



PSR UNDER FIRE

How freight rail is courting disaster

AMTRAK TURNS 50

LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & TRAINMEN

Journal

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HONORING ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Montana Rail Link SD70ACe 4404

— the essential workers
tribute unit — leads the
Gas Local at Perma,
Mont., on May 5, 2021.
The Mission Mountains
loom in the distance.



BUDDY BRIGADE

Canine companion
inspires BLET's
John Karakian

COVID'S TOLL

Honoring BLET
members lost
to coronavirus

Also inside:

Last Runs
Brotherhood News
Legislative Update
Brotherhood Obituaries



Published by the BLET, a division of the Rail Conference, International Brotherhood of Teamsters



BLET President's Message

BY DENNIS R. PIERCE, BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Triennial elections offer chance to get involved



2016: One of the first training classes at the BLET National Division Training Center in Independence, Ohio.

As this issue of the *Journal* goes to print, BLET is in the midst of its Local Division Triennial Election cycle. In September, nominations were taken for all Local Division offices, and in some cases, only one eligible candidate was nominated for a given officer position. Those eligible Candidates will be considered elected by acclamation at their Local Division's December meeting, while ballots will be counted at the same meeting for all other eligible candidates in contested elections.

All duly elected officers will take office in January, making 2022 a pivotal year for our Brotherhood. While many current Local Division Officers will return for another three year term of office, there will be many new officers, assuming their elected positions for the first time. My goal as National President is to ensure that the National Division does its part to help all elected Local Division officers

succeed. That includes many forms of support, but perhaps most important is a return to in-person Education and Training classes.

We will soon be announcing our Training Class schedule for 2022, but the tentative plan is to return to in-person classes at our Independence, Ohio Headquarters for both Local Chairmen and Local Division Secretary-Treasurers in the first quarter of 2022. This will give the involved new and existing Local Division Officers the chance to receive hands-on training at the National Division Training Center, which is the best way for our Officers to learn about the responsibilities that go with elected office.

In the interim, and for those unable to attend in-person training, BLET's Education and Training Department continues to host online training for Local Chairmen and for Local Division Secretary-Treasurers. It is recommended that Local Division Officers attending in-person

training also take the online class before traveling to Independence, because the two programs were specifically developed to complement each other.

Our tentative Education and Training Program also includes a return to in-person training classes in Washington, D.C. for our Division Legislative Representatives. Scheduling these classes will be more complicated as the IBT Headquarters returns to full operations. In addition, there are still certain limitations on all lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill. Therefore, our return to in-person training for Local Division Legislative Representatives will be contingent on successfully managing all of these pieces.

As a BLET Officer who was elected to my first Local Division Office in 1991, I can tell you that I still see BLET's Local Division Elections every three years as a new beginning point for our Union. I have traveled the country since

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Biden Administration nominees to serve in key rail posts

BUTTIGIEG, TROTTEBERG TO HEAD DOT; BOSE NOMINATED FRA ADMINISTRATOR

PETE BUTTIGIEG IS NEW U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

Pete Buttigieg currently serves as the 19th Secretary of Transportation, having been sworn in on February 3, 2021.

Prior to joining the Biden-Harris Administration, Secretary Buttigieg served two terms as mayor of his hometown of South Bend, Indiana. A graduate of Harvard University and a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, Buttigieg served for seven years as an officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve, taking a leave of absence from the mayor's office for a deployment to Afghanistan in 2014.

"For too long, the nation's transportation needs have been overlooked. That's why the Teamsters are pleased to see that President-elect Biden is making such a high-profile pick to lead the U.S. Transportation Department in his administration with his choice of Pete Buttigieg," said Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa. "I got a chance to meet Pete during the Teamsters' presidential candidate forum last December and spoke to him again today. Both times I was left impressed by what I heard. He is a problem-solver that we require at a time when elected officials in the nation's capital have talked a big game about upgrading the nation's infrastructure but gotten little done.

"We need a strong voice to lead the effort to improve the nation's transportation networks so they can handle the needs of a 21st century economy. Pete Buttigieg is a solid choice to do so.

"As the largest transportation union in North America, we look forward to



Photo: courtesy of the Teamsters

Pete Buttigieg at a Teamster-sponsored forum for Presidential candidates in 2020 working with Pete to improve the lives of workers."

Secretary Buttigieg is the son of Joseph Buttigieg, who immigrated to the United States from Malta, and Jennifer Anne Montgomery, a fifth-generation Hoosier. In 2011, he was elected Mayor of South Bend with a focus on delivering a new future for the city through a fresh approach to politics and bold ideas.

Soon known as "Mayor Pete," Buttigieg worked across the aisle to transform South Bend's future and improve people's everyday lives. His leadership helped spark citywide job growth and facilitated innovative public-private partnerships like Commuters Trust, a

benefits program designed to improve the city's transportation experience for workers.

In 2019, he launched his historic campaign for president. Throughout 2020, he campaigned for the election of the Biden-Harris ticket and served on the advisory board for the presidential transition. In December, he was nominated by President-elect Biden to be Secretary of Transportation. He was confirmed by the Senate on February 2, 2021, becoming the first openly gay person confirmed to serve in a president's Cabinet. Secretary Buttigieg lives with his husband Chasten and their rescue dogs, Buddy and Truman.

Photo: Mark Trottenberg, via Flickr



POLLY TROTTEMBERG JOINS U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AS DEPUTY SECRETARY

Polly Trottenberg was sworn in April 15 as the Deputy Secretary of Transportation by Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg in a private ceremony, following her Senate confirmation April 14.

Trottenberg brings more than 25 years of public sector experience across all levels of government to the role. Most recently, she served for seven years as the Transportation Commissioner for New York City, where she headed an agency of nearly 6,000 employees responsible for the safe, efficient and equitable operations of New York City's transportation network. As Commissioner, she also led the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) through COVID-19 response and recovery, prioritizing transforming City streets to promote livability, sustainable transportation and economic recovery.

"The nation's transportation needs are broad and diverse," Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa said. "That's why the Teamsters laud President Biden's choice of Polly Trottenberg as the next Deputy Secretary of Transportation. She knows how to prioritize our infrastructure needs so the country can better serve the more than 700,000 Teamsters who work across

the industry as well as all Americans who use the nation's roads, rails and airports.

"Trottenberg is an expert in the field, having served in top positions in federal, state and local government. The Teamsters are confident she will hit the ground running and will help direct a much-needed major overhaul of U.S. transportation networks."

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg said, "Polly Trottenberg served as Commissioner of NYCDOT and earned a reputation as a brilliant, thoughtful, effective public servant whose work improved the lives of millions of travelers. Her passion and skill arrives at a critical moment as we work to transform our infrastructure, create millions of good jobs, advance safety and equity, and combat climate change."

Previously, Trottenberg served in the Obama administration as the Assistant Secretary and Under Secretary for Policy at the U.S. Department of Transportation. During her five years at the Department, she developed and implemented transportation policies to address the needs of state and local transportation agencies on every type of project from roads and bridges, to transit and rail, to airports, ports and pipelines.

BIDEN NOMINATES AMIT BOSE TO SERVE AS FRA ADMINISTRATOR

On April 23, President Biden nominated Amit Bose to serve as Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Bose is currently serving as the Acting FRA Administrator.


Previously, Bose worked at HNTB, an architectural and engineering firm, where he also served as board chair of the Coalition for the Northeast Corridor and on the New Jersey Restart and Recovery Advisory Council.



He has previously served at the FRA during the Obama-Biden Administration as Deputy Administrator, Chief Counsel, Senior Advisor and Director of Governmental Affairs and the U.S.

Department of Transportation (DOT) as Associate General Counsel and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs. In those positions, he worked on safety, policy, regulatory, and governmental affairs matters, and provided legal counsel, guidance and advice to the Office of the Secretary and DOT's operating administrations. Before joining DOT, Bose also worked for New Jersey Transit, the New Jersey Department of Transportation and as a transportation staffer in the U.S. Congress.

His involvement in many rail and transportation prior to joining the Executive Branch includes: securing the full funding grant agreement for the Hudson Bergen Light Rail, Newark Light Rail and Congressional authorization for the 50-foot deepening of New York Harbor. In addition, he was in private practice in Georgia, focused on land use, environmental, and municipal law.

Amit has an AB from Columbia College, a MIA from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and a JD from the University of Georgia. 

FRA statement on PTC implementation



Photo: Chase Gurnoe

THE RAIL SAFETY IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2008 (RSIA) mandated the implementation of PTC systems on Class I railroads' main lines over which five million or more gross tons of annual traffic and certain hazardous materials are transported, and on any main lines over which intercity or commuter rail passenger transportation is regularly provided.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced on December 29, 2020, that Positive Train Control (PTC) technology was in operation on all 57,536 required freight and passenger railroad route miles, prior to the statutory deadline of December 31, 2020, set by Congress. In addition, as required, FRA has certified that each host railroad's PTC system complies with the technical requirements for PTC systems. Furthermore, railroads have reported that interoperability has been achieved between each applicable host and tenant railroad that operates on PTC-governed main lines.

PTC systems are designed to prevent train-to-train collisions, over-speed derailments, incursions into established work zones, and movements of trains through switches left in the wrong position. Forty-one railroads were subject

to the statutory mandate, including seven Class I railroads, Amtrak, 28 commuter railroads, and 5 other freight railroads that host regularly scheduled intercity or commuter rail passenger service.

The Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (RSIA) mandated the implementation of PTC systems on Class I railroads' main lines over which five million or more gross tons of annual traffic and certain hazardous materials are transported, and on any main lines over which intercity or commuter rail passenger transportation is regularly provided. RSIA and FRA's implementing regulations also require PTC systems to be interoperable, meaning that the locomotives of host and tenant railroads operating on the same main line must communicate with and respond to the PTC system, including during uninterrupted movements over property boundaries. 📻

NTSB satisfied with railroads' progress on PTC recommendations

The National Transportation Safety Board said on January 14, 2021, it would close three key positive train control safety recommendations and was satisfied that the nation's railroads met the deadline for compliance on December 31, 2020.

The recommendations to Metra, Canadian National Railway Corp. and CSX Transportation are related to installing PTC, the safety technology that prevents equipped trains from colliding, missing signals or speeding. The recommendations will be classified "closed – acceptable action."

The NTSB has called for PTC for more than 50 years. Positive train control has long been a key advocacy issue for the independent federal safety agency and is on the NTSB's 2019-2020 Most Wanted List of transportation safety improvements.

The first of the 154 PTC-preventable accidents the agency investigated was in Darien, Connecticut, in 1969. The last was Carey, Ohio, in 2019.

"I've seen up close the devastation and heart-break a rail catastrophe brings," said NTSB Chairman Robert L. Sumwalt, who has been a board member on scene for 36 transportation accidents, including four that would have been prevented if PTC were in place. "We will silently mark our success with every train crash prevented, every life saved by this technology."

The NTSB recommended CSX install a PTC system after a Feb. 16, 1996, collision between Amtrak and a Maryland Rail Commuter passenger trains on CSX tracks near Silver Spring, Maryland. Three operating crewmembers and eight passengers on the MARC train were killed in the derailment and subsequent fire.

The recommendation to Metra resulted from a 2003 overspeed derailment that injured 47 on Oct. 12, 2003. The train was traveling 68 mph in a 10 mph zone.

The NTSB issued the recommendation to Canadian National after two CN freight trains collided head on in Anding, Mississippi, on July 10, 2005. Four crewmembers were killed and 15,000 gallons of diesel fuel were released from the locomotives, resulting in a fire that burned for 15 hours. 📻

BLET GC Karakian delivers opening prayer at IBT 30th Convention

Brother John M. Karakian, General Chairman of the BLET's CN-Grand Trunk Western General Committee of Adjustment, had the honor of delivering the invocation during opening ceremonies of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters' 30th Convention on Tuesday, June 22.

The convention is unique in that it is the first online international convention in the 118-year history of the Teamsters. Brother Karakian delivered the invocation from the computer at his home outside of Detroit, Michigan, and his message was telecast virtually to representatives from more than 500 Teamster locals in the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico, including members of the BLET.

"We pray that we can show one another, as well as the media and



KARAKIAN TO THE IBT CONVENTION:

"Most importantly, Our Lord God, not only let us achieve the high standard of Teamster unionism that is required of us, but let us also achieve the high standard that You require of us."

the on-looking outside world, the success of Teamster members, reaching and sharing with one another, their cooperative effort of endeavors, creativity and goals, and that it will have a great Teamster Strong unification impact, throughout the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and beyond, over the coming months and years," Karakian said. "Most importantly, Our

Lord God, not only let us achieve the high standard of Teamster unionism that is required of us, but let us also achieve the high standard that You require of us. And it will be shown in our daily life, to our betterment. Not only through the betterment of our Teamster works, but also in the betterment of the way we live our daily lives, toward our neighbors, at home or at work."

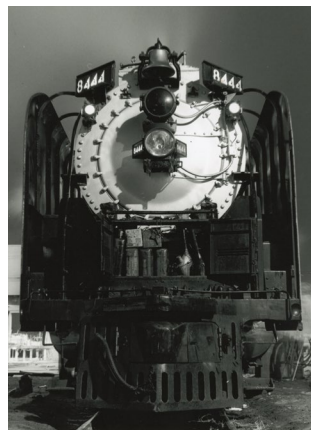
A member of BLET Division 122 in Port Huron, Michigan, Brother Karakian hired out in 1974 as a tower operator for the Penn Central (which later became Conrail) in Detroit, Michigan. On March 10, 1977, he moved to the GTW where he hired out as a fireman in Pontiac, Michigan. He qualified to work as a GTW yard engineer on June 30, 1978, and qualified to perform service as a GTW road engineer on February 25, 1981. Brother Karakian joined the Brotherhood on June 1, 1977, and began serving as General Chairman in 1992. He has been reelected to the General Chairman's office eight consecutive times, most recently by acclamation in August of 2019.

The convention concluded on Thursday, June 24. "On behalf of the BLET, I thank Brother John Karakian for the excellent job he did in representing himself and our union on an international stage," BLET President Dennis R. Pierce said. "He carried himself with humility, grace and dignity, and he made the BLET proud." 📷

BATES ENJOYS OLD-SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHY, PHOTO DEVELOPMENT

Brother Russell G. Bates, an Amtrak locomotive engineer and long-time member of BLET Division 60 (Seattle, Washington), recently became active again in what is becoming a lost art — developing and photographs from negatives.

Brother Bates — a BLET member since 1992 who retired in July 2021 — has been shooting medium format black-and-white film since he was a teenager, and enjoys working in the darkroom to develop, enlarge and



wet-print photographs from negatives. Brother Bates is a third-generation railroader, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. His father, Russell Bates, was a locomotive engineer who worked along the Southern Pacific's San Joaquin Division around Los Angeles before he passed away in 1980. His grandfather, Raymond Bates, also worked the San Joaquin Division and was promoted to locomotive engineer in 1903.

Bates is also a second-generation photographer, as his father Russell was an avid photographer who took many railroad photos throughout his career. During retirement, Brother Bates may spend more time processing material from his father's collection of steam-era subjects from the 1950s.

Brother Bates has been a member of the BLET for nearly 30 years, having joined Division 60 on December 1, 1992. He works as an Amtrak locomotive engineer out of Seattle on the Cascades Corridor to Portland, Oregon. During his three decades of BLET membership, Brother Bates has served as Legislative Representative of Division 60 and served for 12 years as Secretary-Treasurer of the Washington State Legislative Board.

Brother Bates is pleased to share with BLET members this photo of Union Pacific steam locomotive #8444 (now numbered #844) taken at night in a roundhouse in Las Vegas, Nevada, on May 10, 1980. It was shot on Kodak Tri-x 400 film on a twin lens Rolleiflex, with about a 10-minute exposure. 📷



Guest Columnists

BY JAMES P. HOFFA, TEAMSTERS GENERAL PRESIDENT
& JOHN MURPHY, DIRECTOR, TEAMSTERS RAIL CONFERENCE

Teamsters unite to take on Amazon threat

The Teamsters Union at its 30th International Convention in June made a historic decision to commit and unite the union to protecting and improving the wages and working standards in the goods movement industry under threat from Amazon's exploitive employment model.

Amazon's reprehensible labor practices are well documented and recent groundbreaking reporting confirms there are continuing abusive practices. A recent analysis by Jeff Bezos' own *Washington Post* and a report by the Strategic Organizing Center

shined a light on Amazon's atrocious health and safety record that found, among other things, Amazon workers are injured at rates twice the industry average. The *New York Times* documented the Amazon culture of treating workers like disposable cogs through a business model designed on high worker turnover.

For the past five years we've been tracking Amazon's growth, presence and impact on Teamster-represented industries and speaking with thousands of Amazon workers about the conditions they face in their workplaces.

Since then, we have embarked on an unprecedented effort to educate and train our leaders about the threat to industry standards and the need to mobilize our members to support Amazon workers as they organize to build power in their workplaces.

Our union has been ambassadors of workers in this industry for well over a hundred years. We fought for workers' rights to organize and build power before the current labor laws were passed in 1935 and since then our contracts have set the highest wages, benefits and working conditions in the goods movement industry.

I'm proud of that history, proud of the foundation that we have built to take on this threat, proud that all levels of our union have united behind these efforts and proud that the work of helping Amazon workers build power in their workplaces will continue and expand under the next generation of Teamster leadership.

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA
TEAMSTERS GENERAL
PRESIDENT

U.S. High-Speed Rail Coalition advances

The Teamsters Rail Conference, other unions and businesses have established the U.S. High Speed Rail Coalition (HSRC). It is Co-Chaired by former Secretaries of Transportation Ray LaHood, Norm Mineta and Anthony Foxx.

Our focus is to convince Congress to make a significant investment in high-speed rail to protect our climate, connect our communities, deliver equity to underserved communities and create good union jobs. The HSRC is running a federal advocacy campaign to ensure that America builds

back better with high-speed rail (HSR).

The HSRC's four goals are:

- Appropriate \$205 billion in federal funds for high-speed rail development
- Robust labor standards included in the American High-Speed Rail Act
- A High-Speed Rail Development Authority within the USDOT that is focused solely on the promotion, funding, and construction of HSR
- A Rail Trust Fund that will provide reliable funding for building our an HSR system akin to the Federal Highway Trust Fund

History has shown once

a country builds one high-speed rail, the rest of the nation wants it. That was the case in Japan in 1964, and it was the case in France in 1981. Not only did France want it, all of Europe wanted it. The same will happen here. Once we have one system running, the rest of the nation see its efficiency, frequency, and ease of use, and they will want it, too.

That is not just the future of high-speed rail, it is the future of rail labor. High-speed rail is the key to increase the ranks of our membership. HSR means work in the operations, maintenance, signaling, dis-

patching, communications, electrical work, etc., will fall to the existing rail unions.

Congress is currently debating a multi-trillion-dollar investment in infrastructure. Contact your Senators and Representatives and ask them to support funding for HSR.

Go to www.fundhighspeedrail.org to send an email to them.

Fraternally,

JOHN F. MURPHY
DIRECTOR, TEAMSTERS
RAIL CONFERENCE
AND INTERNATIONAL
VICE PRESIDENT

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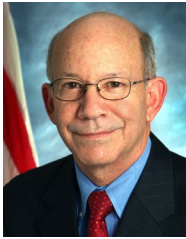
James P. Hoffa grew up on picket lines and in union meetings. He is the only son of James R. Hoffa, former General President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. On his 18th birthday, Hoffa received his own union card and was sworn in by his father.



John Murphy has been an Eastern Region Vice President since 1998. He spearheaded merger negotiations with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees and now serves as Director of the Rail Conference.



Sounding the alarm on PSR



About the Author:

Peter DeFazio serves as U.S. Representative for Oregon's 4th congressional district, serving since 1987. In 2019, DeFazio was elected to the powerful position of Chair of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Coast Guard, highways and transit, ports and water resources, railroads, aviation, and economic development. As Chair, and previously as Ranking Member, DeFazio has taken the lead role on several multi-billion-dollar laws that have created jobs and improved transportation options. At a 2019 hearing regarding Precision Scheduled Railroading ("PSR"), DeFazio memorably said that the nation's railroad system had fallen into the hands of "the jackals on Wall Street." He further said: "Wall Street is setting the terms and pressuring executives, and they aren't concerned about safety. Their monthly or quarterly profits are what is watched by Wall Street. Only if there's an absolutely catastrophic accident that bankrupts a railroad will they care about it, but short of that, they don't give a damn."

As members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, you know firsthand the benefits that a strong nationwide railroad system brings to our country.

Years of organized bargaining with the railroads have carved a path for railroad workers to earn middle-class wages and benefits—opportunities that are often difficult to find in today's economy. Powered by your work, freight railroads transport roughly 40% of all long-distance freight volume that moves through our country, making the economic contributions of the industry indisputable. As Chair of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I am committed to supporting a vibrant freight rail industry and its workers.

Unfortunately, in recent years, the industry has adopted a new way of doing business. Driven by pressure from investors, the Class I railroads have adopted variations of precision scheduled railroading (PSR), which in practice, means that the bot-

tom line drives all aspects of decision-making. Focused on maximizing revenue by squeezing out so-called "inefficiencies," PSR has resulted in longer trains, service disruptions that negatively impact shippers, and a smaller workforce pushed to do more with less.

As the railroads have moved to implement PSR, I have sounded the alarm at Congressional proceedings held by my committee, raising concerns about the long-term effects that PSR will have on the industry. In the House-passed version of surface transportation reauthorization legislation, I included provisions to address PSR, such as examining the safety impacts associated with operating increasingly longer trains.

And earlier this year, at the request of myself and Chair of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Donald M. Payne, Jr., the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) began studying how railroad workers, shippers, and passenger railroads are impacted by changes in op-

erating and scheduling practices resulting from this new business model. This study will consider PSR's impact on train size, safety impacts associated with a reduced workforce, impacts on the quality and reliability of service, and the ability of the railroads to adjust to changing market conditions, among other related issues. I expect the GAO study will support our work in finding ways to address the negative impacts this railroad management strategy has on workers, safety, shippers, and the industry as a whole.

Rail shipments are projected to grow in the coming decades. And with freight railroads contributing just 0.5% of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, railroads are a good fit to meet future demands and challenges. Ensuring that PSR and its short-term revenue gains do not damage the long-term health of the industry is critical. You can be sure I will continue my work in promoting policies that advance a lasting freight rail industry and the middle-class workers who support it. 📢

"Unfortunately, in recent years, the industry has adopted a new way of doing business. Driven by pressure from investors, the Class I railroads have adopted variations of precision scheduled railroading (PSR), which in practice, means that the bottom line drives all aspects of decision-making."

COVID TAKES ITS TOLL

BLET EXTENDS ITS DEEPEST SYMPATHIES TO THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS WHO DIED DUE TO COVID-19

Richard J. Dimitroff 1949-2021

BROTHER RICHARD J. DIMITROFF, A RETIRED MEMBER OF BLET DIVISION 421 IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK, lost his battle with COVID-19 on January 5, 2021. He was 71 years old. Brother Dimitroff was an Army veteran who proudly served his country in the Vietnam War and was a Purple Heart and Bronze Star Medal recipient.



Brother Dimitroff first joined the Brotherhood in 1978 and throughout his career worked for Penn Central, Conrail and CSX Transportation. He is survived by: his wife of 49 years, Cynthia; sons Richard and Daniel; grandson Nicholas; brothers Chester, James and John; and many cherished nieces and nephews. Brother Dimitroff was a dedicated volunteer with the Pathfinders Vets 4 Vets at the Buffalo VA Medical Center.

Jason R. Fleming 1976-2020

THE BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND TRAINMEN MOURNS THE LOSS OF BROTHER JASON R. FLEMING, who passed away from complications related to COVID-19 on December 3, 2020. He was 44 years old. Brother Fleming was a BNSF locomotive engineer and had been a member of Division 75 (Kansas City,

Mo.) since August 1, 2006. Brother Fleming is survived by two sons,



Brandon and Jeremy James ("J.J."), the mother of his children, Jennifer Cartmill, and wife Amie K. (Harvkey) Cortinas. Brother Fleming enjoyed woodworking, riding four-wheelers, and swing dancing with his sister Jayme. More than anything, he truly loved spending time with his family, especially his boys Brandon and J.J. He was a dedicated and professional railroader who will be sorely missed by his family and friends.

Jose I. Jaramillo 1976-2020

BROTHER JOSE I. JARAMILLO, A MEMBER OF BLET DIVISION 505 IN LA JUNTA, COLORADO,



passed away from COVID-19 on December 9, 2020. He was 44 years old. Brother Jaramillo worked as a conductor for the BNSF Railway and had been a member of the BLET since 2013. He was preceded in death by his parents, and his late father Sonny worked in the track department for the Santa Fe Railway. He is survived by his wife of 24 years, Mary Jo; three children,

Joseph, Dominick (Karla), and Catalina; two grandchildren, Catalya and Catalina; and a host of other loving family members. Brother Jaramillo enjoyed traveling, camping, fishing, grilling, gardening, crafting and watching SpongeBob SquarePants. He loved to read and knew the Bible well. Brother Jaramillo was a sports fanatic and loved every sport and all the Colorado teams. He loved coaching his kids as they grew and was so proud of all their accomplishments. Brother Jaramillo will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him.

Alan W. Kendall 1977-2021

BROTHER ALAN W. KENDALL, A BNSF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEER AND MEMBER



OF BLET DIVISION 811 (CLOVIS, NEW MEXICO), passed away from COVID-19 on January 5, 2021. He was 43 years old. Brother Kendall had 23 years of seniority

with the BNSF Railway. He is survived by his parents, David E. and Pam G. Kendall; brother Brian Kendall; and four children, Leanna, Sarah, Kelsey and Dustin. He was a fifth-generation railroader who followed in the footsteps of his father, David E., who is a retired conductor who worked out of Clovis, N.M. Also a fifth-generation railroader, Kendall's brother Brian is a BNSF conductor out of Clovis, N.M.

Michael L. Nothnagel

1952-2020

MICHAEL "MIKE" L. NOTHNAGEL, A RETIRED MEMBER OF BLET DIVISION 623 IN MCCOOK, NEBRASKA, passed away from COVID-19 on December 16, 2020. He was 68 years old. Brother



Nothnagel had 40 years of service with the BNSF Railway when he retired in 2013. He first joined the Brotherhood on May 1, 1979, and throughout the years he used his wisdom and

experience to train many of the young engineers who are working today. After high school, Brother Nothnagel joined the Army National Guard and earned a distinguished Expert M-16 Rifle Award. He was selected to attend a track vehicle mechanic course, graduating at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Brother Nothnagel had a passion for muscle cars and was especially proud of the 1962 Impala 409 that he built himself. Over the years, he won several high honor national awards at various car shows. For 40 years, in September, he attended the Reno International Air Races, where he served on the pit crew. Brother Nothnagel and his wife Darlene were married on September 25, 1990. He is survived by Darlene; daughters Destiny Waterman and Shanna (Jeff) Schulz; one grandson, Benjamin Walter; mother and stepfather, Nadine (Stan) Vrbas; brother Bill (Linda Thieben) Nothnagel; blood brother, Larry (June) Wells; and countless other family and friends.

Jack K. Osborn

1969-2020

ON AUGUST 29, 2020, BLET MEMBER JACK K. OSBORN DIED OF COMPLICATIONS RELATED TO COVID-19. He was 51 years old. Brother Osborn was a loving

husband and father who is survived by his wife, Tonya; and three daughters: Kelsi Lockmiller and her husband



Aaron; Kortni Osborn; and Kyli Osborn. Brother Osborn graduated from Clovis (N.M.) High School in 1987 and entered the United States Navy on February 9, 1988. He served in

both Desert Storm and the Persian Gulf War over a period of three years. He was honorably discharged in 1992 and hired out with the BNSF Railway in April of 1994. He joined the BLET on May 1, 1996, and was a member of Division 811 (Clovis, N.M.). Brother Osborn was a veteran engineer who paid strict attention to detail and made safety his top priority. He will be missed by his all those who knew him, especially his family and his extended railroad family.

Anthony M. Panariello

1971-2020

IN ANOTHER TRAGIC LOSS TO OUR RAILROAD FAMILY, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen is saddened to report the passing of



Brother Anthony M. Panariello, a PATH locomotive engineer who died from COVID on November 13, 2020. He was 49 years old. Brother Panariello was a member of BLET

Division 497 (Jersey City, N.J.) who first joined the BLET on November 1, 2001. He was a huge Star Wars fan, loved trains, remote control cars, and fishing. Brother Panariello was known for his loud and infectious laugh, his deep love for his family, and his strong religious faith. Brother Panariello is survived by his wife of 19 years,

Andrea; four children, Antonio Michael, Andrew Matthew, Aaron Mark, and Angelina Marie; his parents; a sister and a brother; and many other loving family members. He will be dearly missed by his family and friends.

Steven J. Shaner

1960-2020

BLET MEMBER STEVEN J. SHANER, A LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEER WITH THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD, died from complications related to COVID-19 on December 31, 2020. He was 60 years



old. Brother Shaner had 24 years of railroad seniority and had belonged to BLET 125 in Clinton, Iowa, since May 1, 2013. He and his wife Karen were married on June

14, 1986. Brother Shaner is survived by his wife; daughters Julianna and Jacquelyn; sons Justin (Michelle) and Jeremy; six grandchildren, Alexis, Makayla, Anastasiya, Addison, Derby, and Christopher; one brother, Donald; and several nieces, nephews and cousins. Brother Shaner enjoyed snowmobiling, 4-wheeling, camping, and fishing, but most of all he loved his family.

Bryan D. Stowe

1967-2021

THE BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND TRAINMEN IS SADDENED TO REPORT THE PASSING OF BROTHER BRYAN D. STOWE, a BNSF Railway locomotive engineer who died from COVID on April 12, 2021. He was 53 years old. Brother Stowe was a member of BLET Division 98 (Lincoln, Nebraska) who joined our Brotherhood on August 1, 1999. He had 23 years of seniority as an engineer. Brother Stowe was a graduate of the

University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a degree in anthropology. Brother Stow loved his family, the holidays, Disney vacations, Legos, Starbucks, trains,



and his cats, who he considered to be his furry four-legged kids. He is survived by his wife, Lori Anderson-Stowe; sons David (Courtney) Stowe and Christian (Maria) Stowe;

grandchildren Allison, Noah, and arriving soon "Peanut;" his father Forrest Stowe; brother Myron (Beverly); and numerous other loving family members and friends.

Mario J. Vasquez 1956-2020

IN ANOTHER TRAGIC LOSS FOR OUR BROTHERHOOD, MARIO J. VASQUEZ OF BLET DIVISION 398 (San Bernardino, Calif.) passed away from COVID on December 28, 2020. A BNSF locomotive engineer, Brother Vasquez was 64



years old. He had over 25 years of seniority on the railroad and had been a member of the BLET since March 1, 2005. Brother Vasquez enjoyed the beach, listening to music,

live concerts, going to the movies with his son, hanging out with his friends and had a passion for exercise. Most of all, he enjoyed spending time with his proudest accomplishment, his son James. They had a very strong bond. Brother Vasquez is survived by his son James, his niece Martha and her family, his ex-wife Susie, and countless friends. Mario will be remembered for his smile, his laugh, his never ending stories and most of all, his generosity and kindness to all who needed his help. ☪

Retired Amtrak Vice General Chairman "Mac" McDowell, 1951-2021

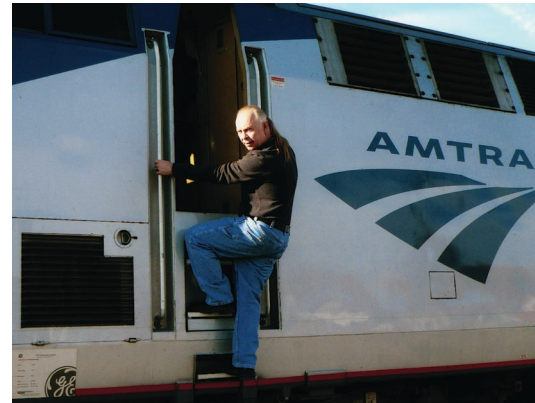
THE BLET NATIONAL DIVISION SENDS DEEPEST CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF BROTHER CRAIG A. "MAC" MCDOWELL, who lost his battle

with cancer on January 21, 2021. Brother McDowell faithfully served the BLET membership for many years as Vice General Chairman of the Amtrak General Committee of Adjustment. He was 69 years old.

Brother McDowell's 37-year railroad career began in September of 1974, when he hired out with the Burlington Northern as a track gang welder's helper in Grand Island, Nebraska. He was accepted into the locomotive engineers' training program in Lincoln, Nebraska, in July of 1976 and earned promotion to the craft in August of 1977. When Amtrak assumed employment of train and engine crews in June of 1988, Brother McDowell was called for an engineer's job in Zone 11 in Salt Lake City, Utah. In November of that year he transferred to Denver, Colo., where he worked until retirement. He safely completed his Last Run on December 30, 2011, working as the locomotive engineer of Amtrak's California Zephyr from Grand Junction to Denver.

Brother McDowell first joined the Brotherhood on July 1, 1977, as a member of Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.). He transferred to Division 940 (Denver, Colo.) and Division 349 (Salt Lake City, Utah) before becoming a member of Division 47 (Denver, Colo.) in November of 1988.

Mac was elected Local Chairman of Division 47 in March of 1989, and Western Regional Chairman in January of 1993. Under the wing of the late Ronald E. Wiggins, former Amtrak General Chairman, Brother McDowell was groomed for the Vice General Chairman's position. He was elected to



that office in May of 1998, at Amtrak's 5th General Committee of Adjustment meeting in Atlantic City, N.J. Brother McDowell was subsequently reelected by acclamation to the VGC position at the GCA's 6th, 7th and 8th meetings.

As part of his duties as Vice General Chairman, Brother McDowell wrote arbitration briefs, and was involved in hundreds of cases over the years, fighting to preserve and protect the jobs of countless BLET members.

Amtrak General Chairman Mark B. Kenny said: "Mac was the bedrock on which the Amtrak General Committee was founded and built since the creation of the national system in the mid-1980s. He was thoroughly dedicated, in every way possible, to his beloved Division 47 and every member of the Amtrak GCA, and tireless in his commitment as a BLET officer. He leaves behind an enduring legacy of what it truly means to be a 'good and thoroughly reliable brother' and friend."

"Brother McDowell was an exemplary leader who helped protect the jobs of countless BLET members during his decades of service to our Brotherhood," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "On behalf of the BLET National Division, I extend our most heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Brother McDowell." ☪

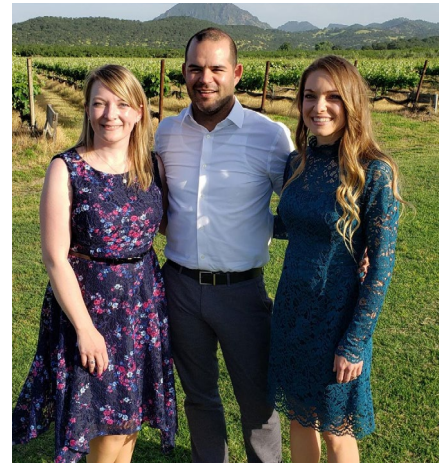
BLET honors the memory of Jose Hernandez III, son of BLET member, killed in VTA mass shooting



Biological father Jose Hernandez II, grandfather Karl Albert, Jose Hernandez III, step-dad Roy Benbow, BLET Division 839



Jose with his mother Karrey



Jose with step sisters (Brother Benbow's daughters, from left) Jennifer Gutierrez and Serena McTeer.

ALL MEN AND WOMEN OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND TRAINMEN (BLET) SEND THEIR DEEPEST CONDOLENCES TO BROTHER ROY A. BENBOW, his family, and friends.

Brother Benbow is a member of BLET Division 839, whose step-son Jose Hernandez III was killed in the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) mass shooting in San Jose, California, on May 26, 2021. Jose was one of nine victims in the tragedy. He was just 35 years old.

"Heart wrenching devastation," Brother Benbow said. "It's so hard to believe something so evil could happen."

Brother Benbow recalls his step-son as a kind, sensitive and outgoing young man. Jose made friends easily and would drop whatever he was doing to help a friend in need. Jose began working for the VTA as a transit mechanic in 2012, working on buses, later becoming an electro-mechanic and then a substation mechanic. As a VTA employee, Jose was a member of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 265. VTA provides bus, light rail, and paratransit services in the San Jose area, and participates as a funding

partner in regional rail services including Caltrain, Capital Corridor, and the Altamont Corridor Express.

"I'm not using the word lightly, but Jose was a genius mechanic," Brother Benbow said. "A master mechanic. Mechanical things just came naturally to him easily. He was bright, technical. He loved life. He loved a lot of things. Soccer. Snowboarding. Wake boarding. Drones. Taking things apart and putting them back together. He enjoyed riding his motorcycle and boating. He played guitar and built motorcycles. He was a bright young man."

Brother Benbow says he began dating Jose's mother, Karrey, in 2004 when Jose was 19 years old. Jose had always been especially close to his mother.

"We are a Christian family," Brother Benbow said. "We knew we wanted to get married, and felt it was important to have Jose's blessing. I went to him and he agreed. We made a special pact because he wanted his mother to be married, taken care of and protected. Our relationship was as good as you can get."

Brother Benbow and Karrey were married in 2005, and celebrated their

16th wedding anniversary on June 4, 2021. Brother Benbow has worked in the railroad industry for 42 years, including 11 years as a trainman and the past 31 as a locomotive engineer with the BNSF Railway. He holds his seniority on the former Santa Fe Railway's Valley Division. He has been a member of BLET Division 839 in Richmond, California, since January 1, 1995.

Tanya Hernandez, Jose's sister, said his motto for life was: "Drive fast. Take chances. Live your life."

"It is difficult to find words to express our devastation at the loss of life suffered in San Jose on May 26," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "One senseless act of evil can hurt the lives of so many people. It is my hope that this humble tribute to Jose Hernandez III will serve to honor his memory and help us to remember what is good and right in America. On behalf of the 57,500 men and women of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, I extend our most heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of all victims in the VTA tragedy, especially to Brother Benbow and his family." 🕯️

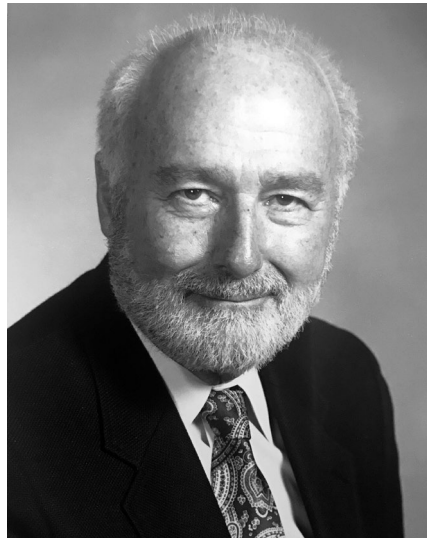
C. George Hainsworth, former BLE Canadian Director, 1928-2021

CHARLES GEORGE HAINSWORTH, WHO SERVED THE BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS (BLE) AS CANADIAN DIRECTOR, International Vice President and National Legislative Representative-Canada, passed away peacefully at his home on April 1, 2021, with family by his side. He was 92 years old.

A native of Sioux Lookout, Ontario, Brother Hainsworth began his railway career on October 15, 1948, as a locomotive fireman for the Canadian National Railway. He earned promotion to locomotive engineer for CN on April 4, 1954, and joined BLE Division 583 (Winnipeg, Manitoba) on July 1, 1975.


Brother Hainsworth immediately became involved in the Brotherhood's legislative affairs, serving Division 583 (Winnipeg, Manitoba) as Legislative Representative for several years before winning election to the office of Manitoba Provincial Legislative Board Chairman in 1983. In 1987, he was appointed to serve the BLE as an International Vice President for Canada, and was reelected to that position on August 22, 1991. Brother Hainsworth was appointed to the office of Canadian Director for the BLE effective February 1, 1992.

A highlight of his career was his appointment to the National Transportation Act Review Commission by Canada's Minister of Transport in 1992. He served as a member of the Commission's Surface Advisory Panel. Of the many labor unions throughout Canada, the BLE was the only one chosen to have a representative, which was a testament to Brother Hainsworth's reputation as a rail transportation expert and an outstanding labor leader. He retired effective June 30, 1993, after a distinguished career that spanned 45 years.



Brother Hainsworth is survived by his loving wife of 20 years, Viola Folkes; his children, Charles Hainsworth (Debra); Alice Bruce (Mike); Viola's daughter Donna Lee (Bob); son-in-law Neil Crocker; and nine grandsons and eight great-grandchildren.

Brother Hainsworth enjoyed traveling throughout the United States and Canada for his union work, and spoke fondly of his trips to Europe to visit his daughter Alice and her husband Mike in Germany, where Mike played hockey. He also enjoyed fishing during his free time. Both of Brother Hainsworth's grandfathers worked in the railroad industry, one as a machinist and one as a car inspector.

"George Hainsworth made a positive lasting impression on our Brotherhood," said Dennis R. Pierce, National President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET). "He was a dedicated union officer and many railroaders have benefitted from his leadership. On behalf of all men and women of the BLET, I extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Brother George." 

Leo M. Srubas, 1930-2021

BROTHER LEO M. SRUBAS, A MEMBER OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND TRAINMEN FOR NEARLY 65 YEARS, PASSED AWAY ON MARCH 26, 2021, after a two and a half year battle with kidney disease. He was 91 years old.

Brother Srubas was a member of BLET Division 81 in Kansas City, Kansas. He joined our Brotherhood on August 13, 1956, and held continuous membership for more than six decades. He served the Brotherhood in numerous elected offices over the years, including Secretary-Treasurer of the Kansas State Legislative Board. Brother Srubas may best be remembered for his role as Secretary-Treasurer of the BLET's former Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM), where he and his wife Frances were a fixture for many decades. Brother Srubas served as a member of the SWCM scholarship committee, helping to award financial aid to hundreds of BLET families throughout the years.

Brother Srubas began his railroad career in 1950 as a laborer for Union Pacific Railroad in his home town of Kansas City, Kansas. He went firing on July 12, 1951, and earned his promotion to locomotive engineer on May 15, 1959. From 1951 to 1953, he served the U.S. army in the railroad battalion in Ft. Eustis, Va., and served in the Korean War, working on military railroads to transport troops and supplies in Korea.

Brother Srubas went on his Last Run for the Union Pacific on January 14, 1996, working as a locomotive engineer between Kansas City and Marysville, Kan.


Brother Srubas was preceded in death by his wife Frances, who passed away in 2012. The couple married on June 1, 1957, and they had one son, Larry. Brother Srubas



Brother Srubas and his wife Frances at the BLET's 2004 Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM).

was a member of the Knights of Lithuania, where he served as treasurer, and also the Lithuanians of America, where he served as president, vice president, and treasurer. He belonged to the Knights of Columbus Marian Council 3768, and was a member of the Christ the King Parish in Kansas City, Kansas, beginning in 1960.

Brother Srubas was buried at Mount Calvary Cemetery in Kansas City, Kansas, on March 31, 2021. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations in memory of Leo Srubas be made to the Christ the King School: <https://www.ctkclassical.org/donate.html>.

"Brother Leo Srubas will be sorely missed by all who knew him," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "He helped many BLET members over the years through his dedication as an elected union officer, and their families also benefitted from his generosity and hard work on the Southwestern Convention Meeting scholarship committee. On behalf of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, I extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Leo Srubas." 

BROTHERHOOD OBITUARIES:

THIS INFORMATION IS BASED UPON REPORTS
FILED BY THE SECRETARY-TREASURERS
OF THE VARIOUS BLET DIVISIONS

AS OF

OCTOBER 31, 2020

6 — Kevin T. Christians
13 — D. W. Schieche
28 — Mathew J. McCarty
30 — Gary S. Anderson
30 — Susan E. Holloway
71 — Andrew M. Salmon
71 — Fred J. Topel
74 — Joseph E. Fink
88 — J. L. Vancura
106 — L. R. Hicks
112 — J. M. Fleming
169 — Mark W. Perrault
206 — Joe K. Jones
269 — Gary C. McComb
446 — Pat J. Williams
622 — Jim L. Fistler
631 — W. T. Skinn
781 — Kenneth E. Brackett
846 — William V. Wood
888 — Marc A. Turcasso

AS OF

NOVEMBER 30, 2020

20 — R. A. Durham
45 — L. J. Hileman
142 — Leo T. Gonzales
336 — D. N. Ray
442 — Gary W. Davis
497 — D. S. Choice
497 — A. M. Panariello
587 — Rick A. Rothweiler
590 — John D. Jones
755 — C. C. Heckard
776 — Justin R. St. John

AS OF

DECEMBER 31, 2020

3 — Terry K. Shock
11 — L. Van Story
75 — Jason R. Fleming
107 — G. F. Chuning
112 — Michael H. Slocum
115 — Scott D. Brotherton
155 — K. P. Smith
190 — Roger Pearson
325 — Daniel Vokish
442 — D. A. Phegley
622 — Jerod P. Johnston
624 — C. L. Van Slyke
741 — Larry D. Bohannon
741 — Jose C. Castaneda

742 — E. C. Keller
757 — Richard H. Witt
776 — F. J. Descant
776 — Joel R. Phillips
811 — Jack K. Osborn
834 — A. L. Mize

AS OF

JANUARY 31, 2021

47 — C. A. McDowell
74 — Michael D. Gunnels
103 — Brian R. Bouley
125 — Steven J. Shaner
133 — Mike D. Crisler
142 — Gilbert Cruz
182 — Kenneth D. Williams
190 — Darrell L. Harshbarger
195 — Dennis L. Harrison
239 — Samuel E. O'Neal
269 — Fred D. Broszeit
270 — Fred E. Catt
309 — H. G. Adams
398 — Mario J. Vasquez
421 — Richard J. Dimitroff
474 — Joseph A. Correa
553 — Daniel P. Elwood
811 — Alan W. Kendall
899 — Roger D. Davenport

AS OF

FEBRUARY 28, 2021

48 — Bobby J. Norman
125 — Seth A. Stockman
183 — Max D. Eckert
183 — J. O. Vittitoe
198 — James W. White
285 — Jack L. Brown
448 — J. W. Colwell
537 — Gregory T. Moore
593 — M. L. Clark
599 — B. G. Garrett
599 — Thomas M. Sullivan
607 — Roy E. Burgess
607 — Philip J. Ondrejch
757 — G. W. Guthrie
934 — D. T. Rotruck

AS OF

MARCH 31, 2021

41 — H. H. Martin
60 — Thomas R. Crone
81 — L. M. Srubas
88 — R. C. Harper

125 — J. A. Biladeau
198 — Harold D. Berry
198 — M. M. Emery
198 — H. Wayne Gothard
198 — J. A. Moore
198 — Howard R. Phillips
206 — J. L. Sawyer
222 — Burke L. Hall
242 — Robert Q. Lewis
246 — R. L. Stemaly
260 — F. E. Lacy
269 — Mitchell Datz
269 — Norman B. Davis
269 — Harvey E. Ferguson
357 — B. A. Klawitter
387 — James C. Clapper
482 — Mark A. Thorpe
500 — R. G. Maddox
504 — Kyle J. Victor
527 — J. J. Cook
736 — Danny J. Criddle
857 — Rick D. Gill
934 — J. T. Lease

AS OF

APRIL 30, 2021

28 — Lou A. Carrillo
86 — Dave C. Eckelmann
98 — Bryan D. Stowe
115 — J. C. Patton
115 — M. B. Qualls
153 — T. K. Barker
180 — Charles L. Mooer
182 — James L. Henderson
298 — G. C. Feda
301 — N. R. Wilkinson
306 — D. I. Stuckey
357 — A. W. Hellenberg
383 — Rick D. Melvin
387 — S. P. Miller
474 — W. H. Elkins
495 — T. W. Fendley
504 — Katherine J. Phillips
517 — William M. Eischens
518 — Daniel J. Furey
523 — Michael G. Kelly
531 — W. J. Adams
542 — C. J. Whitmore
583 — C. G. Hainsworth
623 — Michael L. Nothnagel

Precision Scheduled Railroading: HOW FREIGHT RAIL IS COURTING CATASTROPHE

Workers are sounding the alarm that drastic cuts in employees and maintenance in order to increase profits are tempting fate

BY AARON GORDON

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MOTHERBOARD TECH BY VICE

Just before 5 a.m. on August 2, 2017, Alice Murray was fast asleep when her entire house shook, almost as if a freight train had crashed into the block, she told the Cumberland Times-News.

That's exactly what happened.

About 30 yards away, just off Cleveland Street in Hyndman, Pennsylvania, 33 cars in a 178-car freight train belonging to CSX Corporation derailed. The train crashed into one house and damaged two others. The entire town had to be evacuated. Miraculously, no one was killed.

As scary as the derailment in Hyndman was, it could have been much worse. Of the 178 cars on that train, 70 contained hazardous material, including 15 of the derailed cars, according to a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation. Luckily, just three of them—which contained molten asphalt, molten sulfur, and propane—either leaked or lit on fire.

The town was evacuated because molten asphalt, if released, can create vapors that, according to the NTSB, are an “explosive mixture with air.” Some of the other derailed cars contained liquified petroleum gas, and one car that did not derail contained Sodium Chlorate, which is potentially poisonous to inhale.

Like plane crashes, freight train derailments are rarely the result of a single



Hyndman accident scene
(Photo: Pennsylvania State Police)

failure. Many different things have to go wrong. Also like air travel, freight trains are a highly regulated form of transportation because of the potential for catastrophe.

And yet, freight train derailments are surprisingly common. In 2019, railroads reported 341 derailments on main line track, meaning the parts of the rail system not in yards or other work areas. Of those 341 derailments, 24 were freight trains carrying 159 cars of hazardous material, according to data the railroads voluntarily submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration. Even local news reports provide an alarming window into how frequent derailments are that people actually notice. While reporting this article, freight trains derailed on February 15 in Illinois, February 23 in Pennsylvania, March 3 in California, March 7 in Alabama, and March 11 in both Wis-

consin and Minnesota.

None of these derailments resulted in any reported injuries. But according to Greg Regan, President of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department, a labor organization consisting of 33 transportation unions, these are red flags.

“If you have increases in the less significant or catastrophic derailments,” Regan said, “it reflects a degrading safety culture, and certainly leads to oversights and an environment that could lead to the more disastrous types of derailment that again grab the headlines.”

To be sure, even on well-run freight railways or rigorously regulated airlines, accidents still happen. And at first glance, the derailment in Hyndman appeared to be just another accident. NTSB investigators found the train derailed largely because of a combination of improper braking procedures and the empty cars being in the front of the train. Long trains have an accordion effect where they expand and contract as they brake and accelerate. Empty cars brake faster than heavy ones, and if the empty cars are in front, the full ones will push against them, possibly forcing the empty cars up and off the tracks.

This is not a new problem. How to properly and safely space empty rail cars amid long freight trains and how to brake so as to minimize derailments are some of the oldest and most basic safety protocols in rail operation. And those protocols, along with other rules and practices meant to ensure as safe a rail



NTSB investigators examine a ruptured tank car on August 4, 2017. The derailment occurred in Hyndman, Pennsylvania, on August 2, 2017. (Photo by Erik Strickland, NTSB, image via Wiki Commons)

network as possible, are now being ignored for the sake of profit.

According to interviews with current and former rail workers, union officials, and independent experts, the Hyndman derailment and others like it are the all-too-predictable result of nearly all the major freight rail companies adopting a business approach called Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR). Proponents of PSR say it is about leveraging modern technology to improve efficiency. But those who work on the railroads every day say it is little more than a euphemism for draconian cost-cutting in order to achieve an arbitrary metric that pleases shareholders. That metric, called an “operating ratio,” must get below 60 percent, which means only 60 percent of every dollar earned goes towards actually running the railroads. The rest can go towards executive pay and shareholder dividends. All but one of the seven so-called “Class I” railroad companies, which account for 94 percent of the

freight rail industry’s revenue, have explicitly adopted some form of PSR.

How freight railroads are being run, and for whose benefit, is not just a railroad industry issue. It is a problem that has ramifications across the American economy. Freight rail moves 57 tons of goods per American per year. It is often the most economical, efficient, and environmentally friendly way to move things over long distances. It is also widely recognized as the safest way to move vast quantities of hazardous materials that, for better or worse, currently undergird our comfortable living standards and economic productivity.

But, as the Hyndman derailment demonstrated, moving those hazardous materials is a potential life-and-death question for communities all along the industry’s 140,000 miles of rail. And unlike our roads, bridges, tunnels, and public transportation systems, the entire Class I freight rail system is privately operated and maintained. In other words,

the railroad companies themselves get to decide how much to invest in repair, maintenance and other safety measures, and how much to keep as profit.

Increasingly, railroads are choosing to boost profits and pay shareholders rather than invest in safety. In interviews with Motherboard, workers said that since their respective companies adopted PSR, they barely recognize the work that they do. All of their priorities have changed. What used to be about safety is now about cutting costs. Among the changes:

- Workers now have to inspect many multiples more rail cars in a fraction of the time, barely giving them enough time to walk the entire train;
- Trains are longer than they used to be and assembled haphazardly, with little thought as to where the heavy and empty cars should go to avoid derailments because it would keep the train in the yard longer;
- Shops and yards that used to perform inspections along routes have been

closed, meaning there are fewer inspection points;

- Routes have been changed so cars stop for inspection less frequently;
- Maintenance is deferred as long as possible;
- Knowledgeable and safety-conscious supervisors have often been replaced by businessmen who cultivate a culture of fear and intimidation around reporting unsafe equipment; doing so would keep the train in the yard longer, hurting the metrics on which supervisors are graded;
- While there are strict federal rules governing how often the people running the trains must rest so as to minimize accidents, the workers performing safety-critical inspections have been pushed to compensate for mass layoffs by working 16 hours per shift or more, discouraged from taking lunch breaks, and sometimes required to work overtime or risk losing their jobs

One 40-year veteran railroad worker told Motherboard he has never seen anything like it. “They’re just cutting everywhere, on both ends of everything.” (Motherboard agreed to not name several railroad workers quoted in this article because they feared being fired for speaking out about sensitive safety issues.)

In statements to Motherboard, neither Norfolk Southern nor CSX directly addressed any of these points. Instead, they issued broad defenses of their safety practices, pointing to aggregate safety metrics reported to regulators.

“Norfolk Southern is firmly committed at all levels to operating safely, protecting our employees and the communities that we serve,” said Norfolk Southern’s spokesman Jeff DeGraff. “Our comprehensive approach mirrors that of the freight railroad industry, including significant private investment, employee training efforts, technology implementation, regular inspections, and community outreach, which has led to dramatic safety improvements over the past two decades with respect to train accidents and employee injuries.”

Cindy Schild, director of media relations at CSX, said in a statement to Motherboard, “Safety is a core value at CSX,



Derailment at Hyndman, Pennsylvania (Photo: NTSB)

and while we will always strive to be better, we are proud that after implementing our new operating model in 2017 and 2018, CSX significantly improved our safety performance as evidenced by the metrics reported to our Federal regulator, the FRA [Federal Railroad Administration].”

The impact of PSR on freight rail safety appears to be one of the worst kept secrets in the industry. Workers are afraid to speak out publicly because, several told Motherboard, it would put a target on their backs at a time when one out of every four freight rail workers has lost their jobs in the last five years alone. But there is a bubbling desperation to get someone, anyone, to do something before it’s too late.

To a person, the more than a dozen workers and union officials Motherboard spoke to warned that railroads are courting disaster. Unless something is done to hinder these dangerous practices, they cautioned, derailments like Hyndman will look trivial in comparison to “the big one,” a disaster so bad it will plaster the news and snap Congress and regulators into action.

“Railroads haul the most dangerous gases in the world,” one veteran worker told Motherboard. “I do think it’s a mat-

ter of time. There’s going to be a freight car that hasn’t been inspected in 90,000 miles that comes off the track, as it goes off the track and slams into other cars, into a tank car, and either explodes or leaks poisonous gas out. It’s going to take something like that, and a lot of deaths, and then all of a sudden everybody’s going to care.”

This is not a mere theoretical possibility. This exact set of circumstances happened not long ago just a few miles across the U.S. border. On July 6, 2013, a Montreal, Maine and Atlantic (MMA) Railway train carrying two million gallons of liquid petroleum in 72 tank cars crashed into the downtown area of Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. 47 people died, 2,000 people were evacuated, 40 buildings were destroyed, and millions of gallons of oil seeped into the soil and nearby river. Among the causes of this tragedy, according to Canada’s Transportation Safety Board’s then-chairperson Wendy Tadros, was “a shortline railway running its operations at the margins” and cutting corners on maintenance and training. Three lower-level employees, including the train’s engineer, were charged with criminal negligence but ultimately acquitted.

Many of the towns’ residents sought



An aerial photograph of the site of the March 10, 2017, Union Pacific Railroad train derailment near Graettinger, Iowa. The train consisted of 98 tank cars loaded with ethanol, three locomotives and two buffer cars filled with sand. Twenty of the 98 tank cars derailed, 14 of the 20 released about 322,000 gallons of undenatured ethanol, fueling a post-accident fire that burned for more than 36 hours. (NTSB photo)

accountability at a higher level. Jean Paradis, who lost three friends in the disaster, told Canada's Global News, "Transport Canada has let those cheap companies run railroads for less money, for making more money instead of acting for security for people."

Now, those familiar with the rail industry stateside say the same is happening here. "It's only a matter of time before fatigued workers, unrealistic inspection policies, and unqualified inspections result in a major incident in someone's neighborhood," said Jason Cox of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen in a video posted to Youtube in early February. "I implore anyone who might be watching who has the authority to act to please act now." As of this writing, the video has nine views.

SMART-TD union president Jeremy Ferguson, who has been involved in the freight rail industry since 1997, offered a grim warning. He compared what is occurring in the freight industry to a high-profile transportation disaster from not too long ago in which 346 people died and from an industry that, in a lot of ways,

has a lot in common with freight rail.

"It's going to end up," he said, "like Boeing."

"SAFETY FOURTH"

Norfolk Southern (NS) used to be one of the safest railroads in the country. It won an industry award for safest Class I railroad 20 years in a row until the award was discontinued in 2012. Safety was always the highest priority, workers told Motherboard, but that started to change when NS implemented PSR.

In early February 2019, NS announced it would implement its own version of PSR. Although its workforce had already been declining, in order to lower its operating ratio by about five percent in two years, the railroad planned to reduce its workforce by 3,000 people.

Motherboard spoke to four NS workers who asked to remain anonymous because they fear retaliation from the company for speaking to the press. They all said these cuts have resulted in a dramatic personnel shortage, and since none of the company's efficiency metrics measure safety, supervisors and workers are

placed in the thankless position of either sacrificing safety in order to hit the numbers or do the responsible thing and risk getting punished.

Across the different crafts, workers highlighted the same general problem: in the push for efficiency, fewer workers are being tasked with more, rushed through safety-critical inspections and repairs, and are pressured not to report defects or potential safety issues that will take cars out of service and require manpower to fix.

As an example, several workers told Motherboard about car inspections. When a freight train comes into a yard, Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations require the cars be inspected, with dozens of different inspection points per car to make sure the freight was up for another punishing run on the rails. When these workers first started years or even decades ago, there was no set rule about how long these inspections should take because cars are different lengths and designs vary with some having more inspection points than others. But, as a rule of thumb, carmen generally estimated it would take three minutes per car. About five years ago, NS management mandated inspections take no more than two and a half minutes per car. Some of the workers Motherboard spoke to thought this was reasonable enough.

But in the past two years, management started mandating workers spend no more than two minutes per car. Then 1.8. Then 1.5. Now, it's 1.4, barely giving workers any time to stop and look at the car they're supposedly inspecting, which can be up to 100 feet in length. Thanks to the staff cuts, rail yard closures and operation consolidation, workers that used to inspect perhaps 300 cars a day are now inspecting three or four times that. Company notices and presentations that used to highlight the importance of safety now talk about efficiency. In one bulletin board material, a worker said, safety was listed as the fourth most important thing, behind measures like reducing car dwell time and getting trains back on the rails. The workers have a joke around the shop floor now:

“Safety Fourth.”

This forces workers into an impossible situation that can only be solved one of two ways. The first way is, as one worker told Motherboard, to lie on the inspection sheet about how much time it took per car. “Basically, our bosses now, they basically told us, just lie,” one worker told Motherboard. “Please just lie on that inspection sheet. Just lie, write bogus times, to satisfy ‘em.”

The second way is to not really do the inspections, at least not properly. Management doesn’t explicitly tell workers to do this but “you’re just made to feel you’re an idiot,” another worker said, like “you’re the only one in the world who would care about this stuff, now you’re holding up the train and pushing everything back.” And it is made clear to them that if they keep holding trains back, their yard will be shut down and they’ll lose their jobs.

As a result, “normal maintenance is getting neglected severely,” that worker said. A different NS worker concurred, telling Motherboard that recently a train came into his yard with some freight cars that hadn’t received a basic walk-around inspection in 90,000 miles. Per FRA regulations, trains are not supposed to travel 3,500 miles without an inspection. He estimated about 13 out of the 60 cars had “major defects.”

The consequences of these policies are deadly. In the early evening of October 4, 2018, a Union Pacific train collided into another in Granite Canyon, Wyoming. The moving train was speeding down a hill at 50 miles per hour unable to stop due to problems with the air brakes. Both the engineer and conductor were killed. NTSB investigators determined six of the 10 cars added to the train at the previous stop were overdue for air brake testing by a period of a few weeks to two years. The NTSB concluded that, had the cars been tested per federal safety regulations, the air brake problems would almost certainly have been detected.

In a statement, Union Pacific spokesperson Kristen South told Motherboard, “Union Pacific has recognized many operational efficiencies in the past few years



Derailed at Granite Canyon, Wyoming (Photo: NTSB)

that have reduced the amount of equipment and resources on our network.”

Echoing many PSR proponents over the years, South asserted these PSR-esque initiatives actually improve safety. “The ability to operate trains with more rail cars results in fewer trains, reducing the potential for employee injuries and derailments. Additionally, we successfully utilized Distributed Power locomotive technology and improved train consist parameters to enhance braking ability and train handling capabilities. This technology allows for new train lengths without compromising our high safety expectations.”

South disputed claims their equipment is not properly inspected, saying it undergoes “detailed inspections, meeting federal requirements, before departing and after arriving at destinations” and leverages various technologies to supplement inspections.

THE MONEYBALL OF RAILROADING

Precision Schedule Railroading is the brainchild of Hunter Harrison, who by most accounts is the single most important figure in North American railroading of the last 50 years. And even he understood the dire conse-

quences of his innovations.

In October 2017, just two months after the CSX derailment in Hyndman, Harrison appeared before the Surface Transportation Board to hear complaints from shippers about how his cost-cutting at CSX tanked service. Harrison had been receiving oxygen for some months to treat his emphysema and would die two months later.

“I got blood all over my hands,” Harrison said in a somewhat bizarre non sequitur. “From injuries in this industry that should have been avoidable. And I think these issues of safety never fall to the wayside with us. And they always will be.”

Harrison started his railroading career in 1963 as an oiler on the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway, which, like many misleading railroad names, ran in the south and nowhere near San Francisco. The “Frisco,” as it was nicknamed, was acquired by Burlington Northern (the “BN” in BNSF, a Class I railroad) in 1980. Harrison worked his way up the management ladder. He left BN in 1989 to take an executive job at Illinois Central, a railroad that mostly ran down the midwest from Chicago to Alabama and had recently been purchased by an investment group. It was here that Harrison

first implemented PSR.

PSR is the Moneyball of railroading. In an industry that at the time did not run on set schedules, struggled to be profitable, and didn't bother to measure or track many key performance indicators, Harrison brought a rigorous, data-driven approach to railroad scheduling and asset management that made them run more efficiently. Rather than run hub-and-spoke networks with inefficient branch lines, Harrison sold off unprofitable parts of the business, ran longer, heavier trains at faster speeds on set schedules and eliminated as many intermediate stops to change cargo as possible. Howard Green, Harrison's biographer, wrote that few things bothered Harrison more than "underutilised assets." Harrison himself wrote "If an asset isn't used, it's a liability" because, he believed, railroads only make money when cars are moving.

These are all solid enough management principles, but like any cost-cutting or efficiency obsessions, they have their limits. At some point, all the fat has been trimmed, all the underutilized assets sold off, and all that's left is muscle and bone. The remainder of Harrison's railroading career was premised on rejecting this idea, on assuring shareholders that there was always more fat to trim.

In 1999, Illinois Central was absorbed by Canadian National Railway (CN), a Class I railroad. Harrison became CEO in 2002, doing the PSR thing there, too. He left in 2009 having made CN the most efficient Class I in North America and a celebrated railroad man in industry circles.

Three years later, an activist investor from Pershing Square Capital Management named William Ackman installed Harrison as CEO at CN's rival, Canadian Pacific Railway (CP). Harrison did a kind of PSR-Plus at CP, stepping up the cost-cutting measures, leaving CP's operating ratio on par with CN's.

In 2017, yet another activist investor at Mantle Ridge replicated the process at CSX Corporation, another Class I railroad, where Harrison implemented a mega-PSR. He got rid of 900 locomotives, 26,000 wagons, and aimed to slash

the 31,000-person workforce by a third. Before he could do so, Harrison died in December 2017.

According to Harrison's biographer, shareholders of the railroads Harrison ran benefited to the tune of approximately \$50 billion in increased stock value. Meanwhile, as CSX's competitors saw the writing on the wall and implemented their own versions of PSR, according to Surface Transportation Board data, the Class I railroad workforce has been cut by 25 percent since 2016.

Harrison ushered in a generation of freight railroading with many advocates. But it also has many skeptics who argue, whatever its merits may have been back when railroads were less efficient and struggling for profitability, PSR is now little more than cover for a mass corporate looting of North American freight rail.

"PSR appears to have definite advantages to some parties," independent railway economist Jim Blaze told Rail Journal in 2019. "However, the focused cost cutting is done with a slash-and-burn zest rarely seen before by previous cost-cutters."

In fact, one has to go back to the Gilded Age to find a similar period in railroad history. Richard White, a Stanford historian and author of *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* told Motherboard that, while the analogy is not exact, PSR reminds him a lot of the "Fast Freight Lines" of the late 19th Century, "whose goal was to keep freight in motion by moving directly between points of origin and destination and avoiding the long delays when cars were switched at division points." There are differences between then and now; for example, that was a period where railroading was stupendously competitive and technology has advanced to the point where coordinating a continent-spanning freight network is actually feasible. Plus, the workforce now is almost entirely unionized providing protections 19th Century workers fought bitter and often deadly battles to win.

But, some of the overarching lessons from the Fast Freight era still apply.

While accounting was far more primitive—and often done with cooked books—more than a century ago, the end result was surprisingly similar. As White described it, "Insiders took over Fast Freight lines and siphoned off the profits." And that, he added, "meant less for maintenance and safer technologies."

Just as workers a century ago were a driving force in making railroads safer for everyone, so too do workers today want reforms before disasters. The workers Motherboard spoke to said they agreed to talk because they considered it their duty to make the railroad as safe as possible. Their jobs, both before and since PSR, are to report any defects they see.

Now, things have gotten to the point where the defects are not limited to the freight cars. To them, the entire corporate philosophy is defective. And they're worried more people will get hurt. As one put it, "if I don't shop it and it gets a conductor hurt or a train derailed, that's on me."

One worker framed the issue slightly differently. In much the same way workers accept responsibility if a car they inspect ends up having a defect that isn't fixed and hurts someone, the executives making the decisions that make these types of accidents inevitable need to be held accountable as well.

Harkening back to the Boeing comparison, another worker said he thinks it's important to speak out so executives cannot claim after the fact that they had no knowledge of what they were doing, that whatever catastrophe may occur is not "just another accident." In case a railroad executive is ever, say, hauled before Congress to account for his actions, he wants it on the record before the fact that everyone working on the railroads knows a catastrophic derailment is "totally foreseeable." 🗣️

BLET Editor's Note:

It was announced on July 9, 2021, that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) will launch an investigation into PSR. Work on the investigation is expected to begin in September.

Buddy Brigade

CANINE COMPANION INSPIRES BLET MEMBER JOHN KARAKIAN

Anyone who has walked a dog has heard the “who’s walking who?” joke. With John Karakian, BLET’s Grant Trunk Western General Chairman, his dog actually was walking him. Karakian and Buddy, his chocolate lab, walked three or four hours at a stretch a few times a day for more than 12 years.

“Buddy would pick the route. Once we’d step outside, he’d either go to the left or right. I’d let him take the way and there were lots of different routes. I didn’t want him to think he could outwalk me,” Karakian said. If it was hot, Buddy would lead them to a local lake and he’d sit in the water while Karakian waited on the dock. “He would start slowing down when we’d be on the way home. He’d want to stay out.”

No matter where they went throughout their Detroit neighborhood, Buddy would get attention and treats from friends and strangers alike.

“He was a fantastic dog with a great disposition. Everyone loved Buddy,” Karakian said.

In the meantime, Karakian was often on the phone doing work. Karakian, one of the longest-serving General Chairmen of a BLET General Committee of Adjustment, worked as a locomotive engineer before going full time as a General Chairman. His father was a Teamster at a lumber company in Detroit and, once when



BLET General Chairman and his chocolate lab Buddy were a welcome sight for neighbors

Jimmy Hoffa came to speak at the local, his father brought him along, making a huge impression.

“A lot of the union local chairmen knew Buddy. He was a Teamster,” Karakian said. “He even softened up the company sometimes. Buddy was my secret weapon in negotiations.”

Unbeknownst to Karakian until Buddy passed away in March 2019, they were both well known in the community. “Apparently, everybody knew us. The police

and fire department sent people by when they noticed we hadn’t walked past their stations for a few days. Everyone was wondering where we were,” Karakian said.

He decided to let people on their regular walking route know what happened, so he handed out a photo of Buddy along with tickets to his church’s Easter production. Dozens of people showed up so he spent the next seven months passing out more than 2,000 more notices about Buddy along with tickets to the Christmas service at Brightmoor Christian Church in Novi, Mich.

Hundreds of people showed up with their “Buddy” tickets.

The story of Karakian and Buddy has been written about by the Christian Broadcasting Network, and Guideposts magazine featured their story in the most recent issue.

He has gotten hundreds of emails and letters of support from all walks of life, including Jim Harbaugh, coach of the Michigan Wolverines college football team; evangelist Franklin Graham; Gretchen Whitmer, who was Michigan governor and now serves as the Secretary of Energy; and even Joe Biden’s White House.

“It’s hard to believe how much has happened since Buddy passed away,” Karakian said. “The whole thing really helped me get closer to God. Buddy did that too,” he said.



A photo collage honoring Buddy and Brother Karakian



Brother Karakian (center) with retired National President Paul T. Sorrow and Grand Trunk Western BLET members following a contract ratification several years ago.

“It’s hard to believe how much has happened since Buddy passed away. The whole thing really helped me get closer to God. Buddy did that too.”



Election brings change to Washington D.C.



BY VINCENT G. VERNA
VICE PRESIDENT &
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE
REPRESENTATIVE

Changes. Elections have consequences. We've all heard that one. But elections can also have benefits. "Politics," Bismarck said, "is the art of the possible."

One of our tasks after any major national election is to reassess what is possible and then work toward it as our common goal. In recent years, BLET has had to adopt a more defensive posture and try to weather political storms from politicians who made clear — by their statements and sponsored legislation — that they would work to neutralize union power. Not content with simply lessening the power of unions, many of these same politicians have made a priority of legislating unions out of existence. Current events have demonstrated the need to restabilize as we pull out of the COVID pandemic and get things done for the BLET membership as well as the public at large.

BLET can then begin again with a solid foundation to work for legislation and to help elect legislators that put railroad worker safety as priority number one when it comes to rail operating concerns.

After the election of 2020, Washington D.C. has become a changed environment. It has changed politically and physically. The attack on the Capitol on January 6, 2021, has left scars on the city. Fencing, barriers and razor wire remain in place around the Capitol's 60-acre grounds due to continued threats against

"Once any person decides to resort to violence against our government, kill or injure Capitol Police, or shut down the orderly process of governing, they have abandoned any political position they may have. This is not the exercise of freedom, but mob rule."

the building and elected officials. It is terrible to see in America. In the 10 years I have been living and working in D.C., it has been a privilege to work and walk these grounds and witness the majestic architecture of its citadel, The Capitol.

Washington D.C. looks like a war zone. It is a hard thing to have to talk about and it is even worse to see. Freedom does not look like soldiers, barricades and barbed wire in D.C. A walk from Union Station to BLET offices inside the Teamster Building requires showing identification to an armed National Guardsman. It would be ignorant to not understand the reasons there need to be soldiers there for protection of people and government property.

Speaking of freedom and service, I remember a day I took a member of my family to the World War II Memorial not long after I relocated to Washington D.C. It was a beautiful day. There is a large fountain and pool in the middle of the Memorial. I saw an elderly veteran sitting on one of the benches near the fountain and I could see tears welling up in his eyes. But what was surprising to notice was he also had a smile on his face. I

turned my attention to see what he was looking at. It was two small children jumping up and down getting soaking wet in the fountain. I looked back at the veteran who looked at me and we both nodded together for just a moment. I had to keep walking, or I think I would have cried. That is what freedom feels like in Washington D.C. This experience was incredibly moving for me, and it is not a rare occurrence. Veterans are constant visitors to the Capitol. Their sacrifices and why they made them are on full display here in our political buildings, memorials, Arlington National Cemetery and the list goes on.

It is a terrible situation that America needs protection from threats from its own citizens. Costs associated from the January 6 attack on the Capitol and the continued National Guard presence that is scheduled to remain in place through May 2021, is expected to exceed \$30 million.

Before BLET gets anywhere politically in Washington D.C., we have to have a functioning government free from fear of violent attack. Politics is the main way to achieve a civic goal without resorting to violence. Violence is the breakdown of politics.

Once any person decides to resort to violence against our government, kill or injure Capitol Police, or shut down the orderly process of governing, they have abandoned any political position they may have. This is not the exercise of freedom, but mob rule. It goes against all of our Founders' principles, whether someone's political philosophy aligns with Thomas Paine or Edmund Burke.

Mastery of politics is what makes America exceptional. Any country run by an Autocrat can resort to violent action. Violence and graft are the primary



tools of an autocrat. American strength comes from its ability to wage peace and diplomacy before war. Ask any soldier and they'll tell you the true limits of military strength. They know first-hand. This is much like I remind elected officials in Washington anytime I have the opportunity about railroad operations. If you want to know anything about operating a train, ask a locomotive engineer. A locomotive engineer will tell you. If you ask a locomotive engineer, you will get a genuine answer.

On the COVID pandemic front, BLET members have been trying to get the right PPE and manage COVID challenges since the start of it. Since the change of Administrations, there has now been put into effect a mask wearing mandate in all enclosed vehicles with two or more people. Everyone seems to find masks cumbersome to wear to some greater or lesser extent, however it is now a mandate that rail carriers and their employees have to follow. FRA has informed us their goal is not to play gotcha "we caught you not wearing a mask." If they see people in enclosed spaces not wearing a mask, the FRA inspectors have been tasked to remind people of the mandate and offer to provide a mask to the person if they do not have their own.

This has occurred while BLET members have simultaneously been required to operate within an already crowded work environment. This has meant using bolt-on equipment in the cab for PTC implementation, fuel savings software and other forms of equipment.

There have been severe cuts in manpower—before and after the onset of COVID. Our members have already been forced to work under the constraints of "precision scheduled railroading" or other similar business models with different names, but impossible operating ratio goals.

These types of models put short term profits on Wall Street ahead of long-term gains that are sustainable and take safe operations into account. BLET wants and needs the railroads to be profitable and increase shareholder value. However, BLET insists that those

"The time is overdue for our leaders in Congress to be held accountable.

The way we do that is monitor how they vote.

If obstructionism continues, politicians can continue to hide behind distracting the public with petty issue opinions that accomplish nothing except to spur debate or division on social media websites."

profits do not come at the expense of the safety of our members on the job.

Given the state of things in Washington at the moment, BLET must assess what is possible. This raises questions. Where do we place our limited resources? What items can we prioritize in the wake of unprecedented violence in and on The Capitol? How do we balance our opportunities and possibilities against this while our members are on the front lines of moving freight during a once in a hundred-years pandemic?

These are questions BLET is faced with, among many others. These are also questions that have not needed to be posed for the bulk of the BLET's history or even U.S. History. A major fork in the road lies ahead for America and for BLET. It could correctly be viewed as a crisis.

President John F. Kennedy reminded us, "When written in Chinese, the word crisis is composed of two characters: one represents danger, the other represents opportunity."

BLET has an opportunity to achieve major rail safety legislation for the first time in 13 years, since 2008. We must avoid the danger of complacency and must work as hard as we can within this difficult environment.

There is a new Chairman of the T&I

Railroad Subcommittee, Congressman-Donald Payne (D-NJ 10). BLET has met with Chairman Payne twice since the Members of the 117th Congress took



Payne

their oaths of office. For the first time in many years, we have an opportunity to pass a transportation and infrastructure bill that will help all Americans and provide great jobs for Americans. With a bill

like this, BLET will deploy every effort it can to include rail safety legislation that helps our members have more certainty over crew size, cross border operations, train length and hedge-fund railroading.

The Senate has a new Majority Leader, Chuck Schumer, who has promised to bring legislation to the floor that gets



Schumer

passed in the House. This does not guarantee that the legislation will pass, but it does guarantee that politicians will have to perform their Constitutional duties and vote for or against issues for Americans.

They can then be judged on how they vote and not simply what they say.

We also have a new FRA that will change course on better regulatory enforcement for perennial problems faced by railroaders regarding Hours of Service law violations and provide a return to the Rail Safety Advisory Committee ("RSAC") as a forum to examine regulatory changes necessary to promote and implement safe and safer rail operations.

The time is overdue for our leaders in Congress to be held accountable. The way we do that is monitor how they vote. If obstructionism continues, politicians can continue to hide behind distracting the public with petty issue opinions that accomplish nothing except to spur debate or division on social media websites. All Americans, regardless of political affiliation, want Congress and the White House to get things done. We now have hope that they can and evidence that



Rail Conference Joins High-Speed Rail Coalition



Front view of a new Amtrak Acela train under construction at Alstom's facility in Hornell, New York. The new trainsets are expected to begin service along the Northeast Corridor in 2021.

High speed rail photo: courtesy of Amtrak

Dennis R. Pierce, President, Teamsters Rail Conference announced that the Teamsters Rail Conference — following a unanimous vote by its Policy Committee — has joined the U.S. High Speed Rail Coalition Executive Committee. The Committee is comprised of passenger and high-speed rail stakeholders, proponents and supporters from all corners of the Nation.

The Committee's Campaign will focus on educating elected officials at all levels of government, as well as the public, of the benefits of federal investment in expanding high speed rail service. Among

the key goals of the Campaign are:

- a minimum of \$205 billion for true high-speed rail;
- the establishment of a Rail Trust Fund;
- the formation of a High Speed Rail Development Agency within USDOT; and
- maintaining the robust labor standards outlined in the American High Speed Rail Act.

The Teamsters Rail Conference is comprised of two Divisions, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BMWED) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and

Trainmen Division (BLET). As such, the Teamsters Rail Conference Policy Committee is comprised equally of BMWED and BLET voting members. As part of its approval to join the High Speed Rail Coalition Executive Committee, the Policy Committee also agreed that both Divisions and their respective Crafts would be equally represented on the Executive Committee. BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative Vince Verna and BMWED Director of Government Affairs Jeff Joines will serve as the joint representatives and spokesmen for the Teamsters Rail Conference.



BLET Vice President Verna said, “I am very happy that BLET and BMWED can lead the Teamsters Rail Conference as part of a high speed rail coalition. This is to ensure that the HSR coalition includes labor rights as a main priority. We are happy Congress is seeking the funding for high speed rail while also protecting funding for Amtrak and other intercity and passenger rail systems. Our members who move today’s passengers are essential and we are eager to represent rail workers who will work on high speed rail systems in the future.”

BMWED Director Joines said, “The BMWED is excited to be a part of the High Speed Rail Coalition along with the BLET. HSR will transform our communities and the way we travel in the 21st century, along with providing good paying union railroad jobs well into the future. We call on Congress to meet the long-needed increased funding for high-speed rail around the country.”

On June 19, 2021, Brother Verna was one of the featured speakers at a rally to promote high-speed rail at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. The rally was sponsored by the High Speed Rail Coalition and additional guest speakers included U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, and U.S. Reps. Seth Moulton and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

After the rally, Brother Verna said: “We want Congress to fund high-speed



A new Acela trainset makes its journey from Hornell, New York, to Pueblo, Colorado, for high-speed testing.

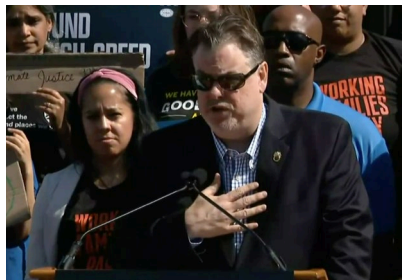
rail at levels that would help ensure its success and the ability to maintain a World Class workforce with federal protections for collective bargaining and Railroad Retirement. The BLET plans to let Congress work out the details of the funding, but on the employees side, we want to see the workforce protected by unions and locomotive engineers running high speed trains represented by the BLET.”

The Teamsters Rail Conference represents more than 70,000 rail employees

in the United States who work as locomotive engineers, trainmen and maintenance of way workers on the major freight railroads, Amtrak, and the country’s numerous commuter rail systems and short line railroads. The Conference was formed in early 2004 after the merger of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and added to in 2005 when the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees also merged with the Teamsters. 🇺🇸

VINCE VERNA AT HIGH SPEED RAIL RALLY:

“We want Congress to fund high-speed rail at levels that would help ensure its success and the ability to maintain a World Class workforce with federal protections for collective bargaining and Railroad Retirement.”



BLET Vice President & National Legislative Representative Vince Verna spoke on behalf of the Teamsters Rail Conference at a rally for high-speed rail funding in Washington, D.C., on June 10, 2021. In the background wearing BLET polo shirts are Herb Harris (green polo), Chairman of the BLET Washington D.C. Legislative Board, and Carlyle Smith (blue polo), 2nd Vice Chairman of the Washington D.C. Legislative Board.

Dave Brown retires after lifetime of union service

Brother David K. Brown, long-serving Chairman of the BLET's Minnesota State Legislative Board, retired on November 5, 2020. His railroad career spanned 49 years of service with the BNSF Railway and Northstar Commuter rail, and included a lifetime of dedicated service to the union movement. Brother Brown stood up for the rights of all workers and used the power of legislation to fight for improved safety and working conditions for railroaders.

Brother Brown hired out with the BN at Minneapolis Junction in Minneapolis on September 9, 1971. He worked about four months as a switch tender, then became a switchman. Brother Brown was supposed to be put into the engineer ranks in 1978, but got bumped and had to work in Brainard where he became the senior fireman in his district. He went firing in 1993 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1993.

Brother Brown joined the Brotherhood on December 1, 2002, and he has held continuous membership ever since. He is a member of Division 517 in St. Paul, Minnesota. He became active in a union leadership role right away upon joining the Brotherhood, winning election to serve Division 517 as Legislative Representative. It was an office he held for nearly 20 years and relinquished the position only when he knew he was going to retire.

Brother Brown was first elected Chairman of the Minnesota State Legislative Board in 2007, and was reelected by acclamation at subsequent meetings in 2011, 2015 and 2019. As State Legislative Board Chairman, Brother Brown spent much time lobbying inside his state capital building for improvements to railroad safety. During his term as Chairman, 16 bills written by Brother Brown were introduced in the state legislature, including three that would eventually become law: 1. The



Brother Dave Brown served the BLET as Chairman of the Minnesota State Legislative Board from 2007-2020

Motor Carriers of Railroad Employees law that provides for the safety of rail workers when transported by other means than train; 2. A law that protects locomotive engineers from having to submit a personal driver's license to law enforcement at an at-grade incident; and 3. A law that established penalties for pedestrians that go around crossing gates. Brother Brown formulated and was lead lobbyist on all three of these bills, and he helped to build the coalitions of bipartisan support that were necessary to pass each bill into law.

Brother Brown also lent a helping hand when called upon to lobby for BLET issues in Washington D.C., something he did many times over the years. He served the BLET's National Association of State Legislative Board Chairman (NASLBC) as Region 3 Chairman for several years, and was assigned to work on multiple RSAC committees in service to the Brotherhood. Brother Brown and his wife Cheri hosted the BLET's International Western Convention (IWC) in Minneapolis in 2014, where Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton delivered the keynote address. Brother Brown was an officer of the former IWC, having

served on its Executive Committee.

In addition to his work in the freight industry for the BNSF, Brother Brown also worked as a passenger rail locomotive engineer. He worked for Northstar Commuter Rail for about three years, in an arrangement where the BNSF provided operating crews as well as trackage rights.

In 2009, Brother Brown and his BNSF conductor were given a safety commendation by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). The FRA recognized the crew for their exemplary service and prompt action to circumvent a collision while working during a severe blizzard.

Brother Brown's Last Run came on November 4, 2020. He worked as the locomotive engineer of a transfer job out of North Town to St. Paul, Minnesota, serving various industries along the way. His retirement became effective the next day.

Brother Brown held elected union office in every job and in every industry he ever worked. Prior to his service with the BLET, Brother Brown was a union officer with the United Transportation Union while working in other crafts. Prior to his railroad career, he worked in the auto industry and was a union

officer with the United Auto Workers. Brother Brown also spent time as a commercial fisherman in Alaska. He said it was dangerous, like working for the railroad industry, and that he tragically lost seven friends in severe storms. He is proud to have started a safety committee while working as a commercial fisherman. Brown says the Coast Guard took note of the committee's work and farmed it out to other commercial vessels.

Brother Brown owned his own business for a number of years, which has the distinction of being the first cyber cafe in northern Minnesota. Brown described it as a delicatessen and coffee shop that offered internet service to consumers. It also served as an art and music venue, hosting a wide variety of acts such as the Winnipeg Bagpipers and the Green Hornets, a heavy metal band from Los Angeles.

Brother Brown and his lovely wife Cheri were married in 2002. She had two sons and a daughter from a previous marriage, while he had two daughters and a son from a previous marriage. Today, Dave and Cheri have six grandchildren.

In his free time, Brother Brown enjoys hunting and fishing, wood working, spending time at the lake in Montana, and gardening. He plans to spend even more time in Montana during retirement, with wintertime spent visiting as many people as possible in the warmer parts of the country. He also plans to spend more time with grandkids.

Brother Brown delivered a speech at a rally during the height of the War on Workers in 2011. Part of his speech is just as relevant today, and helps to crystalize his passion for the union movement and his dedication as a union leader.

"Solidarity, dignity and respect are not just words to inspire our union Brothers and Sisters to stand shoulder to shoulder," he said. "They are the essential foundation of basic human rights. Those are powerful words, and I urge you to rise up and answer call." 📢

Jerry Jensen served Division 98 as Local Chairman



These four men, who have served as Local Chairmen of Division 98 for more than 25 years, gathered for a photo at the BLET's Fourth National Convention in 2018 (from left): National President Dennis Pierce, Roy Helm, Jerry Jensen and L.D. Gordon

Brother J.C. "Jerry" Jensen, who served for eight years as Local Chairman of BLET Division 98 in Lincoln, Nebraska, safely completed his Last Run for the BNSF Railway on November 24, 2020.

His retirement brought to a conclusion a railroad career that began in 1978, the same year he graduated from high school. Brother Jensen hired out with the Burlington Northern as a track laborer at Lincoln, Nebraska, transferring to engine service a short time later. He went firing on June 21, 1979, and earned his promotion to locomotive engineer for the BN on December 13, 1979. Brother Jensen joined the Brotherhood as a member of Division 98 on April 1, 1980, and he has held continuous membership ever since. He is the proud owner of a 40-year BLET membership pin.

Brother Jensen became involved in union activities in 2000, when he began serving as Vice Local Chairman of Division 98. In 2004, Brother Jensen was elected to serve Division 98 as Local

Chairman, a position he held until 2012. Brother Jensen represented Division 98 as a delegate to the BLET's First National Convention in 2006, and he served the National Division as a member of the Arrangements Committee at subsequent National Conventions in 2010, 2014 and 2018.

For his Last Run on November 24, 2020, Brother Jensen worked as the locomotive engineer of a local train between Lincoln and Aurora, Nebraska (and return). His retirement became effective January 30, 2021.

He and his wife Lori were married on October 13, 1979. They have three sons: Sean, Dane, and Trey, 26. The couple has two granddaughters. Brother Jensen's late father-in-law, Edmond D. Kelly, worked as a locomotive engineer for the BN.

Brother Jensen's hobbies include gardening, remodeling and landscaping. During retirement, he plans to spend more time working around the yard and enjoying life. 📢

Never a dull moment as Division 629's Knutelski concludes 31-year career with BNSF

Brother Ronald D. Knutelski of BLET Division 629 (Hannibal, Missouri) retired after 31 years of railroading when he safely completed his Last Run for the BNSF Railway on December 10, 2020. He has been a BLET member for over 28 consecutive years.

Brother Knutelski began his railroad career on May 1, 1989, when hired out as a brakeman with the Burlington Northern in Galesburg, Illinois. He then married his wife Ada Marie on June 24, 1989.

"My life as I knew it changed forever," Brother Knutelski said. "Chasing work around two states and various locations I felt becoming a locomotive engineer would increase my opportunity for steady work. I was accepted into the locomotive engineer training program in July of 1990 and earned my engineer seniority in December of 1990 at Beardstown, Illinois."

He recalls that — at that time — all trains on the Beardstown line still had an occupied caboose.

Brother Knutelski joined the Brotherhood on July 1, 1992. Almost immediately he became actively involved in union leadership. "Shortly after becoming an engineer I approached the Secretary-Treasurer where I was working in West Quincy, Missouri, which was closer to my original home of Hannibal. Dean Hammock, Secretary-Treasurer of Division 629, was close to retiring, and showing interest in the BLE I guess qualified me to take his spot," Brother Knutelski said. "I was on the next ballot — unopposed — for the office of Division 629 Secretary-Treasurer."

Brother Knutelski said the Division only had a couple of dozen members at the time. He held the office of Division 629 Secretary-Treasurer for four terms and saw the Brotherhood move



Brother Ronald D. Knutelski served the BLET as Secretary-Treasurer of Division 629 for several years.

from paper monthly reporting to the digital era. After completing his fourth term as S-T, he learned that Division 629's President was planning to retire, so Brother Knutelski recruited a replacement S-T and ran for the Division President's job. He held the office of Division President until the spring of 2020 when he stepped aside in advance of his retirement. "I resigned so our Vice President could have some break-in time while I was still around," Brother Knutelski said.

During his tenure as a union officer, Brother Knutelski said membership in Division 629 more than tripled. He used the opportunity to mentor younger members about the importance of union membership. "I was quick to point out to new members how the BLET was the first and still defends the two member crew on every train," he said. "At one point a fourth of our membership was trainmen, many eventually becoming locomotive engineers."

"One of the many honors I had was meeting then-General Chairman Denis Pierce, accompanied by Vice General Chairman Steve Bratka, in Beard-

stown for a special meeting ahead of the vote to merger with the trainmen's union (UTU)," Brother Knutelski said. "May Steve rest in peace. Both were stand-up men and their priority was putting the future of all railroaders first."

Brother Knutelski is also proud to have attended the BLET's Second National Convention in Reno, Nevada, in 2010.

Reflecting on his railroad career, which spanned more than three decades, Brother Knutelski said: "Being a locomotive engineer running the K-line along the scenic Mississippi River between Burlington, Iowa, and St. Louis, Missouri, most of my career was never dull, especially through many challenging floods. Ada and I raised two sons, Alex, who is in his early 30s, and Austin, who is in his late 20s. Both got a train ride and blew the whistle early in my career when they were young boys and things were a little more relaxed. Ada and I look forward to seeing some of this great country when the dust settles. I look back with mostly smiles toward the many good times and railroaders I shared the cab with." 📻

Scott Sughroue helped members for 17 years as Local Chairman of Div. 621

After an injury-free railroad career that spanned 44 years, Brother Scott J. Sughroue safely completed his Last Run for the BNSF Railway on December 3, 2020. A dedicated union officer, Brother Sughroue served as Local Chairman of BLET Division 621 (Wymore, Nebraska) for 17 years, with an additional three years as Vice Local Chairman. He is the proud owner of a 40-year BLET membership pin.

Brother Sughroue hired out with the Burlington Northern on June 15, 1976, working as a material handler out of Havelock Yard in Lincoln, Nebraska. He went firing on July 19, 1979, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer on January 10, 1980. He joined the Brotherhood as a member of Division 98 (Lincoln, Nebraska) on May 1, 1980, transferring his membership to Division 621 in 1997.

For a span of 20 years, Brother Sughroue served Division 621 as Vice Local Chairman (1997-2000) and as Local Chairman (2000-2017). He served his GCA on the Board of Tellers in 2016. Four times Brother Sughroue represented Division 621 as a Delegate to the BLE International convention in 2001 and to three BLET National conventions (2006, 2010 and 2014). In 2018, he served on the Arrangements Committee at the BLET's Fourth National Convention.

Regarding his 17 years of service as Local Chairman, Brother Sughroue said: "I was inspired by the people I followed, and, the idea of helping my Brothers and Sisters with pay and discipline grievances was appealing. The Local Chairman is also the sounding board for the membership, not only for work, but a lot of times in their personal lives, so that part was gratifying as well."

Brother Sughroue's Last Run came on December 3, 2020. He worked as the locomotive engineer on a road switcher in and around Fremont, Nebraska. His retirement became effective the next day.



Brother Scott J. Sughroue hired out in 1976 and retired after 44 years of railroading on December 4, 2020.

Brother Sughroue has multiple family members who work in the railroad industry. His father-in-law Don Peterson was a BNSF locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 98 (Lincoln, Nebraska) before taking a buy-out in 1989 following a 24-year career. His son-in-law Ben Poe is a locomotive engineer and member of Division 621 (Wymore, Nebraska). Son-in-law John P. Fricke is also a BNSF conductor/engineer. His brother Mark Sughroue is a retired coal superintendent with the BNSF out of Fort Worth, Texas.

Brother Sughroue and his wife Suzanne were married on March 23, 1985. They have three children: Hannah, Lily and Joseph. Brother Sughroue's hobbies include golfing, running, gardening, and home improvement projects. His wife Suzanne has served on numerous

boards in Lincoln, and currently serves the Lincoln Community Playhouse and Leadership Lincoln. She is also on the Nebraska Wesleyan University Board of Governors. The couple volunteers stocking food in Little Free Pantries around Lincoln, and also volunteers serving meals at the Gathering Place and at Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach.

During retirement, Brother Sughroue plans to stay active physically and mentally, and says he may explore bartending once a week.

"I didn't think hiring on in 1976 would lead to a 44-year career, but it was a good living and it went by fast," Brother Sughroue said. "As far as BLE and BLET membership, I wish I would have become involved in leadership roles earlier in my career because it was a pleasure to serve the members." 🍷

Bess completes Last Run with his son as conductor

Brother James K. Bess, a member of BLET Division 33 (Battle Creek, Michigan), completed his Last Run for the CN/Grand Trunk Western on August 29, 2020. What made the event so special — other than bringing a 42-year railroad career to a happy ending — was the fact that his son Alex Bess worked as his conductor for his Last Run.

Brother Bess hired out with the GTW track department on September 11, 1978. He transferred to the clerical department in June of 1986, then made the jump to the operating crafts on April 3, 1994. Brother Bess has held

continuous membership in Division 33 since October 1, 1995. He has been an active and involved Brother throughout his 26-year union career, and served Division 33 as Secretary-Treasurer for nine years.

Following Brother Bess' Last Run, his retirement became effective October 1, 2020.

B.J. Trumble, Chairman of the BLET's Michigan State Legislative Board, extended his congratulations to Brother Bess upon his Last Run. "We wish Jim all the best during his well-deserved retirement," Trumble said. "After 42 years, he has definitely earned it." 📍



From left: Division 33's James Bess and his son Alex Bess

The BLET publishes Last Runs for members who have retired, and recognizes members with 40 years or more of membership in Honor Roll articles. If you are planning to retire soon, please let us know! For details, contact: John Bentley, Editor, Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Journal, Email: Bentley@ble-t.org, 7061 East Pleasant Valley Road, Independence, Ohio 44131

PRESIDENT PIERCE MESSAGE

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becoming National President encouraging all members to consider running for office in their Local Division; members getting involved in their Union is the lifeblood of any labor organization. Whether it's long time officers passing on what they have learned while in office to new officers wanting to serve, or it's new young members thrust into a new role with no training, our Local Division election cycle sets the stage for the future of our Organization. I have often said that trade Unionism is not a spectator sport; our future as a successful Labor Organization is directly tied to member participation.

While my message in this publication is a look forward, it would not be complete without me commenting on what our members have been through during the past two years. Since the pandemic first reared its ugly head, working class Americans have been forced as essential workers to be on the job, taking risks that employers in many cases failed to address. As a result, thousands of working class Americans have perished and others

"This is not the first issue to divide working class Americans, and it will not be the last. My goal is to continue to find the common ground that we can all support, while also respecting the views that we are each entitled to as American Citizens and Union Members."

continue to fight the effects of COVID-19, creating the group called long haulers. Teamsters, specifically BLET members, have not been left out of either of those groups. Dozens of BLET members have perished from COVID-19 and we should all mourn for them and their families. But as we approach 2022, our country and our membership is deeply divided over what steps should be taken by either the Government or the employers to end the COVID-19 pandemic. I think one thing is for sure — it is safe to say that we all want it to be over. I am certain

that all Americans want to return to the lives that they had before the pandemic; where we are divided is over what it will take for that to happen.

This is not the first issue to divide working class Americans, and it will not be the last. My goal is to continue to find the common ground that we can all support, while also respecting the views that we are each entitled to as American Citizens and Union Members. We will vigorously defend our Collective Bargaining Agreements when and where carrier policies violate them, and Our Union will defend all members adversely affected by these same policies through the enforcement of our due process contract provisions.

None of this has been easy for any of us, but be assured that each and every BLET member, along with all who labor in the transportation industry, are essential to our Nation's survival. It is not the CEOs who move the freight; it is the day-in and day-out work of the rank and file transportation employees that actually gets the job done. Help your Union help you as we move forward; your involvement is the key to our success. 📍

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AMTRAK MARKS 50TH ANNIVERSARY



Photo: courtesy of Amtrak

President Biden speaks at a special ceremony marking Amtrak's 50th anniversary

On April 30, 2021, U.S. President Joe Biden joined Amtrak executives for a ceremony to pay homage to Amtrak's 50th anniversary and share the railroad's vision for the future. Held at Gray 30th Street Station in Philadelphia, the ceremony highlighted the contributions of Amtrak employees past and present as well as plans to expand and improve rail service for the future.

"Today we have a once in a generation opportunity to position Amtrak, and rail, and intercity rail, as well in general to play a central role in our transformation of transportation and economic future," President Biden said at the event.

"America needs a rail network that offers



frequent, reliable, sustainable and equitable train service. Amtrak has the vision and expertise to deliver it, now we need Congress to provide the funding for the next 50 years," Amtrak CEO Bill Flynn said.

Over the next 15 years, Amtrak's vision for expansion will connect up to 160

communities throughout the United States by building new or improved rail corridors in over 25 states. As part of this plan, Amtrak will introduce new stations in over half the U.S. states, increase rail service to 47 of the top 50 metropolitan areas and create over half a million new, well-paying jobs.

The Amtrak fleet is also being modernized. Next year, Amtrak will debut the first, new Acela high-speed trains. Even sooner, customers will begin riding new state-owned railcars in the Midwest and California and diesel-electric locomotives will go into service this summer. Overnight trains with refreshed interiors on Superliner bi-level coaches, sleeping cars, lounges and dining cars are also coming in the next several months. 🚂