The National Transportation Safety Board has recommended that railroads install inward-facing cameras and voice recorders in every locomotive cab in the nation, warning that cell phone texting by engineers and conductors is a growing and lethal danger.

The NTSB made its recommendation in the wake of a previous investigation into the deadly collision of a commuter train and a freight train in Chatsworth, Calif., in 2008 - a crash that killed 25 and injured 135, which the NTSB blamed on a Metrolink engineer who passed a stop signal while text messaging.

The engineer's prolific text messaging was "egregious," NTSB chairwoman Deborah A.P. Hersman said, citing records of his phone use. "This was an accident waiting to happen."

The NTSB said the Union Pacific conductor on the freight train the Metrolink commuter train slammed into also was improperly texting. Daily constant monitoring would have stopped the Metrolink engineer, who died in the collision, from texting, Hersman said. Cameras would mean "management cannot turn a blind eye to bad actors who are not doing their job."

The Chatsworth crash prompted Congress, in 2008, to pass legislation requiring railroads to install positive train control (PTC) within six years, which the NTSB said could have prevented the accident. But rather than await installation of PTC, the NTSB now wants inward-facing cameras (cameras aimed at crew members inside the cab). The NTSB said other forms of enforcing bans on text messaging, cell phones and other personal electronic devices have proven inadequate.

The NTSB does not have authority to require installation of inward-facing cameras and voice recorders, but is asking the FRA to require such equipment.

Rail labor has long contended that such cameras and voice recorders are an invasion of privacy and that the fail-safe nature of PTC will prevent collisions such as that at Chatsworth.

The FRA, in October 2008, banned the use of cell phones, texting devices, GPS devices, electronic calculators, Game Boys, laptop computers and any other personal electronic devices by train and engine service crews, including hostlers and remote control operators. Penalties for violating the ban include being taken out of service and fined up to $25,000 by the FRA.

FRA regulations and railroad operating procedures already provide for extensive recording of locomotive and signal data, and radio conversations are routinely recorded.

**Final PTC rule requires two screens in cab**

A final rule on how positive train control technology (PTC) is to be implemented by the nation's railroads was issued in January by the FRA.

The Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 mandated that freight, intercity passenger and commuter rail routes have operable PTC in place no later than Dec. 31, 2015.

Railroads must submit their final PTC plans to the FRA by April 16. The FRA said this final rule will allow railroads to meet the April 16 compliance date.

PTC, which has been on the National Transportation Safety Board's "most wanted" list since 1990 - and which has strong support from the U.S. - utilizes on-board and external track signaling and remote dispatch center computer and satellite technology to assist train crews avoid train collisions.

PTC components include digital radio communications, computers, geographical information systems (GIS) and the Global Positioning System (GPS). The technology is not capable of replacing two sets of eyes and ears in the locomotive cab.

The technology is not capable of replacing two sets of eyes and ears in the locomotive cab.

**The technology is not capable of replacing two sets of eyes and ears in the cab.**
Local 194, Elkhart, Ind.

Robert L. Holbrook displays the etched plaque presented to him upon his retirement by Local Chairperson James E. Ball, commemorating his many years of service as chairperson to this Norfolk Southern local.

Local 324, Seattle, Wash.

The Web site address of this BNSF Railway local has changed, Local President Paul McGill reported. Members seeking local information should now visit www.utu324.com.

Local 756, San Antonio, Texas

The members of this Union Pacific local in the Laredo area organized a toy drive for the Casa de Missioncorda, a domestic violence shelter providing comprehensive services to abused women and their children, member Bobby Flores reported. “Through the cooperation of Local Chairperson Martin Valdez and myself, we were able to donate more than 200 toys to this local shelter,” Flores said. “We are very proud of contributing to our community in this time of need, and we thank the officers of our union for giving us the means to be able to give to others.”

Local 792, Cleveland, Ohio

Furloughed conductor Gordon Wanyeck wrote UTU News to express his appreciation for the efforts of fellow members in assisting furloughed employees during the holiday season, “As a furloughed Norfolk Southern freight conductor, I would like to share with all the generosity that was displayed here this Christmas season. Our local chairpersons asked for donations to assist the 35 furloughed Cleveland Terminal employees. The response was overwhelming, despite the economy. This spirit of individual sacrifice and the desire to help others has made me even prouder to be part of this team. I would like to express my gratitude to all and look forward to returning to work with the outstanding members of Cleveland Terminal,” Wanyeck wrote.

Local 887, Harvey, N.D.

A fund has been established to assist the children of CP conductor Kevin Goldade, who died in November, State Legislative Director Marc Halvorson reported. Goldade’s wife, Bobbie, passed away in 2006. “Following the unexpected passing of both parents, the family is now left to care for Goldade’s three sons and daughter, Jacob (18), Kary (14), Hunter (12) and Kolby (11),” Halvorson said. The UTU brothers and sisters at Harvey have established an account to help offset the children’s educational expenses. Local 887 has donated $500 to the fund. Send contributions to the Kevin Goldade’s Children Fund, First International Bank & Trust, 910 Lincoln Ave., P.O. Box 245, Harvey, ND 58841.

Local 898, Boston, Mass.

Arthur Gonzales Jr., 22, an assistant conductor with the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail Co., was killed in an automobile accident on Jan. 6, Local Treasurer Frank Teague reported. He would have turned 23 on Jan. 8, Teague said.

Around the UTU

Local 1081, Glendale, Ariz.

Conductor Kurt Loveless unexpectedly lost his wife, Amie, just before Christmas, State Legislative Director Greg Hynes reported. Local President Jay Woodward and Vice President Tom Clem took up a collection among local members and were able to deliver 10 presents for each of Loveless’ two children, Emma, 2, and Tyler, 4. They also provided the family with $635 in gift cards.

Local 1183, Port Huron, Mich.

Legislative Rep. Fred Beidler contacted UTU News to express his family’s appreciation to everyone who provided assistance and monetary contributions after the family lost their home to fire just before Christmas. “Thank you for everything. Those words just cannot convey the depth of our gratitude. Our sincerest ‘thanks’ for all of your good wishes and all of the generous gifts. We thank you for your kindness and prayers. We will not soon forget. We are eternally grateful. We cannot say ‘thank you’ enough,” he wrote.

Local 1293, Altoona, Wis.

Conductor Jon Duffy, 54, died while on duty at the Union Pacific’s South St. Paul yard, Minnesota State Legislative Director Phil Qualy reported. He is survived by his wife, Kim, his parents, two brothers and a sister. The incident remains under investigation.

Local 1440, Staten Island, N.Y.

Members of this Staten Island Railroad local participated in a food drive to benefit the Staten Island Project Hospitality program, Secreterary & Treasurer Vincent La Bella reported. The food drive was organized by Kerry Halvorsen and her co-workers in the building and bridges department.

Local 1544, Maywood, Calif.

Secretary & Treasurer Gary Proctor informed UTU News that the members of this BNSF Railroad local are mourning the death of former Local President John E. Reams, 52, who died Jan. 5.

Local 1670, Laredo, Texas

This El Metro bus local presented a $500 check to Navidad en el Barrio to help keep a local Christmas tradition alive, KONS-TV in Laredo reported. The non-profit organization is dedicated to improving the lives of the less fortunate in its communities and sponsored a two-day Christmas party for underprivileged children at the Laredo Entertainment Center. “This (donation) was voted on by the members of the maintenance department,” Local Chairperson Bill Koch said. “They also gave a check to the Webb County Food Bank for $1,200 earlier in the year.”

Local 1741, San Francisco, Calif.

Members of this bus local joined AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and nearly 1,000 San Francisco hotel workers and others at a rally outside the Hilton Hotel on Jan. 5 in support of the 9,000 unionized hotel workers who have been working without a contract since Aug. 19. Some 140 people in all, including Trumka, were arrested and cited for trespassing. “The struggle of hotel workers here in San Francisco and across our country is so important. If we don’t protect the wages and benefits and health care of workers, no job is safe, no worker is safe, no family is safe,” Trumka said.
FRA urges compliance with all rail-safety rules

Shocked that 16 railroad employees were killed in on-duty accidents during 2009 — eight of them UTU members — Federal Railroad Administrator Joe Szabo has issued a strong plea that all employees “think about rules compliance and consider its impact on ensuring a safe return home after each tour of duty.”

Said Szabo, a former conductor and UTU’s Illinois state legislative director prior to being chosen by President Obama as FRA administrator: “Having spent 19 years on the ground myself, I — like you — understand the realities of railroading. “My stomach still turns in knots each time I hear of an on-duty fatality. “Let us each do everything we can to take care of ourselves and our coworkers.

“Zero fatalities is the only acceptable number, and it’s a number we can all live with.”

“Zero fatalities is the only acceptable number.”

Judy Gertler, for 26 years a railroad safety expert with the consulting firm Foster Miller, which holds FRA contracts for data collection and analysis, said of Szabo’s plea, “This is the first time I have seen an FRA administrator send out anything like this regarding rules compliance.”

AFL-CIO creating online college

The AFL-CIO is joining with the National Labor College in Silver Spring, Md., and the Princeton Review to create an online college for the federation’s 11.5 million members and their families, reports The New York Times.

The new college, tentatively named the College for Working Families, will be the first and only accredited degree-granting online institution devoted exclusively to educating union members. It plans to begin offering courses this fall, including ones on criminal justice, education, business and allied health sciences.

“We’re working on a survey to send out to the AFL-CIO’s members to find out what they’d be interested in,” said William Scheuerman, president of the National Labor College, a 41-year-old college for union members.

He said the online college would charge $100 to $150 a credit, competitive with community colleges and far cheaper than most four-year colleges and for-profit schools.

Scheuerman said the labor college selected the Princeton Review and its Penn Foster subsidiary as partners because of their expertise in distance learning.

Scheuerman said workers whose labor unions were not in the AFL-CIO, like members of the Teamsters and service employees’ unions, could also take courses in the new college. He said they would probably have to pay a premium above what AFL-CIO members pay.

Scheuerman said the online college would first offer bachelor’s degrees and would ultimately also offer associate’s and master’s degrees.

El-Sibaie named to safety post

A civil engineer with an extensive railroad engineering background is the Federal Railroad Administration’s new deputy associate administrator for safety, regulatory and legislative affairs.

Dr. Magdy El-Sibaie succeeds Grady Cothren in the post, following an extensive nationwide search to fill the position. Cothren announced his retirement in late 2009, but is remaining at the FRA through March to assist El-Sibaie in the transition.

Most recently, El-Sibaie was acting associate administrator for hazardous materials safety at DOT’s Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

Until October 2009, he was the FRA’s director of research and development, following a successful tenure as the agency’s chief of track research, where he managed the FRA’s track inspection technology development program that created improved systems for measuring track geometry at high speeds.

El-Sibaie earned a doctorate in engineering mechanics from the University of Delaware in 1986, and was recruited by the Association of American Railroads as a researcher at the industry’s Chicago Technical Center, where he is credited with pioneering new methods of computer modeling to measure the dynamic behavior of track under varying loads, speeds and conditions.

For that work, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers honored him in 1980 with its Rail Transportation Award.

In 1989, he was reassigned by the AAR to its Transportation Test Center in Pueblo, Colo., where he worked on vehicle/track interaction modeling and testing, in-train stability and wheel-load dynamics. He returned to the Chicago Test Center in 1993 to lead the AAR’s track assessment and test program.

El-Sibaie joined the FRA in 1995 as a senior program manager in the Office of Research and Development, chairing a government/industry working group that formulated the first set of safety standards for U.S. high-speed rail service.

He also worked with rail suppliers and Amtrak to establish standards for Amtrak’s high-speed Acela trains operating on the Northeast Corridor.

As deputy associate administrator for safety, regulatory and legislative affairs, El-Sibaie will lead FRA initiatives that develop and implement industry safety regulatory strategy. These efforts include leading the Rail Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC) in studying emerging safety issues, including the incorporation of new technology into the rail environment, as well as risk-reduction strategies and close-call reporting.

“Dr. El-Sibaie’s numerous and demonstrated accomplishments make him an excellent choice for this position,” said UTU National Legislative Director James Stem. “We look forward to working with him in our never-ending effort to improve workplace safety and bring our members home from the job in one piece.”

Fed’s set drug, alcohol test rates

FRA-mandated minimum drug and alcohol random-test rates will remain at their lowest levels in 2010, said the agency Jan. 13 after reporting that positive tests for substance abuse among railroad workers is barely a blip on the random-testing radar screen.

The FRA said it would require railroads in 2010 to administer random drug tests to one in four rail workers in safety-sensitive positions, and random tests for alcohol use to one in 10 rail workers in safety-sensitive positions.

This is the same minimum testing level as was required in 2009.

Announcing that “because the industry-wide random drug testing positive rate has remained below one percent for the last two years of data,” the FRA said it would impose the minimum annual random drug-testing rate of 25 percent in 2010.

And “because the industry-wide random alcohol testing violation rate has remained below one-half of one percent for the last two years,” the FRA said it would retain the minimum 10 percent random test rate for alcohol use in 2010.

Were positive tests for drug use to exceed 1.0 percent, or positive tests for alcohol to exceed 0.5 percent, the FRA could impose a considerably higher random testing requirement — as high as one in two workers for drug and alcohol random testing.

www.utu.org / www.utui.org
The National Mediation Board, which administers the Railway Labor Act, proposes changing the rules by which rail and airline employees choose labor union representation. The UTU supports the change.

The NMB rules for representation elections now require a majority of employees eligible to vote actually cast a ballot favoring a union before that union is certified as the bargaining agent. Those not voting are assumed to have cast a "no" ballot. By contrast, the National Labor Relations Board, which administers labor law affecting the bus industry, certifies representation elections based on results of those actually voting – the universal standard in democratic elections.

The UTU submitted comments supporting the change. A decision may be issued this month.

You might wonder why the NMB has been out of sync with universal democratic voting procedures. The answer is that circumstances were markedly different when the rule was first imposed in the 1930s.

Back then, the NMB was concerned with company unions, racial discrimination, conflict among competing unions, lower reading comprehension among union members, primitive means of communication, and even communist agitators.

Two-thirds of the NMB workload in the 1930s involved purging outlaw company unions, which were controlled by management. Requiring a majority of those eligible to vote (as opposed to a majority of those voting) more conclusively communicated to management an employee desire for an independent labor union.

African-American employees often were denied representation in company unions, and were discriminated against in hiring, assignments and discipline.

Many railroads back then tried to deny ballots to African-American employees. By certifying representation elections based on the majority of those eligible to vote, the NMB advanced racial democracy.

In that earlier era of labor unions were in competition for representation, as it was not until 1954 that the AFL-CIO constitution prohibited “raiding” by its member unions. Thus, the NMB sought to “get it right” in determining which union the majority of employees favored.

During the 1930s, only 30 percent of workers held high school diplomas (versus more than 70 percent today), and voting was by mail ballot with detailed written instructions. Communication also was primitive.

This was no small concern, as under the Railway Labor Act, representation is system-wide. It may be hard to believe in this era of cell phones, but during the 1930s, it was a matter of survival. The NMB’s proposal would level playing field for employees and employers.

It would strengthen penalties against companies that illegally coerce employees from expressing support for union representation; it would require a neutral third party impose a contract if a company refuses to negotiate in good faith; and it would require an employer to recognize a union immediately if a majority of employees sign union-authorization cards.

The UTU supports passage of the Employee Free Choice Act.

AMB is a major part of the future of intercity and high-speed passenger rail. The White House has a real vision for intercity and high-speed passenger rail. AMB is experiencing record ridership. Federal economic stimulus funding is helping to rebuild our railroad and create new jobs. We are adding new state and private investment in equipment and services on state corridor projects, and are about to enter into a new commuter rail contract.

And make no mistake about it – we will meet our challenges and opportunities. We can, and are, doing that today. The investments we’re making and the steps we’re taking to improve are designed to secure our approach safety by shifting our focus to working in a way that reduces risk and increases collaboration. Our focus should be on reducing risks and protecting each other, not statistics.

As front-line employees with significant critical interactions with our passengers, UTU members play a critical role in helping AMB to stand out from our competition and I will look to you for your support as we move forward.

I am very excited about the coming years. They will be filled with achievements that demonstrate a safer, greener, and healthier railroad and is an improved financial and customer-focused company that lives up to its role in making America’s national passenger rail needs.

I thank each and every UTU member for the good work you do for AMB. Please continue to work safely.

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**A message to UTU members from AMB President and CEO Joe Boardman**

Increasing ridership is a major part of the future of intercity and high-speed passenger rail. AMB is a significant beneficiary of President Obama’s historic federal investment in passenger rail with approximately $4.5 billion of the $8 billion in grants awarded to state-led projects that support improvements to current or future AMB routes.

AMB must change and rise to meet our new challenges and opportunities. We can, and are, doing that today. The investments we’re making and the steps we’re taking to improve are designed to secure our future.

AMB is a major part of the future of intercity and high-speed passenger rail. The White House has a real vision for intercity and high-speed passenger rail. AMB is experiencing record ridership. Federal economic stimulus funding is helping to rebuild our railroad and create new jobs. We are adding new state and private investment in equipment and services on state corridor projects, and are about to enter into a new commuter rail contract.

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New York
State Director Sam Nasca reports that the recent earthquake in Haiti has affected many drivers who are members of Local 153, Spring Valley, which represents workers at Chestnut Ridge Transportation.

“Local 153 has more than 300 members who are of Haitian descent and have family, friends and property in Haiti,” Nasca said. “It has been a very trying time for those members, as they try to determine the fate of their family members, friends and others.”

We have urged assistance for the Haitian recovery, through the authorized agencies and entities approved to handle such assistance. UTU members also have gathered and sent items needed in the recovery effort.

(See a related story on UTU International’s donations to the Haitian relief effort, page 1.)

Illinois
State Legislative Director Bob Guy recently attended a rail summit hosted by Gov. Pat Quinn that examined the economic impact of rail transportation in the state.

The guest speaker was former state legislative director and current FRA Administrator Joe Szabo.

Items discussed included local rail development, manufacturing, connecting to a global economy and innovation.

“This was a really good forum, and good opportunity for the UTU to connect and communicate with industry leaders,” Guy said. “This kind of meeting shows how railroads have become a priority for both the Quinn and Obama administrations.”

Also in attendance were Sen. Dick Durbin (D-III.); Rep. Debbie Halvorson (D-III.), Illinois Transportation Secretary Gary Hamburg and U.S. Department of Commerce Assistant Secretary for Economic Development John Fernandez.

Missouri
At the urging of the UTU, State Sen. Timothy Green (D - Spanish Lake) has introduced legislation to regulate the transportation of railroad employees by contract carriers to establish much-needed safety standards.

Senate Bill 762 would increase the safety of railroad workers by adopting new regulations on hours of operation to combat driver fatigue, require driver alcohol and drug testing after accidents, review and maintain workers’ driving records, create important maintenance and repair standards for vehicles, and set reasonable liability insurance standards on contract carriers that transport railroad employees.

“Two of the biggest safety issues are distraction and fatigue, ones that we have all experienced,” Green said. “A tired driver is a dangerous driver and as performance starts to decline when sleep is reduced by even a few hours.”

Last year, similar legislation passed in the Arkansas General Assembly with unanimous votes and was signed into law by the governor.

“The safety of our railroad workers and other drivers on Missouri’s highways is the number one objective of this legislation,” State Legislative Director Ken Menges said. “Sen. Green, a dedicated member of Missouri’s organized labor movement, realises the importance of safety on our roadways and is committed to fighting for our hardworking UTU members.”

EPA works to curb school bus emissions

Millions of school children across the nation ride on buses every day that burn diesel fuel, exposing them to dangerous pollutants and serious health hazards.

Part of Jim Bluhbaugh’s job as head of the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) National Clean Diesel Campaign is to clear the air by reducing emissions from thousands of diesel-fueled school buses, and in the process protect children from these noxious exhaust fumes, The Washington Post reports.

As part of EPA’s Clean School Bus USA program, Bluhbaugh and his team have provided millions of dollars in grants to states and school districts since 2003 for the installation of new exhaust systems and filters on their bus fleets to reduce nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and air toxins.

Last year, the program got a big boost with a $100-million appropriation under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to install clean-diesel technologies across the nation, which represents a six-fold increase over 2008 funding.

“The Recovery Act funds will allow the program to assist many more fleets and communities with lowering diesel emissions from the 11 million engines in the existing fleet,” said Bluhbaugh.

The problem of pollution is bigger than just school buses. More than 11 million diesel engines are in operation today that do not meet the EPA’s clean diesel standards.

Bluhbaugh’s program focuses on a wide variety of pollution reduction initiatives in the transportation, agricultural and construction equipment sectors. To date, Bluhbaugh’s team has upgraded or replaced hundreds of thousands of non-school-bus engines, including locomotives, vessels, trucks and construction equipment.

“Diesel emissions are one of the most challenging and important public health issues facing the country,” said Bluhbaugh. “It’s difficult because diesel engines are the work horse of the country. You’ll find them in school buses, in construction equipment, and locomotives.”

Government bans texting by bus, truck drivers

The U.S. Department of Transportation has issued a ban on texting by commercial bus and truck drivers as part of what DOT calls an effort to combat traffic deaths stemming from distracted motorists, Bloomberg News reports.

The Federal Railroad Administration — in October 2008 — banned the use of all electronic devices in the cabs of locomotives, and violators are subject to fines as high as $25,000, plus other discipline.

Bus and truck drivers caught violating the DOT ban may be subject to civil or criminal penalties of as much as $2,750, DOT said. The restriction applies only to drivers of buses carrying more than eight passengers.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has made the issue a priority after more than 5,800 people died in 2008 in accidents where at least one form of driver distraction was cited in the crash report. DOT’s move comes almost four months after President Barack Obama banned the nation’s almost three million federal employees from texting while driving on the job.

“Our regulations will help prevent unsafe activity within the cab,” Anne Ferro, head of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, said. “We want to make it crystal clear to operators and their employers that texting while driving is the type of unsafe activity that these regulations are intended to prohibit.”

Research shows that drivers take their eyes off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds for every six seconds spent sending and receiving text messages.

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.

Along with the photo, please mail or e-mail the name and rank of the individual, the branch and unit of the military in which they serve, where they are 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 Delorit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4520.

www.utu.org / www.utuia.org
UTUIA: YOUR union-owned insurance company

Insurance for unionized transportation employees, managed by labor-represented employees FOR labor-represented workers

By Tony Martella
UTUIA Director of Insurance & Marketing

The foundation of a sound financial plan is to assure sufficient income to protect our loved ones in the event of an untimely death, catastrophic illness or long-term disability. The United Transportation Union Insurance Association (UTUIA), owned by its policyholders, offers top-quality insurance products for every stage of life and family circumstances, specifically for transportation industry members and their families.

UTUIA is all about dedicated trade unions assisting dedicated trade unions in a not-for-profit company.

With more than $23 million in surplus, UTUIA is financially sound and offers a broad portfolio of competitive products.

And unlike so many private insurance companies, the union-friendly UTUIA doesn’t engage in anti-union practices, such as lobbying for anti-worker policies.

To learn more about UTUIA products, contact a UTUIA field supervisor. The list of field supervisors and their contact information is shown on the opposite page.

DISABILITIES

Today you are healthy and have the ability to earn an income. Tomorrow, that may change. Income replacement insurance is one of the most critical forms of insurance you can own and yet it is one of the most overlooked.

Your most valuable asset is your ability to earn a living. How will your family manage if you are disabled for a prolonged period of time?

Don’t take that gamble. Let the UTUIA help your disability income plan can make all the difference.

Our policy is guaranteed renewable, which means we can never refuse to renew your coverage as long as you pay your premiums.

This is one of the best investments you’ll make to insure your family’s financial future.

CANCER

The costs associated with cancer treatment can be devastating, not only to the person who is diagnosed with this terrible disease, but to his or her family members as well. To help, UTUIA offers an affordable cancer policy. The benefits include:

• First diagnosis benefit: $2,000
• Hospital confinement benefit: $300 per day
• Home recovery and convalescent benefit: $120 per day
• Extended stay benefit: $120 per day
• Bone marrow transplant benefit: $15,000
Less than $1 a day covers you and your family! Also, there is no “lifetime maximum” on the total benefits you can collect from this plan.

LIFE INSURANCE

Whole life insurance
Permanent life insurance offers guaranteed premium, a guaranteed death benefit, guaranteed cash values and may pay dividends. It provides whole-life coverage up to age 121.

Life insurance allows you to borrow up to 90 percent of the cash value in your policy. Other benefits include supplements (called “riders”) to cover your spouse and dependents, an accidental death benefit provision and a waiver of premium if you become disabled.

Term Life Insurance
Term life insurance offers substantial insurance coverage for low premium rates. It also provides coverage for a specific period of time, up to age 95. Conversion privileges guarantee your approval to a whole life insurance policy, without medical review.

Visit us on the Internet at www.utu.org and click on the “Contact Us” button.

Or, call us, toll-free, at (800) 558-8842 and we will have a field supervisor contact you directly.

Or, complete, clip and mail the coupon at right; someone from the UTUIA will contact you.
The UTU is offering the members of the UTU Alumni Association the vacation of a lifetime—an 11-day excursion to Alaska—at a group-rate price that is hard to beat.

This tour includes a seven-day cruise on Inside Passage, a flight to Fairbanks and a two-day tour aboard the McKinley Explorer, a luxury train with towed passenger cars.

Vacationers will depart Vancouver, B.C., Aug. 15 aboard Holland America’s five-star cruise ship M.S. Statendam. This vessel boasts fewer passengers, larger staterooms and more space than any other plying the Alaska waters.

Aboard ship you can enjoy a massage in the Greenhouse Spa, a cooking lesson in the Culinary Arts Center or hundreds of other activities.

On day three you will discover Ketchikan, possibly enjoying a flightseeing trip to breathtaking Misty Fjords National Monument.

On day four you will explore Juneau. You can wander the lush Tongass National Forest, explore Mendenhall Glacier or go whale watching.

You will be in Skagway on the fifth day of your adventure. This is home to the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park and the historic White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad.

On day six the ship will cruise Glacier Bay National Park, Alaska’s number-one glacier experience. You will cruise from the Reid and Lamplugh glaciers to the mighty Johns Hopkins—surrounded by rugged mountains and unforgettable scenery.

After a relaxing morning at sea on day seven, you will enter Prince William Sound and see the only place in Alaska that surrounds you on three sides with flowing rivers of ice, the College Fjord.

On day eight you will disembark at Seward and board a motorcoach for a scenic journey through the Chugach National Forest to Anchorage, where you will board a flight to Fairbanks.

You will board the luxurious McKinley Explorer train on day nine where you will take in the sights and sounds of the Alaska Railroad. You will arrive at Denali National Park lodge that evening.

The morning of day 10 is for exploring and side trips. Then you will reboard the Explorer for a trip over the Hurricane Gulch Bridge, alongside lush mountains and raging rivers to Anchorage.

You will depart Anchorage the following morning, or stuck around and explore if you desire.

The UTU, through its association with Landfall Travel/America Express, is able to offer this once-in-a-lifetime trip beginning at only $1,352 per person. Certain other fees and taxes apply.

This tour is open to all UTU Alumni Association members and friends; other UTU members are welcome to join them as space permits.

For more information contact Landfall Travel toll free at (800) 835-9233; log onto the UTU Alumni Association page at www.landfalltravel.com, or email travel@landfalltravel.com.

**Alumni member George Harris: Still going strong**

Meet George M. Harris, a UTU Alumni Association member and lifetime member of Local 1518, Indianapolis, Brother Harris, 94, started serving April 24, 1937, and retired Dec. 7, 1981.

He worked as a conductor for the New York Central, Penn Central and Conrail. He also served many years as local chairperson and vice general chairperson.

“George is probably the oldest New York Central conductor still living in this area, if not the whole Great Four System,” said friend and fellow Local 1518 retiree Jim Amett.

“George is still in good health, doesn’t take any prescription drugs, works in his vegetable and flower gardens and was, until recently, a regular Lake Michigan fisherman. He used to spend time near Ludington, Mich., fishing every summer. He still gets out and shovels snow in the winter months for exercise.

“George met Cecil Mott in Frutigen, Switzerland, in 1946 during World War II and they have been married for more than 53 years. They had two children: Alex, a former BNSF engineer in California, and a daughter, Georgine, of Indianapolis. He has five grandchildren, one of whom was an engineer for the BNSF. Amett said.

**Railroaders to picnic in St. Petersburg, Fla.**

Retired member Joe Alenduff is again organizing an annual picnic for railroaders in the St. Petersburg, Fla., area.

The event, scheduled for Saturday, March 20, will run from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Shelter 15 in Ft. DeSoto Park in St. Petersburg.

Coffee and iced tea will be furnished.

Participants are urged to bring two covered dishes to share, their own place settings and cups.

All railroaders, their friends and relatives are welcome and encouraged to pass the word, Alenduff said.

Take U.S. 19 South, or Exit 17 on I-275 at St. Petersburg and follow the signs.

For more information, contact Alenduff at (727) 522-6808 or send an e-mail to him at jelenduff@tampabay.rr.com.

**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 fellow UTU Alumni Association members.

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<tr>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>City/State</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mask, James G.</td>
<td>Elyria, Ohio</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>McCoy, Robert V.</td>
<td>Auburndale, Fla.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Doan, Hubert W.</td>
<td>Danville, Ill.</td>
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<td>94</td>
<td>Felkins, Marion E.</td>
<td>Independence, Kan.</td>
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<td>117</td>
<td>Baker, Fred K.</td>
<td>Portland, Ore.</td>
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<td>194</td>
<td>McClellan, Jack R.</td>
<td>Sicklerville, N.J.</td>
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<td>194</td>
<td>Ward, Clarence L.</td>
<td>Brasilia, Ind.</td>
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<td>239</td>
<td>Klobus, Albert</td>
<td>Albany, Calif.</td>
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<td>243</td>
<td>Anthony, Robert G.</td>
<td>Fort Worth, Texas</td>
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<td>278</td>
<td>Wetzorek, Walter J.</td>
<td>Jackson, Mich.</td>
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<td>284</td>
<td>Dunn Jr., William E.</td>
<td>Brook Park, Ohio</td>
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<td>293</td>
<td>Steed, Charles W.</td>
<td>Houston, Texas</td>
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<td>298</td>
<td>Beall, Harold G.</td>
<td>Loganport, Ind.</td>
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<td>298</td>
<td>Jensen, Herman W.</td>
<td>Garrett, Ind.</td>
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<td>313</td>
<td>Alschwager, Donald</td>
<td>Ludington, Mich.</td>
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UTU member returns $2,830 found on train

NEW YORK – Meet the most trusted train conductor in New York: Long Island Rail Road conductor and UTU member Larry Pinkham Jr., a member of Local 645, Babylon, N.Y.

One of the LIRR train conductor’s duties is to walk through his or her train after all customers leave at the final stop, checking for items passengers may have left behind, said LIRR General Chairperson Anthony Simon.

Pinkham did just that on Jan. 12, when the 2:52 p.m. train from Penn Station completed its run at Huntington, N.Y., at 3:59 p.m.

Pinkham was checking the train when he came across what he described as “a wallet that was large and bulky,” right near the window seat of one of the cars.

The wallet turned out to contain $2,830 in cash and, luckily, identification and a wallet.

Pinkham, a 10-year LIRR veteran, turned in the wallet and contents to LIRR managers at the railroad’s lost and found office in Penn Station.

The cash was tagged and deposited for safekeeping and its owner, attorney David Spelling, was contacted.

The billfold was eventually reunited with Huntington resident Speling, who said he was “absolutely frantic” when he reached and realized he didn’t have his wallet.

LIRR procedure is to store found money in a fund and cut the rightful owner a check after they can prove it is theirs.

Pinkham, who was humble about his heroic deed, was not allowed to collect reward money as an LIRR employee. “We’re here for the customers,” he said.

“I am extremely proud of the honesty that Mr. Pinkham displayed by returning that type of cash,” Simon said. “His actions are a true example to the integrity that is displayed by UTU members throughout our property.”

COBRA subsidy extended for laid-off workers

COBRA, the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, has long enabled many people who lose their job to keep their health insurance, generally for 18 months, at 102 percent of the full cost, meaning the portions paid by both the employer and employee.

But such coverage is expensive, and many people can’t afford it. With so many Americans unemployed at once, a subsidy was deemed necessary to prevent the percentage of uninsured Americans from growing dramatically.

The subsidy was launched in March 2009 and paid 65 percent of the health insurance premium cost for nine months for workers laid off between Sept. 1, 2008, and Dec. 31, 2009 — saving families an average of $722 per month on average health insurance premiums of $1,111.

With a recently enacted extension, families get 15 months of subsidy instead of just nine. And the extension will apply retroactively even to those whose subsidy ended between Nov. 30 and Dec. 21 (the time between the end of the initial legislation and the start of the new measure), according to the Department of Labor.

Under the extension, a worker now qualifies for COBRA premium assistance if she or he was laid off involuntarily (meaning not fired for cause) between Sept. 1, 2008, and Feb. 28, 2010, and is eligible for COBRA assistance.

Workers are generally eligible for COBRA if they received their health insurance through their employer. (For full details on eligibility, log on to www.dol.gov/cobra or call the Department of Labor at 866-444-3272.)

Though COBRA coverage generally lasts up to 18 months, the current extension provides the premium subsidy for up to 15 months more. An analysis by benefits consulting firm Hewitt Associates, based in Lincolnshire, Ill., found that average monthly enrollment rates in COBRA healthcare plans among subsidy-eligible workers have increased by 20 percentage points since the COBRA subsidy began.

COBRA — and the premium subsidy — ends if the individual becomes eligible for other employer-sponsored healthcare coverage (through a new job or a spouse’s new job, for example) or Medicare.

Some people eligible for the subsidy might have dropped coverage when their COBRA subsidy ended in November or December because the full cost proved prohibitive. Employers must give those who did not have the opportunity to pay back premiums and remain covered. Payment must be made within 60 days of the date when the subsidy initially expired.

Register online now for regional meetings

Online registration is now available for the two UTU/UTUIA regional meetings scheduled for later this year.

The meetings are scheduled for July 26-28 at the Arizona Biltmore Resort and Spa, Phoenix, Ariz., and Aug. 23-25 at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, N.C.

The online registration forms can be accessed from the “Meetings” button on the UTU Web site, www.utu.org. Payments can be made via credit card over the secure link.

The registration fee for these meetings, $150 per person in advance or $200 on site, is the same as that charged the last three years. Children 11 years of age and younger are complimentary.

Registration fees cover all meeting materials, the welcoming reception, three lunches and one dinner. Registered spouses and children also receive a discount on tours.

Each person attending the regional meeting, including family members and guests, MUST be registered in order to attend any social event or meal.

Registering before the regional meetings speeds sign-in procedures, helps organizers plan more accurately, and saves on meeting costs.

Those registering online can also make their hotel reservations through the same “Meetings” page. Attendees are urged to reserve their rooms as soon as possible because room holds for the UTU are limited at both facilities.

Watch for complete regional meeting details in next month’s issue of the UTU News.
UTU asks Senate to fast track FAA legislation

The UTU has joined other transportation labor organizations in urging the Senate to make Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthori-
tization a priority and bring the measure to the Senate floor for a vote quickly.

The House already has passed an FAA reau-
thorization bill, but the Senate must act before a final measure can become law.

Since October 2007, the FAA has been oper-
ating on a series of short-term funding exten-
sions, leaving crucial safety, modernization,
Passenger-rail funding aims to create jobs

With international transportation expert Anthony Perl calling it “the most important transportation initiative that the U.S. has seen in my 47-year lifetime,” the Obama administration on Jan. 28 awarded $8 billion in jobs-creation stimulus money for 13 passenger-rail corridors in 31 states.

The biggest winners were California, Florida and Illinois. The Associated Press says the massive national initiative building program “could rival the Interstate highway’s waken in the Eisenhower era.”

Perl, a transportation fellow with the Joint Carbon Institute in Santa Rosa, Calif., and a member of the Via Canada Rail board of directors, said, “The program opens the door to a post-carbon mobility future in ways that tinkering with vehicle fuel efficiency, auto emissions and intelligent vehicle and highway designs can never accomplish. “All these trains will be powered by electricity, an open-ended energy carrier that can blend renewable energy sources with decreasing carbon content,” Perl said.

Program lays foundation for future

The stimulus funding, said President Obama, “creates jobs immediately and it lays the foundation for a vibrant economy in the future.”

Obama said this $8 billion is a down payment. In fact, Congress already has approved, but not awarded, an additional $2.5 billion for transportation projects. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said some of that $2.5 billion could also be directed toward passenger-rail projects.

Additionally, Obama’s fiscal-year 2011 federal budget request is expected to seek even more money for these projects, reports the Associated Press.

Obama administration will be funding these high-speed rail projects:

- **California**: $2.3 billion to begin work on an 800-mile-long, high-speed rail line tying Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay area to Los Angeles and San Diego.
- **Florida**: $1.25 billion to build a 324-mile rail line connecting Tampa with Orlando, and eventually extending south to Miami.
- **Illinois/Missouri**: $1.1 billion to improve a rail line between Chicago and St. Louis so that trains travel up to 110 mph.
- **Massachusetts**: $40 million for a second main-line track linking Springfield with New Haven, Conn.
- **Michigan**: $244 million to improve speeds on a 300-mile corridor linking Detroit with Chicago.
- **Missouri**: $31 million for bridge and crossover expansion linking St. Louis and Kansas City.
- **Northeast Corridor**: $112 million for engineering on a new tunnel in Baltimore and various track work in New Jersey and Rhode Island.
- **North Carolina**: $520 million for projects that will increase top speeds to 100 mph on trains between Raleigh and Charlotte, and double the number of round trips on the route linking Washington, D.C., Richmond, Raleigh and Charlotte.
- **Ohio**: $400 million for a new Cleveland-Columbus-Dayton-Cincinnati corridor.
- **Wisconsin**: $810 million to upgrade and refurbish train stations and install safety equipment on the Madison-to-Milwaukee leg of a line that stretches from Minneapolis to Chicago.
- **Washington/Oregon**: $590 million to upgrade and expand a rail corridor linking Eugene, Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.

UTU joins in Amtrak snow-removal waiver fight

The UTU and four other rail labor organizations, whose members work in safety-sensitive positions, have asked the FRA to deny an Amtrak request to waive permanently the existing mandatory and safety-critical functions governing passenger-platform snow removal outside the Northeast Corridor.

The result would be the scrapping of on-track safety protection for Amtrak employees as well as contractor employees. Amtrak withholds this function, which has been administered by the UTU and the other labor organizations — that would have required a conductor to coordinate platform snow removal to the detriment of the conductor’s other safety-critical functions.

Amtrak now is asking that its employees and contractor employees be permitted to remove snow from station platforms with no real on-track safety in effect. If granted by the FRA, said the labor organizations, there would be “no means whatsoever for a roadway work group to establish on-track safety through the dispatcher or control operator, establish on-track safety through train coordination or train approach warning, or otherwise withhold trains from the work area.”

“Amtrak seeks to permanently remove the mandatory and safety-critical functions of the roadway worker in charge from station platform snow-removal operations and proposes to substitute minimal ‘procedures’ for roadway worker groups engaged in snow removal at high- and low-level passenger platforms nationwide,” said the labor organizations.

“Under Amtrak’s waiver request,” said the labor organizations, “Amtrak employees and contractor employees will perform this dangerous work on passenger platforms in high-speed territory, utilizing both power tools and hand tools, all while unsupervised and unprotected by a qualified roadway worker in charge.”

“This work, by its very nature, is most often performed in extreme weather conditions that can affect a worker’s dexterity and judgment. These workers will necessarily be dressed in heavy winter clothing, which can adversely affect the workers’ vision, hearing, agility, and ability to react to unanticipated danger. Such extreme working conditions underscore the need for full compliance with federal on-track safety regulations to protect roadway workers.”

The national labor organizations said, “by removing the roadway worker in charge, the waiver will severely impede the ability of roadway workers to make a good faith challenge. First-level good faith challenges, in virtually all cases, presented to the designated roadway worker in charge, who is uniquely qualified and equipped to immediately rectify safety-related matters on-site and in real time.”
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 month.

The winning photo will be published in the UTU News.

Exceptional photographs will be included on the UTU website.

We encourage you to submit photographs or digital photographs of work-related scenes, such as railroad, bus or mass transit operations, new equipment, 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 photo of a CSX consist was taken by Matt Oravik, a trainman/engineer of Local 1379, Homestead, Pa. “This photo was taken Nov. 29, 2009, in Homestead. It is train V89228 out of Newel, Pa.,” Oravik said.

By Dan Johnson

We frequently hear from frustrated members, “Why don’t we simply go on strike, shut the railroad down and be done with it?”

I, too, have shared these feelings witnessing excessive discipline, outrageous demands of arrogant managers, and carrier negotiators focusing on their year-end bonus.

But the fact is, it’s against the law to simply “shut ‘em down.”

Before labor or management may engage in strikes or lockouts, each must satisfy numerous steps spelled out by the Railway Labor Act (RLA). In most disputes – defined as differences over application or interpretation of contracts – the RLA requires final and binding arbitration.

In the few disputes that can lead to a strike or lockout – involving collective bargaining over contract amendments affecting wages, benefits and working conditions – the Supreme Court held that the RLA purposely creates “interminable” delay designed to encourage both sides to reach a mutually-acceptable solution and keep the trains running.

Among the lengthy steps is open-ended mediation by the National Mediation Board, and recommendations for settlement by a White House-appointed presidential emergency board (PEB).

Railroads are deemed so essential to national defense and a healthy economy that even in the few instances where all intermediate steps fail, and a strike or lockout is permitted, Congress usually inserts itself and passes a back-to-work law imposing settlement demands generally mirroring PEB recommendations.

We, in rail labor, have learned from bitter experience that our membership is better served by a voluntary settlement – even if we don’t get all we want – than having a third party, with no real-world knowledge of our industry, cram a settlement down our throats.

Finally, if we ignore the law and “shut ‘em down” anyway, we face fines and civil judgments that could bankrupt the union and result in jail terms for those involved.

(Dan Johnson hired on as a Southern Pacific trainman in 1966. He served as UTU International general secretary & treasurer from 2001 until his retirement in 2007.)

Inside this issue of the UTU News:

NS conductor Matt Taylor gave the gift of life. See page 2.

CEO Joe Boardman optimistic about Amtrak’s future. See page 4.

UTU offers Alaskan cruise, tour to retirees. See page 8.

UTU member Larry Pinkham honored for honesty. See page 9.