

# RT&S

RAILWAY TRACK AND STRUCTURES

April 2010

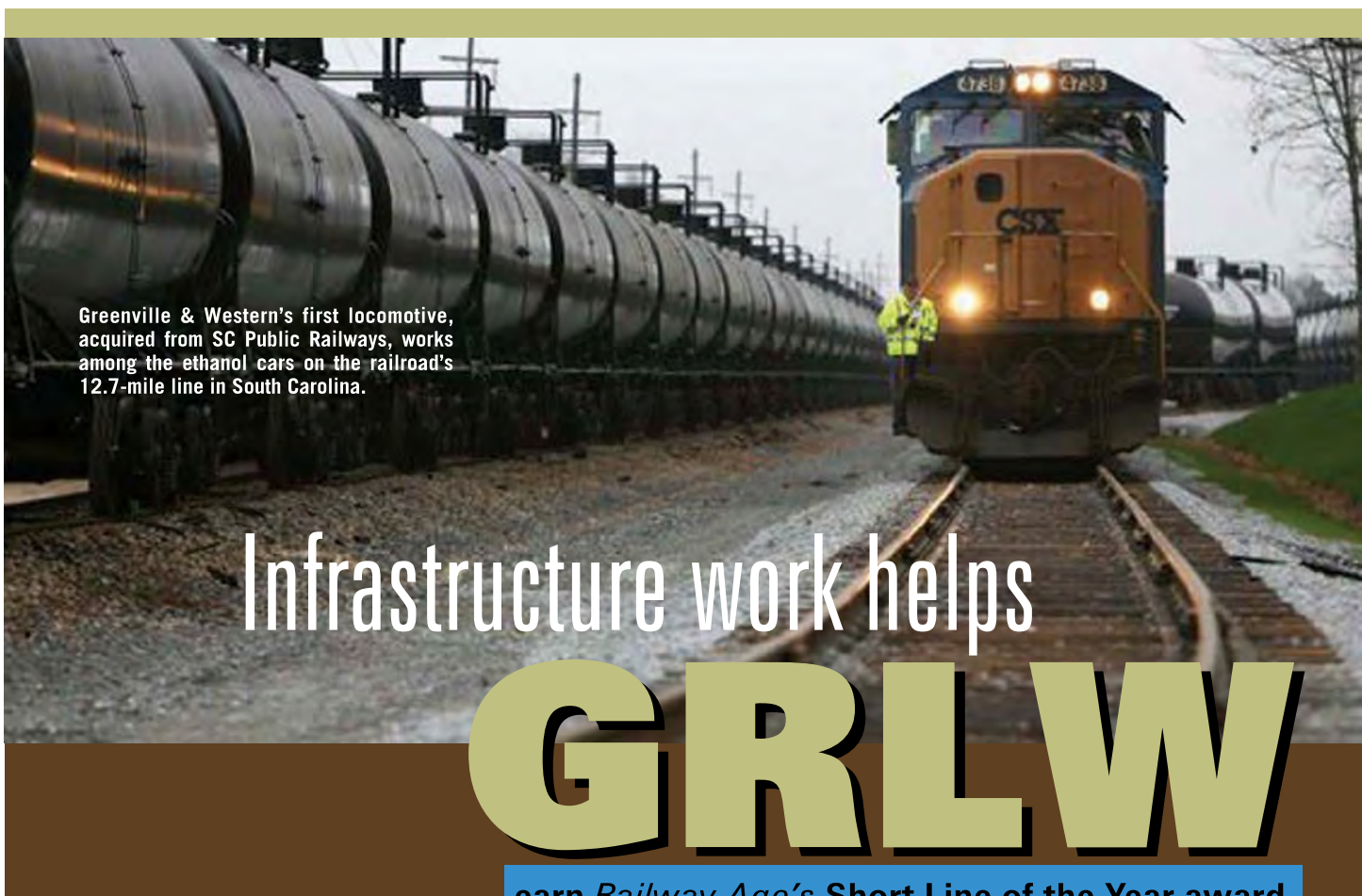
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- Shortline M/W:  
Greenville & Western
- PTC update





Greenville & Western's first locomotive, acquired from SC Public Railways, works among the ethanol cars on the railroad's 12.7-mile line in South Carolina.

# Infrastructure work helps

# GRLW

earn *Railway Age's* Short Line of the Year award

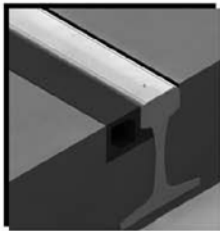
## Careful infrastructure investment, team effort lead to healthy traffic increases for South Carolina railroad.

by Tom Judge, editor

**R**ailway Age, a sister publication to *RT&S*, named Greenville & Western Railway Co. LLC the 2010 Short Line Railroad of the Year. Careful investments in the infrastructure helped GRLW rise from a candidate for abandonment to one of the top shortlines in the nation.

"This year's winner not only excelled despite economic turmoil, but al-

so found ways to take advantage of it and to prosper," says *Railway Age* Publisher Robert P. DeMarco. "The award winner had a vision and a plan, and not only reassured existing customers on their lines but actively courted new ones with strong marketing efforts. Combined with the cooperation and coordination with their respective Class 1 partners, the winners cultivated customer relationships,



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# Shortline m/w: **GRLW**



South Carolina-based Wilson Contractor, Inc., handles major track work for Greenville & Western.

invested in infrastructure and property assets and kept tabs on the growing market for 'green' growth, which the U.S. railroad industry is ideally positioned to leverage."

The award will be presented at the American Short Line and Regional

Railroad Association's annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., May 4.

Greenville, S.C.-based Greenville & Western Railway operates 12.74 miles through Anderson County. The company acquired the route from CSX Transportation in 2006, inheriting online

traffic of fewer than 100 carloads annually. Intensive work on the right-of-way and a strategic purchase of 38.3 acres to encourage distribution facilities for ethanol and petroleum products, helped propel the shortline's volume to 1,872 revenue carloads in 2009—an increase of

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130 percent over a two-year period.

In addition to being recognized by *Railway Age*, GRLW this year also is being honored by CSXT at the Class 1 railroad's 2010 Short Line Workshop for notching the largest percentage of growth, on a line-haul basis, between 2008 and 2009.

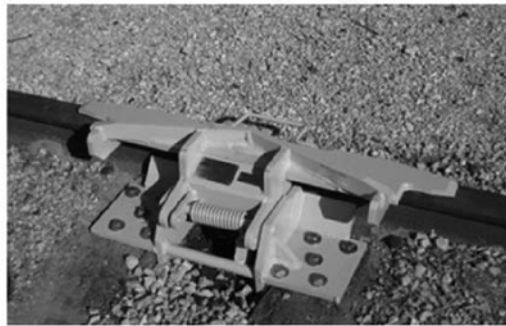
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- Preservation: Protect the future of the local economy by ensuring the longevity of existing rail service in both Carolinas through preservation of service.
- Restoration: Provide new infrastructure to promote opportunities for future economic growth through the restoration of rail service to areas without service.
- Revitalization: Offer products and services not currently offered by existing carriers.

Greenville & Western's roots can be traced back to the original 1910 charter of the Greenville, Spartanburg & Anderson Railway. The line was part of a section of the GS&A that was constructed between Greenwood and

**Left: GRLW installs a new switch panel. The line retimbered most of its switches in 2009 and installed new switch stands.**

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# Shortline m/w: **GRLW**

Greenville between 1910 and 1912 and the company, together with its affiliate, Piedmont Traction Company, was collectively recognized by the public as Piedmont & Northern Lines. Following the 1911 charter of the Piedmont and Northern Railway Co., both companies were absorbed into the P&N in 1914 and such was the line's identity through

1969. Purchased by Seaboard Coast Line Railroad in that same year, the line, as the result of successive mergers that led to the formation of CSXT, remained under CSXT ownership and operation for more than 36 years, ending October 20, 2006.

Effective October 21, 2006, GRLW assumed ownership and operation of



the line, which serves the Belton, Cheddar, Williamston and Pelzer communities in South Carolina.

Once a candidate for abandonment, GRLW continues to upgrade the infrastructure of its 12.74-mile line to further aid in the ongoing development of adjacent parcels in order to attract new businesses to locate along the line and bring additional new job opportunities to Anderson County.

GRLW interchanges with both CSXT at Pelzer and the Pickens Railway at Belton. GRLW also has interchange access to Norfolk Southern at Anderson via its PKHP connection at Belton.

GRLW currently offers seven-day service and customizable switching services to its interchange partners and online customers.

GRLW remains an accident, incident and injury-free member of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association and multi-year recipient of the Jake Award with Distinction for achieving a Frequency/Severity Index of 0.00 for the past three consecutive years (2007-2009).

In addition to the above-mentioned awards, GRLW is the recipient of ASLRRRA's 2010 Marketing Award.

## Maintenance philosophy

The railroad's basic maintenance philosophy is "fix it now." And everyone in the company turns to the work at hand when needed to get the job done.

"Anytime I hi-rail, I look at any problem areas and deal with them," said Jason Byrd, manager-engineering. "Our track inspectors do repairs, as well. We go out with bolts, joint bars, etc. and fix as much as we can the day that we find it. If there's something critical, we deal with that as quickly as possible. Ninety percent of what we haul is ethanol.

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"Last year, starting in September, we began transporting a substantial amount of ethanol. Now we have more revenue to use on our infrastructure," Byrd said.

GRLW recently finished a tie upgrade program, installing nearly 13,000 wood ties, virtually every other tie in a mile of track. Now the railroad is aiming for Class 2 track status, doing ballast and rail upgrades to get there.

"Other major work includes replacing rail on a quarter-mile curve, surfacing and redecking a bridge with new timbers," he said. "The bridge crosses a two-lane road about a mile in from the junction with CSXT. It is a plate-girder bridge and we're adding new ties on the approaches and new timbers.

"In one stretch of our line, we are surfacing and upgrading to 136-pound rail from 100-pound," he noted. "Work on the quarter-mile curve is most critical. It's the sharpest on our line and sits at the bottom of a one-plus-percent grade, so trains come down into the sharp curve."

Byrd continued: "Basically, all we did at first was hit our really bad spots with kinks or gauge issues. The big project, after completing the ethanol distribution facility, was to install new ties. The work was complete with ties installed in March 2009. Now we're surfacing, bringing in ballast to really complete that section and upgrade track speed. So far, we have put in 1,300 tons of ballast in one seven-mile stretch. We will probably put in another 1,300 tons of ballast this year."

The railroad has initiated the engineering for a 3,600-foot siding on the opposite side of the main line from its unit train facility. The siding will help in staging empty cars.

"Currently, we have to split the outbound unit trains in two locations, one at the yard and the other at the interchange," Byrd said. "We plan to finish grading by the end of the fourth quarter, but won't do actual construction until next year. We would do all the siding work this year if we didn't have to replace the quarter-mile curve. That curve work takes precedence."

In addition to installing new wood ties, GRLW also retimbered all of its main line switches and added new switch stands with bow handles.

"We've done a tremendous upgrade since we took over the line," Byrd noted. "Previously, in some places you could only see head of rail. Late last summer, we weed-sprayed the entire railroad, includ-

ing sidings, and brush cut 20 feet on either side of track south of the yard, at least seven-eight feet down each side of track along the entire length of the railroad."

"We do much of our track work in-house," he said. "My co-workers go out with me and assist with joint bar replacement, tie removal, tie insertion, etc. Anything major, we contract out.



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# Shortline m/w: **GRLW**



About 90 percent of the traffic on Greenville & Western is ethanol, but the railroad also handles limestone, plastics, scrap metal, fertilizer and feed products and paper.

We've used Wilson Contractor, Inc., of Donalds, S.C., for track work."

## Rolling territory

Byrd added: "Much of the line is on

a grade, including two locations in excess of one percent. There are lots of ups and downs and some long uphill grades, the steepest of which lie at the exit of curves. GRLW has many fills

and cuts, some with a steep drop off on either side. For the most part, the countryside around here is undulating. There are one or two deep creeks."

"The two worst spots for drainage are on the ruling grades," said Steve Hawkins, president. "The only marshy issues are due to poor drainage rather than naturally occurring conditions. One wet area is where a highway water outlet is dumping onto our property. Also, our predecessor hadn't done regular maintenance for many years, which resulted in clogged ditches. The places where we're finding wet areas will be rectified when we get the ditches cleared. There are no natural marshy areas."

Hawkins continued: "Over the next five years, we want to rebuild every grade crossing, upgrade to 136-pound rail for all rail replacements, ensure there are no joints in crossings, increase overall drainage and add ballast to the whole railroad after drainage has been corrected. Also, depending on traffic



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growing as anticipated, we'll build an additional 5,600-foot siding to enable us to have three unit trains on line simultaneously and still keep our main line open."

In addition to ethanol, GRLW also handles limestone, plastics, scrap metal, fertilizer and feed products and paper.

### All together

"Each of us on this railroad has his or her specialty," Hawkins noted. "As owner, my specialty, of course, is everything. Jason's is engineering, but he also may be found out running a train. My operations manager runs the day-to-day operations to keep trains moving. When he has time and when Jason needs help, he may be doing track work or signal maintenance. On a slow day, train service folks may be cutting brush, helping with track work or just working on a locomotive. It's fair to say that we cross all those lines.

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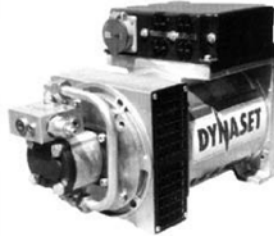


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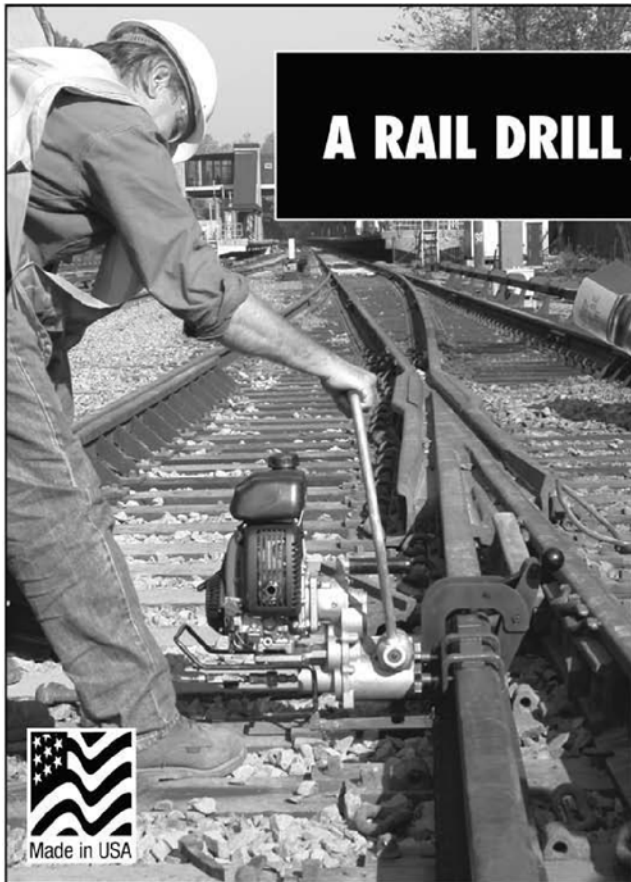


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# Shortline m/w: **GRLW**



When acquired by its present ownership three years ago, Greenville and Western hauled about 100 cars per year. In 2010, the railroad expects to haul nearly 5,000 carloads.

“We’re fortunate to have many skilled electrical engineering. The operations folks,” Hawkins said. “Jason is degreed in manager had worked for CSXT and had a

good operating background before coming to us. One train service employee is a former career Navy man with lots of experience in both diesel and electrical areas from his time in the Navy. Everyone brings a specialty to the table. It’s a team effort to go out and get things done.

“For the past two years, we’ve been actively pursuing financial assistance to install brand new gated, lighted crossing warning systems,” Hawkins pointed out. “One new system would replace an older outdated system, which would be moved to another crossing. We plan to continue working with the state to get the necessary funding. This line hauled fewer than 100 carloads annually when we bought it, but we should hit near 5,000 carloads this year. As we get track speed up and the traffic count up, maybe the state will realize this is not the same railroad it was just a few years ago.

“Finally, what I am most proud of is that this railroad has been incident free, accident free and injury free since inception,” Hawkins said. □

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