Great Lakes pilots land deal after years in holding pattern

After nearly three years of mediation with Great Lakes Airlines in conjunction with the National Mediation Panel, SMART Transportation Division-represented airline pilots employed by the company have finally reached an agreement with the carrier.

Following several requests by the pilots’ local representatives to the NMB to be released from mediation, the affected pilots and SMART representatives reached a tentative agreement in late June.

A four-year contract with significant wage increases and beneficial work-rule changes was approved Sept. 16 with 80 percent of the ballots cast in support of the deal. GO 040 General Committee of Adjustment Vice Chairperson Matthew Klundt reports that 92 percent of all eligible pilots voted.

GO 040 General Committee of Adjustment Chairperson Matthew Klundt said many of the GLA pilots were extremely happy to accommodate the long-ordained “The word ‘strike’ kept coming up among our members. We were all relieved when we saw a light at the end of the tunnel in June. I personally thank Transportation Division President John Trettenero and SMART representatives Jeremy Ferguson and other union officers for encouraging our members to let the process play out,” he said.

On average, airline captains will receive an immediate 20 percent pay increase, first officers an immediate 22 percent increase, and certified airline transport pilot first officers will see an immediate 55 to 55 percent pay increase, depending on what aircraft they are operating.

All Great Lakes pilots will then receive additional two- to three-percentage wage increases each year, through 2017. Realistically, the increases will amount to about 5.5 to six percent per year with the longevity increases built into the agreement. Other wage scales have also been negotiated for pilots operating jet airline service in anticipation of the carrier possibly purchasing those aircraft in the future.

“Hopefully, this will come to fruition soon as the number of passengers using Great Lakes’ services has been steadily shrinking due to competition providing faster jet service,” Ferguson said.

“The airline’s flights have also decreased due to pilot shortages created by new Federal Aviation Administration regulations which resulted in GLA pilots being recruited by larger carriers. I think this agreement is a win for both sides. The airline now greatly improves on-time performance and gains only Beechcraft 1900D and Embraer EMB-120 Brasilia turbo-prop aircraft with available seating ranging from nine to 30 stats.

The new contract also contains the following provisions:

- An increase in the daily allowance for expenses (per diem) rate from $1.35 to $1.50 per hour;
- An improved discipline grievance procedure, allowing for formal investigations with proper notice, within five days of a decision, charges, time limits on the notice, time limits on when a hearing can be held, the right to cross examine company witnesses and the right of the union to attend;
- A limit on pairings or crew pairings that cannot exceed five calendar days (Airline work schedules consist of assignments called “pairings” that are a sequence of flights that begin and end at the same terminal);
- After two years, an increase in the minimum wages for second- and first-class pilots.

Continued on page 10

FRA’s Szabo stepping down at year’s end

After nearly six years serving as chief of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Railroad Administration, Joe Szabo is stepping down in January.

In a statement to FRA staff, Szabo said, “I will head home to accept a position as a senior fellow for the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. In my new capacity, I’ll work with the region’s local elected officials, the Illinois General Assembly, the freight and passenger rail industry, organized labor, and logistic firms, and other metropolitan regions on transportation planning and programming. “It is a role that allows me to return to my roots in local government, to serve as a senior advisor on transportation policy, and – from Chicago – continue to advance the safe, efficient, and reliable movement of people and goods for a strong America, just like we’ve done together here at FRA.

“It has been an honor to serve my President, former Secretary Ray LaHood and Secretary Anthony Foxx.”

Nominated March 20, 2009, and confirmed by the United States Senate on April 29, 2009, Szabo is the twelfth Administrator of the FRA and the first to come from the ranks of rail workers.

Prior to becoming FRA administrator, Szabo served as the former United Transportation Union’s Illinois state legislative director. He also served as vice president of the Illinois AFL-CIO, mayor of Riverdale, Ill., and vice chairman of the Chicago Area Transportation Study’s Executive Committee. In 2002, he chaired the governor’s Freight Rail Sub-Committee and, in 2005, was assigned by the UTU to the FRA’s Railroad Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC), where he participated in the development of rail-safety regulations.

Continued on page 10

Calvin Studvant chosen as second bus vice president

The SMART Transportation Division’s board of directors selected former Alternate Vice President – Bus Calvin Studvant to serve as the division’s second bus vice president. Delegates attending the First SMART Transportation Division Convention in San Diego this past summer approved an amendment to the SMART Constitution calling for a second vice president to serve the Bus Department’s growing membership. That amendment was approved by delegates at the first SMART General Convention in August.

A member of Local 759 at Newark, N.J., Studvant was born June 18, 1960. He served his country in the U.S. Army from 1982 to 1986. He has been employed at Community Coach Transportation in New Jersey since June 1993, where he also served as local as general secretary and delegate. He also served as a Transportation Division organizer.

To fill the vacant office of alternate vice president – bus, the board of directors elected former board of appeals member Alyv Hughes to the position.

Hughes began his transportation career with Charlotte Transit in 1999. As a member of Local 1596 at Charlotte, N.C., Hughes has served as local vice president and as both secretary and general chairperson of General Committee of Adjustment GO TMM.

The bus position on the Transportation Division’s board of appeals has been filled by Vice General Chairperson Brenda H. Moore (1715).
Local 168, Chicago, Ill. Brianna McKenna, the daughter of Local Secretary & Treasurer Richard C. Craver and Local Trustees Michael Downer and Kenneth O. Edwards, has graduated from St. Ignatius College Prep and been accepted into a variety of universities. She plans to study accounting and business. McKenna has been a member of the Local 168 women’s club and has been active in incoming college tours. She has also volunteered at various local events and organizations. McKenna is planning to work towards becoming a financial advisor.”

Local 240, Los Angeles, Calif. Local Chairperson Harry Garvin Jr. reports that conductor and brakeman Steven P. Phares, 60, retired Oct. 1 after 42 years of service. Phares had been a member of the Southern Pacific Transportation Co., which later merged with Union Pacific Railroad in 1996. “Steven was a great railroader that loved his job and mainly, the property. Upon arrival, they discovered a 93-year-old man on the ground, unconscious. He was transported to a nearby hospital.

Local 350, Legislative Rep. Jeff Nichols reports that the paramedics and the scene personally thanked the crew for their actions, stating that “if not for the crew’s vigilance and quick actions, the gentleman would have passed away.”

Baker Creek, Calif. State Legislative Director Kenneth O. Edwards gave presentations on the handling of crude oil shipments. Antrak, the light in Indiana to privatize the Indianapolis to Chicago route and House Bill 3040. We thank Vice President Ferguson and State Legislative Director Edwards for coming and addressing the membership,” Garvin said.

Oakland, Calif. Local Chairperson Sandy Ronoldson reports that conductor and brakeman Joseph E. Roark, 50, was killed in a collision with a car on Oct. 4. Roark was a member of Local 303 at Springfield, Mo., and had been a conductor for over 10 years. Roark was on duty at the time of the accident.

St. Louis, Mo. Local Chairperson Harry Garvin Jr. reports that conductor and brakeman Steven P. Phares, 60, retired Oct. 1 after 42 years of service. Phares had been a member of the Southern Pacific Transportation Co., which later merged with Union Pacific Railroad in 1996. “Steven was a great railroader that loved his job and mainly, the property.”

Illinois Institute of Technology

T his N orfolk Southern local recently held its

Two heads better than one, life-saving effort proves The old adage, “two heads are better than one,” has generally proved true in many circumstances. By logical extension, it would seem that four eyes are better than two.

This is especially true for an elderly gentleman from Cabool, Mo., whose life was recently saved as a result of the keen eyesight and quick actions of two BNSF Railway train crew members: SMART Transportation Division conductor Tyler Roark and BLET Engineer Darin Vanter.

On Oct. 4, Roark and Vanter were on their train traveling north, having just left Cabool. Roark was observing all visual details ahead and around, looking for the slightest indication. From his side of the train, he spotted something that didn’t look quite right. There appeared to be a man on the ground, lying underneath a fence that separated a boundry. He raced to the house and yard. He didn’t seem to be moving.

Roark, a member of Local 303 at Springfield, Mo., immediately told Vanter, who proceeded to the scene and contacted the BNSF dispatcher. They accurately described the location of the property to the dispatcher, who relayed that information to the BNSF Resource Operations Call Center (ROCOC). Within minutes, Texas County emergency medical technicians were dispatched to the property. Upon arrival, they discovered a 93-year-old man on the ground, unconscious. He was transported to a nearby hospital.

Local 350 Legislative Rep. Jeff Nichols reports that the paramedics and the scene personally thanked the crew for their actions, stating that “if not for the crew’s vigilance and quick actions, the gentleman would have passed away.”

Nichols said that BNSF management obtained plagues and certificates for the crew, but before being able to present them, Roark left town for a funeral-obituary in Nebraska. “Terry Cart, Springfield Terminal Manager, was able to present Darin Vanter with his and said that he was going to reach out to Tyler and see when he was planning on coming home so he could make the presentation to him as well,” Nichols said.

Roark recently completed SMART after a brief sojourn to the BLET. He said a major reason for his return was the recent vote by Transportation Division members of GO 001 in determining crew consists. He also stressed the importance of having at least a two-person crew on each train.

“The elderly gentleman that I spotted was on my side of the train, not on the engineer’s side. If this had been a one-person train with only an engineer, it’s unlikely the engineer would have seen him,” Roark said.

Congratulations to Brother Roark for helping to save someone’s life through his sharp situational awareness. In matters of crew consist, two heads really are better than one.

Roark, and eight children. He was preceded in death by his former wife, Mary. The Transportation Division News regrets the error.

Local 1202, Fort Wayne, Ind. This Northeast Indiana local recently held its local officer elections and is proud to congratulate the officers listed in the photo caption below, Local Chairperson Gary Robson reports. At its October monthly meeting, Transportation Division Vice President Jeremy Ferguson and Indiana State Senator Steve Stivers, the former House Speaker, gave the presentation. Stivers was a member of the BNSF Transportation Division Kansas City Local 1203.

LePage are all first-time officeholders.

Local 528, Chicago, Ill. Local Chairperson David Wells reports that former conductor and Local Secretary & Treasurer Richard D. Gladkowski, 61, died Nov. 9 after a courageous battle with cancer. The Gladkowski family said that they were being handled by Heartland Memorial Center in Tinley Park, Ill.

Local 662, Richmond, Va. Local President Michael Downer reports that all Local 662 elected officers were re-elected:

Local Secretary & Treasurer Steve Herman. Not pictured are: Vice President and Local Chairperson Doug Edwards, Vice Local Chairperson Tom Abell, Local Secretary & Treasurer Joe Cook and Trustee Matt LePage. Of those elected, McCall, Moore, Smith, Edwards, Abell, Cook and LePage are all full-time officers.

Local 1581, Bakersfield, Calif. Pictured, front row from left, are: Vice Local Chairperson Kim McCaig, Vice Local Chairperson William Moreno and engineer’s Local Chairperson Mike Healey. In the back row, from left, are Legislative Rep. and Local Chairperson Andy McKean, Delegate and Local Chairperson Robbion, President Steve Doffo, Local Chairperson John Seppi, Trustee Tim Smith and Local Secretary & Treasurer Steve Herman. Not pictured are: Vice President and Local Chairperson Doug Edwards, Vice Local Chairperson Tom Abell, Local Secretary & Treasurer Joe Cook and Trustee Matt LePage. Of those elected, McCall, Moore, Smith, Edwards, Abell, Cook and LePage are all full-time officers.

Local 486, Glendale, Mont. Member Michael A. Shunway reports that this BNSF Railway local now has a local website that can be found at www.atu486.com. The website features a news section, local officer contact information, agreements, a photo gallery and much more.

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Barrows named for second term as RRB labor member

President Barack Obama announced Oct. 8 his intention to nominate Walter A. Barrows to a second term as the labor member to the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board. His nomination must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Obama first nominated Barrows as the board’s labor member in 2011. His appointment was confirmed by the Senate on Sept. 26, 2011, and he was sworn into office on Oct. 7.

Prior to his service with the RRB, Barrows served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen from 1999 to 2011. From 2004 to 2011, he also served as a labor trustee overseeing the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust Fund.

Following the nomination of Barrows and several others to key administration posts, Obama said, “These men and women bring extraordinary dedication to their roles and will serve the American people well. I look forward to working with them in the months and years to come.”

Barrows, 56, is a native of Ohio. He started his railroad career with the Norfolk & Western Railway in 1974, holding numerous positions within the railroad’s signal department. Before being elected RBS secretary-treasurer, he served the union in a variety of local and national offices, including general chairman for the Norfolk Southern General Committee and as a Grand Lodge trustee.

He currently resides in Front Royal, Va, with his wife, Linda. They have three grown children. Headquartered in Chicago, the RRB provides retirement, survivor, disability, unemployment and sickness benefit payments totaling almost $1 billion a year to railroad workers and their families under the Railroad Retirement and Unemployment Insurance Acts.

The agency is managed by a three-member board comprised of a representative of rail labor, a representative of rail carriers, and a member representing the general public who serves as chairman. Barrows’ appointment was unanimously supported by 12 different international and national unions which represent employees in the rail industry.

Committee reviews Section 6 notice proposals

A panel of Transportation Division general chairpersons from the Association of General Chairpersons – District I convened at the Transportation Division headquarters Sept. 29-30 to review Section 6 submissions from members and officers. The panel reviewed the submissions and fine-tuned them into Section 6 notices to be served on the rail carriers. Under the Railways Labor Act, the current national agreement between the SMART Transportation Division (UTU) and the National Carriers’ Conference Committee will remain in effect until a new agreement is reached. Pictured, from left, are General Chairperson David Otten (southern, Norfolk Southern GO 348), Danny Young (BNSF Railway GO 039), James A. Hous (Norfolk Southern GO 680), Brent Leonhard (Union Pacific GO 953), Chadwick Adams (BNSF Railway GO 393) and Steve Mastery (CSX GO 049).

Are rail 'special duty' jobs really that special?

What should union members know before accepting an offer from the railroad to work on a “special duty” assignment?

For starters, “special duty” assignments are generally not positions covered by the agreement with your union. If “special duty” assignments are not covered under your agreement, then you should understand that you do not have the rights and protections afforded to you under your agreement while you are performing these assignments.

It is recommended that you speak with your union representative to learn exactly what your agreement says about “special duty” assignments.

The following are considerations that should be carefully deliberated before accepting these types of assignments:

• Are “special duty” assignments covered under your agreement? What rights and entitlements do you have while working on these assignments?

• In addition to this added work, are you required and/or allowed to perform your regular assignment as well?

• Are you required and/or allowed to work overtime in your own craft while on “special duty” assignments?

• What are the required duties, responsibilities and expectations of employees while working “special duty” assignments?

• Can you refuse to work “special duty” assignments? Can you refuse to perform certain tasks while working on a “special duty” assignment?

• Should you do if the railroad asks you to perform work that violates your agreement?

• What should you do if the railroad asks you to provide them with information regarding matters that may be harmful to your stable work environment?

• What happens if you find yourself subjected to discipline under the railroad’s discipline policies while working on a “special duty” assignment?

• What obligations do you have when the “special duty” assignment ends? Can you stop working on the “special duty” assignment whenever you decide? Can the railroad stop using you on the “special duty” assignment whenever they decide?

As a union member, you are strongly encouraged to notify your union representatives prior to considering these types of assignments and seek their advice. In fairness to your fellow brothers and sisters, you should be transparent about the assignment and report any situation to the representative that could impact our jobs, our agreement, our union and our future.

This column was prepared by the J.D. Martin Council of Yardmaster General Chairpersons.

Terminal Railroad Alabama State Docks

SMART Transportation Division-represented trainmen and yardmasters employed by the Terminal Railroad Alabama State Docks have ratified a new six-year agreement by an overwhelming majority.

The new agreement provides for six, three percent annual general wage increases retroactive to April 1, 2012, with the final three percent general wage increase on April 1, 2017. This results in a cumulative wage increase of 19.1 percent over the life of the agreement, with full back pay.

The agreement establishes a $5 certification pay for yard foremen; increases meal periods to thirty minutes with a one hour meal payment on certain assignments; provides a thirty minute training payment for yard foremen, helpers and yardmasters, and reduces the vacation qualifying years to 12 years for four weeks of vacation and 23 years for five weeks vacation.

The agreement provides for calculating paid personal leave days as a start for five-day work weeks and allows employees to bank up to 60 personal leave days.

Transportation Division Vice President Dave Wier, who assisted in negotiations, thanks General Chairperson Mark Cook (GO 898), Alabama State Legislative Director Neil Elders, Local 598 Chairperson Blake Kyser and Local 598 Vice Chairperson Billy Johns, “for putting forth exceptional effort in bringing the members’ concerns to the bargaining table and negotiating an agreement that includes improvements in wages and working conditions.”

Lake Terminal Railroad

SMART Transportation Division-represented trainmen, engineers and yardmasters employed by Lake Terminal Railroad have ratified a new six-year agreement by a unanimous vote.

The agreement provides for six annual wage increases, beginning July 1, 2013, and rolls in previous cost-of-living adjustment increases, resulting in an 18.7 percent cumulative wage increase over the life of the contract.

It also includes lump sum back pay, establishes a $5 certification pay for conductors, engineers and remote control operators, increases carrier-matching contributions to $401(k) accounts to $1,300, and establishes an additional retirement account for new hires with a $75 monthly carrier contribution. There will be limits on employee health and welfare contributions to 12 percent of the plan costs and a freeze on co-pays and deductibles for the life of the contract.

Wier, who also assisted in this effort, congratulates Lake Terminal General Chairperson Brad Dilla and Local Chairperson Russ Telson for “bringing the members’ concerns to the bargaining table and negotiating an agreement with substantial improvements in pay, working conditions, health care and retirement savings.”

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For starters, “special duty” assignments are generally not positions covered by the agreement with your union. If “special duty” assignments are not covered under your agreement, then you should understand that you do not have the rights and protections afforded to you under your agreement while you are performing these assignments.

It is recommended that you speak with your union representative to learn exactly what your agreement says about “special duty” assignments.

The following are considerations that should be carefully deliberated before accepting these types of assignments:

• Are “special duty” assignments covered under your agreement? What rights and entitlements do you have while working on these assignments?

• In addition to this added work, are you required and/or allowed to perform your regular assignment as well?

• Are you required and/or allowed to work overtime in your own craft while on “special duty” assignments?

• What are the required duties, responsibilities and expectations of employees while working “special duty” assignments?

• Can you refuse to work “special duty” assignments? Can you refuse to perform certain tasks while working on a “special duty” assignment?

• Should you do if the railroad asks you to perform work that violates your agreement?

• What should you do if the railroad asks you to provide them with information regarding matters that may be harmful to your stable work environment?

• What happens if you find yourself subjected to discipline under the railroad’s discipline policies while working on a “special duty” assignment?

• What obligations do you have when the “special duty” assignment ends? Can you stop working on the “special duty” assignment whenever you decide? Can the railroad stop using you on the “special duty” assignment whenever they decide?

As a union member, you are strongly encouraged to notify your union representatives prior to considering these types of assignments and seek their advice. In fairness to your fellow brothers and sisters, you should be transparent about the assignment and report any situation to the representative that could impact our jobs, our agreement, our union and our future.

This column was prepared by the J.D. Martin Council of Yardmaster General Chairpersons.
Despite election results, we can prevail by standing together

With the midterm elections over, we now have an impression of what the next two years will look like for legislation affecting working families in the United States.

Overall, anti-worker politicians will now control the legislative agenda in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, as well as in a majority of state houses. The Wall Street CEOs, hedge fund managers and billionaire one-percenter who financed those anti-worker candidates will be expecting a return on their investment.

Based upon comments made on the campaign trail, we have an idea of what will come out of the GOP–dominated Congress in the final two years of the Obama Presidency – at least in how it relates to working family issues.

The newest head of the Senate Committee on Health, Education and Labor is expected to be Sen. Lamar Alexander (R–Tenn.). He donated much of his time and energy to stop a United Auto Workers organizing campaign in Chattanooga, Tenn. Expect attempts through his committee to impede new union election procedures that make it easier for workers to organize, along with new rules targeting pensions, retirement security, health care and worker safety.

Two years ago, U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan (R–Wis.) introduced a budget proposal that included a provision seeking to dismantle the Railroad Retirement system that has successfully existed for almost a century by placing it on the same tier as Social Security. Ryan also claimed that cutting Railroad Retirement would bring “an estimated savings to taxpayers of $2 billion over 10 years.” Not only is this not true, but it reveals a complete almost a century by placing it on the same tier as Social Security. Ryan also claimed that cutting Railroad Retirement would bring “an estimated savings to taxpayers of $2 billion over 10 years.” Not only is this not true, but it reveals a complete vision seeking to dismantle the Railroad Retirement system.

Two new newly elected Republican congressmen in Western Pennsylvania, along with our friend, Rep. Rick Nolan (D), a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

There is no escaping the reality that the incoming Congress will be less supportive of issues important to our members than the existing Congress. It will be harder to pass a two-person train crew bill and it will be harder to secure adequate funding for Amtrak, transit, essential air service and the National Mediation Board.

We don’t have the power to win political elections on our own and this election proved that. What we do have is an obligation to work hard and do the best job that we can for our members. That’s my plan moving forward.

Risch: The election is over, now let’s get to work

This simply means we have to work harder to make our case for all of these things.

A first step is for our state legislative directors to meet with the newly elected members and make the case for issues that are important to us.

We don’t have the power to win political elections on our own and this election proved that. What we do have is an obligation to work hard and do the best job that we can for our members. That’s my plan moving forward.

With the help of Greg Hynes, our alternate national legislative director, our staff and our state legislative boards, we can protect the interests of our members as our union has done for more than 100 years.

Fraternally,

John Risch
National Legislative Director
SMART Transportation Division

Thanks to all of you who helped in our Get Our the Vote Campaign. Your generosity with your PAC contributions, emails and direct mail efforts, volunteer phone calling, door knocking, and your conversations with friends and fellow union members made a difference in many races.

Even where our endorsed candidates didn’t prevail, your efforts were not in vain. Rather, it showed that we were engaged and that we are an organization that supports those that support us.

Clearly the results from Tuesday’s elections were not what many of us had hoped. We lost some good friends like Rep. Nick Rahall (D) in West Virginia and Sen. Mark Pryor in Arkansas (D).

Now our job begins to build relationships with the newly elected members of Congress, whether they are Democrat or Republican.

Anthony Simon, our Long Island Railroad general chairperson, has already reached out to two newly elected Republican congressmen in New York and is setting up introductory meetings.

Special thanks go to Dean Mitchell, our GOTV coordinator, for his hundreds of hours of work on direct mail pieces, robocalls and polling. He worked with our legislative boards to make sure our members were informed as to why we endorsed the candidates we did and helped with early and absentee voting.

Dean also helped with polling and direct mail that made a big difference in the re-election of two good Republican friends, Reps. Chris Gibson and Michael Grimm, both of New York.
Arizona

With the election of Greg Hynes to SMART Transportation Division Assistant National Legislative Director effective Oct. 1, there is a new sheriff in town. Scott Jones, former assistant state legislative director, has been elevated to the office of Arizona state legislative director.

A member of Local 1081 at Glendale, Ariz., Jones has worked on the railroad for 18 years and is a decorated retired military bomb squad leader. The local legislative representative took a leave of absence from BNSF Railway to serve his country in Iraq.

“I am honored to have Scott as my successor,” Hynes said. “I’m sure he will serve our members well.”

Ohio

With the assistance of State Legislative Director Stu Gardner, Transportation Division Local 378 at Cleveland held a “call to action” labor rally Oct. 20 at Sheet Metal Local 33’s union hall and training center in Parma, Ohio. Approximately 45 members and staff were in attendance.

Gardner opened the rally by reminding all that the election was about “voting their paychecks.” Pictured, from left, are Assistant State Legislative Director John Patrick Carney, State Rep. Nicholas Celebrezze, State Rep. Tom Sever, State Rep. Carol Grossman, Gardner, Assistant State Legislative Director David Ones, and Sen. Michael Skindell.

Washington

Members of the SMART Transportation Division’s Washington State Legislative Board attended a three-day legislative conference in September sponsored by the DCG Group, Millennium, and the Northwest Alliance for Jobs and Exports. Legislative Director Herb Krohn reports. Participants were focused on rail labor issues in the state and most of the Transportation Division’s legislative representatives attended. Presentations were also made by leaders from the Millennium and Gateway export terminal projects, the Northwest Alliance for Jobs and Exports and DCG Group. “We presented a brass lantern to State Rep. Larry Haler (R) as ‘House member of the year’ for his sponsorship of both the state’s two-person train crew bill (H.R. 2718) and the yardmaster hours of service limitation bill (H.R. 1621),” Krohn said. “Rep. Haler is a hero to rail labor and is someone who is a shining example of a rare, elected official who is unwavering in support for the safety of rail workers and the public, even in the face of railroad strong-arming tactics and opposition from his own caucus.”

Illinois

Members from both the Sheet Metal and Transportation Divisions of SMART were in attendance at the Illinois AFL-CIO 41st annual Constitutional Convention in Rosemont when the organization’s delegates unanimously approved a resolution supporting SMART Transportation Division’s call for federal legislation mandating at least two crew members on all freight trains. Pictured, from left, are Sheet Metal Local 73 Business Agent Frank Ivonell, SMART Transportation Division Illinois Legislative Board Chairperson John O’Brien, Sheet Metal Local 73 Business Agent Mike Magee, SMART General Vice President Rocco Terranova, SMART Transportation Division Alternate Illinois Legislative Director Carl Druger, Illinois State Legislative Director Bob Guy, Transportation Division Local 265 Secretary & Treasurer Chuck Rauchge, Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn, Sheet Metal Local 265 Business Manager John Keating, SMART Transportation Division Assistant Illinois Legislative Director Joe Cameron, Sheet Metal Local 1 Business Rep. Larry Louis, Sheet Metal Local 73 Recording Secretary Mike Vittorio, Sheet Metal Local 73 Business Agent Brian Mulhern and Sheet Metal Local 73 Business Agent Dan Abers.

Pa. school bus employees pick up three-year deal

SMART Transportation Division members employed by First Student, Inc., in Southeastern Pennsylvania have ratified a new three-year contract, retroactive to June 1, 2014.

The contract covers SMART members of Local 172 at Darby, Pa., working in school bus operations until June 30, 2017. Of the 92 votes cast, 55 were in favor of the agreement.

Members will receive a three percent wage increase across the board for each year of the contract, for a total of nine percent. Driver’s rates of pay will be paid on all charter work and on all van runs with the addition of a meal allowance for charters.

Also provided in the contract is a provision increasing the number of allowable hours worked per week, up to 45. Management had previously disadvantaged employees from working more than 40 hours.

If during the year, an operator’s run hours are reduced by 20 percent or more, that operator will have the option to bump another driver from service whose hours exceed 40.

Also included in the contract is a provision that requires the company to immediately provide an employee with a debit card matching any payroll discrepancy of $50 or more. If a driver or monitor is displaced from a service run for any non-disciplinary reason, the driver will not suffer a loss in hourly pay.

“I thank Local 172 Vice Chairperson Denise Hall, Secretary Kathleen Sitongia and Chairperson Theresa Costantini for their dedication and hard work on this agreement,” Bus Vice President Calvin Studvant said.

Local 172 members chose the former United Transportation Union as their first collective bargaining representative approximately 10 years ago, when the property was unorganized.

Bus Department

By Reddy Adhi, Vice President-Bus areddy@smart-union.org

Thank you for your support, I am here to assist you

To each and every delegate of the SMART Transportation Division, I would like to thank you for electing me to the position of vice president of SMART’s bus department.

My request to all SMART members is to please work with all of your newly elected officers at all levels of the organization. Keep all of your officers informed regarding the issues you face on a daily basis so they can bring your issues to the table and together, we can get the best deals for our membership.

As a local officer, I was not only a member of this organization, but I also worked for the membership. I was, and remain, a middleman between our individual members and our entire SMART organization. I am here to serve.

We have a very powerful organization in SMART, with more than 130,000 active and retired Transportation Division members. We must continue to work together with our brothers and sisters – for our brothers and sisters – to keep our union strong. We – your officers – are ready to work for you if only you allow us to do so.

Knowledge is power. I ask each of you to try to attend all of your local meetings to stay informed and to educate yourself about your agreements and your fellow members. There are a lot of federal and state rules and regulations in the transportation industry, along with workplace policies. Change is happening all the time, so try your best to keep up with changes that affect you. It is easy to follow the rules by knowing them in advance, instead of learning about them when you have been disciplined.

In our business, time limits are very important. If you feel your contract has been violated, contact your local officers immediately, or leave a note in the union mailbox. I have seen, too many times, members waiting too long to notify their local officers of violations and losing cases because they were not filed in a timely manner.

My telephone number is (216) 287-3924 and my email address is areddy@smart-union.org. I am here to assist you.

The holidays will be here before we know it, so I wish all of you and your families a very happy holiday season. Be “SMART” and be union! I hope to see all of you soon.
Newly elected officers of the SMART Transportation Division

JOHN PREVISICH
Transportation Division President

John Previsich is the president of the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers, formerly the United Transportation Union. He is a member of Local 31 in San Jose, Calif. Previsich began his railroading career with Southern Pacific Transportation Company, where he commenced work as a train service operations employee in San Francisco. He later transferred to engine service and attained certification as both a railroad conductor and locomotive engineer. Previsich initiated during work as a local union officer in the mid-1980s. He moved into a system-wide position as a general chairperson in the early 1990s, followed by his election as vice president in 2007. He was re-elected in 2011, serving in the position of assistant president in 2012 and assuming the responsibilities of the general secretary and treasurer position on Jan. 1, 2013. He was re-elected to the position of presiding officer Oct. 1, 2013, and was elected to the office at the Transportation Division convention in 2014.

JOHN RISCH
National Legislative Director

John Risch is the national legislative director of the SMART Transportation Division and has worked full-time in Washington, D.C., office since 2009. There, he works on legislative, regulatory, safety and political issues. He was elected national legislative director in 2014. Risch is a former North Dakota State Legislative Director for the United Transportation Union, serving in that capacity from 1986 to 2009, and as a member of Local 1144 at Mandan, N.D. Risch began his railroading career on Burlington Northern Railroad, working in the road department for two summers while attending college. In the fall of 1976, he hired out in train service and in 1979, he entered engine service and was on the Executive Board from 1991 until 1999. He is a graduate of Bismarck State College and earned a bachelor’s degree in Labor Studies from Antioch University of Yellow Springs, Ohio, where he studied collective bargaining, labor history, labor law, world labor movements and other issues related to labor.

GREG HYNES
Alternate National Legislative Director

Greg Hynes is a 60th generation railroader born in Window, Ariz., bringing up with Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway in Los Angeles, Calif., in 1995. He transferred to Phoenix, Ariz., in 1997. Hynes was elected local legislative representative of Local 1081 at Glendale, Ariz., in 2003. He was elected Arizona State Legislative Director in 2004, was elected to Arizona State Legislative Director in 2009 and was re-elected to that office in 2011. He served on the Executive Council of the Arizona State AFL-CIO and held the positions of the Finance Committee chairmen and Legislative Committee chairmen. Hynes was appointed the first chairperson of the UTU Rail Safety Task Force in 2009 and served in that capacity until being elected SMART Transportation Division Alternate National Legislative Director at the Transportation Division’s convention in 2014. Also in 2014, he was appointed to Federal Railroad Administration’s (FRA) Railroad Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC), which develops new railroad regulatory standards.

David Wier Sr.
Vice President

Local 689, Madison, Ill.

John Lesniewski
Vice President

Local 1534, Chicago, Ill.

Troy Johnson
Vice President

Local 594, Mineola, Texas

John R. England
Vice President

Local 1747, Los Angeles, Calif.

David W. Patenaude
Vice President

Local 1770, Reno, Nev.

Calvin K. Studvant
Vice President

Local 759, Newark, N.J.

John D. Whitaker III
Vice President

Local 1156, Rocky Mount, N.C.

DOYLE K. TURNER
Vice President

Local 1962, Toledo, Ohio

Jeremy Ferguson
Vice President

Local 313, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Rddy Adhi
Vice President

Local 1785, Santa Monica, Calif.

Executive Board

STEVE DAVISON
Local 877, Janesville, Wisc.

STEVE MAVITY
Local 298, Garrett, Ind.

Mike Anderson
Local 1570, Roselle, Ill.

Robert Rebendez Jr.
Local 1422, Los Angeles, Calif.

Phil Craig
Local 14, Harris, S.D.

John D. Whitaker III
Local 1156, Rocky Mount, N.C.

Board of Appeals

Dirk A. Sampson
Local 117, Ventnor, Wash.

Dale Barnett Jr.
Local 722, Montgomery Ala.

Trisa Collins
Local 1137, Fargo, N.D.

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His son, Pat, is now riding as an engineer with the Local 807 (Tucson, Ariz.) officer.

Caret Act required Part D beneficiaries whose income exceeds $85,000 (or $170,000 for a married couple). The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services estimates that pay the larger income-adjusted premiums.

Medicare Part B premiums remain unchanged in 2015
The standard Medicare Part B monthly premium will be $104.90 in 2015, the same amount as in 2014. Some beneficiaries will continue to pay higher premiums based on their modified adjusted gross income, but those amounts are also remaining the same as in 2014. The monthly premiums that include income-related adjustments for 2015 will be $114.90, $229.90, $272.70, or $335.70, depending on the extent to which an individual beneficiary's modified adjusted gross income exceeds $48,000 ($141,600 for a married couple).

Cost-of-living increases are calculated in both the Tier I and Tier II benefits included in a railroad retirement annuity. Tier I benefits, like Social Security benefits, will increase by 1.7 percent, which is the percentage of the CPI rise. Tier II benefits will increase by 0.6 percent, which is 3.2 percent of the CPI rise. The vested dual benefit payments and supplemental annuities also paid by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) are not adjusted for the CPI.

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for nearly 64 million Americans will also increase by 1.7 percent in January 2015. The average regular railroad retirement employee annuity will increase $34 a month to $2,537 and the average of combined benefits for an employee and spouse will increase $48 a month to $3,666. For those aged widower’s eligible for an increase, the average annuity will increase $20 a month to $1,911.

RRB, Social Security benefits increase in 2015
Most railroad retirement annuities, like Social Security benefits, are scheduled to increase in January 2015 on the basis of the rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the third quarter of 2013 to the corresponding period of the current year.

Following are the names of recently deceased members who maintained annual membership in the UTU Alumni Association, according to reports received at UTU International Headquarters. These brothers and sisters will be missed by their many friends and by fellow UTU Alumni Association members.

Local
R McFarland, Jean Mount Laurel, N.J.
8 McElvany, William Salina, Kan.
1 Martha, Clifford W. Geneva, Ohio
4 Boudreau, Joseph F. Fabreville, Que.
60 Jaeger, Donald E. Clifton, N.J.
112 Hairrell, Ronald R. Winslow, Ariz.
195 Luers, Eugene H. West Burlington, Iowa
200 Wright Sr., Jack S. North Platte, Neb.
257 Taylor, Thomas E. Omaha, Neb.
262 Fabricius, David H. Addison, Minn.
305 Tomasiewicz, J.S. Omaha, Neb.
412 Eibach, William F. Emporia, Kan.
490 Hartsell, James H. Hutto, Texas
493 Rials, James A. Palestine, Texas
497 Short, Fremont J. Caledonia, Ill.
504 Heckman, Harold S. Palestine, Texas
524 Bell, Kenneth W. Reisterstown, Md.
631 Whitacre, Robert L. Spring Hill, Fla.
694 Corley, Melvin L. Redding, Calif.
768 Backersten, Eugene W. Decatur, Ill.
847 Rodney, Royce M. Fultondale, Ala.
911 Sales, Gary L. Muscata, Iowa
924 Stoss, John F. Chesapeake, Va.
931 Johnson, Lawrence R. Jefferson City, Mo.
934 Jantzi, Dennis K. Alliance, Neb.
1067 Engstrom, Joseph F. Virginia, Minn.
1074 Linn, Michael C. Tequesta, Fla.
1075 Romanycz, Michael J. Toledo, Ohio
1106 Proctor, Ruben G. Rocky Mount, N.C.
1162 King, Bruce A. Telford, Tenn.
1169 Girvan, Ron J. Pinole, Calif.
1241 Scott, Robert L. Hazard, Ky.
1365 Dantroski, Richard Jamestown, N.D.
1381 Swainy Jr., Joseph G. Girard, Ohio
1409 Smith, Archie A. Southeart, Ga.
1477 Moore, Governor G. Kansas City, Kan.
1510 Wall, Jonathan P. Hutsonville, Ill.
1586 Blaugh, Jimmy L. Brazil, Ind.
1589 O’Donnell, Raymond P. Indianapolis, Ind.
1589 Roche, Joseph T. Martin, Ohio
1593 Arizmendi, Jose S. Loma Linda, Calif.
1629 Kerby, Jesse R. Mesa, Ariz.
1949 McDermott, Kenneth P. Basking Ridge, N.J.
Accidents happen. Without proper insurance, they are costly. UTUIA Accident Indemnity Insurance can help.

Protect yourself and your family from accidents, on and off the job, for less than $1 per day

UTUIA’s accident indemnity plan provides you with money when you need it most: when you’ve had an accident and cannot work.

It helped Local 627 Chairperson John Foote. While being transported in a carrier van, Foote’s life permanently and unexpectedly changed in an instant. His deployed airbag and seat belt saved his life, but the resulting injuries he suffered required ongoing medical attention. His UTUIA Accident Indemnity policy saved him from many of those ensuing medical expenses.

Benefits are paid for emergency treatment, hospital confinement, exams, physical therapy, ambulance service and more. Use the money for whatever you want: mortgage payments, car payments or medical expenses. The choice is yours.

The UTUIA offers two levels of benefits; you choose the level of protection you and your family desire.

• Benefits are paid directly to you.
• Benefits are paid at full value, regardless of any other insurance.
• Benefits will never be reduced.
• Your premium does not increase with age.
• You will never be singled out for a rate increase.
• Guaranteed renewable to age 80.
• No physical required.

Certain conditions and exemptions may apply.

I would like more information on UTUIA’s accident indemnity insurance plan.

Full name __________________________ Date of birth __________ Local number __________

Address __________________________________________________________________________

City State _______ ZIP __________ Sex Male Female

Telephone number with area code __________________________

I would like to inquire on UTUIA Accident Indemnity Insurance.

Phone __________________________

Fax __________________________

Email __________________________

Please print the application and mail or fax to UTUIA, 24950 Country Club Blvd., Ste. 340, North Olmsted, OH 44070-5333 or call 800-558-8842.

Call or email today: (800) 558-8842 or sales@utui.org

Accidents happen. Without proper insurance, they are costly. UTUIA Accident Indemnity Insurance can help.

Changes made to SMART Discipline Income Protection Program

SMART Discipline Income Protection Program has not increased its monthly assessment rates in six years. During that period, the amount that the DIPP plan disbursed in benefits has greatly exceeded the amount that it collected in premiums.

Since DIPP cannot continue to operate effectively at a deficit, the program’s trustees have increased the monthly assessment by five cents for each dollar of benefits – from $6 to $11 cents – effective Feb. 1, 2015, and have reduced the maximum days of benefits payable to those shown in the table below.

The new maximum-day limits will apply to eligible suspensions and discharges that occur on or after Feb. 1. Participants’ current daily benefit will remain in effect and the higher monthly assessments will automatically be deducted from their paycheck unless a participant submits the appropriate change form to modify the daily benefit he or she had previously selected.

The trustees have made additional changes to the DIPP which are effective Nov. 1, 2014.

A participant now may change his or her monthly assessment no more frequently than every 12 months and any increase or decrease in that rate will only be effective for eligible suspensions or discharges that occur more than 90 days after the increase or decrease.

Benefits for disciplinary actions occurring prior to the expiration of the 90-day period will be paid at the old rate.

Even with these changes, DIPP offers much richer benefits than any of the other discipline income plans and remains the only one that is administered by your union, rather than a for-profit insurance company.

Schedule of Maximum Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Assessment</th>
<th>Number of Active Months of Membership in Income Protection Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$4.26</td>
<td>$5.10 $10.50 $15.80 $21.10 $26.40 $31.70 $37.00 $42.30 $47.60 $52.90 $58.20 $63.50 $68.80 $74.10 $79.40 $84.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>$6.00</td>
<td>$15.00 $20.00 $25.00 $30.00 $35.00 $40.00 $45.00 $50.00 $55.00 $60.00 $65.00 $70.00 $75.00 $80.00 $85.00 $90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8.00</td>
<td>$27.00 $32.00 $37.00 $42.00 $47.00 $52.00 $57.00 $62.00 $67.00 $72.00 $77.00 $82.00 $87.00 $92.00 $97.00 $102.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$40.00 $47.00 $54.00 $61.00 $69.00 $76.00 $83.00 $90.00 $97.00 $104.00 $111.00 $118.00 $125.00 $132.00 $139.00 $146.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Great Lakes pilots

Continued from page 1

Szabo stepping down

Continued from page 1

Guests celebrate Stem’s retirement on Capitol Hill

A number of SMART Transportation Division officers, state legislative directors and staff gathered Sept. 15 at the Rayburn House Office Building on the grounds of Capitol Hill to celebrate the retirement of former National Legislative Director James Stem, who officially retired Sept. 30. The gala was held near the chambers of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, where Stem spent much of his time in office over 16 years as United Transportation Union and SMART Transportation Division alternate national legislative director and national legislative director. Pictured, from left, are Colorado State Legislative Director Carl Smith, retired Pennsylvania State Legislative Director Don DuBois, Minnesota State Legislative Director Philip Quade, New England States Legislative Director George Casey, Maryland State Legislative Director Larry Kascamp, Florida State Legislative Director Andres Trujillo, Legislative Office Assistant Chief of Staff Jenny Miller, Stem, Transportation Division President John Presisch, Indiana State Legislative Director Ken Rush, Transportation Division Vice President Jeremy Ferguson, Virginia State Legislative Director Patrick Corp, Kentucky State Legislative Director Jared Casley, Ohio State Legislative Director Stuart Gardiner and Ohio State Legislative Board Secretary and Local 378 President Jeffrey Brandow.

Do you know the Annual Percentage Rate for your credit card?

Most people don’t…but you should!

Take a look at your monthly credit card statement and locate the Annual Percentage Rate. Compare the APR you may be paying now to the low 9.25% APR for purchases with the Amalgamated Bank of Chicago Bank Card.* If your statement shows a rate higher than 9.25% APR, you could save hundreds of dollars every year by switching to the Amalgamated Bank of Chicago Bank Card.

The Amalgamated Bank SMART Bank Card offers more than just the lowest APR. Members also enjoy:

• Zero liability could guarantee that you won’t be held responsible for fraudulent charges made with your card or account information
• Customer service from a union bank staffed by union employees
• Optional rewards program

If you are not yet carrying the SMART bank card, call 1-800-365-6464 for an application or apply online at https://www.aboc.com/smart

The Amalgamated Bank of Chicago credit card is available only to members of SMART living in the United States.

2015 railroad paid holiday schedule

Rail employees working under the national agreement between the UTU and the National Carriers’ Conference Committee (NCCC) will receive 11 paid holidays in 2015. They are:

• New Year’s Day, Thursday, Jan. 1
• President’s Day, Monday, Feb. 16
• Good Friday, Friday, April 3
• Memorial Day, Monday, May 25
• Independence Day, Saturday, July 4
• Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 7
• Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, Nov. 24
• Day after Thanksgiving, Friday, Nov 25
• Christmas Eve, Thursday, Dec. 24
• Christmas Day, Friday, Dec. 25
• New Year’s Eve, Thursday, Dec. 31

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FMCSA promotes safety belt use in employees’ kids’ contest

On Nov. 1, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) kicked-off the 2015 “Be Ready. Be Buckled.” student art contest organized by the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Belt Partnership.

Open to students in kindergarten through twelfth grade with relatives or sponsors in the commercial truck and bus industries, the contest educates kids about highway safety and urges commercial drivers to buckle up on every trip.

“Buckling your safety belt should be an automatic practice for every driver and passenger since it’s the simplest and most effective way to save your life in the event of a crash,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. “The purpose of this art contest is to engage children and their parents in discussing safety and to provide a calendar of kids’ artwork that serves as a year-round reminder to always buckle-up.”

In just the last three years, safety belt use has continued to rise among medium-to-heavy truck and bus drivers to an all-time high of 84 percent, according to a 2013 FMCSA study. While good news, there is room for improvement.

“The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s most recent data from 2012 showed that 697 occupants of large trucks were killed in crashes; approximately 40 percent were not wearing safety belts.

“The good news is that overall safety belt use for professional bus and truck drivers has steadily increased each year and as a direct result, more lives are being saved,” said FMCSA Acting Administrator Scott Darling. “We are focused on reminding every driver that there is never an excuse to skip the important step of buckling up.”

FMCSA will accept contest submissions through Feb. 28, 2015. Students can submit their artwork by mail to the following address:

CMV Safety Belt Partnership
C/o CVSA
Attention: Nicole Leandro
6303 Ivy Lane, Suite 310
Greenbelt, MD 20770

Artwork will be evaluated in two categories: one for kindergarten through second grade, and another for third through sixth grade.

UnitedHealthcare holds enrollment under GA-23111

During November and December 2014, UnitedHealthcare will hold an open enrollment under Group Policy GA-23111.

During this period, any individual who is eligible for coverage under one of the GA-23111 plans can enroll and will be accepted for coverage without any medical underwriting or requirement of good health.

There are no limitations for pre-existing conditions. Enrollment in November and December 2014 will be for coverage effective Jan. 1, 2015.

Only those applicants whose completed enrollment form is postmarked in November 2014 or December 2014 will be considered for open enrollment.

This open enrollment is being held for former railroad employees (and their dependents) who were previously covered under any railroad health plan and were represented by a railway labor organization or were members in accordance with the constitution or by-laws of one of the participating railroad labor organizations, when coverage under their applicable group health plan ended.

If someone you know meets these GA-23111 eligibility provisions, open enrollment provides an opportunity for them to become covered.

Other eligible members of your family may also enroll if they are not currently covered.

In addition, open enrollment under Plan F is available for railroad employees’ parents or parents-in-law who are eligible under Medicare.

Anyone interested in enrolling should call one of the following phone numbers to get additional information about these plans.

For persons eligible for Medicare, call (800) 809-0453; for persons not eligible for Medicare, call (800) 842-5252.


Show your union pride with union gear

American Products offers line of union-made SMART gear, clothing

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

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

American Products is offering several new items this fall that were debated at the regional meetings this summer and will feature some additional items for sale by the end of this month. Please be sure to check the website for details on all the new items.

All items carry a 100 percent quality guarantee against defects in materials and workmanship. Volume discounts on customized orders are available to SMART locals.

Watches and clocks carry a two-year manufacturer’s warranty against defects.

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

Members may also download and print a content order form that can be mailed to UTU Merchandise, Inc., 1600 North Clinton Avenue, Rochester, NY 14621.

Apparel prices may vary depending on size. Visit the SMART TD online store for complete details about prices and available sizes.

American Products, Inc.

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SMART Transportation Division

www.utu.org / www.utuia.org

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Amtrak ridership, revenues continue strong growth

Amtrak posted record ticket revenues for its Fiscal Year 2014 ending Sept. 30 and achieved an increase in ridership over the prior fiscal year, reflecting strong continued demand for passenger rail. However, meeting future growth in passenger demand requires investing in the infrastructure that supports intercity passenger rail and resolving unacceptable congestion delays caused by freight railroads that own the tracks.

For Fiscal Year 2014, ticket revenues reached $2.189 billion, up 4.0 percent from the prior year. Ridership was more than 30.9 million, an increase of 0.2 percent over adjusted FY 2013 numbers. The slower growth in ridership than in recent years is due, in part, to a harsh winter season and on-time performance issues associated with freight train delays and infrastructure in need of replacement.

With ridership of 11.6 million, the Northeast Corridor (NEC) had its highest ridership year ever in FY 2014, up 3.3 percent from the prior year. However, ridership on long-distance routes and state-supported services declined by 4.3 percent and 0.6 percent, respectively.

The Acela Express and the Northeast Regional services each set a new ridership record. In particular, Acela showed strong popularity, with 28 days where the number of trips topped 14,000 as compared to just five such days in the previous year. Eight other routes also set ridership records, including Adirondack, Auto Train, Albany-Niagara Falls-Toronto, Blue Water, Capitol Limited, Empire Service, Fredonia, and Washington-Lynchburg.

“Amtrak is clearly selling a product that is very much in demand,” said Amtrak Board Chairman Tony Coscia. “Achieving strong ridership and revenue despite the challenges with aging infrastructure and freight rail congestion demonstrates Amtrak’s commitment to improving its financial and operating performance, and is a credit to Amtrak’s management and staff. It is now time to leverage Amtrak’s successes in increasing ridership and improving performance by making much-needed investments in our nation’s passenger rail system.”

As more and more people choose Amtrak for their travel needs, investments must be made in the tracks, tunnels, bridges and other infrastructure used by intercity passenger trains particularly on the Northeast Corridor and in Chicago,” said Amtrak President and CEO Joe Boardman.

“Otherwise, we face a future with increased infrastructure-related service disruptions and delays that will hurt local and regional economies and drive passengers away.”

Boardman explained that nowhere is the connection between passenger rail and economic growth stronger than in the NEC, but its infrastructure continues to age and suffers from a chronic case of long-term underfunding.

“The freight railroads simply have to do a better job in moving Amtrak trains over their tracks,” Boardman stressed.

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