



SOUTH SHORE LINE INSULL'S INTERURBAN LEGACY: 2

Today on the SOUTH SHORE

BY JOHN MEANS AND RYAN KERTIS/PHOTOS AS NOTED

A GENERATION AGO, RAILFANS KNEW THE Chicago, South Shore & South Bend as “the Midwest’s last interurban,” with vintage heavyweight electric cars rolling down jointed rail through industrial areas on Indiana’s lake shore. Even as noted historian and author William D. Middleton proclaimed “the American interurban era was truly over” with the shutdown of neighbor Chicago North Shore & Milwaukee in January 1963, the South Shore solidified on. Surviving a number of reversals of fortune through the years, today’s South Shore operation is thriving, yet still retains much of its original charm.

In September 1903, the first Chicago & Indiana Air Line Railway streetcars connected East Chicago to Indiana Harbor. The following year, the railroad was renamed the Chicago, Lake Shore & South Bend Railway. In 1906, the railroad embarked on an aggressive program to build an electric railroad from South Bend, Indiana, all the way to Chicago. An unusual 6600-volt a.c.

system was chosen to energize the line. By 1908, ten trains a day were operating between South Bend and Hammond. In 1912 the Kensington & Eastern Railway was completed to allow through service over the Illinois Central to Chicago. Initially, IC steam locomotives were used to tow CLS&SB coaches over the connection to Chicago. Carload freight service began in 1916, further improving the fortunes of the fledgling electric railway.

Into the 1920s, the South Shore began a period of rapid decline. The railroad had accumulated a significant debt by 1924, leading to a bank foreclosure on the property, and what seemed like the end of the line.

The Insull Era

Samuel Insull was a powerful captain of industry who came up through the ranks of Thomas Edison’s empire in the late 19th century. Insull had combined his holdings in Chicago’s Commonwealth Edison and the Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIP-

SCO) into one of the most powerful utilities in the Midwest. When the CLS&SB entered receivership in 1925, Insull purchased the railroad at foreclosure and reorganized it as the Chicago, South Shore & South Bend Railroad. The South Shore became part of a portfolio of electric interurbans that also included control of the North Shore as well as the Chicago, Aurora & Elgin.

Under Insull’s management, the South Shore was transformed almost overnight. The original streetcar line from East Chicago to Indiana Harbor was abandoned. The overhead wire was converted from 6600 volts a.c. to 1500 volts d.c. to allow trains to operate directly onto the connecting Illinois Central (which was electrified in 1926). Track gangs rebuilt the line to “steam road” standards with heavy rail and deep ballast. New steel heavyweight electric coaches were ordered to replace the original wooden cars. The results were immediate, as both freight and passenger revenues climbed to meet expenses for the first time ever. Thanks

OPPOSITE: South Shore Line train 107 is running wrong-main and about to pound the Indiana Harbor Belt diamond at State Line on November 28, 2012. Lead car No. 47 is part of the second order of electric m.u. cars built by Nippon-Sharyo in 1992. LOU GERARD PHOTO

RIGHT: After what seemed to be years of constant construction, the new joint terminal at Millennium Station in Chicago was dedicated in 2007. On August 1, 2009, South Shore and Metra Electric trains await their departures. CYNTHIA FREELAND PHOTO. BELOW: In brilliant afternoon sun, a South Shore train departs Museum/11th Street station in Chicago on June 29, 2010. LOU GERARD PHOTO



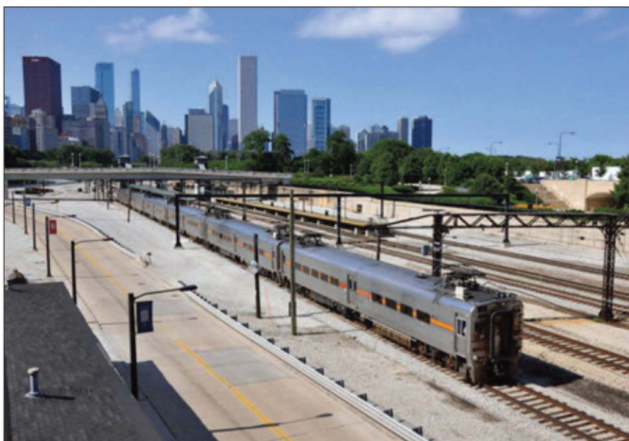
to an aggressive marketing campaign of award winning posters and publicity, the South Shore won the title of "first and fastest" from *Electric Traction* magazine.

Depression and Rebirth

Nearly all of the growth the railroad experienced under new management had been wiped out by the Great Depression. The Insull empire collapsed in 1932, and the South Shore sought its own independent reorganization. Insull left behind a well-built railroad that was able to withstand a few lean years, and slowly the South Shore climbed out of the pools of red ink.

As the years pressed on, passenger and freight service continued to grow with new freight stations being built at South Bend and Hegewisch. The war years provided a great boost in traffic, but increased competition from improved highways and increased automobile usage soon took their toll. The Insull-era passenger cars were rebuilt and lengthened for better capacity, and modernized with air-conditioning.

In 1956, a bypass was completed allowing trains to eliminate the slow



street running through downtown East Chicago. This re-aligned a five mile section of the railroad to follow the newly completed Indiana Toll Road.

The South Shore found itself at the center of a battle for control when the Monon expressed interest in acquisition in 1964, looking to tap the lucrative freight traffic along the lake shore. The South Shore was not interested, instead hoping for merger with a strong eastern partner. The Chesapeake & Ohio had purchased a majority stake in

the South Shore by 1965, but legal challenges from the Monon persisted until the Interstate Commerce Commission approved the takeover in 1967.

It was at this time that first diesel locomotives appeared on the railroad as C&O switchers and Geeps were run alongside the South Shore's own electric freight motors.

The South Shore route was long enough to be considered for possible inclusion in Amtrak, but management declined. However, faced with a rapidly



TOP: A morning train from Chicago arrives at 11th Street station in Michigan City on April 19, 2011. The old South Shore station building has been shuttered for many years, and NICTD is planning to re-route the railroad off the city streets. OTTO M. VONDRAK PHOTO. ABOVE: With co-author Ryan Kertis at the controls, NICTD Train 14 drifts through Hammond, headed for State Line on August 31, 2010. JOHN MEANS PHOTO

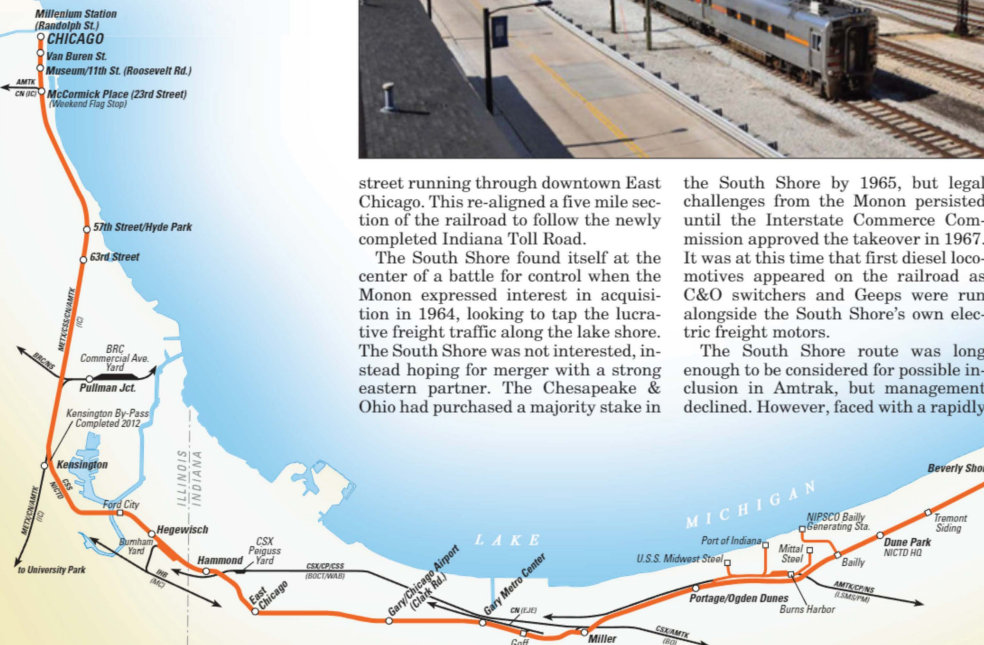
increasing passenger deacts the South Shore filed with the ICC to abandon passenger service completely in 1976. In response, the state of Indiana created the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) to subsidize the South Shore passenger service in 1977. Federal funding helped to obtain the first new passenger cars in more than 50 years, built by Nippon-Sharyo and entering service in November 1982.

The Modern South Shore

Electric freight service came to an end in 1981, entirely replaced by a fleet of diesels. The last of the Insull-era heavyweight passenger cars were retired in 1983. In 1984, C&O sold the South Shore to Venango River Corp., a holding company founded by several former Santa Fe managers. While initially successful, the South Shore slipped into bankruptcy yet again in 1989 after accumulating debt from other Venango River ventures. An agreement was hashed out where the railroad's services would be split. NICTD would directly take over all passenger operations while the Chicago, South Shore & South Bend Railroad would continue to operate freight service.

In 1990, the CSS&SB was purchased by short line operator Anacostia & Pacific, while NICTD owns the entire main line from South Bend to State Line. "South Shore Freight" retains the main line from State Line to Kensington with the maintenance performed by NICTD. South Shore Freight also owns Burnham Yard, Lincoln Yard in Michigan City, and many of the online industrial spurs and sidings.

In 2000, South Shore Freight purchased part of Norfolk Southern's Michigan City District, part of the Lake Division, on former Nickel Plate tracks from Michigan City to Dillon, Ind. They also purchased part of the South Bend Branch from Dillon to Kingsbury, Ind., to gain access to the Kingsbury Industrial Park. The South Bend Branch runs over the former Wabash Fourth District which ran from Chicago to Toledo.



Today on the South Shore Line

Alternatively, NICTD has also modernized and expanded their operations with new equipment, signals and platforms at many stations. In the years since NICTD first purchased the line, welded rail has been installed system-wide, and new high-level platforms at Hegewisch, Hammond and East Chicago helped to speed train dwell times. In 2007, the first of three planned segments of CTC came online between Kensington and Gary, replacing the In-sull-era automatic block signals that long stood trackside. By the spring of 2012, the entire signal system had been converted to modern CTC. A fleet of 14 new bi-level passenger cars, a first for the South Shore, were delivered in the winter of 2009 to help bolster the fleet of single-level electric m.u. (EMU) cars. In February 2012 a new connection was opened at Kensington to speed train movements onto and off of the Metra Electric (former Illinois Central) tracks, which also eliminated the station stop for South Shore trains for the first time in 100 years.

The Passenger Side (NICTD)

South Shore's passenger operations offer frequent service during peak and off-peak hours, with long-distance and short-haul service all incorporated into a daily schedule. The easiest way for one to understand South Shore's schedule would be to grab a public timetable at any one of South Shore's stations or visit www.nictd.com.

A normal weekday sees 21 eastbound trains and 20 westbound trains. A normal weekend day sees 11 eastbounds and 10 westbounds. Photographing passenger trains can be tricky if you seek good lighting conditions. Only a handful of trains run into the sun as peak-hours operations occurring opposite the direction of the sun. Choose your locations wisely, and be aware of local speed limits should you attempt to reach multiple stations.

The Freight Side (CSS)

South Shore Freight, as they are now known, is one of northwest Indiana's primary steel haulers in the region serving Mittal Steel (ArcelorMittal) at Bailly and U.S.S.'s Midwest Steel Plant (part of the Gary Works) in Portage. South Shore Freight is also one of northwest Indiana's largest coal haulers, receiving coal from CSX, Norfolk Southern, and Union Pacific for delivery to Mittal and the NIPSCO. This is all in tandem with the numerous on-line customers and interchange work performed by the South Shore.

South Shore Freight's symbolizing system works by crews, not by train. There are two types of crews; Assigned Freight (AF) and Pool Freight (PF). Assigned crews work an assigned job five days a week with a set start time. The



ABOVE: Sporting a six pack of bi-levels on this day, Train 220 leans into the curve after pausing at the Chicago Airport flag stop on July 25, 2012. RYAN KERTIS PHOTO
OPPOSITE TOP: CSS 2006 leads AF-20 west through Ogdens Dunes, running against the current and wrong main on March 26, 2010. JOHN MEANS PHOTO
OPPOSITE BOTTOM: CSS 2001 starts the drop down to street level after crossing over the CSX mainline and curving away from the Indiana Toll Road at Hammond on December 30, 2012, with co-author John Means as conductor. RYAN KERTIS PHOTO

Pool crews work off of a first-in/first-out board where it is similar to an extra board where you are called to work, but you stay with the same crew through your entire work week. Here is a current breakdown (as of the beginning of 2013) of the six Assigned Freight jobs that toil away during the week.

AF 16: The New Job (Fri: 10:30 a.m., Sat-Sun: 9:30 a.m., Mon-Tues: 2:30 p.m.). On Friday, the train covers one of the Barr Job's off days and goes to East Chicago. On Saturday, they do the work of the Bailly Switcher. On Sunday, they do the Belt Job. On Monday and Tuesday, they take a pair of engines from Shops to Burnham, making any number of stops along the way, pick up an eastbound train, and return making stops as needed.

AF 17: The Bailly Switcher (Mon-Fri: 4:45 a.m.). The Bailly switcher works all day at Bailly putting together the Belt train and the Barr Job. You may also see this crew head west to work Midwest Steel via the connection between Ogdens Dunes and Wilson East to the NS at CP 487. The crew usually comes back to Shops engine light.

AF 18: The City Job (Mon-Fri: 7:00 a.m.). The job starts by switching out an eastbound train at the South Harbor Yard in Michigan City north of the NICTD diamond. After the train is switched, they head east to Davis (about MP 29) where cars are swapped. There's also a customer at Davis that receives a few cars a week. Additional work is performed at Olive before returning to Michigan City. The train is usually shoved down the former Nickel Plate main line and the power is cut off south of Roeske Ave. A customer is also switched at this location.

On Monday-Wednesday-Friday, this job also goes to the lakefront which is accessed from Amtrak's former Michigan Central route in downtown Michigan City. The locomotives will run west through town to Power (CP 36) and back into the siding. Cars are switched for the two industries and taken through the Lincoln Yard adjacent to NIPSCO's Michigan City plant. After the work is completed, the train is pulled back to the siding at Power, and the outbounds are left in the northern most siding. The power returns light to

Michigan City.

AF 19: The Belt Job (Mon-Fri: 8:30 a.m.). The Belt Job works their train west to Belt Railway of Chicago's Commercial Ave. Yard in South Chicago. A normal day sees a pair of Geeps depart Shops westbound behind South Shore Train 14 (which departs the 11th Street at 8:37 a.m.). Upon arrival at Bailly, AF 17 hands their train off to the AF 19. Some days a stop is made at

Goff on Gary's east side to interchange with the CN (EJ&E). The train then continues west to Burnham Yard. Upon completion of the work at Burnham, the train run west to Kensington, then north on the CN/IC to Fordham. At Fordham, after ducking under the BRC, the train is shoved up to Commercial Ave. Yard. Trains are swapped, and the crew shoves back down to the IC connection. They run back to Burn-

ham where they tie up for the day.

AF 20: The East Chicago Job (Sun-Thurs: 10:30 a.m.). The Barr Job is a transfer that runs to CSX at Miller and then on to Peiguss Yard in East Chicago, Indiana. A pair of engines runs light to Bailly and picks up their outbound train. The train then runs west to Miller where they gain access to the CSX Barr Subdivision. The train is shoved down the connection to the crossover at the west end of Miller Siding. After authority is gained from the CSX "RA" Dispatcher, the train is shoved onto the CSX main and then proceeds west to East Chicago. At Columbia Ave. the train enters the east leg of the wye off to head into the yard. Cuts are swapped and the train heads back east to Miller. Once on the South Shore again, a set out is made at Bailly of cars for the mill (sometimes the whole train, sometimes not). The remaining cars are usually destined for the yard in Michigan City).

AF 21: The Burnham Switcher (Sun-Thurs: 7:00 p.m.). This job starts at the new yard office at Burnham Yard, switches out an eastbound (destined for Shops) and a westbound train (destined for Port of Illinois), and switches all of the industries west of Burnham, including the Port of Illinois. After the eastbound and westbound trains are switched out, the Switcher



heads for the Port of Illinois. A stop is usually made to service a pig iron facility just west of the Calumet River Bridge around MP 72. Just west of CP 73.8, the train switches a customer just east of Kensington. After this, the train is shoved back on the siding and run around. A setout is usually made in a small yard adjacent to CP 73.8 of cars for the NS. After this is done, the train disappears into the Port. After the Port work is complete, the train is shoved out and onto the main line. They return to Burnham where the Port inbounders are switched to go out the next day in interchange.

Pool Freights: There are four Pool Freight crews including PF 22, 23, 24, and 25. These are the crews that do all of the miscellaneous work, particularly pertains to the coal traffic on the South Shore. Loaded coal trains are received from the CN at Goff, CSX at Miller, CP at BRC's Commercial Ave. Yard, and NS via Miller Siding located at CP 491 on the former Conrail Chicago Line. The UP trains received at Goff are destined for the NIPSCO plant at Michigan City. CSX delivers loaded coal and coke trains to the siding at Miller for the South Shore. These trains are either for Arcelor Mittal at Bailly or for NIPSCO at Bailly. The coke trains are only delivered to Mittal. South Shore just won a bid for hauling loaded coal trains of bituminous coal from British Columbia for Mittal. These trains are interchanged from the Canadian Pacific at BRC's Commercial Ave Yard to the South Shore. Also, loaded coal trains are left at Miller Siding on the NS at CP 491 which are destined for NIPSCO Michigan City.

Power on the Goff trains is most always Union Pacific power. On the CSX trains, a wide range of CSX power is seen on these trains from the newest of the new GEVOs right on down to SD50s and SD40-2s. The CP trains that are delivered off the BRC are run through using South Shore power. A set of light engines will depart Shops and head to the BRC to pick up the train and bring it to Bailly, or in return, head to Bailly, pick up the empty train, deliver it to the BRC, and return to Shops light power. The NS trains also utilize South Shore power with light power running from Shops to the NS Connection at CP 487, entering the NS, and heading west to Miller Siding at CP 491 to pick up the train. Empties are returned in the same fashion.

With the recent change to the AF-18 job, PF crews also go south on the Kingsbury Industrial Lead to service the online industries down to Kingsbury and return. Any miscellaneous work that needs to be done will also be assigned to a PF crew. The could include switching around Michigan City, taking City cars to Bailly or Goff, pick-



TOP: A pair of new bi-level electric m.u. cars drifts westbound through the backyards of Hammond, crossing Dearborn Street on December 29, 2011. These cars are part of a fleet of 14 built in 2008 similar to those used on Metro Electric. LOU GERARD PHOTO **ABOVE:** In the shadow of NIPSCO's Michigan City Generating Station, CSS 2004 switches coal hoppers at Lincoln Avenue Yard. The cooling tower is often mistaken for a nuclear power plant. JEFF STUPAR PHOTO **OPPOSITE:** Flying white flags, a worker at Michigan City cleans the windows of a South Shore Line m.u. car. during an April 1988 NRHS tour. STEVE BARRY PHOTO

ing up at Goff and peddling east back to Shops, or any combination of things that need to be done. The best way to get an idea of what a crew is doing is to just simply listen to the radio.

Railfanning the South Shore

Given the variety of freight and passenger traffic, there's a lot of action for the visiting railfan to enjoy. First and foremost, the NICTD Police Department takes security very seriously. Do not, under any circumstances, trespass on railroad property. There are plenty of fine photos to be had from public places. Let's work our way east from

Kensington.

Kensington (MP 75.3): From the Metra platform at Kensington, one can get a great view of the newly revamped Kensington Interlocking which was completed in 2012. The former Kensington Tower is still standing and is great photo prop for northbound trains. This particular location is great for the long days of summer when he sun is in the northern part of the sky, particularly in the morning.

Ford City Curve (MP 71.6): The newly installed through-truss bridge at the Ford City Curve in the Hegewisch neighborhood is a sight to behold.

Trains run through the span as they travel above Torrence Ave. and the Norfolk Southern's Chicago District. Unfortunately, there is really no photo angle that can be recommended that doesn't require trespassing or parking along Torrence Ave. which isn't suggested as there is no shoulder.

Hammond (MP 68): From State Line Interlocking (CP 69.2) to Calumet Ave. in Hammond, there are numerous photo opportunities as the tracks twist and wind their way through downtown. The S-curve at Brunswick St. in Hammond is a particular favorite. Also, from Calumet Ave, westbounds can be photographed coming off of the hill where the tracks are elevated from Calumet Ave to Gary.

Miller (MP 55): From the depot at Miller, one can photograph eastbounds passing the small brick station. Westbound can also be photographed com-

ing down the hill from the CSX overpass. The tracks turn sharply to the right as they come down the hill and cross Lake St.

Ogden Dunes (MP 50.8): The Ogden Dunes station is a great photo location as the "South Shore Line" depot sign is in the middle of the platform, across the tracks. Trains can be photographed all day long passing the sign which has the South Shore logo and the station's name printed on it.

Beverly Shores (MP 39.3): The iconic Beverly Shores depot is a great place to shoot trains passing the depot which is adorned by a neon sign lights up at night with the depot's name.

Michigan City (MP 35.2-32.2): At milepost 35.2, the railroad begins the famous street running segment on 10th Street. The trains pass down the middle of 10th Street from milepost 35.2 to milepost 34.5, a distance of a little un-

der a mile. At the 10th Street Interlocking (CP 34.5), trains jog through a sharp S-curve to move from 10th St to 11th St. At the same time, the cross the Amtrak Michigan Line the runs between Porter, Indiana, and Detroit, Michigan. From the 10th Street Interlocking east, the trains run down 11th Street to about milepost 33.4. On 11th Street between Franklin and Pine stands the former and current South Shore depots. The former depot is still adorned by a South Shore sign that is worthy of a photo. East of there, at Cedar Street, the tracks encounter a tight S-curve as they drop into a bowl before climbing out up to Oak St. From there the tracks drop down hill to Michigan Blvd. where they exit the street running. At milepost 32.2, the mainline crosses the South Shore's Kingsbury Industrial Lead on a diamond adjacent to the Carroll Ave. station. This is also the location of the railroad's shop buildings for both freight and passenger. Photographs can be had from the Carroll Ave platform.

Fail Road (MP 21): At about milepost 21, Fail Road passes over the South Shore. This is a particularly nice photo with the tracks heading upgrade eastbound. Trains are usually climbing hard tackling Galena Hill making this great location to photograph AF-18 headed east to Olive.

Hudson Lake (MP15.1): The area around the Hudson Lake depot is a great location as the tracks wind their way through town. There are a few reverse curves and the depot which is located at N. Chicago Rd.

South Bend (MP 3-MP 0): In South Bend, the tracks completely reverse direction before entering the new South Bend Airport Depot. At Westmoor St and Sherman St, the tracks come up alongside Westmoor and run along it to Bendix Drive. The tracks turn sharply north as they cross Bendix Drive and continue north for about two miles next to the road. As the tracks reach the airport, the turn west, crossing Bendix Drive again and running a mile to the depot at Progress and Commerce Drive.

Insull's Legacy Survives

Despite Bill Middleton's proclamation to the contrary, the interurban era may not be over in the United States. The South Shore still maintains much of its Insull-era feel, with m.u. cars wandering down a single-track main line, often with wooden poles still lining the right-of-way, serving quaint stations at many locations. The links to the past are there, but the modern stainless steel passenger cars and heavy diesel-powered freight trains remind you that this is, indeed, a 21st century operation, keeping the interurban torch lit as it races through the Indiana dunelands. ■

