When one of NASA's railroad locomotives needed a newer set of wheels, a one-of-a-kind facility built for the Space Shuttle Program made the upgrade possible. Kennedy Space Center’s Rotation, Processing and Surge Facility, or RPSF, was built in 1984 to handle the shuttle's massive solid rocket motor segments, which came in by rail. This facility has never lifted or done anything other than shuttle segments and shuttle parts."

The NASA Railroad team refurbished locomotive No. 3 years ago, and it handles much of the post-shuttle train work around Kennedy. But locomotive No. 2 had newer wheel and axle assemblies, called trucks. Railroad officials decided it would be best to swap trucks between those two locomotives. "We want to use the best equipment and the most environmentally friendly equipment that we can on the locomotives that we're going to be actually using." Each of NASA's three locomotives weigh more than 79 tons, not counting the trucks,
which add another 44 tons.

With pristine rails running straight through the high bay, and two heavy-lift cranes overhead, the RPSF was perfect for the railroad's needs.

The agency's Ground Systems Development and Operations Program approved the plan and cleared the facility for the job.

Locomotive No. 1 positioned the other two directly beneath the 400-ton overhead cranes inside the RPSF high bay, then retreated to a position just outside the door.

The trucks of locomotives 2 and 3 were locked into place.

The closely choreographed lift operation took place the following day,

with the bodies of locomotives 2 and 3 lifted one at a time and placed on opposite trucks.

As Kennedy Space Center moves into the future, the spaceport is broadening its focus to accommodate NASA rockets, such as the upcoming Space Launch System, as well as commercial launch vehicles.

Use of the RPSF to assist the NASA Railroad demonstrates the adaptability of the
center's unique facilities and workforce.