National rail agreement talks progressing

The TUU’s negotiating committee and railroads party to the national rail agreement – affecting some 40,000 UTU members – have met seven times since the contract came open for amendment Jan. 1.

“Nothing has been agreed to, but progress is being made on wages, benefits and working conditions,” said UTU International President Mike Futhey. “It is impossible to say that any issue has been finalized until all issues are agreed on.”

The existing national agreement remains in force until amendments are concluded under provisions of the Railway Labor Act.

Carriers in national handling, under the umbrella of the National Carriers’ Conference Committee include BNSF, CSX, Kansas City Southern, Norfolk Southern, Union Pacific and many smaller railroads.

In addition to UTU leadership, negotiators for the carriers are Assistant President Amy Martin; UTU International Vice Presidents Robert Kerley and Delbert Snukl; and General Chairpersons John Lesniwski (GO 049), Pate King (GO 680) and Doyle Turner (GO 347).

News and Notes

Local opposes bus cuts

SAN FRANCISCO – With the San Francisco Unified School District facing a deficit of $113 million over the next two school years, a decision is looming on whether to cut the number of buses to save money.

Local 1741 office Paul Stein was quick to intervene, telling the San Francisco Examiner newspaper that “any potential cuts would not only affect the contracted bus drivers (UTU members represented by Local 1741), but students themselves.”

Stein was joined by Ellie Rossetz, executive director of Parents for Public Schools, who told the newspaper, “Parents rely on public transportation and school bus transit to get kids to school. It could be the deciding factor in school choice.”

Union Plus scholarships

Applications are available for the 2011 Union Plus Scholarship Program, which provides $150,000 in scholarships to union members, their spouses and dependants.

To learn more about these scholarships and to download an application, log on to:


Or, send a postcard with your name, return address, telephone number and international union name to: Union Plus Education Foundation, P.O. Box 34800, Washington, DC 20043-4800.

The deadline for receiving applications is Jan. 31, 2011.

Railroads report blockbuster earnings, operating ratios

It was a boomer of a third quarter for major railroad profits. Blockbuster earnings were reported by BNSF Canadian National, Canadian Pacific, CSX, Kansas City Southern, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific as railroads exercised market pricing power and enjoyed robust increases in freight shipments.

• Canadian National reported its third-quarter profit rose by 21 percent, and its operating ratio improved from almost 63 percent in the third quarter 2009 to 60.7 percent for the third quarter 2010.

• Operating ratio is the railroad’s operating expenses expressed as a percentage of operating revenue, and is considered by economists as a basic measure of carrier profitability.

• Canadian Pacific reported that while its third quarter profit declined owing to an extraordinary one-time real-estate sales gain the previous year’s third quarter, its operating ratio improved from more than 76 percent in third quarter 2009 to 73.7 percent for the third quarter 2010.

• CSX reported its third quarter profit climbed by 43 percent, and its operating ratio improved from 73.9 percent in the third quarter 2009 to 69.1 percent for the third quarter 2010.

• Kansas City Southern reported its third quarter profit doubled, and its operating ratio improved from 78.3 percent in the third quarter 2009 to 73.5 percent for the third quarter 2010.

• Norfolk Southern reported its third-quarter profit increased by 47 percent, and its operating ratio improved from 72.8 percent in the third quarter 2009 to 69.6 percent for the third quarter 2010.

• Union Pacific reported its third-quarter profit soared by 51 percent – its most profitable quarter ever – and its operating ratio improved from 73.8 percent in the third quarter 2009 to 68.2 percent for the third quarter 2010.

FRA cell-phone ban to be made permanent

The FRA said it will make permanent its Emergency Order No. 26 restricting the use by on-duty train crews of cell phones and other electronic devices.

Some changes, as described below, are to be included in the permanent ban, to go into effect in late March 2011. Until then, Emergency Order No. 26 will remain in effect.

The emergency order and the permanent ban prohibits the use of any electronic device – whether personal or railroad supplied – if it interferes with that employee’s or another employee’s performance of safety-related duties.

The permanent ban will contain these new or revised provisions:

Election results

UTU endorsed candidates are still a majority in Congress. See page 4 for insight from President Futhey and National Legislative Director James Stem into the congressional election.
Local Unit 17, New Castle, Pa.

UTUIA Local Unit 17 has adopted the "Imagine No More Malaria Fund." Unit President and Field Supervisor Art Rayner reported. Money raised by members of Local Unit 17 will be donated to the White Chapel United Methodist Church’s malaria fund committee, of which Rayner is chairman. White Chapel has set a goal of $6,700 to be applied to the National United Methodist Church’s goal of $75 million. “Each year, nearly 800,000 children die from malaria in Africa. This averages out to one child dying from malaria every 30 seconds,” Rayner said. Send tax-deductible contributions made out to “White Chapel Church” to Rayner at P.O. Box 146, Volant, PA 16156-0146. A receipt will be forthcoming.

Local 60, Newark N.J.

Retired New Jersey Transit conductor Mike Ferlife and his wife, Mary Ellen, appeared on a WABC news telecast entitled “Breast Cancer: Survival and Hope” on Oct. 2. The Emmy Award-winning series, now in its 16th year, features survivors who speak of their determination to fight a disease that interrupted their lives at a critical time. Mary Ellen was diagnosed with breast cancer more than four years ago and was treated. Ferlife was diagnosed with male breast cancer last year and is currently undergoing treatment.

Local 113, Winslow, Ariz.

This BNSF local, in conjunction with the BLET, held a two-day picnic for its members in Winslow, State Legislative Director Greg Hynes reported. Hamburgers and hot dogs were shishked up for two days, and a variety of prizes were also raffled. “This is the first time anything like that has been accomplished in Winslow,” Hynes said.

Local 199, Creston, Iowa

Vice Local Chairperson Billi Joavra reports that the members of this BNSF Local now have a dedicated website at www.utu199.org. The website has links to agreements, contact information for local officers, a new safety page and more. The membership also has member directories Bandi and Arich, who recently retired after 40 years of service.

Local 240, Los Angeles, Calif.

Local Chairperson Harry Garvin Jr. reports that Wilbur A. Sloan retired Oct. 4 after 40 years of service with Southern Pacific and Union Pacific railroads. “All the members and officers of Local 240 wish him long and happy years of retirement,” Garvin said.

Local 465, Gillette, Wyo.

The Department of Defense and the Wyoming National Guard and Reserves have awarded Local Chairperson Kevin Knutson a citation for his support of railroad guardsmen and reserves as UTU member fishes with paralyzed U.S. veterans

Union Pacific conductor Scott Burns’ latest fishing story isn’t about the big one that got away. It’s about the privilege of serving others.

This summer, Burns volunteered his time, equipment and boat as a captain during the Paralyzed Veterans of America’s Lone Star Shootout bass-fishing tournament on Lake Ray Hubbard in Garland, Texas. In addition to assistance provided to these paralyzed veterans and their families, the PVA sponsors a variety of local and national competitive sporting events, including bass-fishing tournaments, wheelchair basketball leagues, skeet and trap shooting competitions and wheelchair bowling.

Burns drew his fishing partner, William Smith of Edmond, Okla., at the pre-tournament meeting hosted by Bass Pro Shop of Garland, Texas, for the two-day event.

The daily routine consisted of team partners meeting in the Bass Pro Shop parking lot at 6:15 a.m., where volunteers from nearby military installations assisted each paralyzed veteran into the boats, then stored the wheelchairs until the team returned at the completion of each day’s competition.

After their fish were weighed and photographs taken, teams returned to the staging area where volunteers would assist the veterans out of the boats and back into their wheelchairs to prepare for the evening meal and activities. “It was an honor and my sincere privilege to be teamed up with William for this PVA tournament. He is a serious tournament fisherman, and it was a true inspiration to see him, along with all the other paralyzed vets, give their best efforts throughout this demanding two-day event.”

“I was humbled and blessed to be a small part of such a worthwhile event,” Burns said. “This is the first PVA event I have participated in, but plan to be among the first to register for this tournament next year.”

A veteran and reserve, Burns expressed his appreciation to Local Chairperson Danny Rampy and his fellow members of Local 439 at Tyler, Texas, for their interest and support. The local helped pay his tournament entry fee and travel expenses. He also provided several unique UP items to Smith, along with a UTU pin. “Both the Union Pacific and the UTU were well represented as William proudly wore a ‘UTU Yes!’ pin on his new Union Pacific visor the entire weekend,” Burns said.

He has since participated in a second tournament in October at Truman Lake, Mo. “The honor was mine,” Burns said.

UTU member fictitious Scott Burns, left, and William Smith at the Paralyzed Veterans of America’s Lone Star Shootout in Garland, Texas.

Local 569, Ennis, Texas

Local Chairperson W.T. "Bill" Smith was recently appointed as an FRA inspector for Region 8 in Rapid City, S.D. General Chairperson Troy Johnson reported. Smith began his railroad career in South Pacific in 1998, prior to the merger with UP. He has also served as secretary of UP General Committee 927. “We wish Brother Smith the best in his new endeavor,” Johnson said.

Local 583, Fond du Lac, Wis.

This CN (Wisconsin Central) local’s website address has been changed to www.utu583.org, according to Secretary & Treasurer Anthony Macareo. The website contains contact information, seniority rosters, agreements and other useful information.

Local 586, Willard, Ohio

Conducting the UTU’s Jacksonville event, Mike Novak retired Aug. 28 after 54 years of rail service with Pennsylvania Railroad, Penn Central Corp., Amtrak and CSX. Novak is currently involved in a sports merchandising business called Sports Fun Lines. Visit his website at www.sportsfunlines.com. "Tell my fellow workers and friends that their retirement has been 99 percent good. Best in health and wealth to all of them in the future,” Novak said.

Local 722, Babylon, N.Y.

Derrill Meyer, 45, a member of this Long Island Rail Road local, died Sept. 14, friend and fellow member Steven J. Messina reported. Meyer, who was costumed for a week after a suffering a ruptured aneurysm, had a 17-year-old daughter and was engaged to be married, Messina said. “He was a great friend to many. May he rest in peace,” Messina said.

Local 982, Rochester, N.Y.

Local Chairperson David Murphy thanks the local's chambake committee, including Kenneth Roden, John and Adrian Hales, and Mike and Cheryl Hoey for a great job in making this year’s chambake a success, especially given the challenge. "Kennedy Roden’s craft projects and gift bags were especially nice. Thanks to all for their hard work,” Murphy said. The local also announced a Christmas dinner party scheduled for the first week of December.

Local 1381, Hammond, Ind.


Local 1565, W. Hollywood, Calif.

After retiring from a 20-year career in the U.S. Marine Corps, Gold Line train operator 1St Sgt. Rosendo Reyes is currently employed with the 20th Century Fox Company’s Toystot coordinators in Los Alamitos, his wife Sandra reported. “This is his third year as a Toys for Tots coordinator and finds it is a very humbling experience to help provide toys for children whose parents cannot afford very much on Christmas. I am proud of what he has accomplished, not only in his military career and husband,” Sandra said. Anyone wishing to donate new, unwrapped toys may contact the Reyes at (909) 566-1414, or by e-mail at PAPAPIC89@aol.com.

Local 887, Bakersfield, Calif.

The address for this UP general committee's website has been changed to www.urge887.com, according to General Chairperson W. Jay Smith.
Open enrollment for RR GA-23111 health plans

During November and December, United Healthcare will hold an open enrollment under railroad plans GA-23111.

During this open enrollment period, any individual eligible for coverage under one of the GA-23111 plans must enroll or be accepted for coverage without medical underwriting or requirement of good health.

There are no limitations for pre-existing conditions.

Enrollment in November and December is for coverage effective Jan. 1, 2011.

Only those applicants who mailed their completed enrollment forms in November or December will be considered for open enrollment.

The next opportunity to enroll during an open enrollment period will not be until November 2012, consistent with the plan’s two-year enrollment cycle.

This open enrollment is:
1. For those covered under any railroad health plan and represented by a railroad labor union.
2. For those who are members in accordance with the constitution or bylaws of one of the participating railroad labor unions when coverage under the employer group health plan applying to them ends.

Retired VP Steve Thompson succumbs to cancer at 60

Retired UTU International Vice President Steven James Thompson, age 60, a member of Local 1709 (Pontiac, Mich.), died Oct. 9 at a hospice in Wentworth, N.C.

He was interred at a cemetery in Loya County, Ky.

For 16 years, Thompson was chairperson of CN Rail (Grand Trunk Western) General Committee of Adjustment 377. He was elected first alternate vice president, east, in September 1999; and succeeded the retiring Pete Patours as UTU International vice president in August 2003. Thompson retired as an international vice president in 2007.

Thompson joined UTU predecessor Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen in 1969 while working as a switchman on Grand Trunk Worn Railway (now part of Canadian National).

In 2003, Thompson was instrumental in raising funds to bring a severely burned Iraqi teenage girl to the University of Michigan’s burn center for treatment. He also was active in a church food bank.

Thompson was a native of Pontiac, Mich. Survivors include his parents, C.T. Thompson and Edna Lance Thompson of Lewsiburg, Ky.; a son, Jim Thompson, of Reidsville, N.C.; brothers Robert Thompson of Franklin, Ky., and Ted Thompson of Reidsville; a sister, Linda Drakesboro; and, and Shar Thompson of Lewsiburg, Ky.; one grandchild and four great-grandchildren.

If you, or someone you know, meet the GA-23111 eligibility provisions, open enrollment provides an opportunity to become covered.

You may also enroll your spouse or eligible children if they are not currently covered. In addition, the UTU “Get a Grip” plan is available for your parent or parent-in-law. Anyone interested in enrolling should call one of the following phone numbers to obtain an enrollment form or additional information:

• For persons eligible for Medicare, call (800) 809-0453.

Persons NOT eligible for Medicare, call (800) 842-5252.

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Note: Enrollment during November and December of the open enrollment period provides for coverage effective the following calendar year, Jan. 1 through Dec. 31. Each June 1 of that calendar year, and only at that time, adjustments to the premium for all plans under GA-23111 may occur. Additionally, if you are enrolled in either Plan A, B or C under GA-23111, and a change in the premium amount you pay does occur, you will be allowed, at that time, to switch your plan to a different plan (A, B, or C) with a lower premium, if available.

Local 377 ratifies new B&P contract

Local 377 members – engineers, conductors and brakemen – employed by Buffalo & Pittsburough Railroad have ratified a new five-year agreement by an almost 8-to-1 margin.

Balloting was by craft under provisions of the UTU Constitution guaranteeing craft autonomy; and each of the crafts was solidly in favor of the agreement.

More than 90 percent of members cast ballots, which UTU International officials termed “good news and quite typical of Local’s 377 membership.”

The newly ratified agreement provides for general wage increases, guaranteed extra boards, plan enhancements, and personal incentive bonuses.

General Chairperson John Lesniewski (Ogden, Utah) praised the agreement, saying “the ratified agreement was a great contract in the best of times, and extraordinary during this lean economic climate.”

Lesniewski praised the efforts of his negotiating team, which included Vice General Chairperson Steven Mavity and Local 377 Chairperson Steven Mahaffey.

Lesniewski also thanked UTU International President Mike Furhey and GY 049 Vice General Chairperson Jeremy Ferguson “for their advice and support directed towards reaching this pact.”

Buffalo & Pittsburgh, acquired by holding company Genese & Wyoming in 1988, is a 368-mile regional railroad serving western New York and western Pennsylvania, and connects with railways Canadian Pacific, CSSX, and Norfolk Southern.

New pact ratified on Illinois & Midland

With 86 percent voting in favor, UTU-represented signal maintainers, mechanical forces and maintenance-of-way employees on Illinois & Midland Railroad (IMR) have ratified a new five-year contract covering wages, benefits and working conditions.

Illinois & Midland is a subsidiary of Genesee & Wyoming.

The new agreement provides a general wage increase, retroactive pay to April 1, 2010, a cap on health care insurance contributions, a new short-term disability plan, an enhanced 401k plan, and enhanced options for personal leave days.

UTU International Vice President Delbert (Butch) Smith, who led the negotiations, called the ratified agreement “a great contract in the best of times, and extraordinary during this lean economic climate.”

Lesniewski praised the efforts of his negotiating team, which included Vice General Chairperson Steven Mavity and Local 377 Chairperson Steven Mahaffey.

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Utun PAC: It’s all about options, benefits, safety

UTU Michigan State Legislative Director Jerry Gibson knows the value of the Utun PAC in electing labor friendly lawmakers. He knows how to share those facts, also.

Local 1075 Secretary & Treasurer John Purcell says he and other members of his Trenton, Mich., local had “no clue of what the UTU PAC was.” No one had ever explained how it worked” until Gibson showed up at a union local meeting.

Purcell credits Gibson with educating the local’s members “on how PAC funds are used and the benefits the PAC provides. I started contributing myself immediately and began to encourage others to do the same.” Purcell said in a recent e-mail he sent Gibson.

“People in the UTU PAC was further driven home after my attendance at the regional meetings where I learned what was being done in Washington and the impact of our PAC funds there,” Purcell said.

More recently, Purcell said the UTU’s get-out-the-vote drive for the Nov. 2 elections was a success. Post cards sent members through a project of the National Legislative Office “reached the members’ homes and several contacted me and asked questions,” Purcell said.

“I provided information which included that the UTU PAC is not a partisan program and that it supports candidates that support us regardless of party affiliation,” Purcell said. “I used the information provided, which listed successful legislation that has improved safety and benefits.

“Of all the results, one result that increased the ATU PAC dollars for becoming new donors all together,” Purcell said.

Purcell said he now writes a check to the UTU PAC in the amount of $265 per month, and 44 percent of Local 1075’s members now donate. He said his goal is to gain PAC contributions from 75 percent of Local 1075’s members.
What the election results mean

International President’s Column

By Mike Futhey, International President
(216) 228-9400: president@utu.org

The UTU is bipartisan in its endorsements

In the now Republican-controlled House of Representatives, there will be new committee chairpersons – those posts mean everything. Chairpersons decide which bills have hearings and are moved to the House floor for a vote. Rep. John Mica (R-Fla.) – very knowledgeable on rail, bus and transit issues, and an advocate of investment in infrastructure – likely will chair the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, where most legislation affecting transportation originates. Among T&I Committee members, more than 68 percent – Democrats and Republicans – who were endorsed by the UTU won re-election.


Better than 6 of every 10 elected lawmakers had UTU endorsements

for example, are Rep. Don Young of Alaska, and Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah. Republican Sen. Hatch is one of the strongest congressional defenders of the Federal Employers’ Liability Act (FELA), while Republican Rep. Young has been one of the UTU’s most ardent supporters in the House of Representatives.

• One of the most important congressional committees to UTU members – airline, bus and rail – is the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, where most legislation affecting transportation originates. Among T&I Committee members, more than 68 percent – Democrats and Republicans – who were endorsed by the UTU won re-election.

• In all congressional races, more than 60 percent of UTU endorsed candidates won election or re-election. Imagine if you could win a poker hand more than 50 percent of the time, or hit safely six of 10 times at bat as a major league ballplayer.

• Despite the change in party control in the House, UTU-recommended candidates are still a majority, meaning we can continue to work successfully on issues that matter to our members: job security, safety, health care and retirement benefits, as well as adequate public funding for Amtrak and transit.

• Key regulatory agencies, such as the Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, National Media

Lawmakers change; our mission does not

November 2010 UTU News
California
Local President and Legislative Rep. Michael Rose of Local 1570, Roseville, Calif., received the endorsement of the California State Legislative Board, along with a UTU PAC contribution check, in his bid for a seat on the Rocklin, Calif., city council, State Legislative Director J.P. Jones reported.

"Brother Rose is a contributor to the UTU PAC program from his local and has worked hard for full membership participation in the program," Jones said. "We fully supported Brother Rose in his effort to achieve a seat on the Rocklin City Council and wanted to show our support with financial assistance to his campaign. It is a local city council races that are many times the starting point in the political process for candidates to advance to higher office at the state and congressional levels."

Unfortunately, Rose finished sixth in the race, where the top five at-large candidates are seated as council members.

Minnesota
Workers fully clad in hazardous-material suits descended on the St. Paul Labor Centre parking lot in late September, unfurling yellow caution tape and scurrying toward pipes and barrels leaking indeterminate liquids, Workday Minnesota reports.

Fortunately, it was only a drill.

Eighteen members of railroad unions participated in the hazardous material response drills, part of a four-day training session in St. Paul organized by the Minnesota Railroad Interfcraft Association and the National Labor College (NLC), with the help of State Legislative Director Quail Qualy.

Wearing plastic suits and oxygen masks, trainees engaged in one of two drills. One challenged them to plug a leaking 50-gallon barrel of "sulfuric acid" and prepare the barrel for safe shipping to a containment area.

The other exercise involved a series of pipes leaking "benzene." Trainees had to figure out a way to plug the leak, prevent a fire from starting, and keep the fluid out of nearby waterways.

Four NLC trainers escorted trainees through the drill stations. The NLC has trained rail workers since the late 1980s, both at its campus in Silver Spring, Md., and at remote locations nationwide.

The Minnesota Railroad Interfcraft Association, formed in 1982, is comprised of the UTU, the Teamsters, and the Transportation Commuinctions Union.

"Education is a key component of our railroad unions’ safety agenda," Qualy said. "Railroad workers receive invaluable training and information, and attendees take their training skills to our locals and share the information."

New Jersey
New Jersey State Legislative Board Chairperson McKinley Cuthbert of Local 44, Newark, N.J., recently met with Assemblywoman Mila M. Joyce (D) to thank her for her support for transportation projects in the state, State Legislative Director Dan O’Connell reports.

She said she will continue to work toward funding of a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River, linking New Jersey with New York City, following its cancellation by Gov. Chris Christie.

It would create 6,000 construction jobs and 45,000 permanent jobs, many of which would benefit UTU Local 60’s members.

FMCSA shows off new bus safety technology
New technology to improve the safety performance of buses was showcased last month by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

The FMCSA demonstrated the latest state-of-the-art technology to be used by law enforcement to conduct commercial motor vehicle safety inspections.

The new technology includes:

• Wireless roadside inspection that can conduct up to 25 times more vehicle inspections a year than the current, in-person inspection process. It allows an inspector to obtain driver and carrier identity, vehicle condition and hours-of-service violations while the vehicle is traveling at highway speeds.

• Smart infrared inspection that detects brake, tire and wheel problems by comparing infrared thermal images of wheels as the vehicle enters a weigh station.

• Performance-based brake testing that assesses a vehicle’s brake force and overall performance.

Montesino wins Watsonville city council seat
WATSONVILLE, Calif. – Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District bus operator Eduardo Montesino was successful in his first bid for public office, winning a seat on the Watsonville, Calif., city council.

A member of Local 23 at Santa Cruz, Calif., Montesino campaigned on the issues of growing the local economy by attracting quality businesses and jobs, improving roads and diversifying transportation options, and preparing children to be competitive in the work force by receiving an excellent education.

Montesino said he has gotten to know countless members of the community, firsthand, through his work as a full-time bus driver and a member of the Latino Affairs Commission.

"I hear the stories of struggle," Montesino told the Santa Cruz Sentinel. "I drive people from one job to the next. I see the need for many more services in South County. There was a need for some new leadership and I’ll bring a different perspective to the job."

Montesino was endorsed by Local 23, Watsonville Mayor Luis Alejo, and Santa Cruz County Treasurer Fred Keeley.

Kansas
Kansas State Legislative Director Ty Drago, standing third from left and Assistant State Legislative Director Chad Herton, kneeling at far left, recently attended a special informational seminar sponsored by Local 44 at Phillipsburg, Kan. The meeting was held for members and newly hired employees of Union Pacific. "This was a great opportunity to hear the concerns of current UTU members, as well as to educate new employees about our union, our contract, the importance of the UTU PAC and other issues," Drago said.

News from UTU State Legislative Boards

LACMTA talks continue; operational funding a must
I extend my congratulations to all the newly elected and re-elected Bus Department officers and delegates, and I ask that they do their best to represent all their membership. Dedication and hard work will include conversation and compromise to produce results. Results are our business.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) negotiations continue on a day-by-day extension. General Chairperson James Williams and his negotiating committee continue to try to hammer out an agreement. The current political and financial climate makes it very difficult. I am confident they will succeed.

The new political environment will make it harder for our hard working members and us to succeed in the near future, but succeed we will.

In the Bus Department there is an issue that should be our priority, and that is operational funding.

Operational funding should be incorporated into all legislation that funds transit projects. Federal, state and local entities have allocated large sums of funding for new and/or expanded transit projects.

These projects fund planning and construction – not operations, which includes driver salaries.

Without operational funding, the future of these projects is in jeopardy and may only create future problems. These problems could be failure of new service, cuts in existing service, or both. UTU National Legislative Director James Stern is aware of this funding problem and has been working in Washington to educate lawmakers on this important issue. He and Alternate National Legislative Director John Rusch plead to continue fighting for this funding.
Begin your document search early

To apply for Railroad Retirement or Social Security benefits, you must provide certain information, and it is suggested you begin the process at least three months prior to your anticipated retirement date.

You will need the following information to register:

- **Proof of age:** An original birth certificate or a certified copy (not a photocopy). If a birth certificate is not available, the Railroad Retirement Board or Social Security will advise you how to proceed.
- **Proof of marriage:** An original or a certified copy (not a photocopy) of the marriage certificate.

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Monthly benefits

Railroad Retirement and Social Security annuities and their spouses' annuities will receive monthly benefit checks directly from the federal government. It is wise to arrange, when applying for retirement benefits, to have the checks deposited electronically into your bank account.

Whether it's Railroad Retirement, Social Security or CalPERS, those agencies will respond to your request for estimates of monthly retirement benefits available to you and your spouse. One of your first retirement chores should be to obtain this estimate, because those benefits are a foundation of your post-retirement income. You may also wish to speak with a certified financial planner, and your UTUIA representative, about retirement financial issues.

**Time to retire**

Filing for retirement benefits – and investigating Medicare health care options – should begin at least three months prior to your planned retirement date. Railroad Retirement benefits generally begin by visiting a Railroad Retirement, Social Security or CalPERS field office, where you will be asked to provide various documents necessary to the processing of retirement benefits payable to you and your spouse. (For the office address, see “Find your document search early.”) Information on the location of field offices may be obtained by calling the toll-free telephone numbers listed on the opposite page. To join the UTUIA Alumni Association and stay in touch with friends and former coworkers, you may determine that there is an advantage to your spouse waiting a little longer to draw retirement benefits. Be sure to enquire about limited, non-retirement-related benefits and consider a skilled nursing facility, hospice and home health care.

Part C is a Medicare advantage plan similar to an HMO or PPO – health plans run by Medicare-approved private insurance companies. Medicare advantage plans generally include Part A, B and D.

Conclusion is a major concern for most retirees

After a lifetime of hard work, UTU rail, road and airline members look forward to a secure retirement. In an ideal world, it would be simple. In the real world, careful planning and attention to detail are essential.

Topping the list of retirement concerns are money and health-care insurance; but you also must protect certain documentation prior to receiving benefits.

**Sources of income**

As a rule of thumb, between 70 and 80 percent of pre-retirement income need not be earned. To enjoy a comfortable retirement, you may wish to plan supplemental benefits until they reach retirement.

**Railroad Retirement** (covering covered railroad workers), Social Security or CalPERS (covering certain California public transit agency workers) was intended to be a retirement’s source of income, and thus will replace only about 40 percent of your pre-retirement income. In California, the Social Security Administration.

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Social Security, RRB benefits frozen for 2011

The Railroad Retirement Board has confirmed for rail workers what the Social Security Administration already had told Social Security recipients: There will be no increase in benefits in 2011. This is the second year in a row that the Consumer Price Index from the third quarter of 2009 to the corresponding period of the current year.

Additionally, and because the CPI did not rise, Railroad Retirement and Social Security beneficiaries will not see an increase in 2011 in the earnings limitation that triggers benefits cuts if they continue working while receiving benefits.

For those under full retirement age in 2011, the exempt earnings amount remains at $14,160. For beneficiaries attaining full retirement age in 2011, the exempt earnings amount for the months before the month full retirement age is attained, remains at $37,680 in 2011.

For employees and spouse annuitants, full retirement age ranges from age 65 for those born before 1938 to age 67 for those born in 1960 or later. For survivor annuitants, full retirement age ranges from age 65 for those born before 1940 to age 67 for those born in 1962 or later.

Special work restrictions continue to be applicable to disability annuitants. In 2011, the monthly disability earnings limit will also stay at the previous year’s amount of $2,080.

Regardless of age and/or earnings, no Railroad Retirement annuity is payable for any month in which an annuitant (retired employee, spouse or survivor) works for a railroad employer or railroad union.

The Department of Health and Human Services has not yet announced if there will be Medicare premium changes for 2011. Information about Medicare changes for 2011, when available, may be found at www.medicare.gov.

Some 85 UTU members, spouses and friends recently cruised to Alaska as part of a UTU Alumni Association-sponsored tour. Discounted travel opportunities are one of the advantages of membership in the Alumni Association. “We had an absolute blast,” said Ann Hopper, a professional travel advisor who arranged the tour and who accompanied the group. “These folks were wonderful.” At the request of UTU retirees, Hopper’s Landfall Travel is working to arrange other tours of interest. All upcoming tours can be viewed on the UTU website, www.utu.org.

Three reach 100-year mark

The Railroad Retirement Board has sent congratulatory letters to three annuitants who recently celebrated their 100th birthdays. The letters were sent to Albert J. Holcomb, who was last employed as a fireman by Penn Central, Paul H. Steenrod, who was last employed as a yardmaster by Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, and Clarence E. Harper, a former Union Pacific conductor.
Treasurers’ workshop set for Feb. 15, 16

The UTU International will conduct a workshop for treasurers Feb. 15-16, 2011, at the Planet Hollywood Resort in Las Vegas.

The two-day workshop includes all training and materials at no cost to local treasurers.

However, each local is responsible for all other costs associated with attendance.

Lost time or salary, travel, hotel and meal expenses connected with your attendance may be reimbursed, if pre-approved at a local meeting, as an allowable expense of the local.

The workshop will provide local treasurers with hands-on training on their responsibilities and reporting duties, including direct receipts and Winstabs.

To register, call the UTU at (216) 228-9402, or e-mail Nancy Miller at n.miller@utu.org.

Space is limited to 35 treasurers and registrations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

The UTU has negotiated a room rate of $99 nightly, plus tax (single/double occupancy), which is good for three days before and three days after the meeting dates, based on availability.

Hotel room reservations should be made directly with the Planet Hollywood Resort by calling (877) 244-9474 and using reservation code SMSTT1.

Check-in time is 4 p.m.; check out is 11 a.m. The workshop will begin both days at 9 a.m.

The deadline for hotel reservations is Jan. 14. Those attending should make hotel reservations immediately after registering for the workshop.

Training sessions will be conducted by UTU International Auditors Stephen Noyes, Bobby Bratley, Mike Arausjo and Franc Von Kreuger.

Participants should bring a notebook computer and a USB flash drive.
Amtrak CEO: ‘More humility, listening skills’

HOPE, Ark. – Amtrak President Joseph Boardman told an audience that poor service and arrogance were to blame for Amtrak’s loss of the commuter service it operates between Virginia Railway Express, reports the Hope Star newspaper.

The commuter service contract was lost to a French company, Keolis, which now operates the commuter trains between Northern Virginia and Washington.

Amtrak lost the VRE contract “long before the bid,” said Boardman, as quoted by the newspaper. “We lost this contract because we didn’t take care of our customer. … We were arrogant.”

The Hope Star quoted Boardman as saying Amtrak must demonstrate more “humility … be inclusive to those who want and have an idea … We need to share the decision making.”

As reported by the Hope Star, Boardman said that as the federal railroad administrator and incoming Amtrak’s CEO, he saw similar flaws in freight rail management: “They are good people, but way too autocratic; they depend too much on rules and not bringing ‘people’ people in, in an inclusive way.”

Amtrak orders new crash-worthy locomotives

Siemens, an international engineering firm with its U.S. headquarters in Washington and plants throughout the U.S., has won a $466-million contract from Amtrak to build 70 Sprinter ACS-64 electric locomotives for Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor and Keystone Corridor.

Important to train crews, the new locomotives will incorporate the latest crash-energy management components, such as “push-back” couplers, to keep the locomotives upright, in-line and on the tracks in the event of a collision, said Amtrak in a press release.

The new Siemens locomotives are to go into service beginning in February 2013.

Legal department introduces new associate

Erika Diehl, the daughter of a career locomotive engineer and an elementary school teacher – both union members – has joined the UTU Law Department as assistant general counsel.

She will assist the UTU, its chairpersons and members with legal issues affecting organizational rights.

“It was my parents’ experiences and influence that prompted my interest in this,” said Diehl. “With the difficult times facing our nation today, there is no better time than the present for labor’s second coming. UTU is moving in a positive direction, and I look forward to playing a role in that endeavor.”

Diehl graduated with high honors from Miami University of Ohio with an undergraduate degree in business, where she double-majored in marketing and organizational leadership, and minored in Spanish.

She earned a law degree, with high honors, from Cleveland-Mahalo College of Law.

“I am grateful for this opportunity and eager to serve the UTU and its members,” she said.

FRA told: ‘Mexican trains must be inspected’

Union Pacific is at it again – and the UTU and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen intend to stop it, again.

The “it” is a U.P. request to the Federal Railroad Administration that U.P. be allowed to bring trains from Mexico into the United States without proper mechanical safety inspections at the border crossing.

In a petition to the FRA, the UTU and the BLET asked the agency to deny U.P.’s latest waiver request that trains from Mexico be allowed to enter the U.S. through El Paso, Texas, without first undergoing required mechanical safety inspections.

“Safety is the paramount reason that the [U.P.] request should be denied,” the UTU and the BLET told the FRA. “It is critically important for cars from Mexico to enter the U.S. with handbrakes applied, retaining valves set, angle cocks closed and bad order cars located within the train.

“The bad order cars from Mexico are sent into the U.S. in a state of repair that the UP can repair them. Not to be overlooked is the fact that these cars also frequently are transporting hazardous materials cars,” the UTU and the BLET told the FRA.

There exists an adequate repair facility at UP’s River Yard located near the International Bridge which can accommodate these trains,” the FRA was told.

Furthermore, the UTU and the BLET told the FRA, “The granting of this kind of petition is not what Congress intended by its enactment of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008.

“Congress made it clear that defective cars from Mexico should not enter the U.S. There is every indication that these trains did not receive proper mechanical and brake inspections in Mexico, and there has been no certification by the FRA that the Mexican trains have complied with the applicable U.S. standards.

“Historically, the FRA has denied requests for waiver of air brake and mechanical safety inspections on trains entering the U.S. if the request involves movement of the trains past a point on the U.S. side of the border. Similarly, the FRA has acted consistent with these principles.

“We believe the FRA should stand fast with this policy and, consistent with earlier decisions of this type, deny the [U.P. waiver] request.”

FRA-cell phone ban

Continued from page 1

personal emergencies. The FRA said such an exception “would present significant obstacles,” as an operating employee “would have a cell phone turned on while on a moving train could easily say the phone was on because of a sick family member, whether true or not.”

The FRA rejected the proposal and the personal emergency exception. But as the rule is now written, an employee will be prohibited from contacting health care providers or sick family members in emergency situations no matter how serious the situation is and even if their railroad employer would have permitted them to do so.

GPS devices

In the final rule, the use of personal global positioning system (GPS) devices is not permitted. "Locomotive engineers,” said the FRA, “are required to be familiar with the physical characteristics of the routes over which they operate. Thus, engineers should already be aware of where sidings, road crossings and other physical characteristics are located.”

Calculators

The FRA’s final rule does permit calculators to be used to determine formulas such as train stopping calculations or tons per operative brake.

Cameras

The final rule allows for stand-alone cameras (not part of a cell phone or other electronic device) to document a safety hazard or violation of a rail safety law, regulation or standard. However, the final rule will permit the use of multi-functional devices that include a camera for “authorized business purposes as specified by the railroad in writing” and only after being approved by the FRA.

The FRA argued it “is necessary to require all employees to carry separate electronic devices on a daily basis to effectively and safely perform their duties.” The FRA recommended – but the FRA rejected – that a cell-phone camera be allowed to document a hazard or violation of a regulation and then be turned off immediately.

Members should note correct RRB phone no.

Take note of the correct toll-free telephone number for the Railroad Retirement Board’s Information Line (877) 772-5772.

This number replaces a previous toll-free number to reach the Railroad Retirement Board. The old number no longer reaches the Railroad Retirement Board’s information line. That number was removed by the phone company.

In fact, some callers report they have called that number and reached a recording seeking payment from them.

Older copies of RRB publications still carry the old and no longer valid toll-free telephone number for the Railroad Retirement Board, and some UTU members may be in possession of those publications. The only valid toll-free telephone number for the Railroad Retirement Board’s Information Line – toll free from all areas of the United States – is (877) 772-5772.

November 2010 UTU News
AFL-CIO launches outreach program to educate, inform young workers

A new survey by the AFL-CIO shows young workers were off this year than they were last year.

In response, the federation is ratcheting up its outreach program to connect with the next generation of workers.

The survey shows young workers are more likely to be working part time, if at all, and have fewer resources to fall back on than they did just last year.

Only 52 percent of young workers surveyed said that they have enough savings to cover their living expenses for two months or more, compared with 60 percent in 2009.

Sixty percent report being concerned about their futures, compared with 41 percent last year. Many also are concerned they will fare worse than previous generations when they reach retirement age.

“In these tough economic times, young workers need more than ever to know the value of collective action and be connected with unions,” said AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler.

The AFL-CIO will establish a National Young Worker Advisory Council to advise the federation’s executive council on the short-term and long-term goals of the young workers’ outreach program.

UTU International President Mike Futhey is a member of the executive council.

Another step being taken by the federation is developing a mentoring model for bringing experienced union leaders and young workers together to learn from each other.

The AFL-CIO also will be working with the American Federation of Teachers to develop new ways to include curricula about unions in classroom around the country and to build a stronger presence on college campuses.

New members on Human Rights Committee

UTU International President Mike Futhey has appointed three new members to the union’s Human Rights Committee: Samantha Royster-Cunningham, Glen Johnson and David Stinsman.

The UTU Human Rights Committee was established in 2002 to educate UTU members and employers and to promote awareness of the advantages of diversity in our union and in society.

Committee members are Billy D. Moye (Local 1971, Atlanta; co-director); Frank Hickman (Local 1175, Duluth, Minn.; co-director); Barbara Bankston-Guvin (UTU International employee); David Stinsman (Local 1594, Upper Darby, Pa.); Glen Johnson (Local 937, March, Texas); Jessie Turner Jr. (Local 1290, Chicago); Robert Gonzalez (Local 1363, El Monte, Calif.) and Samantha Royster-Cunningham (Local 1933, Washington).

“The UTU is committed to diversity,” Futhey said. “At all levels of our organization, we work to ensure equality in the workplace.”

Rails putting T&E workers back to work

A ray of sunshine is emerging as thousands of train and engine (T&E) workers are being recalled to work.

Union Pacific restored the jobs of some 1,100 furloughed workers during the third quarter 2010, and said all its furloughed workers would be back on the job in coming months.

UP said also it expects to hire additional workers in 2011.

At Norfolk Southern, according to the Journal of Commerce, all furloughed T&E workers have returned to their jobs, and NS will be hiring an additional 1,550 T&E workers this year – and an additional 1,800 in 2011.

Although train and engine jobs on the nation’s Class I railroads had been cut by some 20 percent between June 2007 and June 2009, there has been a steady increase in T&E jobs in 2010, especially over the past few months, according to U.S. Surface Transportation Board data.

In June 2007, Class I railroads employed 69,298 workers in T&E jobs. By June 2009, the number of T&E workers had declined to 55,434 – a decline of some 20 percent from the June 2007 level.

Beginning this past June, however, the number of T&E jobs began rising significantly, climbing back to 61,444 in September, or only about 11 percent below the June 2007 level of T&E employment.

The STB has not yet reported October 2010 T&E employment, which is expected to show another rise.

With rail traffic strong and expected to remain so, there is confidence that the number of T&E jobs will continue rising on all railroads during the fourth quarter.

Another ray of sunshine is found in an observation by the British-based Economist magazine:

“America has far more going for it than its current mood suggests. It is still the most innovative economy on earth, the place where the world’s greatest universities meet the world’s deepest pockets. Its demography is favorable, with a high birth rate and limitless space into which to expand.”

Local 937 in Mart, Texas, holds quarterly seminars

President Jake Kelly and Vice Local Chairperson Jeremy Brooks have been holding quarterly informational seminars on member rights and application of contracts at Hearne, Texas, which is the away-from-home terminal for many of their Union Pacific-employed members.

“This is a great opportunity for the members as it does not take time away from other pressing issues at home,” said Kelly. Presentations are made by General Chairperson Troy Johnson (GO 927), State Legislative Director Connie English, UTUA Field Rep. Joe Solito and UTU designated legal counsel.

More than 60 members attended the October four-hour seminar. “This is something other UTU locals should consider doing,” said S&T Dan Gibben.

Pictured at left, from left, are Local 937 President Jake Kelly, S&T Dan Gibben, Local Chairperson and Legislative Rep. Glen Johnson, S&T-elect Lionel Ganta, Local Chairperson Clay Summers and Vice Local Chairperson Jeremy Brooks.
This month’s winning photo:

Amtrak's vision for NE corridor: Bold, fast

Faster than a bird and a plane is the vision of Amtrak President Joseph Boardman for future Amtrak high-speed service throughout the Northeast megalopolis, north from Washington to Boston – a transportation corridor home to almost 50 million residents that represents more than 17 percent of the population on just two percent of the nation’s land area.

Boardman's $117-billion vision, to be implemented over the next 30 years, is for Amtrak to operate trains up to 220 mph over a high-speed passenger-rail right-of-way linking Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston.

Using a combination of public and private investment, Boardman would like construction to begin in 2015 and be fully operational by 2040.

Faster than a bird or a plane? Birds don't carry people.

Amtrak's vision for NE corridor: Bold, fast

Inside this issue of the UTU News:

There is nothing fishy about UTUer Burn's motivation. See page 2.

Retired Vice President Steve Thompson dies. See page 3.

Contemplating retirement? UTU has good advice. See pages 67.

Erika Diehl joins UTU Legal Dept. See page 10.

This photo was taken by Jason Berg, an Amtrak conductor and member of Local 117, Vancouver, Wash. "I was deadheading on the Empire Builder when we got delayed by a freight train for 45 minutes, so I got out and snapped some shots. This was taken in a siding called Kremlin, Mont., about ten miles west of Havre, Mont."