BLET, SMART-TD REACH TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH RAILROADS

EARLY ON THE MORNING of September 15, 2022, following nearly three years of bargaining, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), a Division of the Rail Conference of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers (SMART-TD) reached a tentative National Agreement with the nation’s largest freight rail carriers which includes wage increases, bonuses, and no increases to insurance copays and deductibles. For the first time our Unions were able to obtain negotiated sick leave, the first step in addressing our members need for medical leave.

A tentative National Agreement was an early on the morning of September 15, 2022, following nearly three years of bargaining, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), a Division of the Rail Conference of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers (SMART-TD) reached a tentative National Agreement with the nation’s largest freight rail carriers which includes wage increases, bonuses, and no increases to insurance copays and deductibles. For the first time our Unions were able to obtain negotiated sick leave, the first step in addressing our members need for medical leave.

The solidarity shown by our members, essential workers to this economy who keep America’s freight trains moving, made the difference in our Unions obtaining agreement provisions that exceeded the recommendations of the Presidential Emergency Board. We listened when our members told us that a final agreement would require improvements to their quality of life as well as economic gains. As a result, this agreement includes agreement provisions that will create voluntary assigned days off for members working in thru freight service, and all

TEAMSTERS GENERAL PRESIDENT SEAN O’BRIEN’S STATEMENT ON TENTATIVE NATIONAL AGREEMENT

SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

Dear BLET Brothers and Sisters:

The BLET National General Chairmen’s Association (NGCA) includes General Chairmen from Class 1 freight, commuter and passenger, and short line railroads. Put briefly, those officers are the designated BLET representatives for our members on their railroad properties. Each one has an affirmative duty to negotiate and enforce collective bargaining agreements and represent our members in all grievances related to their respective CBAs and disciplinary matters.

In handling negotiations for a new national freight agreement, the General Chairmen on properties where the Carrier is bargaining nationally give their bargaining authority to the National Wage Committee pursuant to internal BLET law. However, that does not result in the involved General Chairmen being excluded as a party to the bargaining process. Instead, as is the case today, our Bylaws properly provide for three (3) Association members to serve on the National Wage Committee when negotiating national agreements.

Upon reviewing the tentative agreement, as proposed, the National Wage Committee voted unanimously to send it to the membership for ratification in the early morning hours of Thursday, September 15th. Furthermore, given the critical importance and potential impact of the proposed agreement to all General Committees, the NGCA convened to review the tentative agreement, and for the purpose of sharing this letter of advice to the membership. During that meeting, the participating General Chairmen also voted unanimously to put the proposed agreement out in standard ratification form in order to ascertain the will of the membership as to whether the agreement should or should not be ratified.

The solidarity shown by our members, essential workers to this economy who keep America’s freight trains moving, made the difference in our Unions obtaining agreement provisions that exceeded the recommendations of the Presidential Emergency Board.

The parties’ Health and Welfare Plan point-of-service costs will remain unchanged; there will be no increases to copays or deductibles and there are no disruptions to the existing health care networks. After over 20 hours of negotiations, we were able to reach an agreement that frees our members’ monthly health care contributions at the end of the agreement. No additional increases will apply to our monthly contributions while the parties bargain over the next National Agreement.

The solidarity shown by our members, essential workers to this economy who keep America’s freight trains moving, made the difference in our Unions obtaining agreement provisions that exceeded the recommendations of the Presidential Emergency Board. We listened when our members told us that a final agreement would require improvements to their quality of life as well as economic gains.

As a result, this agreement includes agreement provisions that will create voluntary assigned days off for members working in thru freight service, and all

Continued on page 3

MARK B. KENNY, CHAIRMAN, NGCA ON WHY THE NGCA VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO PUT THE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT UP FOR RATIFICATION:

Moreover, the fact that nine (9) other rail Unions have already agreed to tentative agreements based solely on the PEB recommendations cannot be overlooked when considering the steps that Congress is clearly prepared and certainly willing to take in order to avert a national railroad strike, which would bring immediate economic harm to the entire country.”
In my conversations with members of the General Committee, Local Division and State Legislative Board levels since the tentative agreement was reached, it has become increasingly clear that there is more misinformation and misrepresentations circulating in social media than there is clear and factual information about the tentative agreement, how it was reached, and what our options are.

Before I address the most outrageous misrepresentations, I must point back to my joint message with President Ferguson where we said, “As has been said time and again, do not listen to the Carrier moles and trolls that attempt to blame this situation on the employees or their Unions. They are only attempting to divide us as we close in on the final months of this round of bargaining. Among our unions, our solidarity is our strength. Please do not allow those attempting to divide us to succeed.”

This has never been truer than now. There are groups, many from outside our Union, trying to exploit the time period following the conclusion of negotiations leading up to the tentative agreement, how it was reached, and what the membership should do next.

One of the biggest lies, started by a Union-hating contributor to an industry rag, was that your vote would not matter because your Union planned to impose the tentative agreement by fiat or through some backroom deal to arbitrate the dispute. As background, there was a time when the BLE’s Constitution and Bylaws allowed your President to accept binding arbitration of a contract dispute. The last time that happened resulted in the famous Arbitration Award No. 458 in the mid-1980s. The results of that arbitration have haunted our Union for over 30 years.

Those results were so poorly received that BLE’s Constitution and Bylaws were promptly modified at its next convention in 1986; the rank and file membership must vote in favor of accepting binding arbitration before that can ever happen. That change was carried over into the BLE’s Bylaws when we merged with the UP in 1986. Since then, no BLE or BLET President has polled our members on accepting arbitration, and I have committed to all of you since I became President that I will not do so either. Any suggestion that our Union would accept binding arbitration against our membership’s wishes is lying to you. I have yet to find a case where the membership benefited from being lied to. Don’t fall for it; it’s just not true.

Equally untrue is the idea that your Union somehow sold any member out by giving you the opportunity to vote yes or no on the tentative agreement. There was also a time in our Union’s history when members did not have the right to ratify contracts. They had no individual vote on their contract, and their Local Chairman cast a vote in favor or against that contract. Too often, this time at the BLE Convention in 1996, the first BLE Convention I attended as a delegate. The delegates to that convention, duly elected by the membership, changed the BLE Constitution and Bylaws to re-establish a contract ratification process. Those recommendations were on the tentative agreement. There was also a time in our Union’s history when members did not have the right to ratify contracts. Those members who take the time to vote will determine the outcome of the ratification process. Please participate in the ratification process regardless of how you view the tentative agreement. To ensure you receive your ballot, please ensure that the National Division has your correct address on file. You can do that by checking with your Local Division Secretary-Treasurer, and reporting any address changes to the BLET Website.

In the coming days, the National President will be communicating with the carriers to finalize the questions and answers related to the contract language. Ballots will be mailed shortly after that is completed. We are also setting up virtual and in-person town hall meetings to discuss the tentative agreement directly with the membership.

In the end, it is the membership that will decide what happens next. And for one last urban legend, a non-returned ballot is not counted in any way, shape or form. Those members who take the time to vote will determine the outcome of the ratification process. Please participate in the ratification process regardless of how you view the tentative agreement. To ensure you receive your ballot, please ensure that the National Division has your correct address on file. You can do that by checking with your Local Division Secretary-Treasurer, and reporting any address changes to the BLET Website.

Dennis R. Pierce
BLET National President

In my conversations with members at the General Committee, Local Division and State Legislative Board levels when the tentative agreement was reached, it has become increasingly clear that there is more misinformation and misrepresentations circulating in social media than there is clear and factual information about the tentative agreement, how it was reached, and what our options are.
BLET Advisory Board Resolution on Tentative National Freight Agreement

**PUBLIC RESOLUTION REGARDING THE BLET NATIONAL WAGE COMMITTEE DECISION TO SEND THE TENTATIVE NATIONAL FREIGHT AGREEMENT TO A MEMBERSHIP VOTE.**

WHEREAS, the BLET Bylaws provide for the structure of a National Wage Committee to negotiate agreements over the structure of a National Wage Committee to send the Tentative Agreement to the membership for a democratic vote; and

WHEREAS, the National Wage Committee made that decision knowing that the United States Congress was contemplating preventing the membership from striking at a critical time on September 16, 2022, by extending the cooling-off period or imposing nothing more than the Presidential Emergency Board recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the Tentative Agreement includes contractual provisions that improve the working conditions of the membership beyond what is contained in the Presidential Emergency Board recommendations; and

WHEREAS, allowing the membership to vote on a Tentative Agreement does not take away the right to strike, and that right is still available to the membership at the end of the current cooling-off period of the Tentative Agreement is not ratified; and

WHEREAS, the BLET Bylaws give the membership complete control to accept or reject a proposed contract through a ratification vote, and no union officer or group of officers has the authority to impose a contract that is rejected.

IT IS NOW HEREBY RESOLVED:

1. The Advisory Board unanimously supports the decision made by the National Wage Committee to send the Tentative Agreement to the membership for their consideration.

2. The Advisory Board further recognizes that our Bylaws require that the membership be given the right to vote on the contract, and fully respects their right to vote in favor of or against the Tentative Agreement. Should the Tentative Agreement fail ratification, every member of the Advisory Board will be on the picket line with the membership when the cooling-off period ends.

ADOPTED BY THE BLET ADVISORY BOARD on September 26, 2022.

---

**SYNOPSIS OF 2022 TENTATIVE NATIONAL AGREEMENT**

**Five year term**

24% compounded general wage increases (GWI) plus $5,000 in lump sum bonuses

**Largest wage increase in nearly half a century**

All road service assignments (including extraboards) will have assigned days off

Addition of one paid personal leave day, scheduled to current personal leave day and/or daily vacation day rules, or as earned day off on the employee's birthday

Employees in unsalaried service (including extraboards) will be allowed to attend three annual routine/preventive medical care visits without being assessed any form of disciplinary, demerit, or disciplinary citations under any Carriers' attendance policies

All advances relating to hospital admissions and surgeries will not result in any form of disciplinary points, demerits or disciplinary citations under any Carriers' attendance-related policies.

Addition of autism therapies, including Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) treatment

Addition of autism therapies, including Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) treatment

Estimated increases effective January 1, 2023, with no retroactivity:

**1/1/2022:** Estimated monthly contribution, $340

**1/1/2023:** Estimated monthly contribution, $362

---

**BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce explained how the Q&A process benefits the members and the Organization:**

"While we know that our members are eager to learn more about the details of the tentative agreement, the additional clarification gained from the Q&A process will provide more information for the membership as to the terms and conditions of the tentative agreement before they cast their vote. The process also provides our General Chairman with a stronger and stronger argument:**

**AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2022**

**TENTATIVE NATIONAL AGREEMENT**

7/1/2021: 3.5% GWI: Dec. 1, 2020: $1,000 bonus

7/1/2022: 7.0% GWI: Dec. 1, 2021: $1,000 bonus

7/1/2022: 2.0% GWI: Dec. 1, 2021: $1,000 bonus

7/1/2024: 4.5% GWI: Dec. 1, 2024: $1,000 bonus

---

**CARILLION:**

PREVENTIVE MEDICAL CARE, AS WELL AS EX-MEMBERS WITH THE ABILITY TO TAKE TIME OFF. MOST IMPORTANTLY, FOR THE FIRST TIME, MEMBERS WILL RECEIVE ONE ADDITIONAL PAID DAY OFF. THE AGREEMENT PROVIDES FOR THE STRUCTURE OF A NATIONAL WAGE COMMITTEE TO SEND THE TENTATIVE NATIONAL AGREEMENT TO THE MEMBERSHIP FOR A DEMOCRATIC VOTE; AND THE ORGANIZATION: "WHILE WE FOLLOW."
RYAN M. JONES

BROTHER RYAN M. JONES, a member of BLET Division 103 in Cheyenne, Wyoming, passed away while on duty on July 28, 2022. He was 33 years old.

Brother Jones hired out with the Union Pacific Railroad in July of 2014 as a conductor out of Green River, Wyoming, until he had adequate seniority to work at Cheyenne. He was promoted to locomotive engineer in August 2018. Brother Jones had recently joined the BLET and was excited and proud about his new membership.

On the evening of July 28, 2022, Brother Jones had just finished untying a coal train at Hanna, Wyoming, when he suffered a major cardiac event. He is survived by his father, Michael, his sister, Jessica (Jones) Toman, her husband Christopher Toman, and their infant son, Decker, who was the joy of Ryan’s life.

Prior to his railroad career, Brother Jones received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Hotel and Resort Management from Metropolitan State University, and worked for Marriott in Denver for several years. In his free time, Brother Jones enjoyed fishing and exploring the mountains of Colorado, especially in his “hometown” of Marble, Colorado. Coworkers will remember Brother Jones for his generosity, his sense of humor, and his frequent smile.

A celebration of life was held on August 12, 2022.

“On behalf of the BLET National Division, and all men and women of our Brotherhood, I extend deepest condolences to the family and friends of Brother Jones,” BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said.

KEITH W. BASS

BROTHER KEITH W. BASS, a member of BLET Division 48 in St. Louis, Missouri, died on July 27 from injuries sustained in a crew van accident on July 26. He was 46 years old.

A Union Pacific locomotive engineer, Brother Bass hired out in January of 2006 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in February of 2008. He joined the BLET in June 2014.

Brother Bass and SMART-TD Members Matt Nichols and Zach Brannon were being transported back to Dupo, Illinois from Washington, Missouri, when the accident happened after 9 p.m. on July 26. Brother Bass passed away at around 7 a.m. the following morning from his injuries. Brothers Nichols and Brannon are recovering.

Brother Bass was a veteran of the United States Navy. He was an active and involved BLET member, and was a participant in the BLET’s recent Town Hall meeting in St. Louis on May 11. Brother Bass is survived by his wife Amber and two children — Keeton, a college sophomore, and Delaney, a high school junior. Amber shared that Keith always had a smile on his face, always had a joke ready, and always had a story to share.

The family hosted a Celebration of Life on August 5, 2022, and he was buried with military honors.

BLET members ratify new contract with Illinois & Midland

Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) on July 21 ratified a new property agreement with the Illinois & Midland Railroad.

The BLET secured General Wage increases of 29 percent over the life of the five-year agreement, which runs through 2026. Members also receive a $5,000 signing bonus. While there are no major work rule changes, the cost of employee health care will increase to about $300 per month.

The Illinois & Midland membership is represented by the BLET’s CN-IC General Committee of Adjustment. The negotiating team consisted of CN-IC General Chairman Billy Evans and assigned Vice President Alan Holdcraft. “I would like to thank Division 315 Local Chairman Mike Lohman for his help in getting this contract ratified,” General Chairman Evans said.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said: “As with the recent DM&E contract, the general wage increases in the Illinois & Midland deal reflect the fact that our members are essential to the railroad’s success. I thank our Illinois & Midland members for their solidarity and patience during the negotiating process. I also thank Brother Evans and Brother Holdcraft for bringing these negotiations to a successful conclusion.”

The Illinois & Midland is a 154-mile Genesis & Wyoming property that operates primarily in Peoria, Springfield and Taylorville, Illinois. It interchanges with the BNSF Railway, Canadian National Railway, Kansas City Southern, Norfolk Southern, Texseal & Peoria Railroad, and the Union Pacific.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD ON FRA’S PROPOSED TWO-PERSON CREW RULE

On July 27, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) published a crew size proposed rulemaking and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) will be publishing comments that support regulations requiring two-person crews. We believe that having at least two crew members on a train is critical to the safety of employees and the public.

FRA needs to hear from you; we encourage members to post comments from your perspective as a locomotive engineer or conductor. Comments can be made at the link below, and the deadline to submit is December 2, 2022.

When posting comments:
1. Be concise.
2. Stay focused on your areas of agreement and disagreement.
3. Use your experience as your guide. You know rail operations best!
4. Be professional and courteous.

Crew Size Proposed Rule is here: https://www.regulations.gov/docket/FRA-2021-0032/document
Click below to comment by the September 26 deadline:
https://www.regulations.gov/comment/FR-2021-0032-0001 or https://blet.org/make-action
As of late September 2022, the FRA had received nearly 10,500 comments.
Open Letter to BLET Membership

Continued from page 1

The NGCA stands by the decision made by the National Wage Committee for sound reason as every General Chairman knows well the intricacies and extreme difficulty in negotiating agreements with adversarial carriers whose sole interest is protecting their railroad and minimizing economic impact of new agreements.

Concluding, we fully understand how the collective bargaining process works in practical terms, which are typically standard. So, when further improvements to PEB recommendations are achieved, which is not usually the case, and the National Wage Committee is satisfied that everything within the Union’s reach at the bargaining table has been addressed, and all negotiating efforts have been exhausted, the next step is automatically triggered pursuant to our governing By-laws. At that point, the National Division has a duty to place the fate of the issue in the hands of the membership. That form of democratic ratification process has served the Brotherhood well and has long stood as the cornerstone of our Union.

To be perfectly clear, this letter is not at all intended to tell members how to vote during ratification. Alternatively, our purpose here is simple. Our guidance herein is solely intended to better inform the membership as to how a national wage movement works by identifying those who play a role in the process and the procedural steps that must be taken in accordance with our By-laws, in order for our members to make fully informed decisions when casting their ballot. And we genuinely hope this information is received accordingly.

Lastly, as the balloting process approaches, we strongly urge every member to take advantage of their right to vote for sound reason as every General Chairman knows well the intricacies and extreme difficulty in negotiating agreements with adversarial carriers whose sole interest is protecting their railroad and minimizing economic impact of new agreements.

Fraternally yours,
Mark B. Kenny
National Chairman, NGCA

LECMPA is still the leader when it comes to protecting BLET members’ income and assets.

More than $100 million in claims paid out to railroaders in the past decade.

- 365 days of coverage immediately. No waiting.
- Accidental Death Coverage on-an-off the job*
- Payroll Deduction with no enrollment fee
- Industry-best Loyalty Award

REFERRALS THAT LEAD TO A NEW MEMBER EARN YOU A $100 CASH REWARD!
DUE TO FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION (FEC) REGULATIONS, OUR 2022 ENDORSEMENTS ARE VIEWABLE IN THE MEMBERS-ONLY AREA OF THE BLET WEBSITE: WWW.BLE-T.ORG/MEMBERS.
More than 200 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and their families convened in Baltimore, Maryland, on the morning of August 2 for the opening ceremonies of the BLET’s second regional meeting of 2022.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce, called the meeting to order. Boy Scouts from Troop 414 out of Pasadena, Maryland, presented the colors. After the presentation of the flags, Brother Don T. Hill delivered the invocation. Brother Hill is General Chairman of the BLET’s SEPTA General Committee of Adjustment and is a member of Division 71 in Philadelphia, Pa.

President Pierce then welcomed all members, families, and guests to Baltimore. He introduced members of the BLET Advisory Board who were in attendance. He thanked National Vice President Jim Louis, Special Representative Matt Kronyak, and Special Representative Jason Wright for their work in managing and organizing the regional meeting. President Pierce also thanked National Secretary-Treasurer Sister Kelly Hamrick, National President, BLET Auxiliary, Brother Duane Geddie, Local Chairman of the regional meeting arrangements committee members who provided local support: Brother Duane Geddie, Local Chairman of Division 52 (Baltimore, Md.); Sister Kelly Hamrick, Secretary-Treasurer of Division 442 (Washington, D.C.); Brother Lonnie Swigert, Local Chairman of BLET Division 292 (Beach City, Ohio); Brother Mark Crouch, Local Chairman of BLET Division 97 (Baltimore, Md.); and Brother Greg Lund, a retired member of Division 421 (Buffalo, New York).

Guest speakers included: Jimmy Donovan, Director of the Department of Political and Legislative Affairs, International Brotherhood of Teamsters; Amti Bose, Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration; John Bragg, Labor Member, Railroad Retirement Board; and Kat Bishikis, National President, BLET Auxiliary.

President Pierce gave a brief presentation regarding recent and upcoming events involving the BLET. He provided an update on national negotiations, including a recap of how the Brotherhood went from giving up on national negotiations, including a recent proposal by the FRA regarding two-person train crews; CSX’s acquisition of the Pan Am Railways; the Canadian National-Kansas City Southern merger; BNSF Railway’s terminated lease of the Montana Rail Link; and the BLET’S Fifth National Convention coming up in October. President Pierce also announced that the 2023 BLET regional meetings are scheduled for Milwaukee (the week of June 26) and Myrtle Beach (the week of August 14).

The morning session concluded with a video presentation highlighting the union’s recent efforts to bring attention to the struggles that railroad workers face. In essence, railroad workers have been without a contract pay raise since 2019, yet carriers continually brag about record profits. Through several outreach campaigns, the BLET is letting the public know about this inequity. A mobile billboard truck was on-site at the BLET regional meeting in Baltimore, where the group en masse adjourned for a brief rally to send a message to rail carriers that they are off track, and that it’s time to settle the national contract by investing in crews and safety.

Members took advantage of educational opportunities throughout the remainder of the week, including specialized training for BLET Legislative Representatives, Secretary-Treasurers, and Local Chairmen. The 2022 Baltimore regional meeting concluded with a banquet on the evening of August 4.
BLET members ratify BNSF-MRL implementation agreements

n September 30, an overwhelming majority of par-
ticipating BLET members ratified an imple-
menting Agreement and O- jeon Short Line Protective
Agreement with BNSF regarding
its resumption of service on the Montana Rail Link.

In January, MRL an-
ounced it would terminate its
lease with BNSF, resum-
ing operations on the line. The implementing Agree-
ment, negotiated by the BLET
Committee of Adjustment with assistance from
the National Division, governs BNSF’s hiring of the
BLET-represented employees, their seniority, work
rules, pay, benefits, and inte-
gation throughout the BNSF system.

The agreements govern about 500 members currently
working for MRL.

Among other items, the new-
ly ratified agreements include the following provisions:
• Current MRL and BNSF employees will be offered employment with BNSF.
• Maintain original MRL hire date for prior right sen-
niority (PRM) on the MRL.

BLET members will receive a $5,000 bonus for
hiring out with the BNSF.
• The engineer extra board will have a rest cycle.

The rail labor agreement provides a $50,000 bonus for
employees on Day 1 of their employment with BNSF.

BLET National President Dennis Pierce thanked the
membership for their high level of participation and in-
volvement throughout the ratifica-
tion process.

8 AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2022

NATIONAL PRESIDENT DENNIS P. PERCY:
National Division Officers, Indianapolis, Ind., Con-
france of Directors, and Rail Division 5 rhe BLET, BLET-mgt.
representatives and National Staff.

Among other items, the new-
ly ratified agreements include the following provisions:
• Current MRL and BNSF employees will be offered employment with BNSF.
• Maintain original MRL hire date for prior right sen-
niority (PRM) on the MRL.

BLET members will receive a $5,000 bonus for
hiring out with the BNSF.
• The engineer extra board will have a rest cycle.

The rail labor agreement provides a $50,000 bonus for
employees on Day 1 of their employment with BNSF.

BLET National President Dennis Pierce thanked the
membership for their high level of participation and in-
volvement throughout the ratifica-
tion process.