

About the *Pioneer Zephyr*

The *Pioneer Zephyr* is America's first diesel-electric, streamlined, stainless-steel passenger train. It is located in the Museum's Entry Hall and was renovated and conserved in 2020.

History

In an attempt to increase rail passenger traffic, the Burlington Zephyr was built for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad Company (CB&Q) in 1934 by the Budd Company of Philadelphia. The Burlington Zephyr offered high-speed transportation in an elegant, streamlined, stainless steel design. It was the first diesel-electric passenger train to enter regular service. The train was renamed the "Pioneer Zephyr" in 1936 because it was the first of several diesel-powered Zephyrs built for the CB&Q.

On May 26, 1934, the *Pioneer Zephyr* left Denver and arrived in Chicago 13 hours and five minutes later to reopen the A Century of Progress World's Fair in 1934. That single nonstop trip of 1,015 miles at record-breaking average speed of 77.6 mph changed the course of railroading and land transportation. Never before had a train traveled more than 775 miles without stopping for fuel and water.

The *Pioneer Zephyr*, nicknamed the "Silver Streak," was donated to the Museum of Science and Industry in 1960 and was displayed outside next to the *999 Empire State Express* locomotive near the Columbia Basin. In 1997, the Museum hired Northern Rail Car of Milwaukee to restore the *Pioneer Zephyr* to its 1930s-era glory. The gleaming, refurbished train was then moved to a new, underground gallery at the Museum in 1998. The exhibit closed in October 2019, to make way for a completely new exhibition, opening in March 2021.

Significance

The *Pioneer Zephyr* was a true pioneer. It served as a prototype of design and technology for future trains. The *Pioneer Zephyr* sparked the rapid conversion of rail transportation from steam to diesel-electric locomotion. Its aerodynamically efficient shape stimulated the streamlining of all types of products in the 1930s, and helped to preserve passenger rail travel.

By the Numbers

- Maximum Speed: 112.5 mph
- Rating: 600 hp @ 750 rpm
- Length: 60.0456 meters
- Weight: 197,000 lbs. (98.5 tons)
- Passenger Capacity: 72 (20 in Smoking Compartment, 40 in Main Passenger Compartment, and 12 in Observation Lounger/Solarium)