

New man takes throttle of Grand Trunk Western Railroad

What's down the track?

By ALICE COLLINS
 "We go hand in hand with the industry of Michigan. We live and breathe the automotive business... and when that slows, as it did last winter, we slow right along with it... and now it's picking up again."
 John H. Burdakin was speaking from his office in Detroit just one week after assuming the presidency of Grand Trunk Western Railroad — the U.S. subsidiary of Canadian National Railway serving predominately Michigan customers.
 He was expressing some thoughts on Grand Trunk, its freight operation, its commuter service

tually went out of non-commuter passenger service and began concentrating on freight.

However, thanks to the cooperation of the State of Michigan, Grand Trunk in September began its first inter-city service for Amtrak between Pt. Huron and Chicago with one train in each direction daily.

Michigan is studying the advisability of running a second train with connections in Toronto.

ON FREIGHT operations: "We're primarily in the business of freight. Last year was a good year for us because auto industry production was up." When the energy crisis hit last winter, and car production slowed, so did our freight operation. Business is better now than earlier this year... we're about equal to where we were last fall before the crisis."

On economic depression: "I'm too optimistic to think that could happen."

On Michigan's economy: "I'm confident in it... business is better and the automobile industry is here to stay. It may have to make some changes, like manufacturing smaller cars. But no other forms of transportation will ever replace the automobile."

On mass transportation: "As I said before, it has to increase. The energy problem will force people into mass transit use."

"I'd like to see Proposal D approved by the voters on Nov. 5th." This proposition on the general election ballot asks voter approval for \$1.1 billion general obligation bond issue to finance planning, acquisition, construction and equipping of land, air and water transportation systems in Michigan.

On railroading philosophies: The management of Grand Trunk (a Canadian government-owned railroad) has "its own goals and philosophies. We operate like a private American company."

"But the management of all railroads have come to realize they're operating public utilities. We're here to service the public and the management understands this. Of course, we're in business to make a profit too."

On the status of Grand Trunk: "We've made a great many advancements in the last three years. Although we're still a deficit operation."

The \$20.7 million deficit of 1970 has been sliced to an estimated \$6 million for 1974. The peak of the three years was 1973 with a revenue of \$108.9 million.

By APRIL of 1975, Grand Trunk will be the first railroad in North America with a completely integrated automatic information system on car movements, operations and revenues.

The \$7.5 million installation scheduled for completion next year will provide a system-wide computer network linking all Grand Trunk trackage by means of 61 electronic scanners.

Primarily a Michigan railroad, Grand Trunk operates 1,032 route miles in the United States plus 2,148 miles of running and switching track.

Before joining Grand Trunk in 1971 as vice president of operations, Burdakin spent 21 years with the Pennsylvania Railroad, starting as a junior engineer and rising through the ranks to assistant general manager of the Pittsburgh central region.

In 1960 he took a 14-month leave of absence to manage the Panama Canal railroad.

With the merger of the Pennsylvania and New York Central into the Penn Central, Burdakin was promoted to general manager and later vice president of the Cleveland region. He came to Detroit in 1970 as vice president and general manager of Penn Central's northern region.

He is a member of many professional, fraternal and civic organizations including the Boys' Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

He is also an active member of the Northbrook Presbyterian Church in Beverly Hills. He and his wife, Jean, have three sons.



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up and down the Pontiac-to-Detroit corridor, the economy, and future prospects of railroads in general.

THE BUSY 52-year-old Birmingham resident's opinions are based on a railroading career that began in 1940 with the Pennsylvania Railroad, and later the Penn Central, before joining Grand Trunk in 1971.

On passenger service: "It's going to continue to grow because of energy shortages. But the movement of people will never be a profit making operation again."

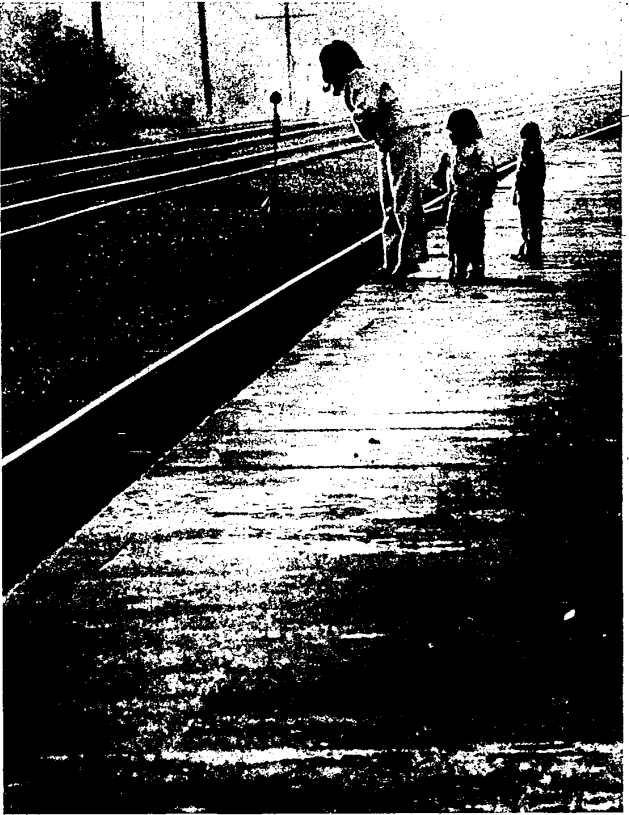
"A train on a popular corridor run here and there may make a profit, but I know of no country in the world where railroads are profiting on the movement of passengers."

"During the energy crisis peak last winter, we had a 25 percent increase in commuter passengers between Pontiac and Detroit, via Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham and Royal Oak."

"But people are back to driving their cars now, so our increase has leveled off at about five percent."

"A year ago we entered into an agreement with the South Eastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMATA). They set our schedules and rates and underwrite some of our losses. With SEMATA in the picture, our loss is less."

When Amtrak began operating inter-city passenger service in 1971, Penn Central was chosen for the Detroit to Chicago run. So Grand Trunk vir-



Waiting for a train are commuters at the GTWR Birmingham station. (photo by Douglas Bauman)

Developers, designers are regulated

Business must meet needs of handicapped



Don Dorais can stretch to dial the phone, but the coin slots are out of reach. (Photograph by Douglas Bauman)

By ALICE COLLINS

A simple sidewalk curb can be a frustrating, insurmountable barrier, blocking entrances into stores, shopping centers, restaurants and theaters.

The man, woman and child riding in a wheelchair faces this six-inch wall wherever he or she goes because the world is geared for the able-bodied — the ones who can step up on the sidewalk, walk into a narrow public telephone booth, reach a paper towel dispenser on a rest room wall, walk or run up a flight of stairs, squeeze into a parking space and have room to get out because there's no wheelchair to set up and slide into.

And Oakland County is no different from the rest of Michigan or the rest of the United States. The physically handicapped are denied access everywhere.

MICHIGAN ADOPTED a series of laws, the first dating back to 1966, calling for the elimination of architectural barriers in new and remodeled public buildings.

"Their enforcement has been weak or not at all," said Miriam King, a spokeswoman for the handicapped and chairperson of the committee for barrier free design of the Michigan Rehabilitation Assn.

"But Nov. 6 begins a new era for Michigan's handicapped and aged," she predicted.

A new uniform state construction code will take effect, carrying with it mandatory requirements for barrier free design for all new or renovated public-use facilities. And backing it up is Public Act 190, which provides for implementing and enforcing these requirements.

Future buildings and facilities will have to be fully accessible to the handicapped, including persons in wheelchairs, the blind and the aged.

Under the code, stores, shopping centers, schools, restaurants, theaters, sports arenas, multiple family dwellings and all similar structures, must have at least one primary entrance at ground level, with no curbs or other barriers blocking the way.

PARKING SPACES at least 12 by 19 feet must be available close to walkways and entrances; every level of a building must be accessible by ramp or elevator.

Other provisions call for braille

"In many cases it hasn't been a matter of deliberately violating the laws... designers of structures just don't know what the requirements are," said Mrs. King. "Some think they're complying when they're not."

One such example, said Mrs. King, is the Orchard Mall in Orchard Lake. They applied for the international symbol of barrier free design — a designation for facilities that fully comply with all requirements.



1976 GOAL:
 Design for ALL Our Citizens...



to be used on elevator buttons. Also listed as accessible are telephones, rest room facilities, electrical switches and fire alarms.

Under the law, builders who fail to follow the requirements of the code will be subject to fine or injunction to halt construction or prevent occupancy.

The Coalition for Barrier Free Environment, with headquarters in Pontiac, will be monitoring compliance with the code on a volunteer basis, said Mrs. King.

"I'm predicting immediate reaction to any obvious attempt to subvert the legal requirements of the barrier free design provisions of the Michigan Building Code and Public Act 190," she declared.

MOST AREA facilities don't comply with design laws already on the books, including a curb-cut law passed in 1973. Under this, all new sidewalks and those replaced must be cut and sloped to the road at each corner.

"The mall is beautiful and fully accessible for the handicapped, except for its bathrooms. But if they make the necessary corrections," Mrs. King added, "they may become one of the first in Oakland County to carry the international symbol."

The Somerset Mall in Troy was recently visited by Attorney Sheldon Wachler of Oak Park, who is in a wheelchair.

"I was interested in finding a public meeting room at the mall," said Wachler, "but found they were all downstairs and in accessible."

Don Dorais, a member of the barrier free design committee and also in a wheelchair, said he had to "go clear around to the back of Hudsons and go up the delivery ramp" to get into the Oakland Mall in Troy.