



The Nevada Northern Railway was built in 1906 to access the Nevada Consolidated Copper Company's porphyry copper deposits near Ely, Nevada (this location). Construction began at the CP (1869) mainline (which was SP-owned in 1906) at Cobre, Nevada, and proceeded southward. The railroad's symbolic completion included a Copper Spike ceremony in Ely. The 140-mile line was an easy build because its course runs north-south, as do the valleys between the north-south-trending normal-fault mountain ranges. The NN used two valleys: Goshute Valley to the north and Steptoe Valley farther south, which are separated by low hills at Currie that required just a few curves to negotiate. As a subsidiary of Nevada Consolidated, the primary purpose of the NN was the haulage of copper ore and mining equipment, but other freight traffic was also carried and the railroad operated a daily passenger train between East Ely (this location) and Cobre until 1941. The mines closed around 1980 and the NN suspended all operations in 1983. In 1996, the Broken Hill Properties' Nevada Railroad acquired the NN and hauled copper ore concentrate from BHP's concentrator at Riepetown (a few miles west of Ely) to Shafter, where the NN (1906) connects to the WP (1909). The BHP ceased operations in 1999. The NN tracks are still present, but the only usable trackage is several miles of track around Ely, which is used for today's Nevada Northern Railway heritage railroad (this location), and a few miles of track south of Shafter, where the Union Pacific (WP successor) stores some cars. In a series of donations beginning in 1986, Kennecott Copper transferred the NN as well as the NN's yard and shop in East Ely (this location), to the White Pine Historical Railroad Foundation. The Foundation operates the property as the Nevada Northern Railway Museum, including a heritage railroad on this part of the former NN. In 2006, the NN's East Ely shops became a National Historic Landmark. Visitors are free to explore NN's yard and shop in East Ely.

Northeastward view of the NN yard at East Ely.



What a treat to poke around an active shop servicing steam locomotives.



Passenger excursion train service is offered between Ely, Ruth, and McGill using period equipment pulled by historic steam and diesel locomotives. NN #93 is an ALC 2-8-0 that the NN purchased new in 1909. #93 sports Nevada Consolidated Copper Company livery.



NN #40 works the East Ely yard.



NN #40 blows off some steam at the east edge of town.



NN #40 blows smoke.



Three miles northeast of the Ely yard and museum, an 8-mile branch of the NN, built in 1908 and called the Hiline Branch, splits off to the east to climb the lower slopes of the Schell Creek Range to the former smelter at McGill. This southward view of the McGill depot, built in 1909, is at the end of the Hiline track. A fill grade is visible just below the left eave of the depot; that is a higher hiline that splits off the Hiline Branch a mile south of McGill. The depot is only 2 miles east of the NN mainline, but a few hundred feet higher in elevation.



Southward view from the same location as previous. The eve of the McGill depot is in the upper right and the fill grade and a cut for the higher hilene is in the upper left.