Futhey elected an AFL-CIO vice president

UTU International President Mike Futhey has been elected to the AFL-CIO Executive Council, which directs federal policies affecting the interests of working families. Futhey also was elected an AFL-CIO vice president, and will carry that title while continuing as UTU International president.

The AFL-CIO is comprised of 51 national and international labor unions representing some 11.5 million workers.

Futhey joins the new AFL-CIO leadership, which is now headed by former United Mine Workers President Richard Trumka, who succeeds John Sweeney. Sweeney, who retired as the AFL-CIO’s chief executive officer, served as AFL-CIO president for 14 years. Trumka, nominated by Sweeney, was elevated from his post of secretary-treasurer.

Upon taking office, Trumka issued a tough warning that intra-union raiding would not be tolerated.

Trumka also pledged to make the labor movement appeal to a new generation of workers who perceive unions as “only a graying, faded picture from another time. We need a unionism that makes sense to the next generation—young workers who see their parents neither have the money to go to college or are almost penniless by the time they come out,” Trumka said.

Also elected was Liz Shuler as secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO. She formerly was executive assistant to the president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Artlene Holk Baker was re-elected as the AFL-CIO executive vice president.

The AFL-CIO also announced that the 265,000-member Unite Here, which represents hotel, restaurant and clothing industry workers, has rejoined the federation four years after departing in a dispute over the direction of the AFL-CIO.

A highlight of the AFL-CIO convention was the appearance of President Barack Obama, who said “one of the fundamental reasons I ran for president was to stand up for hardworking families; to ease the struggles, lift the hopes, and make possible the dreams of middle class Americans.”

Obama emphasized that strong unions are required to build a strong economy and assure a strong middle class in America.

Study finds Amtrak bridges in poor shape

PHILADELPHIA – Nearly half of the bridges that carry Amtrak trains in the Philadelphia area have structural elements rated “poor” or worse, according to Amtrak’s bridge-inspection reports, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer.

The inspections show that 143 bridges – more than 47 percent – received “poor” or lower marks for such defects as deteriorated metal plates or decaying stone walls.

Some have eroded support piers, others badly worn girder elements and missing rivets. None of the bridges had any “failed” marks.

Amtrak officials claim the bridges are safe for travel. But decades of deferred maintenance mean the aging bridges will require hundreds of millions of dollars to bring them into good repair.

The situation is similar elsewhere in the country, where Amtrak owns about 1,400 bridges, largely in the Northeast. Lacking money to meet all of its repair and maintenance needs, Amtrak has deferred an estimated $5 billion in capital and infrastructure maintenance spending.

On the Amtrak line between Philadelphia and New York, 60.6 percent of the bridges in South- eastern Pennsylvania have some elements rated “poor” or worse. On the Philadelphia-to-Harrisburg line, 50.8 percent of the area bridges have “poor” components.

The Philadelphia-to-Washington line had fewer low marks, with 15 percent of the area bridges with “poor” elements.

In addition to increasing the risk of a major failure on the system, the deteriorated condition of Amtrak’s rolling stock and infrastructure may contribute to higher operating costs and reduced reliability of service,” the GAO said in a 2006 study, the last review of its kind by the agency.

In response to the report, Sen. Arlen Specter (D-Pa.) has asked Vice President Joe Biden for federal stimulus funds to repair Amtrak bridges in the Philadelphia region.

Specter also wrote to Amtrak President Joseph H. Boardman, asking for a report on how the national passenger railroad intends to address the issue of its deteriorated bridges.

Noting that Amtrak owns about 1,400 bridges nationwide, Specter asked Boardman if “the conditions in the Philadelphia region reflect a national state of disrepair for Amtrak-owned bridges.”

Lynx pilots choose UTU

Pilots at Denver-based regional airline Lynx Aviation have voted to be represented by the UTU.

The decision by 125 Lynx pilots to choose the UTU as their collective bargaining agent follows the decision in April by some 390 Great Lakes Aviation pilots and flight attendants for UTU representation.

Lynx, formed in 2006 as a subsidiary of Frontier Airlines Holdings, operates feeder service for Frontier to 15 destinations out of Denver, using 74-seat Bombardier (Q400) aircraft. Great Lakes operates 30-seat Embraer Brasilias and 19-seat Raytheon Beach 1900D regional airliners, and serves 65 destinations.

In mid-August, Frontier and Lynx were purchased by Republic Airways Holdings of Indianapolis through a federal bankruptcy auction. Although Republic has yet to announce its operating plans, Republic indicated its intention to continue operating Frontier and Lynx as standalone properties. Republic also operates Midwest Airlines as a subsidiary.

UTU International President Mike Futhey thanked Assistant President Arty Martin and Director of Strategic Planning John Naidalin for their efforts in organizing the Lynx pilot group.
Local 23, Santa Cruz, Calif. Member Raymond Mattos, 47, was killed in a car accident early Sept. 12 while driving to work, Local President Elizabeth Woodbridge reported.

Local 195, Galesburg, Ill. This BNSF Railway local was represented in Galesburg’s 117th annual Labor Day parade by Local Chairperson Jim Smith, Legislative Rep. Mac English and member Brian Hutchinson, retired former Legislative Rep. Ralph W. “Bud” Linworth reported. The parade has been held every year since 1892, except the World War II years of 1942 to 1945, Linworth said. In other news, Linworth has graduated from a book on the history of the CB&Q Illinois Pea Vine – The Galesburg to Savannah Branch, dedicated to all the men and women who worked the “pea vine” as employees of the CB&Q, BN and BNSF Railway. For more information about the book, send e-mail to wcmann@yahoo.com.

Local 240, Los Angeles, Calif. The seventh annual Rail Reunion & Retirement Dinner for railroaders in the L.A. Basin will be held from 3 to 10 p.m. on Nov. 7 at El Rancho Verde Golf Club, 335 E. Country Club Dr. in Rialto, Local Chairperson Harry Garvin Jr. reported. The cost is $35 person, $35 per couple, or $40 per person at the door. To make a reservation, call the club at (909) 875-5346 or Garvin at (909) 623-2746. Checks or money orders can be sent to: Harry Garvin Jr., IALC Union Dinner P.O. Box 8396, Alta Loma, CA 91701. “Everyone is welcome to attend from all crafts, active or retired, from the SP, UP, Pacific Electric, former SP/UP on Metrolink or Amtrak,” Garvin said.

Local 911, Minneapolis, Minn. After 42 years of service, Canadian Pacific conductor George Jones “pulled the pin” on Aug. 29, two days following his 60th birthday, State Legislative Director Phil Quayl reported. “As a former Milwaukee Road – River Division conductor, they just don’t come much better. This brother is one who could ‘tell it like it is,’” Quayl said.

Local 982, Rochester, N.Y. On Sept. 6, members of this local held their annual Clambake & Family Day Picnic at Syracuse, N.Y., Local Chairperson David Murphy reported. “We had great attendance and participation, with games, prizes, good food and friends. The planning committee did a great job in keying this event to attract UTU members of all ages, with their families. It was a great success and plans are already being made for next year’s Labor Day weekend,” Murphy said. Among those attending were UTU Designated Counsel Sam Rosenhall and Matt Darby, UTUIA Field Supervisor Art Rayner and organizer Sam Marino.

Mike Jackson (1374). Matt Schumacher (367) and Ben Kirkland (BLET) represented Operation RedBlock at the UTU 2009 regional meetings.

RedBlock: ‘Because it’s the right thing to do’

Matt Schumacher is one of five children. As they became adults, Schumacher’s mother told them that she made all of them too “nice.”

“We were always the first ones to bring in a stray dog or the injured bird,” Schumacher said.

His yearning to lend a helping hand continues to this day and has steered him to his current job as the full-time Operation RedBlock system coordinator for the Union Pacific Railroad.

Operation RedBlock is a labor-operated, management-supported drug- and alcohol-prevention and intervention program. It assists UTU BLET and TCR employees.

A licensed engineer and a member of Local 696 at Omaha, Neb., Schumacher got involved with RedBlock as a peer support coordinator for the UP’s Council Bluffs Service Unit. Today, his duties include contacting coordinators in the field, training local committees throughout the UP system, offering advice, ordering supplies, providing educational materials, and keeping abreast of all federal policy changes and UP program changes.

For the program to remain successful, Schumacher insisted to UP management that the program be operated by the unions. “It’s very important that this program is union owned and operated,” Schumacher said. “Management counselors were not trusted. That’s one request I made right off the bat. It’s not a snatch program. We are policing our own people.”

At the UTU’s 2009 regional meetings, Schumacher lead the Brotherhood Against Alcohol and Drugs (BAAD) workshops and manned the Operation RedBlock exhibit, along with CSW’s Mike Jackson (1374) and Ben Kirkland (BLET). “Going to these conferences is the second most-important thing I do,” Schumacher said.

Though his long hair may cause some to wonder, Schumacher has never been through recovery or suffered from an addiction. He joked, “At one conference I attended, one attendee asked another, ‘Why does our Operation RedBlock coordinator look like a pothead?’”

Schumacher said part of helping employees with substance abuse problems is to install the brotherhood of all unions in what he and others are doing. “We’re all in this together. They need to know that somebody does care for them and is looking out for them.”

Schumacher said, “This job is kind of like being a local chairperson. They do the job they do not because they want a pat on the back. We do what we do because it’s the right thing to do.”

Local 1081, Glendale, Ariz. Member Dempsey Lofton Sr., the father of an autistic son, is seeking to raise funds to combat the disease by participating in the 2009 Walk Now for Autism on Nov. 1. To make a donation on Lofton’s behalf, visit www.walknow- forautism.com with the code at the top of the page, select Support a Walker, then enter Lofton’s first and last names. Donations can be made on Lofton’s personal page.

Local 1440, Staten Island, N.Y. Local Secretary & Treasurer Vincent LaBella reported that the local will host a holiday/farewell service recognition dinner at 7 p.m. on Dec. 4 at The Staten, 697 Forest Ave., on Staten Island. “The purpose of this dinner is to show our appreci- ciation for all of the hard work that is demonstrat- ed by UTU members on the MTA Staten Island Railway,” LaBella said. For more information, visit the local’s Web site at 1440utu.org. In other news, the members of Local 1440 congratulate lead machinist Fabio Fonseca Sr., who retired after 30 years of service.

Local 1518, Indianapolis, Ind. Retired member Ross E. Gillespie and his wife, Alberta, celebrated their 73rd wedding anniversary on Sept. 2, former Secretary & Treasurer James R. O’Neil reported. Gillespie, 92, worked for the former New York Central Railroad.

Local 1545, Monroe, La. Members of this Union Pacific local congratulate Vice President and Legislative Rep. Jeff M. Golliver for 50 years of injury-free service and dedication to his union, Local Secretary & Treasurer Chris D. Christianon reports. Golliver hired out on the Missouri Pacific in 1959 and has held various union offices since being elected assistant local chairperson in the 1970s. “He is still actively working as a conductor for Union Pacific Railroad, and if you ask him when he will retire, he will tell you that he’s not gonna trade a turkey for a jambalaya,” Christianon said.

Local 1780, Kansas City, Mo. On Aug. 18, at the UTU regional meeting in New Orleans, UTU International President Mike Farhey presented Legislative Rep. Kent Nelson with a plaque commemorating his years of service to the Missouri State Legislative Board, State Director Ken Menges reported. “Kent puts more value in the work he has done to help his brothers and sisters than in the possessions that others brag about upon retirement,” Farhey said during the presentation. Nelson officially retired on Aug. 11.

Auxiliary Lodge 70 member Karrmann Nelson, right, looks on as International President Mike Farhey, center, presents to present her husband, Kent Nelson, with a service plaque.

Local 1840, Glasgow, Mont. On Aug. 14, member of the Legion Auxiliary Lodge 228 Delegate Carol Buchheit, UTU Auxiliary Lodge 228 Past President Monica Gartan, Addison Jones, and retired members Richard “Pancho” Damstrom and Marvin Barstad.

Relay for Life team members, from left, are Monica Gartan, Local Chairperson Chuck Gartan, Richard “Pancho” Damstrom, Marvin Barstad, Carol Buchheit, Liz Damstrom and Paula Hlisko at the Glasgow High School track.
Big Blue Bus wants to become a 'green' giant

SANTA MONICA, Calif. – After nine years of planning, and nearly three years of design and construction, Santa Monica’s Big Blue Bus is ready to turn the key on its new state-of-the-art, environmentally significant maintenance facility.

The project came in under budget and on time, and features the latest in sustainable transit maintenance technologies.

The new facility is part of an expansion project that will also include the demolition of the existing maintenance facility and a reorganized, more efficient bus yard. The project was planned so that daily bus operations could be maintained while the project was under construction. The total cost of this phase, including the demolition and new parking area, will be $60 million.

“While the old facility has served us well for over 40 years, we live in a different world now and need a facility that can maintain our larger and more technologically diverse fleet, which includes many different types and sizes of cleaner burning alternative fueled vehicles,” said Stephanie Negriff, director of transit services.

Negriff noted that the project also provides for much needed additional space for bus parking, and longer bays to service the larger articulated buses expected in 2011.

The new facility encompasses 66,000 square feet of workspace and offices along a 450-foot long structure. It includes 21 service bays, which can handle the maintenance and repair of up to 20 buses a day, and has three extended bays to service the new 60-foot articulated buses and two bays dedicated to maintaining Santa Monica Fire Department vehicles.

In keeping with the Big Blue Bus’ and city’s commitment to a sustainable environment, the facility will include many eco-friendly and energy efficient features, such as:

• 600 80-kilowatt photovoltaic panels on the roof to help reduce energy costs by up to 15 percent a year.
• High-reflective concrete paving in the bus yard to keep the facility’s microclimate cooler.
• An urban runoff system to filter storm water.
• Reclaimed water for landscape irrigation.
• Recycled content in major constructions materials, including concrete, structural steel, carpeting, gypsum board, finishes and insulation.
• Light colored single-ply roofing to reflect heat away from the building.
• Low/no-VOC off-gassing materials and finishes.
• Energy efficient measures, including minimum energy water heaters and lighting.
• Workspaces designed to utilize natural ventilation so less air conditioning is required.
• Electric vehicle charging stations.
The Los Angeles office of HOK, an internationally recognized leader in sustainable design, served as the facility’s architect.

“The City of Santa Monica now has a solid, new state-of-the-art facility that will serve them well for years to come,” said Project Executive David Selna of the Morley Construction Company.

In addition to the new building, larger bus yard and demolition of the old facility, the full expansion project will also include a natural gas fueling station and a recycled-water bus wash, which will be completed in a later phase.

The Big Blue Bus operates a fleet of more than 200 energy-efficient vehicles, transporting more than 80,000 passengers a day across a nearly 52-square mile service area.

Serving Santa Monica and the Los Angeles area since 1928, the Big Blue Bus has an 86 percent on-time performance record and has won numerous national awards for its customer service, safety and efficiency.

UTU Local 1785 at Santa Monica

The operators at Santa Monica’s Big Blue Bus are members of Local 1785.

There are approximately 300 drivers employed by the agency, about 170 of whom are full-time employees, said General Chairman Adlin Reddy. The agency operates a fleet of 210 buses, 45 percent of which are fueled by liquefied natural gas (LNG), which is 77 percent cleaner burning than diesel fueled buses. The new facility was constructed to also accommodate 60-foot articulated buses, Reddy said, and he expects the first shipment of 20 or so articulated buses to arrive early next year.

“Our members are very happy with the new facility and are looking forward to driving the new equipment. They are actually easier to drive than the 40-foot buses we drive now,” Reddy said.

He said the UTU membership at Big Blue is a cohesive unit and faces all obstacles with a positive approach.

Since 2001, the members of Local 1785 have held an annual picnic, most recently on July 25 at Westchester Park near the Los Angeles Airport.

“The picnic featured a barbecue meal, a DJ and a kids’ program. We had one of Blue Bus’ great celebrations – and we look to get more members involved in the future,” Reddy said.

Member uses CPR to save woman

You never know when training learned at work will come in handy.

Just ask Jim Turtle, a conductor on Amtrak and member of Local 166, Salt Lake City. Turtle and other Amtrak crew members were standing in front of a hotel in Grand Junction, Col., recently when a woman collapsed in a nearby vehicle.

“The woman’s husband pulled her out of the vehicle and called out for help,” Utah State Legislative Director Jay Seegmiller reports. “That is when Turtle took control of the situation and sprang into action, using CPR training he had received at Amtrak.

“While Brian and the husband started CPR on the unconscious woman who was not breathing, Assistant Conductor Cheryl Porch called 911.” (Porch also is a member and vice local chairman of Local 166.)

“The woman eventually regained consciousness but was not breathing and was not stepping without help,” Seegmiller said. “The paramedics stated that, had it not been for the quick reactions of Mr. Turtle, they might have lost the woman.”

Seegmiller commended Turtle, who is a 32-year member, and Porch for their quick thinking and decisive actions.

This caboose, constructed by UTU members, was the hit of the recent Labor Day parade in downtown Omaha, Neb. Those contributing to its construction included State Legislative Director Ray Lineweber; Dick Casey, John Vaughn, Joe Novel and Jim Boldinginger (all of Local 367, Omaha); Assistant State Legislative Director Bob Borgeson, Tim Engler and Francis Barrett (all of Local 872, Omaha) and Bill Price (Local 646, Council Bluffs, Iowa). UTU Assistant President Arty Martin (far left) marched in the parade with the UTU contingent.

A coach rests in one of the 21 service bays at Big Blue Bus’ new eco-friendly maintenance facility in Santa Monica, Calif.
AFL-CIO and UTU: A powerful alliance

International President’s Column
By Mike Futhey, International President
(216) 228-9400; president@utu.org

The AFL-CIO and UTU, and I are heartened that this approach has caused, in recent months, many hundreds of previously unorganized workers to choose the UTU as their bargaining agent. The UTU continues to gain new members in the airline, bus and rail industries – working men and women who understand not only that in union there is strength, but that the UTU has a proven track record of negotiating world-class agreements and then enforcing those agreements.

Our cherished craft autonomy, beginning at the local level, permits every member an important say in crafting labor agreements.

As Assistant President Arty Martin explains in his column on this page, our craft autonomy begins with the individual member, who has the right and responsibility to document carrier violations of his or her agreement and be assured that every level of the organization – from local officer to general committee of adjustment to state legislative boards to the International – is ready, willing, anxious and able to assist.

No member of the UTU stands alone. Our resources are substantial, and when we include the resources of our UTU PAC and the strength of the AFL-CIO, we match, and often exceed, the strength of the carriers.

A highlight of the AFL-CIO convention was the appearance of Pres-
ident Obama, who opened his speech by saying, “You know, the White House is pretty nice, but there is nothing like being back in the House of Labor.”

President Obama also said that among “the fundamental reasons I ran for president was to stand up for hardworking families; to ease the struggles, lift the hopes, and make possible the dreams of middle class Americans.”

Together, we can and will continue to improve the quality of life for the working men and women who say, “Union, yes!” I am proud to be playing a part on your behalf.

October 2009 UTU News
State Watch
News from UTU State Legislative Boards

Kansas

UTU members were recently in attendance at a reception held in honor of former Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, who was named by President Obama to head the Department of Health and Human Services. Above, Assistant State Legislative Director Ty Dragos (L-1503, Marysville), right, and Alternate Legislative Board Secretary Ivy Holzhauser (L-94, Kansas City), left, congratulate Sebelius on her appointment.

Tennessee

The UTU was a sponsor of the Jackson Day Celebration in Tennessee recently, State Legislative Director Jerry Anderton reports. (The event honors former President Andrew Jackson, founder of the Democratic Party.) Key speakers were Bill Clinton and Albert Gore. Photographed, left to right, are Matt Foster (legislative representative and local chairperson, L-974, Nashville); Roger Crawford (legislative representative, local chairperson, L-359, Jackson); Larry Pigg (local chairperson, delegate, L-974); Brian Houston (assistant state director, legislative representative, L-750, Knoxville); Anderton and Johnny Willis (general chairperson, GO 513, L-974).

Ohio

Joe Boda has retired as chairperson and state legislative director after more than 44 years of dedicated union service. Above, Boda (center) is presented with an award in honor of his retirement by UTU International President Mike Foty (second from right.) Also in attendance were new State Legislative Director Glenn Newsom (left), Vice President Delbert Strunk (second from left) and General Secretary & Treasurer Kim Thompson (right).

New Jersey

State Legislative Board Director Dan O’Connell reports that the board has voted unanimously to recommend the re-election of Gov. Jon Corzine (D).

“While we endorse Gov. Corzine because of his continued support for mass-transit funding, the federal stimulus package; the new passenger rail tunnel to New York City, and for investments in freight rail infrastructure that benefit UTU members on Conrail, CSX and Norfolk Southern. For UTU members in New Jersey the choice is clear: Vote Corzine in 2009,” O’Connell said.

UTU members on LACMTA ratify one-year contract

UTU-represented employees of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) have voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new one-year contract with the transit agency.

All are members of Local 1563 (El Monte), 1564 (Los Angeles), 1565 (West Hollywood), 1607 (Los Angeles) and 1608 (Chatsworth).

The agreement is subject to approval by the agency’s board of directors, which will vote on the proposal at its meeting this month.

If approved by the board, the contract will run retroactively from July 1, 2009, through June 30, 2010.

“On behalf of the general committee, I want to express our appreciation to the membership for the confidence you have demonstrated in your negotiation team,” General Chairperson James A. Williams said.

“It is no secret that the political and economic conditions could not be worse, but we were able to preserve all of your pay guarantees and the protective language in the contract, and maintain the current level of benefits in our health plan.

“This is a great victory for the members of this union and your support is what made it possible,” Williams said.

Williams praised the hard work and solidarity shown by the members of the negotiating committee: Vice General Chairperson and Local 1563 Chairperson Robert Gonzales; Secretary of the general committee and Local 1607 Chairperson Lisa Arredondo; Local 1564 Chairperson Ben Cooper; Local 1563 Chairperson Tim Del Cambe and Local 1608 Chairperson Aaron Montgomery.

UTU seeks info on members, families in military

The United Transportation Union is seeking to honor its members, or their children or spouses, who are serving in any branch of the U.S. military. The UTU News plans to publish these names, and any photos received, in a future edition.

Please mail or e-mail the name and rank of the individual, the branch and unit of the military in which they serve, and where they are currently stationed, along with the UTU member’s name and local number.

UTU News also welcomes photographs of these military personnel, in uniform, for publication. Photos can be returned if requested. Names and photographs should be e-mailed to utunews@utu.org or sent to UTU News, United Transportation Union, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250.

Bus Department
By Richard Deliser, vice president / director

Shorter contracts protect bus workers’ earnings

Kudos to Alternate Bus Vice President-East Calvin Stuvivant and Alternate Bus Vice President-West Bonnie Morr for being chosen as delegates to the AFL-CIO convention in Pittsburgh, where a highlight was President Obama’s speech that may be viewed on the UTU Web site at www.utu.org. Calvin reports that he shook the presid-ent’s hand!

Congratulations also to UTU International President Mike Foty on his election as an AFL-CIO vice president and his appointment to the federation’s Executive Council.

Several bus locals have been involved in contract negotiations, and the trend is towards shorter agreements in the hope that the economy will improve in the near future.

If that becomes reality, we will be able to negotiate wages and benefits from a far stronger position than in the current recession.

General Chairperson James Williams (Local 1564, Los Angeles) reports his members have ratified a new one-year agreement with the LACMTA after hard work and patience of all the committee members.

General Chairperson Nelson Manzano (Local 710, Elizabeth, N.J.; One Bus) praised the work done by Vice General Chairpersons James Powell and Jose Rivera in reaching a one-year agreement with Coach USA, holding the cost-sharing for health care.

Local 1558 in Westwood, N.J.; (Rockland Coaches) reached a similar accord under the direction of General Chairperson Keith Mack, assisted by Mike Byrne, Helaine Parsons, Ed Pollard, Bob Panarotti and Abe Tay. Calvin Stuvivant’s Local 759 in Paramus, N.J., (Community Transit) won an important arbitration, which resulted in an employee being restored to work status with full back pay and benefits.

Also, General Chairperson Bill Koch (Local 1670, Laredo, Texas; Laredo Metro) is keeping a watchful eye on bus inspections at the Mexican border. The U.S. DOT has significantly reduced the number of buses inspected, leading to worries about safety, operator fatigue and equipment maintenance on these bus lines that operate far into the U.S. American companies cannot compete effectively when confronted by cheap labor, shoddy maintenance and ill-qualified driver logs.
In spite of railroad boasts that they have become safer, railroad employee-on-duty fatalities and career-ending injuries have been increasing, according to the FRA. Twenty-five railroad employees lost their lives in on-duty accidents during 2008, up from 16 in 2007. And 2009 got off to a horrible start, with 11 employee-on-duty on-duty fatalities in just the first three months of the year.

Stunned by this sharp increase in rail-employee on-duty fatalities and career-ending injuries, UTU International President Mike Futhey appointed a four-person task force in April to craft, in conjunction with the FRA, an action plan to reduce railroad-on-duty risk while on the job. Leading the task force is UTU Assistant Arizona State Legislative Director Greg Hynes, who is working with UTU Arizona State Legislative Director Scott Olson, Arkansas State Legislative Director Steve Evans and Michigan State Legislative Director Jerry Gibson.

“The objective is to produce an effective solution that includes best practices and techniques to increase situational awareness and keep situation awareness at its highest level,” Futhey said.

To view the UTU Rail Safety Task Force Web page, go to the UTU home page at www.utu.org and click on this button:

UTU Railroad Safety Task Force works to reduce risks

The UTU and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen have petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration for an emergency order to prohibit the use by railroads of one-person operating crews, including remote control operations.

While the UTU has consistently taken exception to single-person operations, in reality it exists today. Accordingly, our members should be aware of the safest course in an unsafe situation.

UTU members working in single-person operations are strongly encouraged to question any order by a railroad official to perform any activities that may result in an injury, loss of limb or life—short of insubordination.

If your request to be relieved of such a task is denied, immediately contact your local chairperson, general chairperson, local legislative representative or state legislative director for further assistance.

Eight rules for staying safe and alive

1. Avoid slips, trips and falls:

   - Keep walkways clear.
   - Never walk on a ladder, step, rail, railing, step, stair or the edge of a platform.
   - Never walk on a ladder, step, stair, step or the edge of a platform.

2. Avoid being careless:

   - Do not take risks or assume anything.
   - Always be aware of your surroundings.
   - Always be aware of your surroundings.

3. On/off standing equipment:

   - Always keep your hands and body away from the moving equipment.
   - Always follow the rules of the road.
   - Always follow the rules of the road.

4. Use proper equipment:

   - Always use the proper equipment.
   - Always use the proper equipment.
   - Always use the proper equipment.

5. Protect yourself:

   - Always wear the proper personal protective equipment.
   - Always wear the proper personal protective equipment.
   - Always wear the proper personal protective equipment.

6. Protect your face:

   - Always wear a face mask when working in dangerous areas.
   - Always wear a face mask when working in dangerous areas.
   - Always wear a face mask when working in dangerous areas.

7. Use proper tools:

   - Always use the proper tools.
   - Always use the proper tools.
   - Always use the proper tools.

8. Use proper lighting:

   - Always use proper lighting.
   - Always use proper lighting.
   - Always use proper lighting.

IN MEMORIAM

Mike Wilcox

Mike Wilcox went to work for the BNSF Railway in 2001. He was a member of Local 212 in Albany, N.Y. He is survived by his wife, Carla; son, Lenny and grandson, Alex, at the age of 26 and had been railroad working just two years.

Saxton Haselwood

Saxton Haselwood, a member of Local 1227 in Wichita, Kan., was killed Feb. 8 at UP's Herrington Yard outside Herrington, Kan. Haselwood, unmarried, was 26 and had been railroad working just two years. He is survived by his wife, Carla; son, Lenny and grandson, Alex, at the age of 26 and had been railroad working just two years.

We need your help; take the UTU’s online safety survey

The value of detailed documentation can never be overstated. UTU members have been empowered to address the issues of harassment and intimidation through federal whistleblower protection that is written into law. This protection already has had a positive impact. Recently, an investigation by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which followed information from a whistleblower, resulted in $300,000 in multiple punitive damage awards against commuter railroad Metro North.

The UTU Safety Task Force has received many complaints about harassment and intimidation. Some of the carriers have made a relentless practice of harassment for the sake of productivity, with little or no regard for their members’ safety. With your detailed documentation, this will change.

In addition to reporting all dangerous safety conditions to your respective carriers, your report should be made to your local legislative representative and state legislative director, with copies to the FRA of a joint UTU-BLET petition for an emergency order to prohibit the use by railroads of one-person operating crews.

Your responses will assist the UTU to better understand your workplace conditions and make the appropriate changes.

The UTU Safety Task Force suggests you familiarize yourself with procedures in your workplace in order that all we all share a safer workplace.

Eight rules for staying safe and alive

Career-ending personal injuries and fatalities have continued to increase in the rail industry.

To educate members of the circumstances of these incidents and to attempt to avoid them in the future, the UTU Rail Safety Task Force urges that each of you continue to look out for each other and forward your ideas and concerns about workplace safety to the task force so we may address them.

Interactive communication and “looking out for each other” is imperative to bringing us all home from work in one piece.

To ensure we all go home to our families in one piece, the UTU Rail Safety Task Force asks for a 100 percent commitment to rules compliance and to the following eight activities:

1. Job briefings: Ensure all crew members are present for job briefings, and focus on risk assessment.

2. Situational awareness: Be aware of your surroundings.

3. On/off standing equipment: Keep hands free of other objects and maintain three-point contact, always being vigilant for equipment movement.

4. Avoid slips, trips and falls: Keep your eyes on the footpath and report any unsafe conditions to your local legislative representative for handling.

5. Radio communications: Always use proper identification, provide car counts when shoving, do not engage in excessive chatter and use “over and out.”

6. Put safety first: Performing a task safely is more important than the time it takes to complete it. The only good movie is one done 100 percent by the rules.

7. Ask questions: If any uncertainty arises, take the time to ask questions. Do not take risks or assume anything.


We need your help; take the UTU’s online safety survey

For more information on safety, including laws, advisories and drug/alcohol testing, visit the “Transportation Safety” page at www.utu.org
BRT watch bob, chain donated to museum

GALESBURG, ILL. — A 99-year-old chain and bob, which is intended to attach to a pocket watch and has had five owners, has been donated to the Galesburg Railroad Museum.

In 1910, a conductor from Galesburg, whose name has been lost in history, and who was one of the early members of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, purchased the chain and bob and decided to pass it from one railroad man to another upon retirement.

(Re the forerunner of the U.T.U.)

Wolfe began working for the railroad in April 1926, and was stationed in Galesburg for most of his career. He held on the chain and bob for 18 years.

In August 1968, he gave it to Calvin F. Evans, who was stationed in Galesburg and worked for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad.

Evans was local chairperson and member of Local 195, Galesburg, Ill., until 1977 when he took a management job with the BN.

William Smith (left) and Cal Evans recently donated a 99-year-old chain and BRT watch bob to the Galesburg Railroad Museum. The chain and bob have five owners over the years, is one of two U.T.U.-president Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen purchased them and decided to pass them from one railroad man to another upon retirement.

“When I received the chain and bob, it gave me pride,” Evans said. “It was some recognition from a man who had seniority and knowledge and worked for the railroad for 40 years. Receiving the chain and bob meant you knew your craft.”

In 1977, Evans left Galesburg for Tacoma, Wash., where he worked for 18 months. He then went on to work in Alliance, Neb., for five years and Memphis, Tenn., for six.

Throughout his travels, Evans only used the chain and bob a few times when he worked on passenger trains.

“The chain and bob was for when I wore my uniform,” he said. “It is important to trains to be on time and people in those days all carried pocket watches that met railroad standards. Daily, you would make sure your watch had the proper time and you had to have them when you went to work.

After having the chain and bob for 22 years, Evans gave it to William Smith, in 1990.

“I had worked with William and thought he was one of the most knowledgeable guys I had worked with so I thought he would appreciate it,” Evans said.

“When Cal gave me the chain and bob, it meant so much to me,” Smith said. “At the time, his son-in-law worked for the railroad and he gave it to me instead, so it is pretty special.

Smith’s railroad service began in 1970 in Memphis and he retired from the Southern Pacific.

“In the years, Smith retired and gave the chain and bob to another railroad man when he retired. So he talked with Evans about the history of the chain and bob.

“Told me that William and Smith and Smith in Galesburg,” Evans said. “I had been to the Galesburg Railroad Museum when I worked in Fort Madison and I thought that was a good place for it if we were not going to pass it on.”

California railroad retirees to meet

Retired conductor John Herrmann of Local 694, Danvers, Calif., is organizing a reunion of retired (and retired) Railroad Retirement Board of the Southern Pacific, Amtrak, AT&SF, UP and WP.

The event will be held Saturday, Oct. 31, at p.m. at Spranger’s Seafood Restaurant, 1919 Fourth St., Berkeley, Calif.

“We will gather in the Atlantic Room to share stories, swap lies, laugh together, enjoy a fine meal and the afternoon together,” Herrmann said.

The cost is $30 and deadline for reservations is Oct. 20. For more information call Herrmann at (530) 926-5180 or (530) 925-0325 (cell).

The Final Call

Following are the names of recently deceased members who maintained annual membership in the UTU Alumni Association (formerly known as the UTU for Life Program), according to reports received at UTU International Headquarters. These brothers and sisters will be missed by their many friends and by fellow UTU Alumni Association members.
Accidental Death and Dismemberment

New UTUIA policy offers guaranteed approval for active transportation employees!

UTUIA’s new Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy includes all the following benefits:

- $180,000 for death caused by common carrier
- $90,000 for death caused by automobile
- $60,000 for accidental death
- $30,000 for dismemberment

Intensive care confinement benefits of:
- $600 per day
- $60 per day for family lodging
- $30 per day for family meals
- Up to $1,800 for air ambulance
- Up to $300 for surface ambulance
- Optional rider for spouse/children

This policy provides benefits for accidents and not sickness. Some benefits provided to the policy owner are greater than those provided under the optional family rider. Some benefits may vary by state of residence.

For more information, complete and mail the coupon at right or call the UTUIA toll-free, at 1-800-558-8842.

Call toll-free: 1-800-558-8842

Information, please

I would like more information on the Accidental Death and Dismemberment plan.

Please print

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Complete and mail to: UTUIA Sales Dept., 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250 1039

UTU needs your photos

The UTU is seeking printed or digital photographs 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 UTU News, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107.

High-resolution digital photographs should be e-mailed to “utunews@utu.org”.

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

All photographs submitted become property of the UTU.

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

Discipline Income Protection Program: It Pays!

What is the Discipline Income Protection Program? This program pays you a specific amount over a length of time if you are suspended, dismissed or removed from service by the carrier for alleged violation of rules or operating procedures, provided that such violations are not on the list of exceptions not covered.

What benefits are paid? You choose the level of benefits paid, from $6 to $200 per day, all at low monthly assessments. The term of benefits, from 250 to 365 days, depends on how long you have been enrolled in the program.

Who sponsors the program? The United Transportation Union International sponsors the Discipline Income Protection Program.

Who is eligible for coverage? UTU members in the U.S. and Canada may enroll as members on a voluntary basis.

How do I get more information? Contact your field supervisor or local insurance representative, or write to: Discipline Income Protection Program, UTU, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250, or e-mail “dipp@utu.org” or check out the Discipline Income Protection Program page on www.utu.org.

The UTU International Staff: Here to Serve You

KARYN HILL

Karyn Hill is a records representative in the Records Department. She started with the UTU in 2007. “We have almost 600,000 individual files in the file room,” she said, “and keeping them all straight is a big job. I create files for new members, search for the files of deceased members, pull files for various departments, and add information to files as needed. With this job, knowing the alphabet is crucial; I know it backward and forward now. Working here is fun; the people are very nice and every day is different and challenging.”

LORA PETSCH

Lora Petsch is a policyholder service representative for the UTUIA. She started in 1981, working in the Claims Department. She served there for 24 years before moving to the Policyholders Service Department four years ago. “My job is to send out new insurance policies,” she said. “When a person purchases insurance coverage from the UTUIA, I assemble the package of materials and send it out to them as soon as possible. I also retrieve files and answer questions. I like to see that things get done as quickly and correctly as possible. It keeps me busy.”

CHARLOTTE DEARMAN

Charlotte DeArman started with the UTU in 1978 as a clerk in the Billing/Audit Department. She worked stints as a clerk in the Accounting Department and as supervisor in the Directory Department before coming full circle back to Billing/Audit as an auditor. She is responsible for auditing about 140 locals. “I speak to local treasurers, audit the locals’ bills, file them on a day-to-day basis, update the computer system and work with local auditors and secretary/treasurers to balance the locals’ books. I also serve as co-chief steward of OPERU Local 17, which represents many UTU employees.”
Feds weigh cell-phone ban for bus, truck drivers

WASHINGTON — Safety investigators told federal regulators three years ago that it was dangerous for bus drivers to talk on cell phones while driving and recommended a ban.

The National Transportation Safety Board put that recommendation on its list of most important safety measures. Industry and safety groups had no objections.

Yet the regulatory agency now says it would write new rules on cell phone use by commercial drivers, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, has done little more than study the issue.

Now, after several high-profile accidents that focused public attention on using cell phones on the road, the Obama administration has decided to act on the recommendation, which was left hanging by the Bush administration.

The NTSB’s recommendation was prompted by a 2004 accident in which the driver of a motorcoach carrying students on a trip to Washington became so engrossed in a cell phone conversation that he failed to notice signs that said the height of an upcoming bridge was nearly two feet less than the height of the bus. The bus slammed into the underside of the bridge, shearing off the roof and injuring 11 passengers.

“He drove that bus right into that bridge. It was like a can opener – it just peeled the top back,” said NTSB Chairman Debo rah Herman. “If you could see the picture, you would be shocked that there weren’t fatalities.”

The safety board recommended that the motor carrier administration prohibit commercial bus drivers from talking on cell phones except in emergencies and that it encourage states to do the same for school bus drivers.

The agency responded that it would not only conduct studies to learn whether a new rule was needed and whether cell phone use by all commercial drivers, including truck drivers, should be prohibited. It hoped to have answers last October.

An official for the motor carrier administration declined comment when contacted by The Associated Press.

Research clearly shows that cell phone use distracts drivers, safety experts said.

“When you are texting and talking on the phone, you might be going through the motions of doing what you need to be doing, but your head is not in the game,” Hersman said.

Seventeen states and the District of Columbia prohibit school bus drivers from using cell phones while driving. Eighteen states and the District of Columbia have passed laws making texting while driving illegal.

A group of Democratic members of Congress introduced a bill this summer requiring states to ban texting or e-mailing while operating a moving vehicle or lose 25 percent of their annual federal highway funding. It would be patterned after Congress’ requirement that states adopt a national drunken driving ban.

Advice from the UTU’s medical consultant on avoiding the addiction to, and tolerance of, drugs

Narcotics, sedatives can both help...and hurt

By Dr. Norman Brown

UTU Medical Consultant

There is an old saying among physicians that patients will lie more often about their drug usage and their sex lives than about any other topics. So, please, just give me the facts.

What drugs was Michael Jackson taking when he died? Who prescribed them? Why did he have so many different drugs on hand? And maybe some even via assumed names? How come he received a drug that was variance-only intravenous sedative in his home?

The tragic recent death of Michael Jackson has once again brought our attention to the double-edged sword of narcotic and sedative drugs. On the one hand, medical providers, in their role as healers, have prescribed narcotics, such as morphine and sedatives, such as the tranquilizers Valium, Xanax and Ambien, to their patients over the years, and hence have given untold numbers of people relief from terrible pain, anxiety and insomnia. On the other hand, serious problems can develop using these drugs.

When a patient with a broken leg receives morphine for the pain, the patient’s brain experiences pain relief. In addition, the patient feels some degree of an altered state of consciousness, which patients describe as anything from very pleasant to oblivion. As doses are repeated, two brain/body changes occur:

1) The brain’s desire for the repeat doses, even if the leg fracture is healing and should be less painful, often increases—called addiction; and,

2) The body’s chemistry gradually cranks up its chemical destruction of the morphine, so to get the same brain result in the same patient, say a week later, increasing amounts of morphine are required—called tolerance.

Unfortunately, medical providers and their patients sometimes get caught up in a vicious cycle wherein the patient keeps requesting repeated, and often increasing, prescriptions of a given narcotic, when the condition for which it was given should be improving.

The doctor writes prescription after prescription, and addiction and tolerance follow.

Of course, when patients have progressive painful cancer, addiction is not a worry, and, incidentally, it is surprising how little apparent addiction occurs in this situation.

I am trying all day to respond to the needs, anxieties and pains of my patients, and I can understand the pressure Michael Jackson felt inside himself and conveyed to his doctors, as they were trying to respond to his pleas for help with anxiety and sleep.

Many of us have watched clips of Jackson’s rehearsals. He appeared to be in very high state of energy as he put his all into the performances. To get wound down from such high activity and get some sleep before another day — in fact, before many days of these performances — would not be easy for anyone. The Propofol worked. It was dangerous, but I would guess that Michael Jackson kept.

What can we learn here as consumers and prescribers of narcotics and sedatives?

Although there is a lot of variation, any prescriber and almost any patient together can evolve into an addicted patient.

As a prescriber, I need to think twice each time I hand such a prescription to a patient, especially if it is a repeat. As patients, I hope we will ask ourselves, “Do I really need to take another pain pill, and get refills, or can I work myself off of these pills?”

I hope those of us who need some type of pain medication every day are always trying to make lifestyle efforts to reduce the pain without medication, for example using the body differently, exercising, losing weight, getting physical therapy, or even engaging in spiritual activities.

Narcotics and sedatives are a huge blessing for mankind in relieving suffering, but we always need to stay vigilant to keep them from doing more harm than good.

Meet your UTU Designated Legal Counsel

There is no more dangerous work environment than on the railroads, where injuries too often are severe. The Federal Employers’ Liability Act (FELA) makes railroads accountable for unsafe working conditions. Railroads retain skilled attorneys to protect their interests. You also have access to skilled and experienced attorneys who understand the railroad industry, its safety hazards, and every aspect of the FELA. They are the UTU Designated Legal Counsel, chosen for their special knowledge and experience. Their job is to represent you. This continuing column introduces you to all of the UTU Designated Legal Counsel. For a complete listing, go to the UTU home page at www.utu.org and click on the blue tile, “Designated Legal Counsel.”

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(800) 877-8440 toll free

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Why should an injured railroad worker contact a UTU Designated Legal Counsel? It is simple: free advice! Not the general advice that you would receive from an attorney who does not handle or specialize in railroad injury cases, but railroad-specific advice that a worker needs to and must know as soon as possible after an injury. Designated counsel will tell the worker exactly what to do to protect their personal and family’s interests.

UTU Designated Legal Counsel have the knowledge and experience to help protect you and your family when you suffer an injury. As soon as an injury occurs, the railroad begins building its defense against your case. It is important to immediately contact D&C, who can explain your rights regarding statements and injury reports and can take steps to ensure that key evidence is not destroyed.
Show your union pride with UTU apparel

American Products introduces new line of union-made, UTU gear and clothing

It’s not too early to begin your holiday shopping and the UTU Web site is just the place to start, without ever leaving your home or going to a busy shopping mall. Just visit the UTU Web site at www.utu.org and click on the UTU Gear tile.

All of the UTU items featured there are sold through American Products and are union-made and/or are made in America.

American Products is offering several new items this fall that were debuted at the regional meetings this summer, including the new UTU department t-shirts, a sporty new micro-fibre vest, a spacious, durable duffel bag, new polo shirts and a windbreaker jacket. Please be sure to check the Web site for details on all the new items.

All items carry a 100 percent quality guarantee against defects in materials and workmanship. Volume discounts on customized orders are available to UTU locals. Watches and clocks carry a two-year manufacturer’s warranty against defects.

All of the featured items can be ordered by credit card directly through the company’s secure Web site, or by calling the company’s toll-free telephone number: 1-800-272-5120.

UTU members may also download and print a custom order form that can be mailed to UTU Merchandise.com, 1600 North Clinton Ave., Rochester, NY 14621.

All orders will be processed within days of receipt.

Prices are shown in U.S. dollars and members should make payment by check in U.S. funds.

When using credit cards, transactions will automatically be billed in U.S. funds. Apparel prices may vary depending on size. Visit the UTU online store for complete details about prices and available sizes.

Volunteers put UTUIA mission statement into practice

One tenet of the UTUIA mission statement says that the association will “encourage and facilitate community outreach and volunteer activities.” While attending this year’s regional meetings in San Francisco and New Orleans, a number of UTU and UTUIA volunteers put that principle into practice.

Prior to the close of each meeting, the spouses and children of UTI International officers and UTUIA field supervisors, along with international staff and others, assembled 100 personal hygiene kits that were delivered to local missions in the host cities.

“In San Francisco, the kits were delivered to the Holy Family Chinese Mission and in New Orleans, we took them to the New Orleans Mission. Both organizations were thrilled to receive these donations,” said International Updating Department Director Marilyn Spangler, who organized the affair.

The kits included soap, shampoo, washcloths, toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, $2 gift certificates from McDonalds and other items, Spangler said.

Money to purchase the kit contents came from UTUIA Local Unit 1 in Cleveland, UTUIA field supervisors, and local chairpersons represented by BNSF General Committee of Adjustment 393 in Temple, Texas.

Angela Fly, the wife of UTUIA Field Supervi- 

or Chris Fly, provided the toothbrushes and tubes of toothpaste, which were donated by the dentist for whom she works.

To Spangler, who serves as president of UTU-

IA Local Unit 1 and was a UTUIA Volunteer of the Year in 2006, it was all just part of a day’s work.

“We hope we can continue to do this at future regional meetings,” she said.

Elaine Skidmore, Cindy Martin and Marie DeCote assemble personal hygiene kits at the San Francisco regional meeting.
This month’s winning photo:

The UTU Public Relations Department awards UTU gear to the union member who submits the best photograph during the previous months.

The winning photo will be published in the UTU News. Exceptional photographs will be included on the UTU Web site.

The UTU would like to see photographs or digital photographs of work-related scenes, such as railroad, bus or mass transit operations, new equipment, scenic shots, activities of your local, or photos of your brothers and sisters keeping America rolling.

Printed photographs should be mailed to UTU News, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107.

High-resolution digital photographs should be in the JPEG format and e-mailed to “utunews@utu.org”.

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

All photographs submitted become property of the UTU.

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

This month’s winning photograph was taken by Philip L. Moseley, a retired railroader and member of Local 1042 in Oklahoma City, Okla. “This is a photo I took in Skagway, Alaska, while on vacation,” Moseley wrote. “It is of White Pass & Yukon Railroad steam engine No. 73, powering the narrow-gauge excursion train to Lake Bennett, Yukon Territory. This is the most fantastic narrow-gauge railroad I have ever ridden. The scenery is out of this world.”

Inside this issue of the UTU News:

Film honors UTU members’ heroic actions

Two UTU members – Terry Forson and Jess Knowlton – recently returned from Hollywood where they served as consultants for an upcoming 20th Century Fox movie, “Unstoppable.”

Directed by Tony Scott and starring Denzel Washington, Chris Pine and Rosario Dawson, the film features Washington playing an experienced locomotive engineer who jumps onto a locomotive with a young conductor to chase down a runaway train carrying a cargo of toxic chemicals.

The movie is based on a true story: Forson and Knowlton are the crewmembers who chased down and caught a runaway CSX train a couple of years ago. Both are members of Local 1397, Columbus, Ohio.

Filming is taking place on the Los Angeles Junction Railway.

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Go green and save green on UTU gear online. See page 11.