

Lake State Railway

2026 ISSUE 1

The Turntable



Photo Credit: Kevin Burkholder



From the
President &
CEO

Celebrating our Team's Accomplishments

As I enter my third year as President and CEO of Lake State Railway, I have been reflecting on the accomplishments our team has achieved, and I could not be more proud. Lake State is a great franchise, but our consistent, above-average growth and commitment to continuous improvement are the result of the railroad professionals who make up our team.

There are several accomplishments and events I would like to highlight.

Recognized for Innovation and Growth

In April, the LSRC team was recognized with two prestigious awards by the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) at its annual conference in Minneapolis.



Roger Fuehring accepting the Green Spark Award

LSRC Chief Mechanical Officer Roger Fuehring accepted the Green Spark Award, formerly the Environmental Award, in recognition of several environmental programs we have implemented. The capstone was becoming the first regional railroad to acquire mainline SD70ACe-T4 road locomotives.

The "Aces," as our mechanical team calls them, meet the highest level of EPA emissions requirements for mainline locomotives while efficiently pulling as much tonnage as two DC locomotives. In fact, we have been able to reduce locomotive assignments from two to one on several of our regularly scheduled manifest trains. Roger has also become a go-to resource for other short lines as they navigate EPA policy impacts and best practices for remaining in compliance.

Our second award was the Business Development Award. LSRC's Vice President of Marketing and Sales Kevin Fowler accepted it on behalf of our team in recognition of the growth strategy and partnership we executed with Edward C. Levy Co. earlier this year.



Kevin Fowler accepted -2026 Business Development Award

During my first year with LSRC, more than a decade ago, Levy moved 1,349 carloads out of Alpena. One of the first calls I received from their general manager was about an opportunity to move a fine base material south. There was one request: "Can you come up with a block of 10 cars that will hold the fine material?"

When I asked why he was asking that question, and mentioned that I had not personally seen the legacy 1957-built cars, he explained: "Are there any cars that will not leak?"

Many of those cars had holes in the car bodies plugged with cardboard and duct tape, and they had a 70-ton capacity. It was obvious that the aging fleet was a hindrance to growth, so we set out to upgrade it.

Within a year, we accomplished a full fleet replacement when we purchased 1980-built Ortner aggregate cars. We bought those cars for scrap value; they were already sitting at a scrap yard in Danville, Illinois, positioned for dismantling. Those cars served us well and represented a huge step forward, allowing volumes to triple out of Alpena, but as we continue working with Levy to pursue additional growth, it is time for another advancement in our car fleet.

This summer, we took delivery of 170 newly rebuilt aluminum rapid-discharge aggregate cars from Trinity Industries. The new cars feature automatic pneumatic gates and a net capacity of 120 tons, creating additional opportunities for efficiency and growth.

It was fitting that one of our new SD70ACe-T4 locomotives brought the new fleet onto home rails as a unit train, ushering in a new era of modern equipment.

Fifteen years ago, that same movement would have looked very different: an ancient Alco C425 pulling 1957-built stone cars over 100-year-old, 85-pound rail.



New aggregate cars pulled by our new SD70ACe-T4

From the
President &
CEO
Continued

The transformation is a great example of what happens when a team sees an opportunity, develops a plan, and executes it. There are two videos highlighting these awards and accomplishments available on our social media pages.

The Accomplishment That Matters Most

The last event I would like to highlight is the one of which I am most proud.



In July, a crew was switching in Flint when they noticed a young woman acting strangely on an overhead bridge. Although she was not fouling the tracks, the crew followed their instincts. They tied down the train, notified their supervisor, and approached her.

They stayed with her until authorities arrived and remained on the scene during the approximately 90 minutes it took first responders to help her reach a safe location.

The first responders told Lake State officials at the scene that they had no doubt our employees saved her life that day.

The crew was Ben and Andrew Story, brothers who are based out of our Flint Terminal. The Story brothers routinely receive high marks from their assigned trainees and consistently go the extra mile for our customers as well.

What they did that day was bigger than simply following a procedure. They saw someone who needed help, trusted their instincts, and took the time to do something about it.

We can celebrate awards, new locomotives, new railcars, and record growth—and we should, but ultimately, another accomplishment of which I am most proud is being a part of and supporting such a great team.

Mike Stickel
President & CEO



Brother's Ben and Andrew Story accept the LSRC Excellence award from Brent Keeler, Superintendent of Transportation and Mike Stickel, President & CEO

LSRC Honors Dedicated Railroaders on Their Retirement

These 2 men have been long-time, dedicated team members of LSRC and their absence will leave holes that are hard to fill. There's something to be said about the old-school work ethic. And these two gentlemen had it. Although they served the railroad in different capacities, each one provided a crucial role in keeping LSRC running and succeeding.

Richard Hanson spent his LSRC career in the Maintenance of Way Department as a Track Operator/Laborer. After 20 years of back-breaking work and battling the elements to keep the tracks in safe & working order, he is hanging up his spike mauls and drills to enjoy a more peaceful life.

Joe Vongrey spent his 21-year LSRC career in the Transportation Department as a seasoned and valuable certified Engineer & Conductor. He has seen and experienced a lot during his tenure here and is on to the next chapter of leisure.

Lake State is so grateful to have had these two gentlemen on our team. It is hard to replace such seasoned and dedicated employees. We wish them both health and happiness in this next journey of life.

You will both be truly missed. Thank you for your years of loyalty and hard work!



Ray Stomerski (Roadmaster/Inspector), Mark Pennell (Superintendent of MOW North), Richard Hanson, and Kevin Mitrzyk (EVP/CFO)



Joe Vongrey (Train Engineer & Conductor)
Mike Stickel (President & CEO)



In a fast-paced world where the blinking red lights of a railroad crossing's automatic warning device may make you nervous about being late for an appointment, or delay you from getting home after work, it's important to understand a few things.

While 2025 proved to be the safest year for the rail industry in American history, one category that continues to trend in the wrong direction is railroad-highway grade crossing incidents. In other words, vehicles struck by trains to the tune of 2,274 impacts in 2025, resulting in 286 fatalities and 764 injuries.

To help visualize the sheer power and weight of a moving freight train, the massive impact of a freight locomotive striking a car is roughly equivalent to that of an automobile crushing an empty pop can. With that in mind, it's imperative that motorists heed the warning of those railroad crossings, bells, bright headlights, and loud horns. After all, they exist for *your* safety.

But what if a vehicle becomes disabled on the railroad crossing?

A person's first instinct may be to dial 9-1-1, but the best option is to utilize the blue Emergency Notification System (ENS) sign that is affixed to every railroad crossing warning device in the United States. This sign features a few key pieces of information.

LSRC LESS SAFETY REALLY COUNT

The emergency contact phone number to dial
An alpha-numeric DOT number that uniquely identifies the crossing
The railroad responsible for the crossing in question

**REPORT PROBLEM
OR EMERGENCY**
1-800-555-5555

X-ING 123456 Z
An American Railroad Co.

Emergency Phone Number

Unique DOT crossing ID number

Railroad responsible for crossing

The process is simple; If your vehicle becomes disabled at a railroad crossing and is in danger of being struck by an oncoming train, call the emergency contact number and provide them with the alpha-numeric number on the sign. This DOT number is unique to each crossing in the United States, which will allow the railroad to identify the precise location of the crossing in question to help ensure they can notify train crews in the area to avoid a potential collision. This process can also be utilized to notify the railroad of an issue with the crossing, such as broken gates, burned out bulbs, or any other malfunction, but keep in mind that calling to report a slow or stopped train won't help get the train moving any faster. Trust me, the railroads aren't making money when trains are stopped, so they want them moving as much as you do, if not more.

Dave Foster
Director of Safety and Training

Historical Steam Locomotive Crossing Saginaw Bridge

When Pere Marquette #1225 crossed the LSRC bridge over the Saginaw River on May 14, it was the first time any steam locomotive in the 1200 series did so. After the bridge was rebuilt and put back into service in 1945 (per an original PM source document), the previous prohibition on those locomotives (due to their axle weight) was lifted. However, available records show that those locomotives only operated out of Saginaw south to Plymouth and beyond – not west to Ludington. Additionally, parent Chesapeake & Ohio Railway replaced all steam locomotives in the Pere Marquette District with diesels by 1951.



Attached is a photo taken by Jack Schafsnitz (and posted on his Facebook page) of PM #1225's crossing of the bridge.

Robert Thatcher - Safety Officer
Steam Railroading Institute



Lloyd Douglas (Engineer & Conductor) was presented with the LSRC Excellence Award in recognition of his exceptional dedication and commitment to Lake State Railway. On his scheduled day off, in the middle of the night, Lloyd drove to Alpena Yard to address a locomotive issue that could have resulted in significant engine damage. His actions not only prevented a potentially costly failure, but also ensured our customers received timely service without major delays.

That level of commitment is what sets Lloyd apart. As Superintendent of Transportation, I want him to know his efforts do not go unnoticed. We sincerely appreciate his dedication, value him as both an employee and a trusted member of our team, and are proud to work alongside someone who consistently steps up when it matters most.

Brent Keeler
Superintendent of Transportation



Roundhouse Report

"I Know a Guy"

It's hard to imagine a single day when innovation, along with fabrication, doesn't take place at the Lake State locomotive shop. We see this with our partners in the car shop at Flint, along with our signal department and maintenance of way.

Track, car, signal, or locomotive; somebody is running into a problem where replacement parts no longer exist daily.

This isn't always based on something being old or outdated. Technology, at times, advances faster than the cycle needed for a piece of equipment that remains in service.

A good example was our original GP40 fleet that was equipped with an outdated computer system. What was outdated? Less than 10 years after the systems were installed on the locomotives at their previous railroads, the manufacturer no longer supported the hardware or software critical to the locomotive operating correctly.

Can you imagine purchasing a new car only to be told by the manufacturer, ten years later, that they can no longer work on it or sell you new parts for it?

For Lake State, we had to search for an off-the-shelf system to replace the control systems on the GP40s and SD50s. This was one problem we had a solution for, but other issues are not always the case.

Every department has its own stories of overcoming parts/support issues from manufacturers. I can personally point out everyone in our locomotive shop and give an example of each employee who went the extra mile to make something work by solving a problem caused by an outdated or unavailable part.

The showstopper is our turntable that controls the movement in and out of our facility. Without the table, we don't move in or out of our facility. These are unique and very limited but are still used on most Class 1 railroads at points where turning is required, and in some cases, efficiency is increased depending on the facility.

We could have looked at companies that can custom-build new components to extend the life of the table. That would bring us back to the technology concerns of 2026. What happens when

that organization stops supporting the product they built?

Our best solution was to rebuild what we have and improve on it where we could. Unfortunately, every large machine shop that came to look at the drivetrain offered discouraging words until we brought Robby McEnrue into our facility on the inspection side as a Lake State Railway employee. A famous quote of Robby's: "I know a guy." In 2024, when looking at the turntable's drivetrain, Robby immediately called a gentleman he once worked for, who saw the drivetrain issues as a



Robby McEnrue

challenge. By the end of 2024, we had rebuilt drivetrains on both ends with all-new bushings packed with grease that Robby oversaw.

Fast forward to 2025. We started seeing bushing issues on some of the rebuilt drivetrain. With the previous company that worked on the table unavailable, Robby jumped in with help from others and made some temporary repairs until he could dig deeper into the issue in 2026.

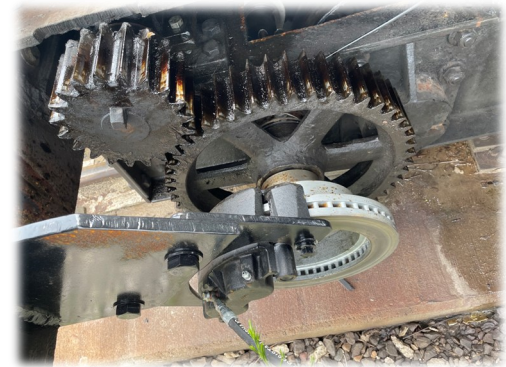


Turntable gear

After some investigation, Robby determined that the bushing would originally have been oil, not grease, as the previous owner had converted it. With that revelation, Robby engineered the bushings on one end to take oil (the other will be done later this year). This was done creatively

using readily available parts, such as fabric pads from air sanders, to hold the oil in place at the end shafts.

He then designed and built a braking system that allowed us to stop the table without it drifting to a stop, making table operation more efficient and safer. In addition, this came with a hydraulic parking brake.

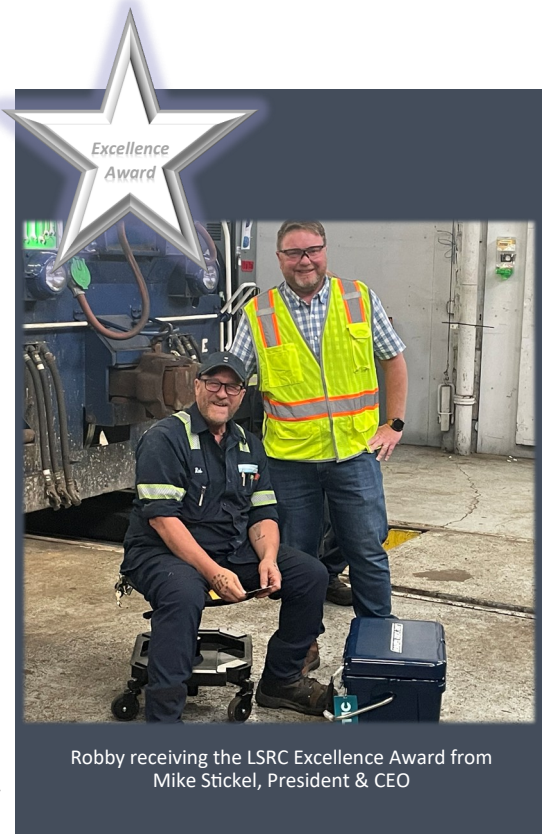


Turntable brake

For all his engineering and hard work, the executive staff suggested that Robby receive an excellence award for his engineering and continued engineering on future projects related to the turntable.

On behalf of the entire locomotive shop, we congratulate Robby on receiving an Excellence Award and appreciate his effort in keeping our turntable moving.

W. Roger Fuehring
Chief Mechanical Officer
and The Roundhouse Team



Robby receiving the LSRC Excellence Award from Mike Stickel, President & CEO

LSRC Employee Spotlight

Matt Bolen
MOW Foreman

A Model of Dedication and Excellence

We are proud to recognize Matt Bolen, Maintenance of Way Foreman, who consistently demonstrates exceptional job knowledge, unwavering loyalty, and a true “never quit” attitude.



Matt grew up and went to school in East Liverpool Ohio. After high school, in 2009, Matt moved to Kentucky and started working for CR Construction, where he started his railroading career. For the next 5 years, he learned how to build track and crossings and helped on tie and rail gangs, also

learning how to change out bridge timbers. His team traveled a lot working at different locations which only allowed him to be home on the weekends.

In 2021, Matt started working for Lake State and he's very glad he made the switch as it allows him to be home with his family every day.



“I have an amazing wife Amanda, we have been together ten years now. Without her support I couldn't do what I do. We have two daughters Marley (8) and Kaytlyn (6) and they are our world. Everything I do is for those three.”

Matt enjoys the outdoors, which is a blessing in his line of work. So when the hard working day is done, you can find him out fishing or hunting or going on nature hike. As a family, they enjoy going kayaking together.

“Right now it's so fun watching the girls learning how to paddle their own kayaks.”

From day one, Matt has shown a deep understanding of his role and responsibilities. His expertise, attention to detail, and willingness to share knowledge with others have made him a valuable resource for both teammates and leadership. Whether faced with routine tasks or unexpected challenges, he approaches every situation with confidence, professionalism, and a commitment to finding solutions.

What truly sets Matt apart is his loyalty and dedication to the organization. He consistently goes above and beyond to support the team, contribute to our goals, and uphold the values that make our workplace successful. His reliability and positive attitude inspire those around them and help create a strong, collaborative work environment.

Perhaps his most admirable quality is his determination. No matter the obstacle, he faces challenges head-on with perseverance and resilience. Matt's “no quit” attitude serves as a powerful example of what can be accomplished through hard work, commitment, and a positive mindset.

We are grateful for his contributions and proud to have him as part of our team. Please join us in recognizing and celebrating his outstanding performance, dedication, and continued commitment to excellence.

Thank you for all that you do—you truly make a difference every day.

Alex Nikora IV
Roadmaster/Inspector

LSRC Family Train Ride —May 2026 Pulled by historic steam engine Pere Marquette #1225



LSRC TEAM

Look what the Stork brought in! Future Railroaders!



Ada Smith
born 02/05/26
to Spencer & Samantha Smith



Carson James Vongrey
born 10/22/25
to Travis & Ashley Vongrey



Hudson James Wiseheart
born 08/15/25
to Cody & Taylor Wiseheart

Jan-July 2026 Employment Anniversaries

EMPLOYEE YEARS

Kevin Mitrzyk.....	33
Corey Violette.....	27
Brian Benson	27
Scott Baker	25
Charley Zelek.....	24
Kevin Podgorniak.....	23
Trista Wolgast.....	19
Elliot Hubbard.....	15
John Bolesky.....	15
John Agnew	15
David Murringer	15
Daniel Heimberger	14
Kristopher Kent	14
Mark Pennell	14
Mike Stickel	13
Melissa Podgorski.....	12
Mark Eickholt	12
Richard Joles.....	12
Keith Jammer	10
Zachary Valeck.....	10
Deanna Hennessy.....	9
Michael Davis	9
Sean Pengelly	9
Christohper Smith	9
Tony Kolnowski	8
Andrew Esseltine.....	8
Brendan Forrest.....	8
Travis Smith	8
Andrew Weise	8
Michael Milkowski.....	7
Jordan Norman.....	7
Brent Keeler	7
James Brown	7
Wade Arnold	7
Roger Fuehring	7
Ryan Kregel	7
Ryan Curbey	7
Jeremie Hascall.....	7
Alex Nikora	7
Nick Sweet	7
Brenda Dault	7
Devlyn Kalinowski.....	7
Tom Wagner.....	6
Travis Vongrey.....	6
Dustin Tomczak	6

Continued....

Janine Denay	6
Matt Bradley.....	5
Tom Klemm	5
Jason Loomis	5
Chad Maxon	5
Kyle McCloud.....	5
Pete Adams	5
Matt Bolen.....	5
Richard Stakolosa	4
William Huff.....	4
David Foster	4
Joshua Krieger	4
Jared Markva	4
Allison Collins	4
James Collins	3
Kelli Eurich.....	3
Noah Steffen	3
Marc Ballard	3
Scott Perkins.....	3
Kevin Fowler.....	3
Seth Baker	3
Nathan Joles.....	3
David Lathrop.....	3
Robert McEnrue	3
Cole Pennell.....	2
Mark Rosner	2
Ashley Neuman	2
Robert Dargan	2
Brian Pannett.....	2
Christopher Cook.....	1
Ron Lord	1
Devin Virgo	1
Brayden Geesaman	1
Dustin Jackson	1
Christopher Dumas.....	1
Matt Breasbois	1
Dave Fitzgerald.....	1
Benjamin Kuehnle	1
Sean Jones.....	1
Tyler Adams.....	1
Jase Sitarski	1
Robert Smith	1
Andrew Young	1
Ian Mitchell	1



**Congratulations to
Ian and Kyra Mitchell
Married April 11, 2026**

New Hires!

*We'd like to give a warm welcome to our newest
Lake State Railway team members!
Welcome Aboard!*

January—July 2026

Clarence Smith—Welder/Track Laborer
Nathan Beach—Engineer/Conductor
Luke McMunigal—Sr. Director Financial Planning & Analysis
Ryan Kerkela—Conductor
Robert Knights—Conductor
Gavin Mackie—Conductor
Nathan Kipp—Signal Maintainer—C & S
Kaden Lawhorn—Conductor
Caleb McCloud—Track Laborer
Cody Phelps—Track Laborer
Benjamin Ritter—Track Laborer

“The Turntable” - Lake State Railway Company's Official Newsletter

Lake State Railway Company

750 N. Washington Ave.
Saginaw, MI 48607

Phone: 989-393-9800
Fax: 989-757-2134
E-mail: info@lsrc.com

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE



Mailing Address Line 1
Mailing Address Line 2
Mailing Address Line 3
Mailing Address Line 4
Mailing Address Line 5

LSRC 1776 Honoring America's 250 Years as a Nation design and photography by Travis Vongrey



To be added to “The Turntable” email distribution list or to make changes to how you receive the newsletter,
please contact hennessyd@lsrc.com. ☺