relays from the old UP Main and Amtrak depot tracks that the MOW Team salvaged last year as part of the track realignment project in the Rail Yards. Believe me, the UP doesn't skimp on the weight and density of the ties it uses. Man, are those things h-e-a-v-y! There's a whole process to changing out ties and everyone on the crew shared the "wealth" when it came to the various jobs – from pulling spikes to prying out tie-plates, to digging out shattered ties, dragging the extra-heavy replacement ties into place, to plating and spiking the new ties – this crew was top-notch. In the end, we managed to change out 25 ties and probably could have done more if we hadn't run out of replacement ties (we only had one bundle with us – like I said, they're heavy). We made real progress on Saturday and everyone on the crew is justified in feeling proud of the accomplishment.

Just to the north of our work limits, our CSRM Track Programs colleagues, Team Signal Department, were servicing the Q and R Street crossings and established their own work limits with red flags. This made for an extra exciting day for railroad, MOW, and Signal crews with multiple "red flagged" work zones adjacent to each other. There was more radio chatter than you could shake a stick at. But, we all coordinated efforts to make sure that we that never delayed or stop the train. Now, that's MOW Teamwork in action! A special shout-out to Dispatcher Melba Fryer, Train Master George Papadopoulos, Signals EIC Paul Helman, and RFE Red Hadler for their great help in making it a smooth day for all!

For the week ahead, Tuesday, the crew will be meeting at the Shops in the afternoon and evening. More ballast regulating and tamping is in order. Thursday, we may go out on the line and start pulling ties between MP 1.2 and 1.4 so that we'll have a head start for Saturday. Yep, that's right. The great tie change-out project of 2013 continues on Saturday, after doughnuts, of course.

Many thanks to all our incredible volunteers who make our railroad possible. Always remember, no track, no train.

We'll see ya out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Chris and DJ navigate the regulator



Mike H. and Brian remove the work-head assembly on the "new-old" tamper



Brian, Mike H., and Cliff following their herculean effort to remove the work-head assemblies



Alan at the helm of the "scary-fier"



Chris and John pry out a tie plate



Alan working the scarifer/inserter as Mike F. uses the inserter function to insert a new tie



This is what we were up against: shattering ties



Steve and Frank setting tie plates and spikes



It's always a good day when Virginia is on the crew!



Chris digging out a splintering tie as the scarifer scarifies a tie crib