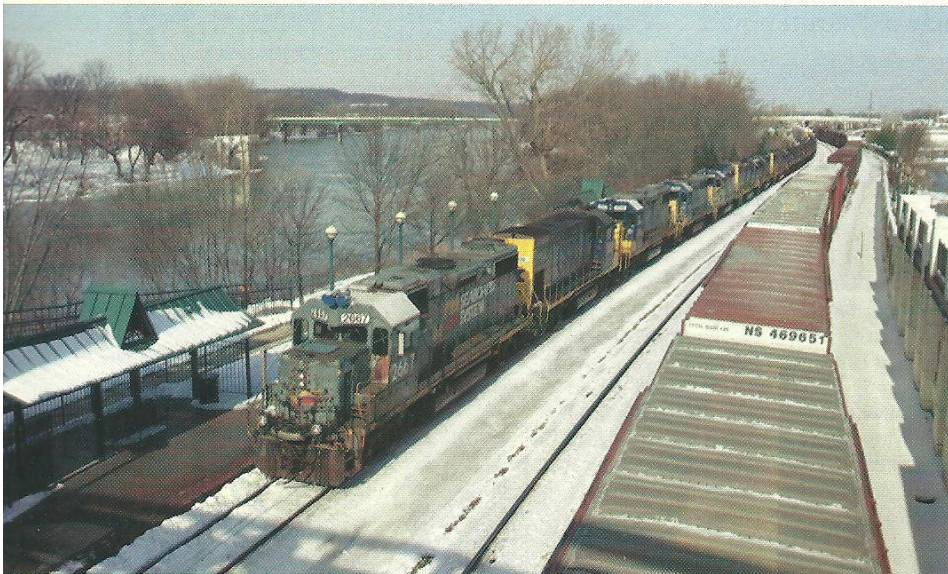


Hoosier hot spot

Watch Amtrak, CSX, and Norfolk Southern from one pedestrian bridge connected to a 1902 depot



CSX Chicago-Indianapolis train Q643 meets a Norfolk Southern auto parts train Feb. 2, 2008, at Lafayette's Amtrak station in the former New York Central depot. Eric Powell

CITY: Lafayette, Ind., has plenty of railroad history thanks to the Monon Railroad's yard and locomotive and car shops that once employed hundreds. The shops are gone, but a Monon Shops Memorial exists near the site. Lafayette was the crossroads of Monon's Chicago-Louisville main line, the Wabash Railroad's Detroit-St. Louis/Kansas City main, New York Central's Indiana Division, and Nickel Plate Road's Frankfort (Ind.)-Peoria line. Today, only the NYC toward Indianapolis is gone; CSX operates the former Monon, NS keeps the ex-Wabash humming with a diverse mix of traffic, and its ex-NKP line to Frankfort sees 4-6 trains per day. Kankakee, Beaverville & Southern comes from the northwest into West Lafayette, just across the Wabash River, several days per week on the former joint NKP-NYC line. Lafayette is a stop on Amtrak's Chicago-Indianapolis train (continuing on to New York three days a week).

YARDS: You can observe CSX's Lafayette Yard one mile north of Riehle Plaza (200 N. Second St.); NS's East Yard on the Lafayette District at the U.S. Highway 52 bypass bridge; and NS's South Yard on the Frankfort District at the U.S. 52 bypass grade crossing.

RAILROAD FREQUENCIES: CSX: 161.370 (road), 160.290 (dispatcher), 160.230 (yard); NS: 160.440 (Lafayette and Frankfort Districts), 161.250 (yard); KB&S: 160.215, 161.490.

TRAIN-WATCHING LOCATIONS: Riehle Plaza, sandwiched between downtown Lafayette and the Wabash River, serves as the Amtrak station and city transportation hub. Anchoring Riehle Plaza is the 1902 Big Four (NYC) depot, which was moved to its present location during a railroad relocation project in the 1990s. Restrooms and snack machines are on the lower level, and parking is available. But the real Riehle Plaza attraction is the pedestrian overpass that straddles NS's two-track Lafayette District and CSX's single-track Monon Sub. About 10 trains a day use CSX; 30 use NS. Lighting for

overhead photos is best midday, but train-watching is great all day. Less than a mile south is the Smith Street pedestrian overpass, near Lafayette Junction, straddling CSX, NS, and the KB&S interchange.

PLACES TO EAT OR STAY: Hotels and eateries abound at the Interstate 65/Indiana Highway 26 interchange on Lafayette's east side, and in West Lafayette, home of Purdue University. Lafayette tourism info: www.lafayette-online.com.

WHAT YOUR FAMILY CAN DO WHILE YOU WATCH TRAINS: Eateries and shops line the square encircling the beautiful Tippecanoe County Courthouse east of Riehle Plaza. The former Highway 26 bridge over the Wabash River is now a public foot bridge linking Riehle Plaza to West Lafayette's "Levee" restaurants and shops.

NEARBY: Fill your belly and your appetite for history at the Whistle Stop Restaurant and Monon Connection Museum, located north of Monon, Ind., 37 miles from downtown Lafayette. The Whistle Stop offers a family-friendly menu and the Monon Connection contains railroad artifacts. Details: www.monon-connection.com or call (219) 253-4100. Linden, Ind., 18 miles south of Lafayette, is home to the Linden Depot Museum, the restored 1907 joint Monon-Nickel Plate Road depot. Next door is the Monon Railroad Historical-Technical Society (<http://lindendepot.com>). Monon Society (www.monon.org) headquarters is open periodically.

ERIC POWELL is an Indianapolis-based freelance writer and *TRAINS* contributor.

TRACKSIDE GUIDE LAFAYETTE, IND.

