Today on the M&NJ

Before winter set in and brought the project to a standstill, DG Yard was undergoing a complete rebuilding and reconfiguration funded by a grant from NYS DOT. The switches to the engine shed (the “bus house” by the station where the operable 44 tonner used to be stored between runs) and to the Loop Track (on the west side of the station where the caboose, fuel tender and occasional covered hoppers were stored) were both removed. The switch on the north end of the Coach Track was moved southward (away from the Sprague Avenue bridge) which shortened the Coach Track but permitted the straightening of the main track as it comes off Sprague Avenue bridge. This provides better clearance through the bridge for the bigger diesels being operated on the M&NJ. The clearance problem occurs when the switch is set for the Coach or Loop Track. Having the switch set for the main is not a problem. So long as the Conrail crew had a couple of cars for "reachers", they could make the pickup off the Coach. Ed Horan has supplied us with a more technical description of the situation that has been remedied. The problem was/is that the O&W bridge was designed for track with a constant degree of curve but when the O&W bridge was swapped for the M&U bridge, the track gang had to fit the sharper compound curve on the south end of the bridge account the No. 8 turnout to the Coach Track, resulting in not enough clearance between the gusset plates and the north end of certain locomotives as they entered/exited the Coach Track. To alleviate the problem, 1" of superelevation in the dap of the new timbers was specified, even though Conrail’s MW-4 Standards Book called for zero supelevation for that degree of curve at 10mph. The deck was built with the 1" superelevation, but for some reason EMD's would clear but the GE's still scraped the gusset plates, albeit just a bit (it has to be something to do with the truck centers/overhang of the different builders). A General Order that restricted GE power from the bridge was proposed, but Pete Rasmussen wouldn't go for it (probably rightly so) as he didn't want any more reasons for Conrail to go to the State and force the M&NJ to take the branch (which was still alive at the time of the bridge swap), and he just handled it locally with the Conrail crews.

To compensate for the loss of some car storage capacity on the Coach Track, the switch for the Farm Track (where the former L&NE flat car sat by Houston Ave. for many years) was moved northward to lengthen that siding. In addition, a new runaround track was installed between Houston Ave. and Washington St. It appears to have a capacity of three or four cars. One purpose of the new runaround may be to eliminate the dropping by on the hill by O&R of empties out of Genpak and the team track at the former Agway Fertilizer site to place the cars behind the engine so they could be dropped at the north end of the Coach Track for pickup by Norfolk Southern.

All the switches in DG Yard were being rebuilt with new timbers and switch stands while the 80 lb. rail was being replaced with 100 lb. rail salvaged from other Regional Rail short lines. Stone ballast was to be dumped to raise the main 3”.

A visit to the yard on November 19th resulted in this report by Ed Horan. They have moved the curve off the Sprague Ave. bridge in a clever but obvious way, splitting the difference to either side of the bridge now that the old switches are out. It really looks good. The north Coach Track switch lead is a bit of a cork-screw with an S type profile, so I don't think they will lose any room as far as total cars go. I think a pellet car with tight centers will be a problem, but only time will tell. The new Farm Track switch is in and it should give them 3 or 4 more car-lengths of storage. Rail is 100 lbs. and only 2 years newer than the 80 lbs. being taken out. Head wear is about the same. The real saving grace to the job is the new switch hardware, which really makes the job look good. Looking north from the Sprague Ave. Bridge, there is a lot of empty space now that the Loop and the engine house leads are out. There are possibilities there for 1 or 2 short leads for trans-loading in the future if they need it.

The big GE # 5114 assigned to the M&NJ evidently was sidelined by voltage regulator issues and in its place GE 44 tonner # 2 operated on November 10th to take two loads to Genpak and pull two empties out of there as well as one empty from the team track at the former site of Agway Fertilizer. The engine operated again the next day to serve as a source of compressed air for the track gang's tools in DG Yard. The B end of the 44 tonner was down with a worn out fuel transfer pump on Thursday and so a mechanic swapped out the pump from the # 1 while the A end was running. The guy working on the engine started out on the Middletown & Hummelstown and is very familiar with center cab GE's. # 1 has also donated her radiators to the # 2.

On November 26th, the Times Herald-Record reported that Port Jervis had installed a new roundhouse oil recovery remediation system funded through a $200,000 grant awarded to the City by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under its Brownfields Cleanup Program. The system "will assist in the cleanup of a critical downtown property, the former rail yard contaminated by oil from diesel fuel."

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