Previsich testifies before Senate subcommittee on passenger rail

SMART Transportation Division President John Previsich testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety and Security Dec. 10 at the Russell Senate Office Building.

The hearing focused on the current state of intercity passenger rail in the United States, the need to invest for future growth and implications for future legislative action. It was presided over by Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), chairman of the subcommittee.

Previsich called on the committee and Congress as a whole to present a long-term vision for passenger rail that includes predictable, dedicated sources of funding.

“Public investment in our nation’s passenger rail system is truly an investment in our nation’s future. Passenger rail is a critical part of our national transportation infrastructure, an important driver of our national and regional economies, and is a middle-class job creator,” Previsich said.

“I can speak to this matter from personal experience. In my capacity as a union representative, I have been involved on passenger rail properties from coast to coast that have leveraged various forms of public funding to provide excellent quality service to the communities through which they operate.

“In my home state of California, I have watched Caltrain in the San Francisco Bay Area leverage a combination of local and federal funding to revitalize the service and move from a low of 3,500 boardings per day, when operated by a private enterprise, to the current figure of over 53,000 boardings per day.

“In my home county of Santa Cruz, Calif., a planning process is already underway to identify new transit corridors that will reduce the number of daily auto trips, decrease our use of fossil fuels and promote more affordable housing. All across America, communities are relying on transit funding to invest in strategic planning that will pay back the investment many times over through job creation, community stimulus, increased tax base and better utilization of local resources.

“It is important to note that for more than 100 years prior to the creation of Amtrak, passenger rail service was provided by private railroads. For at least 40 years prior to public funding, the private rail carriers were unable to provide passenger rail service without sustaining significant financial losses. It was because private operators were unable to continue to provide that service without sustaining huge losses that Amtrak was formed.

“Amtrak was created to save rail passenger service in America, but it must be remembered that the creation of Amtrak was also intended to save our freight rail industry from economic ruin. America’s railroads were losing $1 billion per year providing passenger service just prior to the creation of Amtrak. That is $10 billion in today’s dollars. Had Amtrak not been established, America’s rail system would have financially collapsed.

“Today, Americans support and want more passenger rail. Amtrak has set ridership records in 10 of the last 11 years and polling that our union has commissioned throughout the country shows overwhelming support for more service and increased funding for Amtrak. This is not a partisan issue – our polls show that Democrats and Republicans in red states and blue states support continued and improved Amtrak service.

“Unfortunately, this comes at a time when inadequate federal funding has caused our nation’s passenger rail system to age and deteriorate. As Amtrak’s annual budget requests have established, its aging fleet needs replacing and public investment is needed.”

Continued on page 10

SMART Constitution now available online

The SMART Constitution, as amended by SMART delegates at the first SMART General Convention, is now available on both the SMART website at www.smart-union.org and the Transportation Division website at www.uta.org.

In January 2014, the SMART Sheet Metal and Transportation Division officers completed constitutional modifications required by the terms and conditions of the merger between the two predecessor organizations. That document incorporated the former UTU Constitution into the former SMWIA Constitution as Article 21B of the merged document. At that time, all conflicts between Article 21B and the remainder of the constitution were resolved in order to effectuate the merger.

In 2014, delegates to the SMART Transportation Division convention proposed recommendations for amendments to the constitution. At the first SMART General Convention held Aug. 11-13, those amendments were debated and resolved.

The August proceedings in Las Vegas closed with a show of unity, cooperation and newfound strength.

Of significance to SMART’s Transportation Division membership, the amended constitution contained provisions for the addition of a second vice president to the division’s Bus Department and the addition of a member of the Aviation Department to the division’s board of appeals.

As noted in the October edition of the Transportation Division News, the Transportation Division’s board of directors selected former Alternate Vice President – Bus Calvin Studviant to serve as the division’s second bus vice president to serve the Bus Department’s growing membership. To fill the vacant office of alternate vice president – bus, the board of directors elevated former board of appeals member Alvy Hughes to that position.

On Oct. 23, the Transportation Division’s board of directors selected Charlotte Transit OIC TMD Vice General Chairperson Brenda H. Moore (1715) to fill the open bus position on the board of appeals. The board also chose Great Lakes Airlines Local 40 (Denver) President John Nolan to fill the position of aviation representative to the board of appeals.
Local 486, Glendive, Mont.

Beginning in January, this local will hold a monthly photography contest for its members for its website photo gallery, member Michael Shumway reports. “Each monthly winner will receive a $50 prize and all photos submitted will be included in the website’s photo gallery, with each monthly winner being featured on the website’s homepage,” Shumway said. Photographs will also be eligible to be included in the yearly Transportation Division calendar for Alumni Association members.

The website can be found at www.utu486.com.

Local 199, Creston, Iowa

The members of this BNSF Railway local recently recognized the retirement of three members in November, Local Chairperson Bill Viana said: Lonnie Grif, who worked out with Chicago & North Western Transportation Company in 1976; Dale Hooper, who worked out with Burlington Northern in 1976; and Jamie Hayes, who joined BN in 1972. Hayes and Hooper are pictured above. “All were great members and mentors and will be missed tremendously,” Viana said.

Local 303, Springfield, Mo.

Longtime Local Chairperson Steve McElhaney was honored with a retirement celebration at the Springfield BNSF Railway Terminal Dec. 2 after more than 42 years of service. Legislative Rep. Jeff Nichols reports. McElhaney is pictured above with his wife and daughter. “Steve hired out with the Frisco Railroad when he was 18 years old. He served as chairperson for conductors and beneficiaries for more than 20 years and was a convention delegate. He also worked as a newsline training coordinator along with Local Chairperson Scott Perryman. I can count on one hand the union meetings Steve missed over the last 10 years and they were usually because he was on duty and out of town,” Nichols said.

Local 607, Thayer, Mo.

Newly hired conductors for BNSF Railway here completed their class Nov. 21, Local Secretary & Treasurer Ryan King reported. Pictured in the front row, from left, are Tammy Holman, Richard Dills, Ryan Lamb, Chase Benson and Matt Tarmohr. In the back row, from left, are Stoney Weir, Brian Powell, Allan Brown, Benjamin Burns, Josh Lindberg and Ricky Smith. Congratulations.

Conductor nabbs stray dog after five-year rail odyssey

In the desolate tract of land adjacent to the Farmingdale, N.Y., railroad tracks is a buff-colored stray German shepherd familiar to Long Island Rail Road passengers and crew.

One day, about five years ago, “Pretty Girl” was visited by a kind lady who felt her and that kind lady is SMART Transportation Division member and LIRR conductor Clara T. Campbell of Local 645, N.Y. Campbell and her coworkers named her Pretty Girl and Campbell began putting food out for her in bowls on a near daily basis. Other co-workers quickly followed suit.

For nearly five years, Campbell provided food to the dog. She fed her steak and brew, hamburger meat and canned dog food — meals high in protein with good nutritional content. As time went by, she decided to rescue the dog from the elements. It was time that Pretty Girl got a good home.

Campbell first contacted animal control officers in the town of Oyster Bay. After attempting to rescue the dog, they informed her that they were unsuccessful. With another cold winter rapidly approaching, at the start of the next week, a friend of Campbell’s recruited the help of a good friend. A plan for Pretty Girl’s capture was in order.

The two novice trappers studied the dog’s habits and worked hard to make her in a large cage with a trap door. The dog was taken to the Massapequa Hospital for Animals. Veterinarians discovered that Pretty Girl was infested with ticks and had Lyme disease. Pretty Girl’s medical bills were paid for by the animal rescue group, Last Hope. The group says that she will go through a specialized animal rehab program that will help re-socialize her to live with a family.

Who else is more deserving to adopt this dog other than Campbell? In a heart-breaking twist, individuals have come forward claiming to be the dog’s owners after hearing about Campbell’s story in the media. They have purportedly submitted documentation proving that the dog was theirs when it ran away five years ago.

While Campbell admits that her chances to adopt Pretty Girl have now diminished, she is still holding out hope.

SMART Transportation Division member Anthony Simon said, “We are extremely proud of Clara. She is just another example of a SMART Transportation Division member going above and beyond the call of duty by doing the right thing. Our membership here on Long Island is a dedicated group and it provides safe transportation and always goes the extra mile. Clara is one of many who display these traits each and every day. I could not be prouder of our entire membership.”

Whatever the adoption outcome, congratulations to Clara Campbell who, in a modern world often characterized as indifferent, cared enough about this suffering creature to get it out from the cold.

Local 240, Los Angeles, Calif.

“Year’s” 14th annual rail reunion and retirement dinner Nov. 7 for Southern Pacific, Union Pacific, Pacific Electric, Amtrak, ATSF/IBN, and Metrolink had a great turnout, with more than 190 in attendance from all crafts,” Local Chairperson Harry Garvin Jr. reports. “We even had a retired company officer. Everyone had great time and all are looking forward to next year’s reunion Nov. 6.” Garvin also noted the death of retired conductor Douglas L. West, who died Oct. 31. He retired March 1, 2004, after 42 years of service and is survived by his wife, Doris, and a son and daughter. Local 240 wishes everyone “Happy Holidays.”

Local 911, Minneapolis, Minn.

Retired former Local 911 Chairperson Fred J. Croes, Jr., 78, a mentor to many United Transportation Union and SMART Transportation Division officers in the Upper Midwest, died Nov. 12 of natural causes. During his railroad career, he served his local in a variety of capacities, most notably as local chairperson, legislative representative and delegate. He also served as a vice general chairperson of Soo Line — Milwaukee Road GO 263. He attended UTU International conventions from 1971 to 1999. He retired in May 1998. “Brother Croes was a remarkable leader. He was a fixture at regional meetings and conventions, Chris Dirks said. Willis Croonquist once telling me, ‘Croes knows the federal regulations better than the FAR inspectors do.’”

Croes served with his wife of 59 years, Jan; children Andrea, Denise, Marcia (Ken) Gallaway, David (Sherry), Lisa (Doug) Strenke; 10 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Local 1162, Erwin, Tenn.

Retired former Local Chairperson Bruce A. King, 70, died Sept 24 at the Johnson City Medical Center with family and friends by his side, Secretary-Treasurer W. Ray Thompson reports. A CSX conductor, King was a member of the UTU for 47 years, during 16 of which he served as local chairperson, a faithful member of Alcoholics Anonymous for 31 years, serving as a sponsor to many in their quest for sobriety. He was preceded in death by his wife, Sherry, and survived by his son, Tony; his daughter, Stacey, and two grandsons.

Local 1701, Montebello, Calif.

SMART members gather outside a city council meeting in Montebello in October after council members approved a memorandum of understanding regarding the payment of pension contributions and rest and meal periods for Transportation Division members employed by the city’s Transit Department. At an earlier council meeting, Sheet Metal Local 105 Business Rep. Tim Hinson approached Local 1701 Chairperson Cecilia Lopez, who was wearing a SMART T-shirt, and asked if he could help by bringing members from his local to the next council meeting in support of Local 105 member, who regularlyused the transit system, addressed the council. In the end, three locals were represented at the council meeting, including 1701, Sheet Metal 105 and 1074. It was fantastic to see the unity between Transportation and Sheet Metal. This group is what the union is all about,” Pate said.

Local 1741, San Francisco, Calif.

In the fall, this bus local negotiated a contract for its Durham School Services drivers in San Carlos, Calif., GO 265. General Chairperson Paul Stein reports. The six-year agreement provides a 4.5 percent wage increase for the first year and cost-of-living adjustments each year thereafter, based on the Consumer Price Index. Members will also receive a new paid holiday for Labor Day, their eight. Representing the drivers were GO 265 Chairperson Bergman Zuniga, with assistance from former Transportation Vice President Bonnie Morr and Stein.
Compensation subject to RRB taxes to increase in 2015

The amounts of compensation subject to railroad retirement Tier I and Tier II payroll taxes will increase in 2015, with the Tier I tax rates remaining the same while Tier II tax rates will increase for both railroad employers and employees. Also, railroad unemployment insurance contribution rates paid by employers will include a surcharge of 1.5 percent in 2015.

Tier I and Medicare Tax – The Railroad Retirement Tier I payroll tax on covered rail employers and employees for the year 2015 remains at 7.65 percent. The Railroad Retirement Tier I tax rate is the same as the Social Security tax, and for withholding and reporting purposes is divided into 6.20 percent for retirement and 1.45 percent for Medicare hospital insurance. The maximum amount of an employee’s earnings subject to the 6.20 percent rate increases from $117,000 to $120,260 in 2015, but there is no maximum on earnings subject to the 1.45 percent Medicare rate.

An additional Medicare payroll tax of 0.9 percent applies to an individual’s income exceeding $200,000 or $250,000 for a married couple filing a joint tax return. While employers will begin withholding the additional Medicare tax as soon as an individual’s wages exceed the $200,000 threshold, the final amount owed or refunded will be calculated as part of the individual’s Federal income tax return.

Tier II Tax – The Railroad Retirement Tier II tax rate on employees will be 4.9 percent in 2015, and the employers’ rate will be 13.1 percent. The rates in 2014 for employees and employers were 4.4 percent and 12.6 percent, respectively. The maximum amount of earnings subject to Railroad Retirement Tier II taxes will increase from $87,000 to $88,200 in 2015. Since 2004, Tier II tax rates are based on an average account balance reflecting Railroad Retirement fund history. Depending on this ratio, the Tier II tax rate for employees can be between zero percent and 4.9 percent, while the Tier II rate for employers can range between 9.2 percent and 12.1 percent.

Unemployment Insurance Contributions – Employers, but not employees, pay railroad unemployment insurance contributions, which are experience-rated by employer. The Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act also provides for a surcharge in the event the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account balance falls below an indexed threshold amount. The accrual balance of the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account was $140.4 million on June 30, 2014. Since the balance is less than the indexed threshold of $141.2 million, a 1.5 percent surcharge will be added to the basic contribution rates for 2015, but will not increase the maximum contribution rate. There was no surcharge in 2014 or 2013, although a surcharge of 1.5 percent applied in 2012.

As a result, the unemployment insurance contribution rates (including the 1.5 percent surcharge) on railroad employers in 2015 will range from the minimum rate of 2.15 percent to the maximum rate of 12 percent of monthly compensation up to $1,453, an increase from $1,440 in 2014. In 2015, the minimum rate of 2.15 percent will apply to 77 percent of covered employers, with eight percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent.

During the year, new employers will pay an unemployment insurance rate equal to 90 percent of the unemployment insurance contribution rate paid by the employers who retired or died subsequent to Aug. 1, 2010.

SMART’s CN/IC members ratify retroactive agreement

SMART Transportation Division-represented conductors and trainmen employed by the Canadian National/Illinois Central Railroad have ratified a retroactive agreement, Vice President Dave Wier reports.

The agreement provides for six annual wage increases retroactive to Aug. 1, 2010, with the final wage increase to be effective Jan. 1, 2013, totaling 18.6 percent and resulting in a cumulative wage increase of 20.08 percent over the life of the agreement. The accord includes conductor certification pay rolled into the rates of pay, a full retroactive back pay for all active trainmen and employees that retired or died subsequent to Aug. 1, 2010.

The agreement also lowers the calculated vacation qualification days from 240 to 160 days; increases the meal allowance to $12 after four hours and every eight hours thereafter at the away-from-home terminal; improves bereave ment leave; provides for a furlough retention board; institutes provisions for temporary transfer to other CN properties, and establishes seniority. It also establishes regular assignments after four consecutive days of similar-type work and provides for six-and-two and four-and-two work rest cycles with local negotiations concerning eleven- and three work rest cycles. Participation in the National Health and Welfare plans continues.

“The work rest cycles are, six days of work followed by two days of rest, and four days of work followed by two days of rest, in a 14-day period,” Wier said. “The 11 and three is subject to local negotiations and includes ‘Smart Rest,’ to allow an employee’s consecutive work days to be reset by taking a 24-hour period off. This complies with Rail Safety Improvement Act regulations.”

Wier, who assisted with the mediated negotiations, expressed his appreciation to CN/IC GO 403 General Chairman Tracy Bublitz (134), retired General Chairperson R.W. “Red” Dare (1525), GO 433 Acting General Chairperson William Butch St. John (1557) and GO 433 General Committee Secretary Jerry “J.J.” Russum (1334) for their exceptional effort in bringing the members’ concerns to the bargaining table.

“This agreement will make our members some of the highest paid rail employees in the country,” Wier said.

Treasurers receive training at Atlanta workshop

The SMART Transportation Division Auditors Bobby Brantley and Mike Arzaujo conducted a three-day local treasurers’ workshop at the Hampton Inn & Suites Atlanta Airport-North Oct. 6-8. 2014. The workshop enabled local treasurers with hands-on training on the responsibilities and reporting duties pertaining to their office, including direct receipts and Winstabs. It also focused on completion of mandatory filings for Labor Management reports, IRS Form 990 and Department of Labor requirements. Pictured, from left, are Kent Hartley (1503), Mike Laughlin (553), Arzaujo, Ernie B. Swatz (1701), Carl E. Schub (602), Bernard Gray Jr. (1033), Charles R. Bum (1427), Benjamin Yang (668), Milton L. Driver III (back row, 1290), T. Craig Spangler (974) and Brantley (back row).
While we are thankful, we must continue to build for the future

In the spirit of the holiday season, I want to focus on what we have to be thankful for as we leave 2014 behind.

For one, our First SMART General Convention was a seminal moment when our two former organizations merged into a strong, united union built to improve upon our advances of the past. This has been a long time coming.

Already, local unions from coast to coast and everywhere in between are working together to solve the challenges that face us.

In New York, we showed what we can accomplish when we stand united. I was proud to see sheet metal workers, mechanics, and sign hangers join conductors and their fellow workers in standing together for what became a fair contract for members on the Long Island Rail Road.

We built on that success by moving forward with organizing and bargaining advances in places like Tennessee, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Colorado, New Jersey, Michigan and California.

“Our goal for the coming year is growth. Through growth, we will be able to maximize our union’s bargaining strength for the betterment of each and every member. It is in everybody’s self-interest to help out in these efforts.”

Already, leaders from the local level representing both the transportation and sheet metal industries are coming together to learn about how to launch strategic campaigns customized for every industry we represent.

For our bus members, there are always challenges for adequate funding at the federal and state levels. Our national office and our state legislative directors will be working to make sure transit agencies get the money they sorely need. But the big picture for public transportation is that more young people are opting out of cars in favor of public transportation. So the future is bright here as well.

There is no question the 2015 Congress, and many of the state legislatures, are more conservative and less supportive of public transportation and organized labor in general than in 2014. So be it. We will make our case that investments in public transportation, and adopting policies that encourage the expansion of rail, is not just good for our members, but is good for America as well.

So this is Christmas. And what have you done, Another year over. And a new one just begun,” so sang John Lennon.

The holidays are a good time for all of us to ponder what we have done to make life better for our families, our brothers and sisters in the workplace, and the communities in which we live.

I love a new year; 2015 offers a fresh start with new opportunities to make some progress for our membership and in our personal lives. The year 2014 is water under the bridge, and dwelling on past mistakes and lost opportunities wastes precious time and energy.

There are opportunities, and of course challenges, in store for our union this year and we are preparing to address them all.

Navigating negotiations with the big freight railroads are front and center. John Previsich, our Transportation Division president, has assembled a great negotiating team and this team, along with our general chairpersons, have established our priorities. The rail industry, of course, has other priorities, but then that’s the nature of collective bargaining.

The good news is the industry is in very good financial shape and the future looks great for freight rail in America. Our big freight railroads are investing in their infrastructure and are hiring far beyond normal attrition levels, meaning there will be more jobs in the industry in 2015 than in 2014.

It makes sense for America to expand our freight rail network for a number of reasons: shipping by rail is better for the environment; it’s more fuel efficient, it relieves highway congestion and freight rail doesn’t rely on govern-
The Transportation Division’s Georgia State Legislative Board was a sponsor of the Georgia Railroad Association’s Freshman Legislator Workshop, Legislative Director Matt Campbell reports.

“The freshman legislators learned about the freight rail industry and important issues such as rail funding, truck sizes and weights, and elimination of the sales tax on diesel fuel used by locomotives,” Campbell said. “SMART Transportation Division is the only union member of the GIRA, which represents 25 freight railroads that operate in Georgia.”

North Dakota

U.S. Sen. Heitkamp (D-N.D.) recently spoke to employees of Canadian Pacific Railway about agricultural shipment delays, her support for railway employees of Canadian Pacific Railway about rail funding, truck sizes and weights, and elimination of the sales tax on diesel fuel used by locomotives, Campbell said. “SMART Transportation Division is the only union member of the GIRA, which represents 25 freight railroads that operate in Georgia.”

North Dakota’s farmers rely on consistent rail service to get their crops to market, HillCampbell reports. “North Dakota’s farmers rely on consistent rail service to get their products to market so they can make a living and support their families. But the disappointing reality is that extreme backlogs have hurt our state’s farmers, unnecessarily costing them time and money,” said Heitkamp.

“Rail workers, including those from Canadian Pacific, have shown a great deal of commitment through these difficult circumstances to help farmers and address these agriculture shipment delays — but we need those at the top of the company to get on board and make real changes. “We can’t have this same problem happen again next year. We need to make sure all of North Dakota’s farmers, grain elevators, and utilities have the certainty and rail service they need during this harvest and in the future.”

Washington

Washington State Legislative Director Herb Krohn Nov. 7 appeared on Northwest Now, a Public Broadcasting System program that airs in Washington on Television Station KBTC.

Ill. Legislative Director Guy responds to Amtrak attack

SMART Transportation Division’s Illinois State Legislative Director Bob Guy responded to a “letter to the editor” published in the Nov. 5 issue of the The News-Gazette and Guy’s letter was published by the newspaper Nov. 13.

The original letter by Corrine Ann Williams of the Heritage Foundation was a call to stop increased funding for Amtrak and put the carrier “on a path toward privatization.”

Guy’s response is below.

“A recent letter about Amtrak from the Heritage Foundation regurgitated tired arguments that Amtrak critics have spewed for decades, that Amtrak receives taxpayer assistance, doesn’t run on time, should be privatized and (my favorite) blamed the workforce, yet dismisses ridership records attained nearly every year for a decade.”

“The author gripes about taxpayer assistance, but omits the fact that roads and aviation don’t nearly pay for themselves and rely on public support. The state of the highway trust fund and its seemingly yearly bailout is proof enough.

“The author slams Amtrak for on-time performance, but admits it’s the freight railroads’ fault, yet insists that’s no excuse. Handling of Amtrak by their freight ‘hosts’ is a huge problem, especially Chicago-Champaign, which is why Amtrak is taking action, having the Surface Transportation Board investigate Amtrak’s handling by Canadian National Railway.”

“The author blames the unionized workforce for their “above-market” wages. What market? These aren’t 9- to 5 jobs, Amtrak’s highly skilled, trained, safety-sensitive employee work every single day serving the most precious cargo, passengers.

“Finally, the author retreads ‘privatization.’ Forty-plus years ago, Congress allowed railroads to shed passenger service; it wasn’t profitable. If these same private railroads, while enjoying record revenue and profits, could make passenger rail profitable, they would. But they can’t, so they don’t!”

“Amtrak should be accountable to taxpayers. But, with a generation of young people driving less to stay electronically connected and relocating to locales with public transportation, why starve a transportation mode Americas are obviously demanding.”

Winter is coming, so let’s be safe out there

Although winter hasn’t arrived yet, many states have already seen winter conditions and record snowfall. It’s that time of the year that U.S. roads and highways can be hazardous for transportation.

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), more than 70 percent of the nation’s roads are located in snowy regions that receive more than five inches of average snowfall annually. Nearly 70 percent of the U.S. population lives in these snowy regions.

These conditions can be especially difficult for bus operators, as many people depend on us to get them to their destinations safely and on time.

We need to be extra cautious and prepared this season. Here are a few preventive measures you should practice to keep you and your passengers safe.

• Facility lots and walk areas may be in horrible condition due to weather. Watch for slick spots, especially ice — when approaching your bus. Always take the safest path.

• Make sure to do proper pre-trips. Checking tires, defroster, wiper blades, mirrors, lights and heating system are especially important in winter. If you discover any issues during your pre-trip, please write it up and report it to the proper company personnel. If your issues aren’t addressed, please contact your local union legislative representative.

• Many companies have a “no idling” policy to save on fuel, but it’s very important that you take some time to warm-up your vehicle.

• Be aware of the conditions around you at all times and remember that the posted speed limits are for normal road conditions.

• Enhanced driving skills, alertness and reaction time are needed in wintry conditions. (Bridges freeze first, and many exit ramps can be challenging due to the fact they may receive less attention than main roads.)

• Watch out for pedestrians.

• Always buckle your seat belt.

Our main goal is to be safe. All operators should have buses that are equipped with the necessities to handle the winter weather. Make sure that you put yourself and your passengers in the safest position at all times.
UTU PAC contributions for 2013

How does your state stack up?
(Average UTU PAC contribution per member, per month in dollars for 2013)

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</tbody>
</table>

Your top-performing local legislative representatives

Top Ten UTU PAC Locals
(Average UTU PAC contribution per member, per month in dollars for 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>1081</td>
<td>Glendale, Ariz.</td>
<td>$17.22</td>
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<td>1129</td>
<td>Raleigh, N.C.</td>
<td>15.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>854</td>
<td>Portland, Ore.</td>
<td>13.19</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Madison, Wis.</td>
<td>12.51</td>
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<td>960</td>
<td>West Memphis, Ark.</td>
<td>12.41</td>
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<td>508</td>
<td>Smithville, Texas</td>
<td>12.03</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>San Jose, Calif.</td>
<td>11.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Wilber, Neb.</td>
<td>11.00</td>
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<td>234</td>
<td>Bloomington, Ill.</td>
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<td>490</td>
<td>Princeton, Ind.</td>
<td>9.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>219</td>
<td>Hannibal, Mo.</td>
<td>9.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UTU Political Action Committee Donation Form

To have a strong union, you must have a voice in your local union, attend your local union meetings and contribute to your PAC fund. Here at Local 854, all members (100 percent) contribute to the PAC fund. We teach our new members by example. I am a proud Gold Club member. When I greet a new member with an application to join, they also receive a PAC form with information that all 854 members support our PAC.

Ronne Jones, Local 854 Legislative Rep.

If You Want a Say... Give a Dollar a Day

www.utu.org / www.utuia.org
Rail retiree earnings limits to rise in 2015

Railroad Retirement annuitants subject to earnings restrictions can earn more in 2015 without having their benefits reduced as a result of increases in earnings limits indexed to average national wage increases.

Like Social Security benefits, some Railroad Retirement benefit payments are subject to deductions that an annuitant’s earnings exceed certain exempt amounts. These earnings restrictions apply to those who have not attained full social security retirement age. For employee 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.

For those under full retirement age throughout 2015, the exempt earnings amount rises to $15,720 from $15,480 in 2014. For beneficiaries attaining full retirement age in 2015, the exempt earnings amount, for the months before the month full retirement age is attained, rises to $41,880 in 2015 from $41,400 in 2014.

For those under full retirement age, the earnings deduction is $1 in benefits for every $2 of earnings over the exempt amount. For those attaining full retirement age in 2015, the deduction is $1 for every $3 of earnings over the exempt amount in the months before the month full retirement age is attained. When applicable, these earnings deductions are assessed on the Tier I and vested dual benefit portions of railroad retirement employee and spouse annuities, and the Tier I, Tier II, and vested dual benefit portions of survivor benefits.

All earnings received for services rendered, plus any net earnings from self-employment, are considered when assessing deductions for earnings. Interest, dividends, certain rental income, or income from stocks, bonds, or other investments are not considered earnings for this purpose.

Retired employees and spouses, regardless of age, who work for their last pre-retirement non-railroad employer are also subject to an additional earnings deduction, in their Tier II and supplemental benefits, of $1 for every $2 in earnings up to a maximum reduction of $10 percent. This earnings restriction does not change from year to year and does not allow for an exempt amount.

A spouse benefit is subject to reduction not only for the spouse’s earnings, but also for the earnings of the employee, regardless of whether the earnings are from service for the last pre-retirement non-railroad employer or other post-retirement employment.

Special work restrictions continue to be applicable to disability annuitants in 2015. The monthly disability earnings limit increases to $850 in 2015 from $840 in 2014.

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.
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 car carrier, 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.

Call or email today:
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sales@utuia.org

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Date of birth
Local number
Address
City
State
Zip
Telephone number with area code
Sex
Male
Female

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UTUIA Accident Indemnity Insurance can help.

To be described as a “classic” means that one is considered to be of the highest quality with lasting value; an authoritative standard; fashionable, with simplicity and restraint in style; one of a kind. Like the classic ’57 Chevy or the fashionable Elvis Presley, UTUIA Chairperson William A. Beebe is a classic in his own right.

Amtrak GO 663 General Chairperson Beebe is a classic railroad union man who has witnessed and participated in the formation of the UTU. Beebe has been a delegate to every national convention since the creation of the UTU. He has witnessed, firsthand, the evolution of this union and has often been described as the union's resident historian. Hopson said Beebe was an active participant in the formation of the UTU.

According to Local 227 (Hartford, Conn.) Chairperson Francis L. Ariola, Beebe proudly served in the U.S. Army, beginning in 1946. He later attended college at the University of South Florida and Southern Connecticut State University, where he earned both a bachelor's degree and teaching certificate. He hired out in 1951 with the New Haven Railroad (New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad) in the mail and baggage department, and on May 29, 1953, he transferred into operations as a brakeman, joining the BRT on Aug. 1, 1953. On Jan. 1, 1954, Beebe assumed the office of secretary of the local committee of adjustment for BRT Lodge 937 (now Local 1361). He was elected vice local chairperson in 1957 and became local chairperson in 1962. While serving simultaneously as local chairperson and Connecticut state legislative director from 1964 to 1976, he was elected general chairperson on the former New Haven and Hartford Railroad in 1976.

In 1983, Beebe led UTU-represented Metro North Railroad employees through a six-week strike that resulted in a ground-breaking agreement that has become the benchmark for commuter rail contracts. SMART TD members still benefit from that agreement today, Hopson said. “Now, our committee handles our own contract negotiations with Amtrak with minimal national involvement by the International. Beebe’s 1983 agreement opened the door to this.”

In addition to serving as general chairperson, Local 1361 delegate and trustee, Beebe is again the Connecticut state legislative director. He maintains a rigorous caseload and there are no indications that retirement will ever even be a consideration of his, Ariola said.

So how does Beebe keep it all going? According to Ariola, Beebe makes a concerted effort to stay healthy through physical fitness, diet and rest. “He is very health-conscious and works out every day, and has even been known to beat racquetball opponents 30 years his junior.” Hopson provides more evidence, explaining that, “Beebe was a renowned handball player at the New Haven YMCA, and played masterful tennis even into his seventies.” According to Ariola, Beebe was a successful minor league pitcher in the Drummond Baseball League during the early 1950s. He is also a family man and ensures that he is involved in his two granddaughters’ lives by frequently visiting his daughter Susan’s family in Oregon. “He just loves his grands and they need it since he practically has it memorized.”

“As the union's ‘resident historian,’ Beebe has accumulated a lot of stuff over the years. He keeps the most current union contract with him at all times, in the very likely event that someone asks his opinion about some vague, but pertinent, contractual provision. Members are always asking for his thoughts on various provisions because they trust him as highly competent, knowledgeable and wise. The funny thing is, that he really doesn’t need it since he practically has it memorized.”

“As a union representative and as a man, Bill is fearless. The carriers know that he is a fighter and that he is never intimidated.”

As SMART embarks on another year, members can rest assured that Bill Beebe will continue to take care of business by representing them with the highest quality. Bill Beebe truly is a one-of-a-kind classic.
Previsich testifies before Senate subcommittee

continued from page 1

The system needs significant renovations to tracks, bridges, tunnels and other infrastructure. Meanwhile, the rest of the world—most notably China—is investing heavily in modern and efficient passenger rail infrastructure, leaving American competitiveness, and American workers, further behind.

“Earlier this year, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee reported out the Passenger Rail Reform and Investment Act (PRRIA) of 2014. My union, as well as other rail labor unions, supported this measure and applauded the bipartisan nature of the proposal. The four-year bill does many important things that will help strengthen our national passenger rail network. However, it does not provide Amtrak with the funding levels required to meet the needs of an aging system. Most of all, it does not establish a predictable, dedicated funding source so Amtrak and our communities can adequately plan for future investments.

The last passenger rail reauthorization—PRRIA, signed into law by President Bush in 2008—was bipartisan and provided realistic, multi-year funding levels for Amtrak, and resisted efforts to recklessly privatize the railroads. The bipartisan nature of the legislation that was included in PRRIA provided virtually no private sector interest in permits private companies to seize national rail routes. The four-year reauthorization required by PRRIA would allow investors the green light to profit from assets paid for over decades by the American taxpayer and rail passengers.

The next passenger rail reauthorization should build on the framework established by PRRIA 2008. It should include dedicated, adequate funding to upgrade and operate the Northeast Corridor and to operate the regional and long-distance trains that make up our national system.

I want to emphasize one point. Our union is not opposed to private enterprise. The bulk of our membership works for privately held freight railroads and, overall, we have good relationships with those competitors.

“But the facts are, Amtrak has partnered with our private freight railroads and has negotiated operating agreements with them for more than 40 years. Amtrak’s employees, of whom 80% are federally certified, know and understand the complex operating rules that govern freight railroads, making Amtrak an ideal partner to operate this vital national-wide service.

“Reauthorization must also protect the rights, jobs and wages of workers. Labor protections provided for in PRRIA should be updated to ensure they apply to all rail workers when federal funds are used. In addition, it must ensure that there is a level playing field for all competitors and that rail workers are covered under the appropriate labor law and labor standards Act, the Railway Labor Act and Federal Employers’ Liability Act.

“Allowing employers, oftentimes foreign corporations, to make decisions regarding the service they provide to Amtrak and to the American public is a recipe for ending Amtrak service across our nation. This is why the SM AR T Transportation Division of the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BR S), the Jointlly, the participating unions represent more than 85,000 railroad workers covered by the various organizations’ national agreements and comprise over 56% of the workforce that will be impacted by the negotiations. The serving of the Section 6 bargaining notices is the first step in reaching a new national agreement with railroads represent-

SMART TD, BLET, others to bargain together

continued from page 1

copartition of our organizations on a variety of common issues, and is the logical next step for our great unions. Working together will allow rail labor to make the strongest possible effort to obtain for our members the wages and working conditions that they deserve.

“A majority of the coordinating in the bargaining effort are the American TrainDispatchers Association (ATDA), the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS), the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers (IBB), and the National Conference of Firemen and Oilers (NCFO).”

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Amtrak delivers strong Fiscal Year 2014 financial results, losses lowest since 1973

Amtrak Nov. 25 reported unaudited record revenue totaling approximately $3.2 billion for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2014, representing the fifth consecutive year of revenue growth, and the eighth out of the past nine years.

In Fiscal Year 2014, America's Railroad covered 93 percent of its operating costs with ticket sales and other revenues, up from 89 percent the year before. In addition, Amtrak’s unaudited federal funded operating loss of approximately $227 million was the lowest level since 1973, representing a 7 percent decrease from the prior year and 52 percent lower than in Fiscal Year 2007.

As a result of the company's strong operating performance, long-term debt reductions of approximately 61 percent over the past seven years to $1.3 billion, and other contributing factors, Moody's Investor Service confirmed Amtrak’s A1/Stable debt rating on Nov. 12, 2014.

“Our financial performance over the past year is a clear indication that Amtrak's investments, operating efficiencies and focus on its customers is paying off,” said Amtrak Chairman of the Board Tom Boardman. “Under the leadership of Amtrak’s board and management, the company is transforming how it does business. We are delighted with our latest financial results and are committed to making further progress in the years ahead.”

“Amtrak's corporate restructuring has resulted in a strong emphasis on increased financial transparency, a de-leveraged balance sheet, and providing an improved product to its existing customer base while attracting new passengers. This has resulted in consistently strong ridership and revenue growth, and less reliance on federal operating grant support. Amtrak also is building the equipment, infrastructure and organization needed to support more and faster service, improve the reliability and safety of service, and meet the expectations of a growing customer base while matching the rest.”

Amtrak also is building the equipment, infrastructure and organization needed to support more and faster service, and meet the expectations of a growing customer base while matching the rest.

Metra board chairman: Engineers, conductors do a great job

November 2014 SMART-TD News

Tommy Casey, online Santa
WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Nov. 23 issued a safety advisory to the rail industry to better protect rail employees working on active tracks, or right-of-ways, under the supervision of a dispatcher.

“Clear communication is critical to keeping employees out of harm’s way,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. “I want railway workers to return home safely to their families after their shift and it is the responsibility of the railroads and their employees to keep the work environment as safe as possible.”

Safety Advisory 2014-02 Roadway Worker Authority Limits, highlights the need for railroads to ensure that appropriate safety redundancies are in place.

FRA believes positive train control, a system for monitoring and controlling train movements to enhance safety, should have prevented the incidents described in the Safety Advisory. However, where positive train control is not in effect, FRA recommends that railroads adopt one or more electronic technologies that may serve to fill the technology gap and safeguard roadway workers.

The full advisory can be found at www.utu.org by entering “Safety Advisory 2014-02” in the Search box.

Photo of the month

This photo was taken by Great Lakes Airlines pilot Christopher “Chip” Leffelman of Local 40 at Denver. This is our Embraer Brasilia 120 after an early morning de-icing in Riverton, Wyo. It is a 30-seat turboprop that we operate out of Denver. The Pratt & Whitney engines deliver 1,800 shaft horsepower each and the airplane cruises at approximately 300 knots true airspeed,” Leffelman said.

Inside this issue of SMART Transportation Division News:

Conductor nails stray dog after its five-year odyssey. See page 2.

Treasurers receive training at Atlanta workshop. See page 3.

Meta board chairman: Engineers, conductors do a great job. See page 11.

Tommy Casey, online Santa. See page 11.

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