



Rescue plan gets things rolling

Amtrak, other transit workers back on job thanks to funding from legislation

President Joe Biden signed his \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan on March 11 that was intended to stabilize the nation's economy as it continues the task of rebounding from the COVID-19 pandemic that has killed more than 525,000 people in the United States.

RRB Labor Member John Bragg talks about effects of plan, Page 6.

The plan has \$30.5 billion in emergency funding reserved to assist transit in the country rebound after an immense drop in use as a result of the coronavirus out-

[Continued on Page 2](#)



Northwest Ohio Drone

Thanks to the American Rescue Plan, which passed on a party-line vote by Democratic members of Congress and signed by President Joe Biden, Amtrak workers who were placed on furlough last autumn are back on the job. As a result of the plan, transit agencies also rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic received financial assistance from the federal government in order to stay financially solvent. Photo courtesy of Brett Bottles, owner of Northeast Ohio Drone and son of TD Alumni Association member Raymond Bottles, a retiree from TD Local 2 (Toledo, Ohio).

Next on the agenda: Transportation/infrastructure

After the Democratic majorities in Congress and President Joe Biden gave the country a lifeline to bridge the period between the height and what we all hope are these latter days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's political leadership turns toward the future — what the Biden campaign dubbed "Building Back Better."

On March 31, the administration released an outline of the American

Jobs Plan, a \$2 trillion bill that would transform the nation's transportation system and its infrastructure.

It's no secret that both sides of the political aisle recognize that the backbone of our country — the rails, roads and bridges where the members of SMART Transportation Division work on a daily basis — and how we get around need investment.

[Continued on Page 2](#)



Amtrak, motivated by the announcement by the Biden administration's American Jobs Plan in late March, released this wish-list map showing proposed future service expansions by the carrier a couple of days later.

Inside this issue of the SMART-TD News

- **AROUND SMART-TD:** Three of our members pass away from on-the-job accidents, **Page 3.**
- **LEADERSHIP MESSAGES:** The latest updates from SMART GP Joseph Sellers and TD President Jeremy Ferguson, **Pages 4-5.**
- **STATE WATCH:** Checking out what legislative boards nationwide are working on, **Pages 5-6.**
- **RETIRED:** General Chairperson Billy Moye, a long-time fixture on the Human Rights Committee, pulls the pin on his rail career, **Page 7.**
- **GUEST COLUMN:** Together the union is super strong, so why do we weaken ourselves? **Page 8.**
- **FIGHTING BACK:** Labor leaders help to restore Long Island Rail Road cuts, **Page 9.**

Vice Magazine article gets truth about PSR by talking to TD, TTD

Members and leaders of the SMART Transportation Division, as well as the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department (TTD), spelled out why U.S. freight railroads' obsession with Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR) increases the danger to the public and railroad workers alike.

Journalist Aaron Gordon spoke with TD President **Jeremy Ferguson** and TTD President Greg Regan about the degradation in the safety culture of freight railroads because of PSR in an



in-depth article published March 22. "It's going to end up like Boeing," President Ferguson warned.

Scan the QR code at left with your smart device to read Gordon's article that touched upon many topics that our members are unfortunately already well aware of, including: the severe reduction of rail employees which has greatly impacted safe operations; the increase of fatigue associated with the same demanding work, but with a reduced

work force; the practice of railroads to have inspectors spend less time inspecting cars; the deferral of needed maintenance and potential safety issues being glossed over so that dwell time is not increased.

The article paints a very realistic and clear picture of how the railroads' operating ratios and profits have been placed well ahead of safety, all in the name of PSR.

The lessons learned from past operational mistakes could conceivably end up costing railroads in the long run, interviewees say in the article.

COVID again stops Regional Meeting

The continued challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic regarding indoor gatherings led to SMART leadership voting unanimously to cancel the 2021 SMART Transportation Division Regional Meeting.

Alternative educational opportunities are in the process of being planned for 2021 for TD members and the union continues to pursue a meeting in 2022. Information will be posted to the TD website when it becomes available.

Please stay safe!

A pledge was made in 2018, and a promise is being kept

By Terry Tasker
Coordinator,
TD Alumni Chapter 18

The photo at right was taken in 2018 at the Joseph R. Biden Jr. Amtrak station in Wilmington, Del., with the assistance of the Amtrak police. Then-candidate Biden was asked what SMART and rail labor in general could expect from a Biden administration.

He replied, "better and safer working conditions for all railroad workers."

Candidate Biden spoke directly and was frank about organized labor's need to stay loyal to those who support us for better and safer working conditions.

Since Biden took the oath of office in January, he has kept his word. On March 11, he signed H.R. 1319, the American Rescue Plan Act, which tremendously assisted transit agencies and



This photo from 2018 shows, from left, current SMART National Legislative Director Gregory Hynes, former Delaware State Legislative Director Jim Mallon, current President Joseph Biden, retired National Legislative Director John Risch and SMART-TD Alumni Association Chapter 18 Coordinator Terry L. Tasker Sr.

frontline workers. This plan, in part, recalls 1,200 furloughed Amtrak employees and restarts previously canceled Amtrak services, including long-distance routes that were reduced.

Regarding our bus and transit members, "the transit funding provided by the plan will provide security for them going forward," said National Legislative Director **Gregory Hynes**, showing

us a promise made three years ago is being kept.

Tasker, a TD member for 27 years, established Alumni Association Chapter 18 in Wilmington, Del.

Up next: Focus on transportation and infrastructure

Continued from Page 1

The American Society of Civil Engineers found that deferred infrastructure maintenance in the United States has grown to a \$3.2 trillion deficit.

Even as Biden's predecessor in the Oval Office held "Infrastructure Week" events in the nation's capital on a periodic basis, big projects such as Amtrak expansion, the Hudson Tunnel and the Gateway Project in the Northeast or the alleviation of port and traffic congestion nationwide never came to pass in those four years.

Some of this is the responsibility of the Class I railroads, who keep their capital expenditures on maintenance at constant levels while raking in the profits from their Precision Scheduled Railroading scheme.

Beyond freight rail, there are other places where we as a nation have fallen behind in building and maintaining a 21st century infrastructure. Making our nation travel better and safer will take a new generation of good-paying union jobs while making sound choices by preserving those that already exist.

Elements of H.R. 2, the bill we were able to get through the U.S. House last year, are a part of this plan.

Amtrak already has released an expansion plan, wanting to seize this chance.

"President Biden understands we need to go big, and this announcement brings us one step closer to delivering the aggressive changes we need to rebuild our country," CEO Bill Flynn said.

Now, it's time for Congress to follow through and deliver for America's working people.

Rescue plan gets things rolling for furloughed Amtrak, transit members

Continued from Page 1

break one year ago. That amount is \$10.5 billion more than the \$20 billion requested by Biden in his initial version of the bill that was unveiled before he took office.

Passenger transit services were hit hard by the virus with ridership declining 95% for some carriers. In the initial stages of the pandemic, only essential workers used public transportation as many people in a number of highly populated areas went into lockdown.

"Our bus and transit members have been on the front lines working to provide for their families and to continue to keep the country running in the year since the coronavirus emerged in the United States," SMART Transportation Division National Legislative Director **Gregory Hynes** said after the bill's signing. "The transit funding provided by this plan will provide security

for them going forward."

Amtrak, the nation's largest passenger rail carrier, also experienced a massive decline in ridership as a result of COVID-19. The carrier is slated to get \$1.7 billion to help restore service that had been reduced last autumn, resulting in furloughs of SMART-TD and other unionized workers.

The carrier already announced that it will resume full long-distance service as a result of receiving the funds from the relief plan.

"'Amtrak Joe' and Congress has delivered for us," Hynes said. "The American Rescue Plan is a much-needed boost that will allow Amtrak to recall all of our furloughed members and restore long-distance service very soon."

The plan passed along party lines in both the U.S. Senate and in the U.S. House except for Democratic Congressman Jared Goldman of Maine,

who voted against it.

The American Rescue Plan provides direct payments of \$1,400 to individuals making up to \$75,000 annually, \$350 billion in aid to state and local governments and \$14 billion for vaccine distribution. The bill also provides \$130 billion to elementary, middle and high schools to assist with safe reopening.

In addition to providing direct payments to individuals, the plan also expands jobless benefits through September and child tax credits to assist families who are continuing to struggle through the pandemic.

"Elections matter, and never more than the last election," Hynes said. "It's time to hold those who were elected to office to the promises they've made. This is evidence that that is happening."

Around the SMART-TD

L-23, SANTA CRUZ, CALIF.



In this photo courtesy of General Chairperson James Sandoval, members of Local 23 gather outside a bus in preparation for a journey from their home base of Santa Cruz to Salinas, Calif., in order to receive their COVID-19 vaccinations.

General Chairperson/Local Chairperson **James Sandoval** and the leadership of this local representing workers for Santa Cruz Metro Transit District (SCMTD) report that the local is kicking up their communications efforts while protecting their members.

A group of members drove a bus from Santa Cruz to Salinas, Calif., so that these essential front-line workers could receive their COVID-19 vaccines. The group vaccinations of these and other members of the local were the result of a cooperative effort among SMART-TD’s California State Legislative Board, SCMTD leaders, including its board of directors, and Watsonville, Calif. Mayor Jimmy Dutra.

The local also is working to enhance its ability to reach out to its membership.



One of the first steps was the re-launch of a monthly newsletter for the local — Outward Bound Revisited — this year, which features member profiles and info.

In addition to that, the local has established its own Facebook page, a Twitter account and a website also is in the works using the AFL-CIO’s free Union Hall platform.

L-1361, NEW HAVEN, CONN.



Longtime Amtrak conductor **Carol Jones**, a local chairperson with SMART-TD Local 1361 out of New Haven, Conn., and a member of our union for 23 years, was featured in a “Sister Stories” video during SMART Women’s Week in early March. **Scan the QR code at right** with your smart device to watch her story of coming up in the transportation industry and working as a pioneering woman in the passenger rail sector.



Three members die in March accidents

A Local 1544 (Maywood, Calif.) member lost his life as a result of injuries early March 3.

Brother **Taj Ellis**, 46, of Chino, Calif., was making a set-out in La Mirada Yard in Orange County, Calif., at 12:30 a.m. when he was fatally injured.

He had been a member of our union since July 2013



Ellis

and was a conductor for BNSF.

A member of the SMART-TD National Safety Team is assisting the National Transportation Safety Board in

investigating.

Brother Ellis is survived by his wife, Trinity, and their children.

An online fundraiser has been established by fellow

Local 1544 member **Jimmy Diaz**.

Follow the QR code at



right to donate. “There are no words to describe how we are all feeling at this moment,” Diaz wrote on the GoFundMe page. “The smiles and laughter will forever be remembered my friend.”

Local 934 member **Curtis A. Deines**,

52, a member of our union for more than 20 years, died before dawn on the morning of March 19 after the SUV he was being transported in was involved in a head-on collision with another vehicle on U.S. Highway 2 near Ravenna, Neb.

The driver and three other rail workers in the SUV that Deines was riding in were transported for treatment, as was the driver of the other vehicle involved in the accident, according to the Star-Herald of Scottsbluff, Neb. Deines passed away at the scene of the accident, the Buffalo County Sheriff’s Department stated in an accident report.



Deines

“He will be greatly missed here in Alliance,” said Local Chairperson **Wendie Henderson** of the Nebraska local.

Born in Torrington, Wyo., Brother Deines was a hall-of-fame athlete from his time as a center on the Chadron State College football team. He graduated college in 1996 with a degree in education.

He then entered into service with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad in the maintenance of way department and then transferred into train service as a conductor.

Great sources of pride and joy for him were watching his son, Colin, and

daughter, KayLeah, succeed in life and becoming a grandpa, his family wrote in his obituary.

“Curt was loved by all and will be greatly missed for his big heart and infectious laugh,” his family wrote. “The role Curt played in each of our lives will never be forgotten.”

Brother Deines is survived by his wife, Sonya; his son, Colin; daughter, KayLeah King; two grandchildren; his parents; his sister; two nieces; and a number of in-laws and other relatives.

Follow the QR code above to assist in an online fundraiser for Brother Deines’ family.



Buddy Lee Strieker, an officer of Local 219 (Hannibal, Mo.) for the vast majority of his 24-plus years with our union, died as a result of a switching accident on April 7 in Louisiana, Mo. He was 56 years old.

Brother Strieker was vice local chairperson of LCA-001A and the secretary/treasurer of his local for more than two decades. A trainman/brakeman for BNSF, he also served as an LCA secretary and as a delegate for his local at the second SMART Transportation Division Convention in 2019.

An investigation has been launched by the National Transportation Safety Board into Brother Strieker’s death with a

member of the TD National Safety Team participating.

Brother Strieker was a veteran of the U.S. Army. He is survived by his wife of 34 years, Lisa; his son, Matthew; a granddaughter; two step-grandchildren; three brothers; two sisters and other relatives.

“Away from work, Buddy loved being outside and visiting the family farm,” his family wrote in Brother Strieker’s obituary. “Buddy had a green thumb and enjoyed working in his garden. A wonderful cook, Buddy made the most delicious cheesecakes, birthday cakes, and soups.”

Tony Wyman, a union brother out of Local 445 (Niota, Ill.) remembered on an online memorial page

how he was mentored by Brother Strieker after hiring on in 2004 as a BNSF conductor.

“Buddy ... told me ‘as long as you’re with me you’ll be OK,’” Wyman wrote. “I’m heartbroken that he is gone! Buddy had a story or a joke every time he went to work! People of the BNSF family in Quincy lost a legend ... and I mean a serious legend!”

The SMART Transportation Division offers its deepest condolences to the families, friends and to the union brothers and sisters of these three men as they mourn the loss of these stalwart and dedicated members of our union.

SMART GENERAL PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Biden administration already has improved things

Brothers and Sisters,

I want to start by applauding everyone from President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris to the House and Senate members whose votes were integral in making the American Rescue Plan a reality. Our collective effort to secure a pro-worker majority in the past election has begun to pay off early in this new administration.

This critical relief package is just one in a long line of new pro-worker advances being made by an administration that has a laser-like focus on the needs of working families, and not just the interests of the top one percent and Wall Street. This is a breath of fresh air compared to years of pandering to the elite, as the huge division of wealth recently



By Joseph Sellers Jr.

exposed by Forbes shows.

The American Rescue Plan will deliver desperately needed federal support for hard-working Americans, with leadership and tools to protect our families and communities from COVID-19. This includes an accelerated program of testing and vaccinations to get America back to its pre-pandemic state, sooner rather than later, and financial tools such as direct cash payments to help hard-hit families get through the economic impact of the pandemic.

For our transit and passenger rail brothers and sisters, Amtrak members were idled due to no fault of their own, \$2 billion is targeted to get them back to work and restore intercity services that had been cut by the previous administration. The plan also includes an additional \$30.5 billion in emergency funding reserved to assist transit operations around the country in rebounding from dramatic drops in use due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In addition, the rescue plan provides 100% of health care premiums for COBRA-eligible workers who have lost their jobs involuntarily or have suffered under-employment. This subsidy is for up to six months and will expire on September 30, 2021.

For the Railroad Retirement Board, the plan pro-

“This critical relief package is just one in a long line of new pro-worker advances being made by an administration that has a laser-like focus on the needs of working families, and not just the interests of the top one percent and Wall Street.”

vides a much-needed supplemental appropriation for the agency’s administrative budget. This includes money to beef up online services for railroaders and their families, as well as funding to hire new staff to improve services, handle sickness benefits and process unemployment applications.

For those who are dealing with job loss, the Rescue Plan provides a \$300 weekly boost in unemployment benefits, on top of standard state unemployment benefits. This benefit lasts until Sept. 6, 2021, and includes extended unemployment benefits for

employees who have otherwise exhausted benefits. In addition, the package signed by President Biden waives taxes on the first \$10,200 of unemployment benefits for individuals who made less than \$150,000 in 2020.

President Biden heard our calls for action. Instead of empty words, he is now taking action and delivering on the promises he made to the American people.

Thank you, and please stay safe!

Joseph Sellers Jr.
General President, SMART

Bus Department News

A message from your Bus Department leadership

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

With the vaccine rollout in full throttle mode, it is with optimism that I share that our industry is in recovery. While the recovery is not as swift as we would like it to be, it is, however, moving in the right direction.

Carriers are starting to recall furloughed workers, ridership is starting to creep up to the respectable numbers that carriers enjoyed pre-COVID. Hopefully, when you receive this message in your SMART-TD subscription, we will be back in full operation with all members who have previously been furloughed back in service.

Under the Biden administration, we have seen a more robust vac-



By Calvin Studivant

cine rollout and less vaccine hesitancy as bus operators literally roll up their sleeves and get back behind the wheels of their buses and once again prove how valuable they are to the public who rely so heavily on public transit systems.

Also with the American Rescue Plan Act that President Biden signed into law on March 11, 2021, it sets aside \$30.5 billion to the transit agencies through federal funding, which is another significant step to a full recovery for our industry, which

in turn is another significant step to our members returning to normalcy in their livelihoods.

While all of the aforementioned topics are good for our membership there is still some concern for our sisters and brothers who work in the private sector. Those members are as essential as anyone and they deserve to be treated as such.

Due to the January 6, 2021, insurrection, many of your sisters and brothers served diligently and without fear for their own safety. They were tasked with transporting the National Guard around the nation’s capital during the inauguration proving just how essential they are.

I’m extremely honored to serve those members, some of whom come from my local, that participat-

ed in such an important assignment.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank both NJSLD Ron Sabol and NCSLD Ron Ingerick for the hard work they are doing to assist our members in their states with legislation to ensure their safety. We have made the commitment to make sure that none of our members should ever suffer from an assault, and if one should be assaulted, then we are working hard to make sure that the perpetrators of the assault, be held accountable. As always, I pray for the safe travels of our members.

Fraternally,
Calvin Studivant
VP Bus Department, SMART-TD
216-630-0963

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PLEASE RECYCLE

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TRANSPORTATION DIVISION PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

What we’ve done and what we are doing for you

Brothers and Sisters,

As we turn from enduring a difficult winter and the challenges of a pandemic that has tested our resilience and our country for more than a year, our organization has continued to press ahead to better serve you.

The core purpose of SMART-TD is to aggressively and vigorously defend the safety and well-being of workers and to promptly field the concerns of its membership. Ever since the installation of my administration in 2019, we have been moving ahead to make dynamic changes internally and externally to the union. We want the services you are entitled to as a union member to be delivered promptly and effectively to your satisfaction, pandemic or not.

To this end, a number of technology-related projects have been completed. More are in the works — all undertaken with the intent that we provide the best value and representation that your union can offer and that you deserve as a part of SMART-TD.

- Some of these include:
- The creation of online Safety Condition and Technology Failure Reports to properly document and address membership issues and concerns in a more timely manner. We have received thousands of submissions with a vast majority of these concerns successfully addressed by officers since the launch.
 - Significant improvements to the SMART phone app, with more on the way, which will provide even more func-



By Jeremy Ferguson

tionality, utility and information. These improvements include new features such as messaging functions, virtual membership cards, a listing of local, state legislative and general committee information and contact options to members.

• A revamped website is in the works that will improve and expand members’ experience to find answers and information.

• After receiving numerous requests, we have recently created a membership option to receive the TD News electronically instead of print in efforts to reduce delivery time while saving production and mailing costs.

• We are also in the process of expanding Field Service assistance for local treasurers by providing additional representatives who will be available during select evening and weekend hours.

• We have increased our efforts of communicating with our members and officers, soliciting ideas and suggestions via personal phone conversations and surveys. This includes responding to each and every phone call and email to those that have contacted my office with issues, concerns or questions. As I have stated several times, I value each and every member and your thoughts and ideas are

important to me. These are but a small example of the many projects we are working on, but few are more important than the efforts underway to adapt and improve our efforts to educate members and officers. Some of these are already evident in the newspaper you are reading right now with two features that we’ve added — “What Your Union is Doing for You,” which recaps victories for our members, and the “Know Your Union” articles that show some of the internal workings of the union.

The Human Rights Committee also is being restructured and will be known as the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. We thank recently-retired General Chairperson **Billy Moye** for his service to that group and for setting a pathway for future efforts and success. The new committee members will receive in-depth training and will be available to assist those in need in the very near future. As a union comprised of members diverse in craft, creed, gender and race, the work of this committee will serve to educate, enlighten and to further unite us.

While we are disappointed that 2021 marks the second straight year we have not been able to have an annual regional meeting due to COVID-19, we’re making adjustments. We plan to have smaller, regionally-focused training sessions when and where it is safe to do so. We’re also in the process of establishing virtual training online through the SMART University initiative

that’s being developed. These courses will provide officer training and resources, both visually with videos as well as with supporting documents and presentations.

Externally, we are working at being more visible as well.

As you can see from the front page of this issue, our Transportation Division has a new, sharper-looking insignia that was designed to accompany the SMART logo. It’s another way to exhibit our pride in our organization and the crafts that we represent. If your local wants to design or purchase merchandise featuring this insignia, contact the Public Relations Department for assistance.

Legislative directors in at least 14 states have been working this year to get two-person crew bills introduced after our successful case in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. They’re also working on fighting back against Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR) with 10 states crafting bills to limit train lengths.

No doubt, it’s been a rough period, but our team is built for facing adversity, and more importantly, have the experience and determination to address it.

Many members have been furloughed at the whim of carriers thanks to PSR. We are fighting back by telling all of those who will listen about the increased danger posed by this mode of operation and about carriers wanting to cut freight crews. The in-depth article that Vice Magazine put together in late March is just one example.

We are looking to expand these conversations and are reaching out to additional media outlets, as well as each and every state capital. We now have doors held open, often receiving invitations to tell our side of the story and have our voices heard on Capitol Hill, which is a complete reversal of what we have had to endure the past four years.

There’s much to be positive about as we roll ahead. Amtrak members who had been furloughed because of the pandemic are back on the job thanks to the American Rescue Plan championed by Joe Biden.

The American Jobs Plan infrastructure bill that Biden unveiled March 31 should contain many of the good, transportation-related provisions that last year’s H.R. 2 had, such as bus and transit operator protection and mandating two-person freight crews.

We’ll need to all work together, be active and have our collective voices heard loud and clear to get this done, but we can do it.

We’re going to keep making your union the best it can be by serving, protecting and responding to you. You are the union. We are here for you. Let’s go!

Please stay safe out there, and God bless.



Jeremy R. Ferguson
President,
Transportation Division

State Watch

News from SMART-TD State Legislative Boards

Virginia

State Legislative Director **Ronnie Hobbs** appeared on the Talking SMART podcast (scan QR code with your smart device to listen) to discuss community projects and service he and his fellow SMART Army members have done in Virginia, including collecting clothing for the homeless, food drives, sponsoring Little



League events, and repairing and donating a golf cart for a young cancer patient to drive around his neighborhood.

Hobbs’ act of generosity has inspired some of his union brothers to donate to help in the fight against pediatric cancer.

To help, visit <https://www.stbaldricks.org/participants/DaltonDad2021>.



Virginia SLD **Ronnie Hobbs** (left) and members of Local 854 (Portsmouth, Va.) send a picture to cancer patient Dalton Fox. The local donated \$400 to help in the fight against pediatric cancer.

Hobbs also wanted to give Local 363 Legislative Representative **William Aldridge** a huge thank you for his efforts in raising awareness about SMART-TD PAC, with two drives over the past year and a new one with a gift certificate incentive. “Brother Bill has done a great job!” Hobbs said. “He consistently tells members who want to make a difference to give to PAC.”



Aldridge

Continued on Page 6

FROM THE DESK OF THE RRB LABOR MEMBER — JOHN BRAGG

American Rescue Plan extends CARES Act benefits, supports RRB

As you may have heard, Congress recently enacted legislation to provide some financial relief to railroaders. In the legislation entitled the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), Congress essentially extended the benefits originally created by the CARES Act. This legislation provides for the following benefits:

- A recovery benefit of \$600 per two-week unemployment registration period. This extends the benefit that was established through legislation at the end of December and was due to expire March 14, 2021. As a result, employees receiving unemployment benefits will continue to receive an additional \$600 per registration period.



Bragg

This benefit ends with registration periods that begin after Sept. 6, 2021.

- Extended unemployment benefits for employees who have otherwise exhausted benefits.

Now, in combination with previous legislation, an additional 200 days within 20 additional consecutive two-week registration periods are payable. These extended benefits are available for days of unemployment on or after December 28, 2020. No additional days are available for registration periods beginning after September 6, 2021.

- Waiver of the seven-day waiting period for unemployment and sickness benefits. This was also extended to

Sept. 6, 2021.

- In addition, ARPA provides that up to \$10,200 in unemployment benefits may be exempt from income tax. This provision is administered by the IRS and they have more information in an article entitled, 'New Exclusion of up to \$10,200 of Unemployment Compensation.'

Finally, as you know, the Railroad Retirement Board's (RRB)'s budget has remained flat for several years now and as a result, agency resources have been limited. ARPA provided a much-needed supplemental appropriation for the agency's administrative budget. ARPA appropriated the remaining amount needed for the RRB's multi-year IT modernization plan, which

will eventually provide more online services to railroaders and their families. In addition, it appropriated \$6.8M for agency hiring related to the pandemic for the next two years. The RRB intends to hire staff in field service as well as in the unit at headquarters that handles sickness and unemployment applications. We hope that these additional hires will improve customer service.

As with previous legislation, the RRB has updated the information on its website with the details regarding these benefits.

You can find the FAQs on the site.

Also, with most RRB field offices still closed to the public because of the pandemic, the agency is again reminding customers of self-service

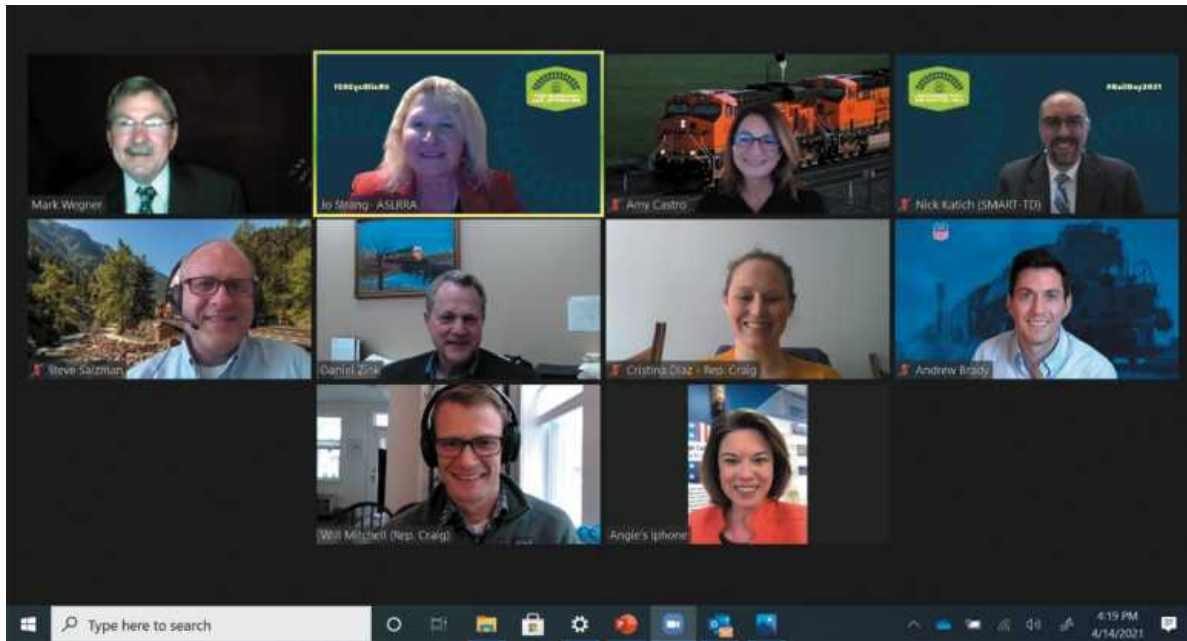
options available to them to help avoid lengthy wait times.

I encourage all railroaders to set up a myRRB.gov account on the RRB.gov website to help avoid any possible delays. To establish an account, employees should go to RRB.gov/myRRB and click on the button labeled SIGN IN WITH LOGIN.GOV at the top of the page. This directs them to login.gov where they will be guided through the process of creating an account and verifying their identity, which takes about 20 minutes to complete.

Once an employee's identity is verified, they will be prompted to sign in to their account and then return to myRRB.

State Watch continued...

Virtual RR Day, take 2



For the second consecutive year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual Railroad Day on the Hill ended up being a hectic schedule of Zoom calls and virtual discussions to get the needs of the railroad industry across to political leaders around the country.

Main topics of discussion mutually agreed upon by labor and carriers included the opposition of larger trucks and approving the personnel funding increase that had been requested by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) for the 2022 fiscal year. Participants in the effort were limited to these topics, but were able to use the opportunity to establish relationships for future discussions about other issues.

In addition to the National Legislative Office, partici-

pants in the effort included SLDs **Scott Jones** (Ariz.); **Louis Costa** (Calif.); **Carl Smith** (Colo.); **Willie Bates** (D.C.); **Andres Trujillo** (Fla.); **Matt Campbell** (Ga.); **Bob Guy** (Ill.); **Chris Smith** (Iowa); **Jeff Mitchell** (Ky.); **Donald Roach** (Mich.); **Nick Katich** (Minn.); **Ron Ingerick** (N.C.); **Ron Sabol** (N.J.); **Clyde Whitaker** (Ohio); **Paul Pokrowka** (Pa.); **Ronnie Hobbs** (Va.); and **Herb Krohn** (Wash.).

SLDs from California, Illinois, Nevada and Ohio also had backup from members of their respective SLBs.

Assistant State Legislative Director **Scott Brent** (Local 1201), Legislative Rep. **Michael Convey** (Local 84) and Legislative Rep. **Ted Smith-Peterson** (Local 1241) also represented their state of California. For Illi-

nois, it was Legislative Chairperson **Jeff Votteler** (Local 1597); Legislative Secretary **Dennis Nee** (Local 1895); Alt. State Legislative Director **Jordan Boone** (Local 445); Assistant State Legislative Director **Joseph Ciemny** (Local 1534) and Legislative Vice Chairperson **Jarrold Hudson** (Local 453) participating.

Assistant State Legislative Director **Gabe Christenson** (Local 1043) took part on behalf of the Nevada State Legislative Board.

Ohio had Assistant State Legislative Director **Kurt Schwamberger** (Local 1529); and Alt. State Legislative Director **Ryan Fitzpatrick** (Local 1397) take part.

"It went very well," said National Legislative Director **Gregory Hynes**.

NLD Hynes makes appearance on Rick Smith labor podcast

National Legislative Director **Gregory Hynes** was a guest on the labor-oriented Rick Smith Show on Feb. 24 where he discussed the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that threw out the Federal Railroad Administration's negative preemption claim, which would have nullified our two person crew state laws.

In addition to talking



about the two-person crew ruling that reinstated state laws governing crew size, Hynes also discussed the history of railroads using technology not to improve operations, but instead to eliminate jobs to increase profits and the need for Amtrak safety to be tightened in the wake of January's insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Maryland

In addition to once again working on getting a two-person crew bill through his state's Legislature, **Larry Kasecamp** and his state board authorized the transfer of funds to the TD Disaster Relief Fund to assist our brothers and sisters in Texas who were affected by the February winter storm that devastated the state's infrastructure, leaving many without power and potable water.

Wyoming



State Legislative Director Stan Blake, left, and Wyoming Vice Legislative Chairperson J.P. Caffee work the Legislature for a two-person crew bill that passed the House, but unfortunately lost by one vote in a state Senate committee.

SAFETY REPORT

Scan the QR code to the right to access the **confidential** union Safety Condition Report to let your leaders know about concerns on your properties!





Members of the National Guard disembark from a bus in January in this photo courtesy of Local 759 President Rafael Becerra and New Jersey State Legislative Director Ron Sabol.

Bus members do their part by transporting D.C. guard

SMART Transportation Division Local 759 President **Rafael Becerra** and about seven of his local brothers and sisters departed their Coach USA garage in Paramus, N.J., on Jan. 10, and traveled to Joint Base Andrews in Prince George's County, Md., to transport our nation's troops and national guardsmen to protect Washington, D.C., for the Jan. 20 inauguration ceremony.

Becerra stayed in the nation's capital for two weeks, returning home Jan. 24, while others from his garage stayed an extra week before returning Jan. 31.

Dillon's Bus Service of Hanover, Md., – an affiliate of Coach USA – was in charge of coordinating with different bus companies that sent their buses and operators to help transport the 26,000 troops (according to militarytimes.com) deployed to D.C.

Employees of Rockland Coaches of Bergenfield, N.J., represented by TD Local 1558, also were called upon to transport troops. Coach bus companies from as far away as Pittsburgh also arrived to help.

According to Becerra, he picked up troops at Andrews and then brought them over to the armory. He then moved them to different hotels and assignments in the D.C. area.

"I also picked up troops from the Reagan airport. The ones I picked up came in from Alaska. I picked up around 29 people," Becerra said. "I also picked up people from the Florida National

Guard from their hotel, and I dropped them off where they were stationed at the African American Museum (National Museum of African American History and Culture)."

Becerra said the first week there was the roughest because he was required to keep making runs from place-to-place and was on call a lot of the time. The troops were constantly coming in during the first week for their assignments, but then there wasn't a lot of transporting that needed to be done during his second week.

"We waited around a lot at the Andrews base parking lot, waiting to be called upon," Becerra said.

New Jersey State Legislative Director **Ron Sabol** had nothing but praise for the members who stepped up to assist.

"Brother Becerra and his fellow members took time away from their families during a pandemic to serve a greater cause than themselves – the protection and safe transition required by our nation's democratic process," Sabol said. "This assignment had health and safety risks involved – just days before our bus operators arrived, armed insurrectionists had threatened members of Congress in the U.S. Capitol itself. Our members had no guarantee that they wouldn't be attacked by domestic terrorists or be exposed to COVID while assisting those troops at our nation's capital – yet they did it without complaint. I thank them for their

exemplary display of duty."

Although he was in the city during the inauguration, Becerra said he did not get to see the ceremony up close.

"I was watching it on my phone, sitting in the parking lot. I was kinda afraid to take pictures," he said. "You don't just go wandering around. You go from check point to check point to check point."

When asked if he had any concerns about contracting COVID-19 while there, Becerra said that he thought things were pretty safe with almost everyone wearing a mask, but he was still a little concerned.

"I would say that 99% of the guys, the troops, they all had masks on. I was tested before I went there, and I was tested when I came back. Thank God I came back in one piece. But it's all part of the job," he said.

Becerra said that by the time that he left, a lot of troops were already clearing out.

When asked what the most memorable thing about the trip was, Becerra replied, "I was amazed that I had never seen D.C. so empty. There was nothing. There was no traffic, there were no people walking. You could walk on the other side of the fence, but that was the closest you got. They kept closing down areas, so you didn't know what was going to be closed."

SMART-TD thanks Brother Becerra and the other troop transporters for their dedication and congratulates them on a job well done.



General Chairperson Billy Moya (GCA-SCL), left, has a conversation with Chad Yokoyama at the Seattle Regional Meeting in July 2018 as they work the Human Rights Committee table.

Safety expert and GC Billy Moya pulls the pin

After 23 years of service, General Chairperson **Billy Moya** (GCA – CSX-SCL) has pulled the pin, retiring Feb. 1.

A third-generation railroader, Moya hired out in 1998 with CSX after spending time in the military. Over the course of his career, he became their district safety chairperson.

Moya became very active in our union and held many positions over his career including LCA secretary from 2012-17, local chairperson (2017-21), Local 1971 delegate, GCA secretary (2012-17), GCA vice chairperson (2015-17) and general chairperson (2017-21). He also worked as an organizer and as a coordinator on the Human Rights Committee (HRC).

"Billy Moya is one of the most decent individuals that I have had the pleasure of knowing. I first met Billy in 2009 while we worked on a campaign involving Local 1594. He was always planning the next move before we even had engaged the previous one. While on organizing campaigns, Billy enjoyed using military lingo, and being a veteran myself, I always knew and understood what he was doing," SMART-TD Bus Department Vice President **Calvin Studivant** said.

At regional meetings, Moya could be counted on to not only man the Human Rights Committee table, but to also conduct workshops on human rights, hazmat and first responders.

Fellow HRC Coordinator and Local 1687 Local Chairperson **Chad Yokoyama** would help Moya at the committee table at meetings.

"Billy served our country and first and foremost, I would like to thank him for his service to our country. He also served our union well and most of the things he did will and should never be known. His role in the HRC took a man of integrity, and that is exactly what he is," Yokoyama said. "For some reason, Billy took a liking to me and saw things in me that I didn't know existed."

"He is willing to help and mentor anyone. Working with Billy, I can't tell you how many times people would come up to him and thank him for all he did for them," Yokoyama said.

Brother Moya was a great example of what it means to be in a union as told by Vice President Studivant in a heartfelt tribute:

"The union has truly lost a shining example of unionism with the retirement of Brother Moya. I salute you Billy for all that you have done to strengthen our organization. Thank you."

"I believe it fitting [that] we stand, salute and thank Billy for all he did," added Yokoyama.

SMART-TD congratulates Brother Moya on all of his accomplishments and wishes him a long, happy and healthy retirement. Congratulations Brother Moya!

GUEST COLUMN

Superman doesn't take the kryptonite, why should we?

By Justin Wolters
General Chairperson,
SMART-TD GCA-449

I have been a fan of the superhero genre since I was a kid. Long before the Avengers teamed up on the big screen to defeat Thanos, I was reading the comics. I was watching superhero cartoons before Superman and Batman became best friends because their mothers had the same first name.

The love I have for superheroes is the same reason I am a union offi-

cer. I do not like bullies or villains.

When I think of our union, I think of Superman. We defend each other for the greater good, much like Superman. I am talking about the collective “we.” SMART members and officers are union brothers and sisters. A collective.

United, we are Superman.

For those of you who don't know, Superman is an alien from the planet Krypton. Krypton is made up of



Wolters

an element called kryptonite and when that planet blew up, the element was scattered all over the universe, and it's Superman's lone weakness. While the radiation of Earth's yellow sun gives him his great powers — super strength, the ability to fly, be “faster than a speeding bullet and more powerful than a locomotive,” etc. — he battles to right wrongs and fight evil everywhere instead of just using the power for himself.

When we all work together it is like thriving under a yellow sun. We are no longer ordinary — we become something much stronger.

Our kryptonite, our weakness, is when we fail to work as a collective.

Stop taking daily doses of kryptonite. Work as a collective. Utilize the agreements, rules and laws to protect ourselves and our families. Only then, will we fully transcend those things that hold us back.

Justin Wolters, general chairperson of GCA-449, is a proud member of SMART Local 1381 in Hammond, Ind.

What's so important about this caboose?

By Ryan J. Fitzpatrick
Local Chairperson,
SMART-TD Local 1397
(Columbus, Ohio)

William C. Gurney, Daniel Hopkins, Daniel J. McCarty, Eugene S. McCarty, Union C. Osterhout, Elmer Wessell, H.S. Wilber and Charles J. Woodworth — do any of these names sound familiar?

It is what these eight men did on Sept. 23, 1883, that has paved the way to the creation of the union you know today.

While employed by the Delaware and Hudson Railway, these men met in secret in a caboose in Oneonta, N.Y., to form a benevolent society known then as the Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen.

During the years leading up to the formation of the BRB, the work of a railroad worker was one of constant danger. At that time, there was no OSHA, FRA or NTSB. Equipment was never maintained properly by the railroads as there was no official oversight. Workers lost limbs and lives. Railroaders could not obtain life or disability insurance as the insurance companies felt that the workers in the industry were too much of a liability. Things had to change. It was not the railroads who made the move to better the workers' benefits, but the workers themselves.

The idea of a labor union or even a benevolent society during these times meant



This caboose in Oneonta, N.Y., is important to the history of SMART-TD — it is the site where the first eight members of what would evolve into the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen met in secrecy to form a union.

you could lose your job or even worse, be “blacklisted”; meaning you could not work for another railroad because of your ties or support of the labor movement. Even speaking of organizing or unions was risking your livelihood. These men knew the risks, but also knew if they were to make a change in labor, it had to be done.

So, on September 23rd, these men met inside D&H caboose No. 10 to form the Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen. The BRB was formed to provide life and disability insurance to railroad workers at affordable rates. Lodge Number 1, named after **Eugene V. Debs** was formed, and from there, more lodges were formed across the country.

In time, the name was changed to the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT), but the mission stayed the same: to provide a benevolent society for the protection of its members.

In the following years, the BRT worked to better the lives of their workers, whether it be by securing pay increases, improvements in working conditions or healthcare benefits.

The BRT fought for the eight-hour basic day, something we take for granted today. Let us not forget the fights involved, the blood that was shed to make this happen. What we have today, what we work under every time we get our call to work, was fought for by men and women who stood up knowing that under one voice, we can make a differ-

ence.

Today, the foundation of the BRT still provides affordable insurance to our members via the UTU Insurance Association (UTUIA). Well into its second century, what was set up to help members and their families who suffered death or dismemberment on the job, has expanded to include short-term and long-term sickness benefits, cancer care, income protection on account of discipline and much more. I believe the founders would be proud of what we have become. In fact, we've come a long way from the meeting of the “Brave Eight” in Oneonta.

The caboose, D&H No. 10, still resides today at Neahwa Park in Oneonta, a testament to the strength in the union.

Officer in BRT headed Labor Dept.

The confirmation of Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, a member of the Laborers' Union, to be President Joe Biden's labor secretary ends a nearly 45-year absence of having a union member head the U.S. Department of Labor.

But as the third secretary of labor, the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen's **William N. Doak** helped establish a lasting legacy.

President Doak

Herbert Hoover nominated Doak, a vice president and national legislative representative of the SMART-TD predecessor union, to lead the DOL in 1930 as the nation struggled in the Great Depression.

In collaboration with his immediate DOL predecessor, James J. Davis, who became a U.S. senator representing Pennsylvania, Doak's crowning achievement was helping the Davis-Bacon Act — legislation that established prevailing wage laws that benefit our Sheet Metal brothers and sisters and other union laborers — to become federal law in 1931. That law remains in effect 90 years later.

Doak's labor secretary stint ended in March 1933, after Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office. Doak returned from his leave as a BRT officer, but just months later, on Oct. 23, 1933, Doak passed away at age 50.



Doak

What YOUR UNION is doing for YOU

Here is a list of recent arbitration victories reported to SMART Transportation Division’s leadership. General chairpersons who wish to report a recent success should email Vice President **Alvy Hughes** (ahughes@smart-union.org) for Bus Department victories and Vice President **David B. Wier Jr.** (dwierjr@smart-union.org) for rail victories.

SMART-TD Vice Presidents **David B. Wier Jr.** and **Jamie C. Modesitt** report that the organization has received numerous favorable decisions from cases arbitrated at the First Division of the National Railroad Adjustment Board. Of the many cases that the organization received sustaining decisions on from the First Division, the cases referenced below are of significant interest:

■ **In NRAB First Division Award No. 30432** (Jacobs, 2020), Texas City Terminal Railway Company terminated a switchman for allegedly damaging a car and bumper post when spotting cars at a customer’s facility. In overturning the carrier’s decision to terminate the claimant’s employment, the board concluded that the carrier’s case was based entirely on speculation. Finding that the carrier failed to satisfy its burden of proof, the board reinstated the claimant and awarded him back pay and benefits. General Chairperson

Chris Boudoin progressed this case to the NRAB First Division.

■ **In NRAB First Division Award No. 30531** (Simon, 2021), CSX dismissed a conductor for purportedly misusing FMLA leave. At the formal investigation, the organization attempted to call the claimant’s girlfriend as a witness in the proceeding; however, the hearing officer refused to allow the claimant’s girlfriend to testify at the formal inquiry. Based on an examination of the record developed in this case, the board determined that the hearing officer’s refusal to allow the requested witness to testify irreparably deprived the claimant of his fundamental due process rights and constituted a violation of the agreement. Having concluded that the carrier committed a fatal procedural impropriety, the board reinstated the claimant to service and directed the carrier to make him whole for lost wages. GO 49 General Chairperson

Rick Lee and GO 49 Vice General Chairperson **Kevin Serres** progressed this case to the NRAB First Division.

■ **In NRAB First Division Award No. 30535** (Simon, 2021), CSX dismissed a conductor for allegedly misusing FMLA leave. Nevertheless, the carrier failed to convene the formal investigation within the contractually prescribed timeframe set forth in the agreement. Because the carrier failed to schedule the formal investigation within the timeframe specified in the agreement, the board found that the claimant’s dismissal should be vacated on procedural grounds. Based on that conclusion, the board reinstated the claimant and directed the carrier to make him whole for lost wages. GO 49 General Chairperson **Rick Lee** and GO 49 Vice General Chairperson **Kevin Serres** progressed this case to the NRAB First Division.

■ **In NRAB First Division Award No. 30550** (Tener, 2021), Union Pacific terminated a conductor for allegedly violating General Code of Operating Rules (GCOR) No. 6.3. Noting that it is incumbent upon management to charge an employee with the correct rule, the board discerned that the carrier failed to tender evidence into the record of the formal investigation to support its allegation that the claimant breached GCOR 6.3. As a result of its observation that the carrier failed to meet its burden of proving whether the claimant violated GCOR 6.3, the board reinstated the claimant to service and awarded him compensation for all lost time. GO 953 General Chairperson **Luke Edington**, GO 953 Associate General Chairperson **Ian Reynolds**, and GO 953 Senior Vice General Chairperson **Zach Nagy** progressed this case to the NRAB First Division

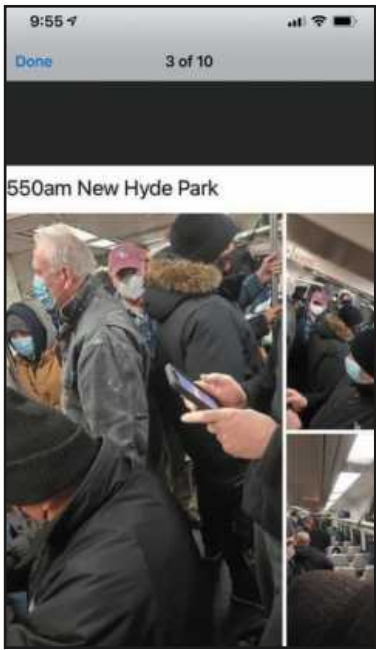
Union wins battle in getting cut LIRR services restored

Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) implemented planned service cuts the morning of Monday, March 8, in spite of objections made by union leadership and echoed by New York state senators just before the cuts went into effect.

The result? Crowded cars and the potential for the early morning commute from places like New Hyde Park or Jamaica Station to become a COVID spreader event with no opportunity for social distancing, as shown by photos provided to SMART-TD



Alternate Vice President **Anthony Simon** by frontline workers, thousands of whom he represents as general chairperson of GCA-505. “These reductions have now made Long Island Rail Road service unsafe as far as allowing for social distancing is concerned,” Simon said. In response to LIRR leadership’s implementation of the cuts, which reduced



This photo, provided by a LIRR worker to Alternate Vice President/General Chairperson Anthony Simon, shows a crowded Long Island Rail Road car early March 8, the day LIRR implemented service cuts. weekday service to the equivalent of what the system offers on the weekend, more than 3,000 unionized workers from SMART, SMART-TD and six other labor unions submitted a message expressing their outrage at the situation to LIRR and to New York City MTA leaders. In addition to Simon, SMART-Mechanical Division General Chairperson **John McCloskey** and TD yard-

master General Chairperson **Michael Miele** signed the letter addressed to New York Metropolitan Transit Agency Chairman and CEO Patrick Foye and LIRR President Phillip Eng. “The MTA’s desire to outsource our work, disregard our membership’s quality of life and forget about what we have delivered throughout a global pandemic is inexcusable,” the union leaders stated. “We certainly hope you can get on the right track in winning us back for the good of this great railroad that we have built and have always been proud to serve. Until then, we will continue to work hard for our customers with the understanding that there is a lack of good faith and insufficient appreciation toward our members from leadership.” Coupled with negative media coverage and the criticism received from the riding public regarding the crowded cars, Foye and Eng soon relented and undid the cuts they had made to LIRR service at the end of the month.

Sporting clay shoots planned in Colo., N.J.

Members are invited to compete in a pair of team clay shoots this autumn in conjunction with the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance (USA).

The first shoot is scheduled at 9:30 a.m. Sept. 25 at Colorado Clays, 13600 Lanewood St., Brighton, CO 80603.

The second is scheduled at 9:30 a.m. Oct. 23 at Red Wing Sporting Clays, 317 Sooy’s Landing Road, Port Republic, NJ 08241.

Registration of your team of five competitors will be available at <https://unionsportsmen.org>.

For both events, in-person registration runs 7:30 to 9 a.m. local time, and the entrance fee includes lunch, beverages, 10- or 20-gauge shells and clay targets.

Individual registration for those ages 18 and older is \$175, while registration for youths is \$125.

Individual shooters will be placed in teams of five when competing or entire

teams of five can register as a group either in-person or online.

The deadline for advance registration is Sept. 20 for the Colorado event and Oct. 18 for the New Jersey event.

Family members and friends of all SMART members can take part in

these team shoots, the proceeds of which go toward the Alliance’s efforts to preserve, restore and conserve natural and outdoor resources in our country.

In addition to the competition, awards, door prizes and premium drawings will take place at both events. There also are sponsorship opportunities available.

Additional information will be placed on the SMART-TD website as the shoots approach. Questions about registration and sponsorships can be directed to Chris Piltz of the USA at 203-767-0745 or chris@unionsportsmen.org.



SMART
TD Alumni

News and information for our retirees and members of the SMART TD Alumni Association

Are you getting close to retirement? You can get the TD News & other benefits for just \$9 a year! Call 216-228-9400, email arayner@smart-union.org or visit www.smart-union.org/td/alumni

From Korea to curator

Alumni member still chugging along at 92, runs local rail museum

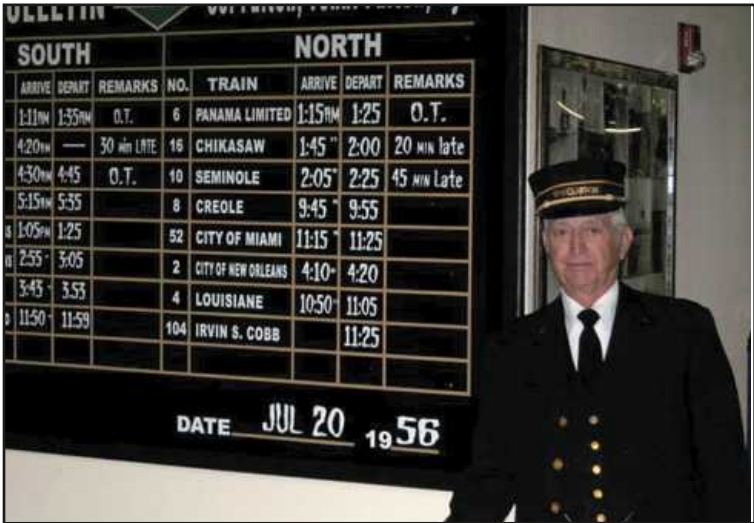
At age 92 (he'll turn 93 in May), Alumni Association member **James D. Cruce** is still keeping busy in year 30 of his retirement by running the Twin Cities Railroad Museum with one other person.

The railroad museum was originally founded in South Fulton, Tenn., in 1994, but didn't actually have a home until Cruce and nine other retired railroaders got involved in 2008 when the city turned the museum over to them.

It started out with those 10 retirees running the museum, but with the passing of eight of them, the museum is now run by Cruce and only one other retiree – **Jones Gamblin**. Both are retired from Local 339 in Jackson, Tenn.

"I've been in charge since 2008. I run the museum. It's been closed on account of this virus. We'll open up again probably in two weeks," Cruce said this spring.

Cruce's collection of railroad memorabilia was the



James Cruce dons his conductor uniform and poses in front of one of the Twin Cities (South Fulton, Tenn.) Railroad Museum's displays in this photo courtesy of the museum's website.

starting point for the museum. Now the Twin Cities Railroad Museum houses numerous displays and demonstrations of historical and current area trains from Illinois Central and Canadian National. The museum also showcases the history of the twin cities of Fulton, Ky., and South Fulton, Tenn.

One of Cruce's personal stories is displayed in the museum — he ran trains in the U.S. Army during the Korean War.

"I was a yardmaster for President Truman," Cruce said. He elaborated that he didn't see combat, he just ran the trains. "I just ran the railroad yard. I didn't go out

on the road, but I took them in the yard and switched them. I ran troop trains and ration trains. Everybody and everything traveled by rail. There were two battalions that did it, my battalion the 724th and the 712th. The 712th ran all the way to the front and ran hospital trains."

After the war, Illinois Central hired a lot of the veterans and Cruce hit the ground running when he hired out for them in Jackson in 1944. He worked as a brakeman and conductor for 47 years, retiring in 1991.

Running the museum

Continued on Page 12

Retirees shouldn't forget to take advantage of wellness checkups

Medicare pays for an Annual Wellness Visit (AWV), a free preventive service.

An Annual Wellness Visit is a visit to develop or update a preventive services plan that is personalized to your needs and to perform a Health Risk Assessment (HRA). An AWV comes in two sizes: your initial AWV and your follow-up AWV. Your initial AWV sets the baseline for future visits.

Your healthcare provider will review all of the information you provided to them, along with what they have observed, focusing on your ability to do general activities of daily living, your risk of falling, plus any hearing

impairments or potential home safety issues that may come up.

From all of this, your provider will create a written schedule/checklist for the next five to 10 years for future screening visits and preventive services. Your provider will also give you personalized referrals based on what the AWV data has shown them.

If you have a question about the AWV, please call Palmetto GBA's toll-free Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455, from 8:30 a.m. until 7 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday. They offer a TTY/TDD line for the hearing impaired at 877-566-3572.



JIM CHASE DOWN A DOLLAR-A-DAY

Dakotas State Legislative Director **Jim Chase** paid a visit to TD Alumni member **John Risch**, a former holder of his position, and picked up a Dollar-a-Day donation for TD PAC. For more info, email TDPAC@smart-union.org.

THE FINAL CALL

Following are the names of deceased members who were active TD members or maintained annual membership in the SMART-TD Alumni Association, according to reports received at the TD office. These brothers and sisters will be missed by their many friends and by fellow Alumni Association members.

Local	Name	City/State	Local	Name	City/State	Local	Name	City/State
31	Casey, Vernon G.	San Jose, Calif.	656	Cooper Jr., John W.	Maumelle, Ark.	1205	Hayes, Leslie R.	Victoria, Texas
72	Hansen, Gene A.	Niles, Mich.	753	Zorzoli, Peter M.	Oliver Branch, Miss.	1216	Denney, Darrell W.	Basehor, Kan.
113	Radosevich, Frank J.	Gallup, N.M.	756	Sosa Jr., Julio S.	Corpus Christi, Texas	1263	Wacter III, Walter E.	Lake Park, Ga.
168	O'Hare, Dennis J.	Oak Lawn, Ill.	781	Bigby Sr., William J.	Marshall, Texas	1337	Boudreaux, Gilbert P.	Hammond, La.
195	Buckalew, Richard D.	Abingdon, Ill.	783	Cole, Ernest L.	China Grove, N.C.	1370	Grisaffi, Marco	Indio, Calif.
202	Pryor, Olan G.	Littleton, Colo.	785	Long, Cleatis R.	Grand Rivers, Ky.	1376	Rife, Dennis H.	Columbus, Ohio
265	Leffler, Paul C.	Littlefield, Ariz.	835	Armstrong, Bryant	Bakersfield, Calif.	1402	Mathes, William A.	Granite City, Ill.
298	Kenny, Eugene R.	Burbank, Ill.	847	Green, Joseph R.	Adamsville, Ala.	1405	Kinder, Roger G.	O'Fallon, Mo.
320	Cornell, Gary W.	Traverse City, Mich.	886	Jensen, Chris M.	Wells, Mich.	1440	Poggi, Thomas J.	Holmdel, N.J.
320	Noble, John R.	Erieau, Ont., Canada	934	Deines, Curtis A.	Chadron, Neb.	1470	Roth, Frederick G.	Parkville, Md.
322	Leeman, R.J.	Kenosha, Wis.	937	Townsend, Wesley L.	Marlin, Texas	1518	Strasen, Robert L.	O'Fallon, Ill.
330	Adams, Richard O.	Cape Girardeau, Mo.	950	Owen, Hugh A.	Paragould, Ark.	1525	Gream, Horace J.	Mt. Vernon, Ill.
376	Cravens, Robert J.	Louisville, Ky.	1003	Walker, Max E.	Johnston City, Ill.	1544	Ellis, Taj J.	Chino, Calif.
386	Brubaker, Richard B.	Ephrata, Pa.	1059	Schan, Joseph R.	Minot, N.D.	1545	Johnson, James E.	Pineville, La.
496	Caudill, Eric D.	Wheelersburg, Ohio	1074	Stein, Robert S.	Van Etten, N.Y.	1637	Marquardt, J.L.	Vancouver, Wash.
573	Stiglich, Don W.	Harrodsburg, Ky.	1075	Smith, Jerry W.	Jackson, Ohio	1949	Colflesh, Lawrence H.	Havertown, Pa.
645	Zdzenski, Richard T.	Middle Village, N.Y.	1190	Huter, John B.	Goshen, Ohio	1951	Wagner, Ronald C.	Buffalo, N.Y.

IN MEMORIAM

Retired General Chairperson James A. Williams of GO 875 dies at age 80

Former General Chairperson **James Arthur Williams**, who led GO 875 for 19 years, passed away March 27, 2021, at the age of 80.

He became a member of our union in May 1966, before starting his long and energetic career as an officer in 1973, when he became the vice local chairperson for Local 1564 in Los Angeles.

In 1974, he ascended to local chairperson and became general chairperson in 1996 before his retirement in 2015.

“He was not only a boss, but was also a friend to some. He was a fellow union man respected for his keen sense of fairness and peace,” **Maria Magallon**, operations man-



Williams

ager of GO 875 wrote. “Mr. Williams was a man of integrity, who cared for his union brothers and sisters. He was a formidable businessman and leader.”

Magallon said that Brother Williams remained connected with the goings-on of the union all throughout his retirement.

“He became a second family to some. His guidance on a professional level and his personality as a boss will be missed,” she said.

John Ellis, current GC of GO 875, recalled Williams as a staunch union man who led by example and was devoted to the betterment of the union and his members’ lives.

“He kept the peace in the office and was very much liked by his

peers and business associates, always the first one at work and the last one to leave,” Ellis said. “He rarely took time off, if any, and treated his tight-knit staff like family who especially will miss him dearly.”

Outside of work, Ellis said that Williams got lots of entertainment out of “The Jerry Springer Show,” loved his morning coffee and then a salad for lunch.

“He had the heart of a giver and dressed to impress,” Ellis said.

The SMART Transportation Division offers its condolences to Brother Williams’ family, friends and especially to our brothers and sisters in GO 875, whose fond memories of his leadership will help carry them through this difficult time of loss.

Local 1067’s Alvin Wigfall passes from COVID

Local 1067 (Virginia, Minn.) member **Alvin Wigfall**, 64, of Superior, Wis., died Friday, April 9 at St. Luke’s Hospital in Duluth, Minn. from COVID-19.

After graduating high school, he went on to earn his bachelor’s degree from the University of Wisconsin-Superior where he also played basketball. Shortly thereafter, Wigfall hired out with Canadian National as a conductor in June 1998, where he would

spend the next 21 years of his career. He went out on disability/E-49 status in November 2019, and was unofficially retired.

“The biggest thing that the rest of us conductors thought about Al was that he was this super kind person. All the new hires loved training with him because he was really, really funny,” Local 1067 President **Kevin Holden** said. “I mean, I remember being a new hire and training with Al. He gave me a hard time about being a new hire that didn’t know anything, but he did it in a way where it was that I didn’t feel made fun of, ya know? It was like we were all kinda in on the joke together.”

“He was a really funny guy. He was a really kind person. I mean that’s the biggest thing about Al, he was just so kind-hearted. He was a kind, gentle, good-hearted person. He was loved by everyone he worked with.”

Married to Melissa Brown since July 29, 2005, they had six children together. He loved spending time with his wife, kids and grandkids.

Wigfall is survived by his wife; sons Kevin (Ruby) Wehmeyer, Alvin Wigfall Jr. and Amare Wigfall; daughters Jordan (Alan) Grimsrud and Jaelyn Wigfall; four grandchildren Zachary Brown Jr., Amarra Grimsrud, Nathan and Jaxon Wehmeyer; five brothers; two sisters and many other relatives.

He was preceded in death by his son, Zachary Brown, and by his parents.

Condolences may be left by visiting www.lenroot-maetzold.com/obituary/alvin-wigfall.

SMART-TD extends our deepest sympathies to Brother Wigfall’s family, friends, Local 1067 and all who knew him.

Laureen Young Jr., 59, passes away from COVID

Laureen Young Jr., 59, a 34-year member out of Local 1565 who worked as a train operator for the LACMTA, passed away Dec. 27, 2020, from complications associated with COVID-19.

Brother Young served as secretary of LCA-875B for two years.



Wigfall



Young

Karen ‘Kay’ Garrity-Barnett, 61, Local 262 Amtrak conductor, passes away

Karen “Kay” Garrity-Barnett, a loyal member of Local 262 (Boston, Mass.) for 24 years and an Amtrak conductor, dedicated her life to serving others outside herself.

But unfortunately, at age 61, a brain aneurysm cut short Sister Garrity-Barnett’s selfless life in December.

“She was taken too suddenly from us,” said John Barnett, Karen’s husband of 20 years. “The outpouring of love from everyone was incredible. We never expected the turnout, and it was a fantastic testament to her unique personality and character.”

John and Karen met while traveling on a train from Boston’s South Station to Providence, R.I., in 1995. After their courtship, they were married in 2000 and spent two decades together as husband and wife.

A mutual passion that both Karen and John enjoyed was boating, and while traveling place to place was part of her job — she’d



Garrity-Barnett

worked on the Chicago-to-D.C. long-distance routes and many others — she loved to travel and had no plans to retire for another few years, Barnett said.

Karen had a brilliant mind, winning scholarships to Wellesley and MIT, John said. She was an expert in the history of Boston and of the country, and ultimately chose not to pursue study in physics for her career serving others as a conductor.

“She loved going to work and was very proud of her job,” he said, recalling that Karen often would go above and beyond to reunite her passengers with items that may have been lost along their journeys on Amtrak.

She also learned American Sign Language to communicate better with deaf passengers.

And one of her greatest callings was to help the furry felines that she found during her travels, tending to the feral ones and even taking in a few — John and Karen ended up naming them after the

places where they had been found.

“She was very caring for them,” John said. “She’d often take food and water to the cats that hid along the tracks.”

In fact, her commitment to helping animals extended beyond her passing — memorial donations were asked to be made in her name to the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals or to a donor’s local animal shelter.

“Kay, you were truly one of the kindest women I’ve ever worked with on the railroad,” fellow Local 262 member and Amtrak conductor **Whitney Joyce** wrote on Garrity-Barnett’s Facebook page after hearing of her death. “You always had the kindest things to say to me and you always left me wondering if you really even knew me! ... May God bless your soul and you.”

The SMART Transportation Division offers its condolences to John Barnett, Sister Garrity-Barnett’s Local 262 brothers and sisters and to all who knew her.

Brad Sowers, 67, Local 1892 member, worked 43 years

Brad Sowers, who died March 2, 2021, at age 67, was a longtime member of Local 1892 (Houston, Texas) and worked as a switchman at UP’s Englewood Yard in Houston up until his retirement in 2013.

He worked 43 years at Southern and Union Pacific railroads. In retirement, he took great pride in being a maintenance man for his church.

“He was a great switchman and an even better person, as most of us currently working today trained as new hires with him on his job,” Local 1892 Secretary/Treasurer **Robert Maldonado** said. “We have lost a good one!!!”



Sowers

Jeff Fontanez, 27-year member, passes away

Brother **Jeff Fontanez**, a member of Local 1565 who worked as a rail operator for the LACMTA, died after a sudden cardiac event that occurred in November.

“He was a dedicated union brother, a family man and the nicest person you would ever meet!” Local Chairperson **John C. Cabanas Jr.** said.

He is survived by his wife and five children.



Fontanez

Bryant Armstrong passes away

Bryant D. Armstrong, 46, of Local 835 (Bakersfield, Calif.), a trainman/brake-man for Union Pacific and a member of our union for four years, passed away Feb. 17, 2021, from COVID-19.

He is survived by two children.



Armstrong

Featured photo showcase



Local helps brothers in fights against cancer

Local 792 (Cleveland, Ohio) pulled together recently to assist a pair of co-workers in their fight against the same illness.

Member **Steve Kromer**, a Norfolk Southern conductor and Tim Price of BLET Division 607 both are battling esophageal cancer, S&T and Local Chairperson **Nick Dorsey** reported.

LCA-687 Secretary **Alan Thompson** held two charity events on his comic book website to raise over \$2,400 while BLET Local Chairman Pat Redmond also helped in the fundraising effort.

“Along with the gracious donations of our co-workers, a total of \$7,800.00 was raised for these two men,” Dorsey said. “Please keep them in your prayers.”

Have a camera? Get your photo featured in the TD News

SMART Transportation Division is always looking for good photos and your picture can be featured on this page.

SMART-TD seeks photographs or digital images of work-related scenes, such as railroad, bus or mass transit operations, new equipment photos, scenic shots, activities of your local or photos of your brothers and sisters keeping America rolling.

Printed photographs should

be mailed to SMART-TD, 24950 Country Club Blvd., Suite 340, North Olmsted, OH 44070-5333.

High-resolution digital photographs should be in JPEG format and emailed to news_td@smart-union.org. We prefer horizontal photos. Be sure that your camera is set to the large resolution setting when taking the photo or it might not reproduce well in print.

With each photograph,

please include your name and SMART local number, the names of the persons in the photo (left to right), where the photo was taken and other pertinent information.

All photographs submitted become property of SMART and can be used in future projects.

Remember to review your employer’s policies regarding use of cameras on the property or during work hours.

In the early morning hours in Los Angeles, Local 1565 (West Hollywood, Calif.) bus operator and Division 15 line instructor **Fabrisio Contreras** took this photo of the dawn breaking over the division’s bus fleet. Contreras had the help of **Quintin Wormley** and **John Ellis** in submitting the photo.

Retiree James Cruce went from Korea to a curator

Continued from Page 10

isn’t easy for Cruce, his wife had a stroke a while back, and he now has to have someone come and sit with her and take care of her needs while he’s at the museum. Even with this complication, Cruce says he still tries to get into the museum a couple of days a week or when someone calls for a tour.

Long before the museum came into being, Cruce along with CN’s Paul Rose and others, built the “Little Obie” safety train in 1986. They would ride the train, which includes a locomotive, flat car and a caboose, around town and give rides to the local children and teach them about railroad safety and the importance of staying off the tracks.

“We ran about 6,000 kids on the safety train,” Cruce said.

They eventually sold it to CN and the carrier built two more safety trains. CN police now conduct tours with the trains all over the U.S. and Canada and teach children and families about railroad safety. See <https://littleobie.ca>. Though Little Obie is no longer run by the museum, Cruce still puts on a program to

HOW TO HELP

The Twin Cities Railroad Museum is a non-profit that relies on volunteers and donations. The museum accepts donations of old railroad paraphernalia, trains, train clothing and other related items. To donate, email rryardmaster@att.net. Monetary donations are accepted, and checks can be made out to “Twin Cities Railroad Museum” and sent to the museum at 700 Milton Counce Dr., South Fulton, TN 38257. To find out more, visit www.tcrailroadmuseum.org or visit the TD website and check out Page 8 of the June 2008 issue of our publication.

teach kids about railroad safety and Little Obie comes to visit as much as possible.

“I think when I pass on, they’re going to bring a little safety train in front of the funeral home and have it lead the funeral procession,” Cruce said.

Thank you, Brother Cruce, for your service in the Korean War and to the community.

Suspension of VSTD elimination period extended to June

At the outset of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, the SMART Voluntary Short Term Disability Plan temporarily suspended the elimination period for COVID-19 disabilities.

In an announcement dated April 15, 2020, the elimination period was waived for any COVID-19 (coronavirus) disabilities beginning in the months of March, April and May 2020. Further announcements advised that the Plan would extend the waiver through February 2021.

The waiver of the elimination period has been extended again through June 30, 2021, in a decision made by the VSTD Board of Trustees comprised of SMART General President **Joseph Sellers Jr.**, General Secretary-Treasurer **Joseph Powell** and TD President **Jeremy Ferguson**.

Members who participate in the VSTD must usually be disabled for 21 days before benefits will begin on the 22nd day, a period of time known as the elimination period.

Effective with all diagnosed COVID-19 (coronavirus) disabilities beginning in the months of March 2020, through June 2021, the elimination period will be waived. This change will expedite and increase benefits for approved applicants so they will have immediate access to money. The period will be reinstated for COVID-19 (coronavirus) disabilities beginning on and after July 1, 2021.

We are pleased that the Plan can take this action on your behalf.