

## A new shop for Iowa Interstate

Shop features enclosed tracks to work on four six-axle locomotives and a separate covered fuel pad

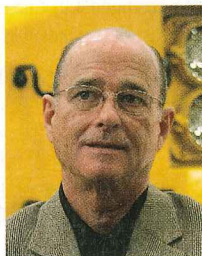


Iowa Interstate ES44AC No. 505 sits on one of two tracks that give the railroad the capability to work on four six-axle locomotives simultaneously. Three photos, Steve Smedley

**If you need proof** that a regional railroad created from the cast-off remains of a once-mighty trunk line has made it, look to South Amana, Iowa, where Iowa Interstate's new \$24 million Dennis H. Miller Locomotive Works rises from the cornfields.

The 30,000-square-foot shop, located halfway between Chicago and Omaha, Neb., on the 600-mile-long successor to the Rock Island's famed east-west main line, opened in October.

The shop is another symbol of resurgence since the regional railroad began 30 years ago as a successor to the defunct Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific.



Dennis H. Miller

Motive power in the early days of the railroad, which started operations in 1984, meant "we would leave with a train out of Chicago with five or six engines; by the time we got to Iowa City, we would be lucky if two or three were still running,"

says Jerome Lipka, Iowa Interstate's president and CEO.

The fleet consisted of second-hand Geeps, Alcos, and three Montreal Locomotive Works products — the kind of power capable of giving any general foreman nightmares. Today, the railroad rosters a tidy group of 43 modern units: 14 General Electric ES44ACs, 21 Electro-Motive



Iowa Interstate machinist-electrician Ted Reilly fuels units in the new shop building.

Division GP38-2s, and eight SD38-2s.

The shop name celebrates the work of Miller, who retired as Iowa Interstate president after leading the railroad to an excellent safety record, improved traffic growth, a rebuilt main line, and the acquisition of the 14 new GE locomotives between 2008 and 2010, says Henry Posner III, the chairman of Iowa Interstate's parent company, Railroad Development Corp. Miller continues serving the company as vice chairman of the board of directors and an adviser in Iowa Interstate operations and marketing.

Located on 62 acres near Homestead, Iowa, the shop features two enclosed tracks long enough to work on four six-axle locomotives. Brightly lit inspection pits run the full length of each track, along with overhead 35-ton and 5-ton cranes.

The shop replaces a single-track building in Iowa City that could not house a six-axle locomotive, forcing mechanics to labor outdoors, and another in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Butch Reid, chief mechanical officer-locomotives, says the new shop will improve efficiency and safety.

"We can do more work in-house, traction motors and wheel change outs, power assembly change outs, all indoors," Reid says. Workers on top of a locomotive use a five-point fall-protection harness.

In addition, a separate, covered run-through building contains a fueling, sanding, and light service track. The fuel pad can pump 440 gallons a minute into a GEVO's 5,000-gallon tank. The Iowa City shop will stay open to repair maintenance-of-way machines.

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