House committee approves Amtrak, passenger rail funding bill

The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Feb. 12 unanimously approved bipartisan legislation that improves the infrastructure, reduces costs, creates greater accountability and transparency, leverages private sector resources, and accelerates project delivery for Amtrak and the nation's passenger rail transportation system.

The Passenger Rail Reform and Investment Act of 2015, or PRRIA (H.R. 749), was introduced by Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.); T&I roads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee Ranking Member Peter DeFazio (D-Or.). Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee Chairman Jeff Denham (R-Calif.). and Subcommittee Ranking Member Michael Capuano (D-Mass.).

“Thank you Capitol for this leadership on this legislation forward and support passage of the bill in the full House. We still have concerns that the bill does not provide Amtrak with the funding levels it needs to make needed repairs and upgrades to an aging system. That being said, the introduction and markup of this legislation is an important first step in bringing long-term stability and investment to Amtrak,” said SMART Transportation Division President John Previsich in a cover letter introducing the model legislation to Congress.

“Passage of the Passenger Rail Reform and Investment Act is an investment in our infrastructure that will make Amtrak operate more like a business – better responding to the needs of its customers and focusing on efficiency, transparency and cost-saving,” Denham said. “I’m proud of the bipartisan unanimous support we’ve garnered for this bill and look forward to seeing PRRIA move to the House floor.”

“Making investments in passenger rail service not only creates economic benefits and employment opportunities, it also enhances the overall experience for passengers and improves safety,” said Capuano. “This legislation may not represent the level of funding I think is necessary, but most rail supporters agree that in today’s political climate it is the most that advocates can expect.”

Passenger rail presents one of the best transportation alternatives for relieving congestion on some of the nation’s most crowded highways and in our busy airspace. However, the rail system and Amtrak – the country’s intercity passenger rail provider – must be reformed and improved. For years, Amtrak has operated under unrealistic fiscal expectations and without a sufficient level of transparency. Profits from Amtrak’s most profitable route – the Northeast Corridor (NEC) – currently are not invested back into the corridor.

And although significant ridership increases are occurring on Amtrak’s state-supported routes, its inconsistent financial structure and “black box” accounting system hamper states’ ability to help manage the routes and understand exactly it is they’re paying Amtrak for.

Anthem responds to breach of client data

Anthem, one of the nation’s largest health insurers, said Feb. 4 that the personal information of tens of millions of its customers and employees, including its chief executive, was the subject of a “very sophisticated external cyberattack.”

The company, which is continuing its investigation into the exact scope of the attack, said hackers were able to breach a database that contained as many as 80 million records of current and former customers, as well as employees. The information accessed included names, Social Security numbers, birthdates, addresses, email addresses and employment information, including income data.

Anthem, Inc., the parent company of SMART’s voluntary short-term disability insurance provider Anthem Life Insurance Co., has informed SMART that the breach could possibly have included VSTD member data as well.

President and CEO Joseph R. Swedich has issued the following statement:

“Safeguarding your personal, financial and medical information is one of our top priorities, and because of that, we have state-of-the-art information security systems to protect your data. However, despite our efforts, Anthem was the target of a very sophisticated external cyber attack. These attackers gained unauthorized access to Anthem’s IT system and have obtained personal information from our current and former members such as their names, birthdays, medical IDs/Social Security numbers, street addresses, email addresses and employment information, including income data. Based on what we know now, there is no evidence that credit card or medical information, such as claims, test results or diagnostic codes were targeted or compromised.

“Once the attack was discovered, Anthem immediately made every effort to close the security vulnerability, contacted the FBI and began fully cooperating with their investigation. Anthem has also retained Mandiant, one of the world’s leading cybersecurity firms, to evaluate our systems and identify solutions based on the evolving landscape.

“Anthem will individually notify current and former members whose information has been accessed. We will provide credit monitoring and identity protection services free of charge so that those who have been affected can have peace of mind. We have created a dedicated website – www.AnthemFacts.com – where members can access information such as frequent questions and answers. We have also established a dedicated toll-free number that both current and former members can call if they have questions related to this incident. That number is: (877) 263-7995. As we learn...
Local 18, El Paso, Texas
Member Edgar Barrientos, 29, died Feb. 5 in a deep-sea scuba diving accident. Vice Business Rep. Michael R. Romero reports. Barrientos hired out with Union Pacific Railroad just last year, but was recently furloughed. He was discharged from the U.S. Marine Corps as a staff sergeant. He was a combat veteran and had served as a drill instructor. “Semper fidels, my Marine brother. May you have fair weather, great prizes and great fun.”

Members training members: HazMat program in Indiana

Pictured, from left, are Indiana State Legislative Director Kenny Edwards, Gary Robison, Andy McKeean and Mark Wallen as they prepare for their Department of Transportation “HazMat Awareness” presentations.

Uncontrolled releases of chemicals can be extremely dangerous, especially in transportation. Generally, railroad workers do not have the same access to quality hazardous materials and basic safety and health training as workers in many other industries.

That is why the SMART Transportation Division, in conjunction with eight other rail unions, participates in the Rail Workers Hazardous Materials Training Program. The goal of this training initiative is to provide railroad workers with the skills and knowledge necessary to protect themselves, the community, and the environment in a hazardous materials transportation emergency. To achieve this goal, the RWHTMP provides rail workers, through quality hazardous materials training courses, the confidence in their knowledge and problem-solving skills to enable them to make change for safer work conditions.

On Dec. 4, an eight-hour Department of Transportation HazMat Awareness course conducted by RWHTMP was held in Indianapolis at the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 416 hall. Transportation Division Indiana State Legislative Director Kenny Edwards organized the session.

CSX General Committee of Adjustment 851 Assistant General Chairperson Yvonne Hayes and BLET Safety Test Force Coordinator Carl Fields led the class, with the assistance of recent RWHTMP Train-the-Trainee Program graduates Gary Robison and Andy McKeean of Local 1202 at Fort Wayne, Ind., and Mark Wallen of Local 1663 at Plainfield, Ind.

Hayes said that 29 railroad workers participated in the course, most from Transportation Division locals in Indiana.

“Rail workers handle a plethora of hazardous materials. The more you know, the safer you and your co-workers will become. A huge debt of gratitude goes out to the Indianapolis Professional Firefighters for letting us use their facilities,” Edwards said.

For more information about RWHTMP, visit www.rwhtmp.org. To see a list of upcoming classes, see www.rwhtmp.org/Upcoming.asp.

Local 161, Seattle, Wash.

After concluding a business meeting in Seattle in February, Transportation Division Vice President-Bus Advi Reddy decided to visit the Boeing Museum of Flight. Having to travel to the museum by bus, Reddy engaged the bus operator in conversation, wondering if the operators were possibly interested in union representation. Upon speaking with operator Richard Peterson, Reddy was pleased to learn that Peterson was in fact a member of SMART Transportation Division Local 161 in Seattle. Reddy and Peterson, left, had very a healthy conversation about SMART and that he was ready to visit the local if the were to be invited in the future.

Local 195, Galesburg, Ill.

This BNSF Railway local has established a website at http://1957.utu.org. Local Committee of Adjustment Secretary Betsy Galbreath reports. “We’re trying to make information more easily accessible for our members,” Galbreath said. The local’s monthly meetings are typically held every third Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. in the Bondi Building, located at 111 E. Main St. in Galesburg. Members should enter through the side door from Kellogg St.

Local 240, Los Angeles, Calif.

All railroaders and their friends and relatives are invited to participate in the 15th Annual FSCSMART TD-UTU Rail Classic golf tournament at 1 p.m. Monday, May 18, at Sierra Lakes Golf Course in Fontana, Calif., according to Local Chairperson Harry J. Garvin Jr. The cost of the four-person scramble, shotgun-start tournament is $75 per person and includes a tri-tip or chicken dinner, great prizes and great fun. Participants should commit and remit to retired conductor Frank Carmona at 30250 Pebble Beach Dr., Sun City, CA 92586, by May 5. Contact Carmona at (951) 301-6525, (909) 770-3366 or by email at FSCrailfotmail.com. The tournament is sponsored by Carmona’s Collision Report and Local 240.

Local 506, Hertingon, Kan.

This Union Pacific local has established a new website at http://smartlocal506.weebly.com. Local President Rusty Beames reports. It provides a news page, copies of agreements, instructions on submitting time claims, an extensive list of discounts available to members and more. “Alternate Legislative Rep. Chris Walls passed some time and effort into various projects for the membership of Local 506 and this is what he submitted,” Beames said. “Hertingon has had many new hires in the last year and it is important to keep them up to date on information and safety issues that pertain to their new job. A big thank you from everyone at Local 506 goes out to Brother Walls for his efforts in setting this up.’’

Local 750, Knoxville, Tenn.

Retired Norfolk Southern employees from all crafts meet at Shoney’s Restaurant located at 4032 N. Broadway in Knoxville every third Wednesday of the month at 11 a.m. retired former Local Chairperson Harvey D. Boles reports. Once each quarter, the New South Credit Union (NSCU) sponsors the meal, Boles said. “If you are a retired Norfolk Southern Knoxville District employee, come on down and enjoy the fellowship and revive some old friendships.’’

Local 872, Omaha, Neb.

This BNSF Railway local has established a website at http://0872.utu.org, Nebraska State Legislative Director Bob Borgeson reports. The local holds its monthly meetings every fourth Wednesday of the month at the Sheet Steel Workers’ International Association hall at 3333 S. 24th St. in Omaha. The phone number is (402) 330-3383.

Local 1741, San Francisco, Calif.

Members of this school-bus operations local joined members of SMART Sheet Metal Division Local 104 in picketing Trayer Engineering Corporation after the company proposed cuts in wages and benefits that would result in members’ pay being reduced by up to 17 percent and proposed to eliminate Local 104’s union health care plan. General Chairperson Paul Stein reports.

UP GO 887, Bakersfield, Calif.

Transportation Division President John Pressuch attends the quadrennial meeting of Union Pacific General Committee of Adjustment 887 in Las Vegas. Pictured, from left, are Corney Baccari, Pressuch, Timmy Baccari, Local 32 (Gfalda), Carl J Chairperson Tim Baccari and his wife, Janine.

UP GO 927, Tyler, Texas

This general committee of adjustment held its quarterly meeting Jan 26-27 in San Antonio, Texas, and General Chairperson Stephen Simpson announces the following results of the committee’s officer elections: Simpson (4989) as chairperson, J. Scott Chelette (1337) as 1st vice general chairperson, Larry S. Richards (508) as secretary, and John A. Dunn (0796), R.G. “Bob” Harrington (1188), Scott J. Newson (0976) and Collin W. Redden (0220) as vice general chairpersons.

Transportation Division has page on Facebook

SMART Transportation Division members now have another way to connect with their union, Facebook. The SMART TD News Facebook page, which can be found searching “SMART Transportation Division News” in Facebook’s search box, is updated daily by your union and features news articles as well as other posts and pictures not always found on www.utu.org. Members can also comment on posts and connect with other members by doing so.
Website is gateway to rail health benefits

Railroad employees and their eligible dependents covered under the Railroad Employees National Health and Welfare Plan or the National Railway Carriers and United Transportation Union Health and Welfare Plan are reminded that a new website is their gateway to information, tools and resources about their health and welfare benefits.

The improved site, which replaces the previous Railroad Information Depot (www.rindepot.com), is www.yourtracktohealth.com.

The website helps you to:
- Explore your benefits;
- Enroll in and manage your coverage;
- Improve your health, and
- Plan your retirement.

Be sure to check out the new video library under “Quick Links,” the “Question of the Month,” and the featured monthly health topic when you’re on the site.

Enhancements are continuing to be made. A secure log-in allows eligible employees and their dependents who are enrolled in one of the health and wellness programs named above to safely access and manage personal benefits information online.

An email registration and subscription center allows eligible employees and their dependents to opt-in to receive important benefits, enrollment and health/wellness information, alerts and updates via email. The subscription center is where you can update and manage your email communications preferences.


This site contains information for railroad employees and/or their eligible dependents covered in the national railroad medical, prescription drug, dental, vision, behavioral health and life insurance benefits plans. If you and/or your dependents are not covered under these plans, including Amtrak employees, you should continue to seek information about your health care benefits from your employer.

UTUIA scholarship applications must be received by March 31

The deadline to apply for a four-year continuing United Transportation Union Insurance Association scholarship for the academic year 2015-2016 is March 31.

The application form printed in the December/January 2014-15 issue of Transportation Division News is the only one that will be accepted. If you need an application form, contact the Transportation Division office at (216) 228-9400.

Effective Jan. 1, all new and currently active scholarship awards from the UTUIA were increased to $1,000 to help ease the increasing educational expenses the association’s members face.

Applicants must be associated with the UTUIA by either owning a UTUIA insurance policy, or by being the child or grandchild of a current UTUIA policyholder. Scholarship applicants must also be associated with the SMART Transportation Division by belonging to the union, or by being the child or grandchild of an active or lifetime SMART Transportation Division member.

Treasurers receive training at TD headquarters

SMART Transportation Division Auditors Bobby Brantley and Mike Araujo conducted a three-day local treasurers’ workshop at the Transportation Division offices in North Olmsted, Ohio, Feb. 18-20. The workshop provided local treasurers with hands-on training on the responsibilities and reporting dates 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 Gilberto Reyes (807), John Putzel (1075), John J. Cass (1117), Tammy Kirchner (430), Kirk Lager (493), Brantley (kneeling), Scott Shannon (204), Josh Phillips (1525), Mike Scharosch (866), Bill Kaiser (1397), Tommy Myers (945), Brandon Suche (1136), Eric Benham (744), Joel Zoeino (1420), Todd Cooksey (594), Aaron Jones (137), Corey Plath (911), Araujo, Ben Coffee (1188), Wes Wilbanks (1291), Tommy Arsenault (662), David Magnuson (7), James Widmer (1566), David Pattell (72) and Eric Duncan (933).

To win or to place you have to show

SMART Day at the Races is April 17 at Fonner Park Race Track in Neb.

The fifth annual SMART Day at the Races will be held at Fonner Park Race Track in Grand Island, Neb., Friday, April 17, at 3 p.m., Union Pacific General Committee of Adjustment GO 933 reports.

In previous years, attendees included members from a number of locals in Kansas, Illinois, Nebraska, Colorado, Iowa and Wyoming, from both the Sheet Metal and Transportation Divisions.

Food and beverages will be available at the track and free clubhouse seating will be provided for those who reply in advance.

Transportation Division Local S6 at Herrington, Kan., will be donating a horse blanket embroidered with the SMART logo to be presented to the owner of the winning horse in a specified race.

Please R.S.V.P. by contacting Local 7 Chairperson Cliff Gordon at (308) 530-5766 orcgordonautow@fantom.net, or Local 286 member Ed Mueller at (308) 530-6711 or by email at meeko@ksds.net, if you’re planning to attend. Special room rates are available at the Midwest Holiday Inn in Grand Island by calling (308) 384-1330. Mention code “UTU” or “SMART” when making a reservation.

SMART General President Joseph Nitro is planning on attending and SMART Transportation Division President John Privitsch may attend if his schedule permits.

To make a reservation, please call Cliff Gordon at (308) 530-5766 or Ed Mueller at (308) 530-6711.

SMART TD contacts EEOC over CSX ‘absence’ policy

The SMART Transportation Division’s Legal Department has written to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) challenging CSX Transportation’s new “absence management policy” for what the union says is a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other laws.

The policy requires any employee that was absent due to illness or off-duty injury to provide doctors’ notes, and the right for the company to communicate directly with an employee’s medical provider. It also requires employees to describe symptoms of non-employee family members if the absence was to care for them.

The union contends that the medical information from CSX is “horizontal” in nature, rather than job-related or consistent with business necessity.

The EEOC has taken the matter under its consideration to determine if it violates any federal discrimination laws.

Any member who feels they have been harmed by the policy should still file their own complaint with the EEOC if they so desire. Information on how to file a charge may be found at http://www.eeoc.gov/employees/howtofile.cfm.

www.utu.org / www.utuia.org
Previsich: ‘It’s your union and it’s your future’

Your union is a leader in advocating on behalf of its members in every forum — from our regulatory and legislative efforts in Washington, D.C., and the state houses, to the day-to-day representation of our members at the local level.

However, the current political climate makes it much more challenging to achieve the successful outcomes that our members deserve. Budget squabbles and funding decisions made by elected officials affect each and every one of our members every day. Who gets elected really does matter and it is critically important that our members consider carefully their choice of candidate when they cast their votes.

Candidates for public office who support issues important to unionized labor deserve our votes. Those who will vote against our interests do not.

We want to operate freight and passenger trains, drive buses and fly airplanes and we deserve fair pay for doing so.

When I’m asked by senators and representatives alike, that’s my answer. “We want to work.” We don’t want to go on the dole. We don’t want unemployment benefits or job retraining.

In sharp contrast to the sea of corporate D.C. lobbyists, we don’t want any special tax breaks or special treatment … we just want to work.

We want to operate freight and passenger trains, drive buses and fly airplanes and we deserve fair pay for doing so.

Plus, we expect and demand on many levels that our workplaces are safe, so that at the end of our shift or flight, we can go home to our families in one piece.

A big part of what we do in our Legislative Department is work to keep the jobs our members have, encourage the creation of more jobs for our members and work to ensure that our workplaces are safe.

Here are examples of our efforts:

- We work to make sure Amtrak and our members’ other passenger rail operations receive adequate investments.
- We work to ensure that our nation’s transit agencies receive their fair share of revenue from the highway trust fund, and
- We support the essential air service program, which ensures that even people in small towns across America have some access to air service.

We are involved in saving jobs too, particularly on the coal side of the railroad industry. At least 20 percent of our freight rail members’ jobs rely on the shipment of coal. To that end, we have actively lobbied Congress and worked with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy to keep coal a part of America’s energy mix. On the West Coast, we are working with allies to open three new ports for coal exports from the Powder River Basin.

But when you sum it all up and ask — “What do we want?” — the answer remains, “We want to work.”

I’ll leave you with the finest reply ever given on what labor wants. Samuel Gompers, the first president of the American Federation of Labor (the AFL of the now AFL-CIO), eloquently said: “What does labor want? We want more schoolhouses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures, to make mankind more noble, womanhood more beautiful, and childhood more happy and bright.”

That’s what we want.

Fraternally,

John Risch

National Legislative Director
SMART Transportation Division
State Watch

News from SMART TD State Legislative Boards

Kansas

State Legislative Director Ty Dragoo went before the City Council of Wellington, Kan., Feb. 9 to ask for their support of Senate Bill 164, a two-person rail crew bill currently being considered by the state legislature.

“This isn’t about money, it’s about safety,” Dragoo said. “The real issue is profits for the railroad. Traffic is down some on the railroads, but profits are up. They can cut costs a lot if they only have one person on a train.”

Railroad companies have consistently said there’s no factual data to support that one-person crews would pose a safety issue, but Dragoo pointed out that is because for the last 60 years, it has not been done.

The council was receptive to the idea of two-person crews, but worried that their support for the bill might damage their relationship with the railroad. Councilman Vince Wetta, a retired railroader and member of Local 794 at Wellington stated, “We are elected to do things for safety. I don’t think the railroad will be that upset. Going to one person is a safety hazard to the public and cities and towns along the route. Financial concerns are not a reason to cut corners on safety operations.”

Drago, Wetta and others also appeared before Topeka, Kan., city and county officials Feb. 19 in an effort to garner additional support for the bill.

Utah

State Legislative Director Jay Seegmiller reports that the legislative board is supporting, in conjunction with BLET, two bills pending in the state legislature. The bills are S.B. 50, which would require two train rail crews on freight trains in the state, and S.B. 127, which would improve safety requirements for van services. S.B. 50 passed in the Senate Transportation Committee by a 3-2 vote and is headed to the full Senate for debate.

S.B. 127 was heard in the Senate Business and Labor Committee, where 16 SMART and BLET members showed up to testify, Seegmiller said. “Their testimony made quite an impact on committee members. S.B. 127 passed out of committee on a unanimous vote, thanks to the involvement of these members.” It now goes to the full Senate for debate and a vote.

“The work is not over, it is just beginning. Our members now need to contact their state Senate and House representatives and encourage them to support S.B. 50 and S.B. 127.” Members can go to http://le.utah.gov and enter their home address and ZIP code in the box at the bottom of the page to find their representatives’ contact information and seek their support for this legislation.

Virginia

A letter to the editor of The Roanoke Times by State Legislative Director Pat Corp, in response to an article published earlier entitled “Railroads want only one person at helm of trains,” was published Jan. 26. Corp’s letter read, in part: “The railroad industry seems to be ramping up its efforts to justify reducing (train crews) from two crew members down to one. Only certain trains to begin with, they say, but I imagine if you give them that inch, the mile isn’t far behind.”

“Using technology to justify the use of one person to operate a train instead of two would make sense to me, also, if we were a for-profit business… it is just natural to a capitalistic business model. Unfortunately, this same minimalist model is devoid of any sense of duty in relation to public concerns or public safety, and typically remains so until a calamity drives up the cost of that model.”

With our nation’s railroads running through just about every major and moderately sized metropolitan center, and with the sheer volume of hazardous material they carry, we cannot afford to roll the dice on safety.”

“I can tell you from personal experience that having the other person in the cab of the locomotive is lifesaving at times. We who run the trains welcome technology that adds a level of safety to train operations and lessens the hazards of the environment we work in, but not the use of that technology to open the door to riskier operations.”

“Now that the elections for local officers are behind us, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all those who were successful in being elected to their new positions. I ask that they keep in mind that fair representation of their fellow brothers and sisters is the goal. Treat all members alike and strive to represent the interests of all. Attend union meetings and encourage your fellow members to do likewise.”

Pennsylvania

Local 61 Legislative Rep. Keith Englehard, State Legislative Director Paul Pokrowka, Local 1373 Legislative Rep. Kyle Brighbell and SEPTA General Committee of Adjustment Vice Chairperson Michael Stevens attended a Feb. 10. waiver request hearing before the Federal Railroad Administration. SEPTA has asked the FRA to extend a waiver that would allow them to ignore current laws concerning hours of service. “In October 2014, I attended SEPTA Local 61’s meeting and the membership unanimously asked me to fight this issue. This is of major concern for us as to the safety of our members and the ruling public. Fatigue-related accidents are a huge concern to the Pennsylvania Legislative Board. SEPTA has chosen to spend their resources circumventing the system rather than working with this office for a proper resolution,” Pokrowka said. “This is a cross-scheduling issue and in no way justifies a waiver.”

FMCSA committee to update bus driver training

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Feb. 10 announced the formation of a 26-member advisory committee that is tasked with updating classroom and new behind-the-wheel training requirements for professional truck and bus drivers.

The Entry-Level Driver Training Advisory Committee comprises a diverse cross-section of motor carrier interests, including training organizations, interstate bus and trucking industries, law enforcement, labor unions and safety advocates. The committee is tasked with negotiating the issues to be addressed in a proposed training rule, which the agency intends to issue by the fall of 2015, with a final rule expected in 2016.

“Ensuring roadway safety starts with the driver,” said FMCSA Acting Administrator Scott Darling. “Finalizing new training requirements for truck and bus operators is one of my top priorities and we have tapped a group of uniquely qualified stakeholders to help us work through the details and meet this goal.”

www.utu.org / www.utuia.org
2015 regional meeting preparations are underway

The 2015 Transportation Division/UTUIA regional meetings have been designed to provide a grand sense of formalism, less of worthwhile education and time of fun for the whole family. As in the past, each regional meeting will run for 2-1/2 days, ending early on the afternoon of the third day. The evening of the first day has been left unscheduled to allow your family and friends to be free to explore and enjoy the many offerings of the regional meeting cities.

Regional meeting registration and hotel information, as well as links to make hotel reservations online, can be accessed by visiting www.utu.org and clicking on the "Meetings" box on the bottom of the homepage.

All those attending the regional meetings must be registered in order to attend any planned social functions. Children, age 11 and under who are pre-registered are complimentary. The registration form is printed on the right.

A completed registration form listing each attendee, regardless of age, and complete payment in U.S. funds must be received at the SMART Transportation Division, 2490 Country Club Blvd., Suite 340, North Olmsted, OH 44070-5333, by June 19 for the Phoenix meeting or by July 6 for the Providence meeting, or the registration will be charged an on-site registration fee of $20.

The pre-registration fee for the 2015 regional meetings is $150 per member, spouse or child over age 11; the same fee charged last seven years. Additional fees apply for the golf outings and tours. You must make your own room reservations and certain deadlines apply. The $150 registration fee covers all workshop materials, a welcoming reception the night before the meetings; three lunches and one evening meal. Those wishing to attend only the workshops do not need to pay the registration fee. No one-day registrations are offered.

You may cancel your meeting registration 10 days prior to the first day of the meetings or golf outing without penalties. Call the Transportation Division at (216) 228-9400 or email gregutui@smart-smart.org immediately regarding changes or cancellations.

United Airlines offering discounted flights

United Airlines offers discounts on all published fares up to 10 days after the Phoenix and Providence; R.L. regional meetings.

Call your travel professional or United Airlines at (800) 426-1412 for reservations. Refer to Z Code (ZUSI) and Agreement Code (902191).

There will be a separate collect, per ticket, for all tickets issued through United Airlines ticketing facility.

So, in addition to the lowest fare possible, you can also choose your flight times and access your meeting discounts by entering the Z Code and Agreement Code in the Offer Code box, without a space between the two codes (ZUSI902191).

A direct link to United's online reservation system can also be found on the Transportation Division's website at www.utu.org and clicking on the "Meetings" tile at the bottom of the homepage. Choose the correct town, enter your dates, and the link will take you to the linked and additional meeting information.

Transportation Division Regional Meeting Registration Form

Registering before the regional meetings expedites sign-in procedures, helps organizers plan more accurately, and saves on meeting expenses for persons attending the regional meeting, including family members and guests. MUST be registered in order to attend any event. Please note that these meetings last 2-1/2 days and conclude on the afternoon of the third day. Registration fees are $150 per person; children 11 years of age and under are complimentary. On-site registration is $200 per person. At least one day prior to the regional meetings, a guest list will be provided to the Transportation Division by June 10 for the Phoenix meeting and by July 3 for the Providence, R.L. meeting for all members, spouses and guests to be considered pre-registered.

Which regional meeting will you be attending?

Phoenix

Providence

Avis Rent-a-Car offering discounts at airports

The Transportation Division has arranged with Avis Rent-a-Car to offer discounted rates to members attending the 2015 regional meetings.

To receive the discount, call Avis at (800) 331-1600 and use SMART’s Avis Worldwide Discount (AWD) number: D15S099.

For the Phoenix and Providence, R.L., regional meetings, members and guests can also reserve a car online. Visit the Transportation Division website at www.utu.org, register for the “Meetings” link at the bottom of the homepage, choose the correct region and注册 the appropriate regional meeting.

When making a car online, be sure to use the same Avis Worldwide Discount (AWD) number as listed above: D15S099.

United Airlines Travel Department

The United Airlines Travel Department has informed SMART of the following savings.

For Phoenix:

- Up to 20% off the lowest available fare into and out of Phoenix (PHX) in First Class, Business First and Economy Class on select dates.
- Up to $50 off round-trip fares in Economy Class on select dates.
- Up to $25 off round-trip fares in Business First and First Class on select dates.

For Providence:

- Up to 20% off the lowest available fare into and out of Providence (PVD) in First Class, Business First and Economy Class on select dates.
- Up to $50 off round-trip fares in Economy Class on select dates.
- Up to $25 off round-trip fares in Business First and First Class on select dates.

For all travel, include United's five percent employee discount and use United AAdvantage program to receive a 200-mile bonus.

SPG Special: United Airlines will extend a 10% discount to SPG members for special fares, subject to availability.

Avis Car Rental

Avis has arranged an exclusive offer with SMART.

- 10% discount on your car rental at Avis, subject to availability.
- Coupon code: SMART
- Book your car rental online at www.avis.com and use coupon code SMART.

Avis Rent-a-Car

- 10% discount on your car rental at Avis, subject to availability.
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For Phoenix:

- Up to 20% off the lowest available fare into and out of Phoenix (PHX) in First Class, Business First and Economy Class on select dates.
- Up to $50 off round-trip fares in Economy Class on select dates.
- Up to $25 off round-trip fares in Business First and First Class on select dates.

For Providence:

- Up to 20% off the lowest available fare into and out of Providence (PVD) in First Class, Business First and Economy Class on select dates.
- Up to $50 off round-trip fares in Economy Class on select dates.
- Up to $25 off round-trip fares in Business First and First Class on select dates.

For all travel, include United's five percent employee discount and use United AAdvantage program to receive a 200-mile bonus.

SPG Special: United Airlines will extend a 10% discount to SPG members for special fares, subject to availability.

Avis Car Rental

Avis has arranged an exclusive offer with SMART.

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For Phoenix:

- Up to 20% off the lowest available fare into and out of Phoenix (PHX) in First Class, Business First and Economy Class on select dates.
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- Up to 20% off the lowest available fare into and out of Providence (PVD) in First Class, Business First and Economy Class on select dates.
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For all travel, include United's five percent employee discount and use United AAdvantage program to receive a 200-mile bonus.

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Career leads retiree to volunteer efforts

After 44 years of working on the railroad, Harry Hendricks retired in 1993 determined to spend some of his time volunteering, but where? Hendricks, 86, found his niche at the Clark County Historical Museum in Vancouver, Wash.

“I got involved with the museum when the rail yard moved a full rail of railroad merchandise in the museum many years ago. I was involved in that, and later on, after I retired, I was down there a couple times a week. I started explaining to people the significance of the items and just slid into being the resident railroad consultant,” Hendricks said.

“I’ve been involved with the museum for 30 years. You know, after you retire, you should have things to do and give back to the community, so that’s what I do.”

“We no longer have the railroad items at the museum, just in storage. The old had to make way for the new, and there’s no longer room at the museum for the railroad items.”

“We had everything from an old depot stove, railroad watches, keys, silverware and plates from dining cars, a steam whistle, a library of books and pamphlets. We had everything in there. Every day, I’d like it to go back in the museum. Retirees would like it to go back. We no longer have room for it at the museum, but I’d like for something to be done with it.”

Most recently, Hendricks sat on a committee

Palmetto GBA: Medicare may cover some dental services

In most cases, Medicare does not cover dental services, specifically, services related to the care, treatment, filling, removal, or replacement of teeth, or structures directly supporting teeth.

This would include check-ups, cleansings, and dental services as well as extractions or other procedures performed to prepare the mouth for dentures (including reconstruction of the jaw (but not after); or titanium implants). Medicare does not change its coverage based on how complex, difficult or necessary the care may be. In addition, if a hospital is treated for hospitalization, it would not automatically allow coverage to exist.

Medicare may cover dental services specifically related to:

• Treatment of a fractured jaw;
• Cancer treatment;
• Extraction of teeth prior to radiation treatment of the jaw (but not after);
• Dental exam prior to a kidney transplant or heart valve replacement; and
• Removal of oral lesions or tumors.

If a covered procedure is performed in connection with an excluded service, as such as preparing the mouth for dentures, both services are non-covered. If a non-covered service is performed on a patient without a covered test or procedure, such removal of a tooth that is preventing the removal of a tumor, both services may be covered. You should contact your provider to determine if a specific service or procedure is covered by Medicare.

If you have questions about what Medicare will pay for dental services, call Palmetto GBA’s Beneficiary Contact Center at (800) 833-4455, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET. For the hearing impaired with the appropriate dial-up service, call TTY/TDD at (877) 566-3572.

RRB annuities are exempt from state income taxes

According to Section 14 (45 U.S.C. Sec. 211m) of the Railroad Retirement Act, retirement annuities are not taxable for individual state income tax purposes.

Bruce Rodman of the Public Affairs/Office of Administration of the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board says, “Both of our primary enabling statutes – the Railroad Retirement Act and the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act – specifically exempt the benefits paid under them from state income taxes.

“However, if a person knows this – and sometimes this might stem from people using free tax prep software or obtaining volunteer assistance in filing their returns – and then elects as taxable income, the state tax collection agencies probably won’t know any better.”

The RRB also states on the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of their website that the railroad retirement, unemployment and sickness benefits paid by the RRB are not subject to state income tax. However, these benefits are taxable on the federal level.

Many tax preparers, and even states, are not aware of these statutes and may attempt to tax a railroad retirement annuity. It is up to the individual to make sure that his or her annuity is not taxed by the state in which they reside.

Oakland Old Rails Club planning April 12 dinner

The Oakland Old Rails Club is planning its annual dinner and get together for Sunday, April 12, at the Elks Family Restaurant at 260 Flatts Blvd. in Conyers, Ga.

The event will begin at noon with a no-host bar, with dinner to be served at 1:00 p.m. There are three dinner choices this year of coulotte steak with mashed potatoes or rice, broiled salmon and rice, or broiled chicken breast with mashed potatoes or rice. All dinners include a tossed salad, vegetables, bread and butter, dessert and coffee.

Tickets are $30 and may be purchased at the March meeting or by mail. For tickets by mail, send money and entrée choices to Bill Cotton, 530 Struthers Ct., Concord, CA 94518. The price includes sales tax and gratuity. Checks can be made payable to “Old Rails Club.” Reservations can also be made by calling (925) 872-1176.
Don’t let cancer treatment costs send your life’s savings down the drain

Protect your family and your savings with a UTUIA Cancer Hospital Indemnity policy

UTUIA’s Cancer Hospital Indemnity policy offers peace of mind. The benefits are paid directly to the policyholder to use as he or she sees fit. Use them to meet household expenses and other continuing expenses. This policy supplements regular hospitalization insurance, thereby protecting savings. Some benefits may vary based on state of residence.

With monthly premiums starting as low as $9 per month, this plan fits into any budget.

UTUIA’s Cancer Hospital Indemnity policy offers:

- $300 per day for hospital confinement
- $600 per day in extended stay benefits
- $100 per day for home recovery
- $2,000 first diagnosis benefit for internal cancer
- $15,000 bone marrow transplant benefit

The benefits are paid directly to the policyholder to use as he or she sees fit. Use them to meet household expenses.

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

Information, please

UTUIA’s Cancer Hospital Indemnity insurance plan.

I would like more information on UTUIA’s Cancer Hospital Indemnity insurance plan.

Full name

Date of birth

UTUIA local number

Sex

City

State

UTUIA Cancer Hospital Indemnity policy offers:

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Railroads expect to spend $29B on network, hire 15,000

U.S. freight railroads plan to spend an estimated $29 billion on the nation’s rail network and project to hire about 15,000 people in 2015, the Association of American Railroads (AAR) reported Feb. 2 in its 2015 Outlook. These high-paying jobs, and record private spending will further strengthen an essential transportation system that is today powering a U.S. economic comeback.

“By providing affordable, efficient and reliable transportation of goods, from lumber to oil to auto parts and grain, freight railroads continue to transport goods, from lumber to oil to auto parts and grain, freight railroads continue to play a vital role in the positive economic trends that are today powering a U.S. economic comeback. "F for too many years, we’ve underfunded our nation’s physical infrastructure. We have to change that and that’s what the Rebuild America Act is all about. We must modernize our infrastructure and create millions of new jobs that will put people back to work and help the economy," Sanders said.

“By making smart federal investments in our nation’s infrastructure, we can create jobs and opportunities today, while strengthening our economy for tomorrow. I’m proud to cosponsor the Rebuild America Act,” Mikulski said.

Tom Trotter, legislative representative for the AFL-CIO, said Sanders’ proposal will “raise the profile about the serious needs of our nation’s infrastructure. This proposal provides a stark blueprint of what needs to be accomplished and provides an opportunity to create millions of new jobs.”

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In addition, rail infrastructure projects are unnecessarily delayed by unwieldy review processes that cost time and money, and current law that limits the ability to partner with the private sector holds back the development of the system.

During the legislation markup, the committee also approved 12 General Services Administration Capital Investment and Leasing Program resolutions that will result in $111 million in taxpayer savings, based on the Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Views and Estimates of the committee.

### SMART, BLET push state two-person crew laws

Continued from page 1

Crew size has become a hot button issue following the 2013 oil train derailment and explosion in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. While an official cause has not been determined, the train in question was operated by a single employee.

“We urge BLET and SMART Transportation Division officers to work with their counterparts in moving legislation forward on this issue of paramount importance to the members we represent,” President Pierce and President Previsich wrote.

### Anthem responds to breach

Continued from page 1

more, we will continually update this website and share that information with you.”

Current methods of protecting insurance policyholders whose information was included in the database that was compromised can visit AnthemFacts.com to learn how to enroll in two years of free credit monitoring and identity theft repair services provided by our vendor – a leading and trusted identity protection provider. Members were able to access these services starting Feb. 13, prior to receiving a mailed notification from Anthem.

The free identity protection services provided by Anthem includes two years of:

- **Identity Repair Assistance:** Should a member experience a data breach, an investigator will do the work to recover financial losses, restore the member’s credit, and ensure the member’s identity is returned to its proper condition. This assistance will cover any fraud that has occurred since the incident first began.

- **Credit Monitoring:** At no cost, members may also enroll in additional protections, including credit monitoring. Credit monitoring alerts consumers when banks and creditors use their identity to open new credit accounts.

- **Child Identity Protection:** Child-specific identity protection services will also be offered to any members with children insured through their Anthem plan.

- **Identity Theft Insurance:** For individuals who enroll, the company has arranged for $1,000,000 in identity theft insurance, where allowed by law.

- **Identity theft monitoring/fraud detection:** For members who enroll, data such as credit card numbers, Social Security numbers and emails will be scanned against aggregated data sources maintained by top security researchers that contain stolen and compromised individual data, in order to look for any indication that the members’ data has been compromised.

- **Phone Alerts:** Individuals who register for this service and provide their contact information will receive an alert when there is a notification from a credit bureau, or when it appears from identity theft monitoring alerts that the individual’s identity may be compromised.

SMART will continue to keep members updated through its websites and publications.

### Rail worker safety bills marked up in Wash.

The text of the bills read, in part, “Any per-
son, corporation, company, or officer of the court operating any railroad, or part of any rail-
road or railway within the state of Washington, and engaged as a common carrier in the trans-
portation of freight or passengers, who violates any of the provisions of section 3 of this act is guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction shall be fined not less than one thousand dol-
ers and not more than one hundred thousand dollars for each offense.”

Krohn said the bills are in response to con-
cerns raised by emergency management offi-
cials who have become aware that the crewm
ers on the head end of the trains, in most cases, cannot see their train beyond a lim-
ited sight distance. Recognizing that the train
crew are the first responders, they believe that trains that pose a risk to the public need crewm
ers on the rear of the train, in a position to be able to see the train and take applicable action in the legislature.

“As an emergency manager, I plan for disas-
ster and work for safety. Human eyes are key to safety and proper staffing is important, which is why I support this,” said Krohn, emergency manager for Kent, Wash., and divi-
sion chief of the Kent Fire Department Rail Fire/Fire. Healthy.

Noting that railroad yardmasters are required to work excessively long hours by rail-
road carriers, H.B. 1284 and S.B. 5696 will pro-
hibit a yardmaster’s “remaining on duty for a period in excess of twelve consecutive hours…An employee may not remain or go on duty unless that employee has at least ten consecutive hours off duty during the prior twenty-four hours.”

If the state’s Utilities and Transportation Commission finds that a Class I carrier violates the provisions of these bills, if passed, “the commission may assess a civil penalty of not less than ten thousand dollars and not more than fifty thousand dollars.”

Krohn said that yardmaster and BNSF GO 341 General Chairperson Jeffrey Sellman was the impetus behind these bills and worked tire-
lessly to advance them in the legislature.

Finally, H.B. 1808 and S.B. 5797 will, if passed, “regulate charter party carriers providing railroad crew transportation and every con-
tract crew hauling vehicle with respect to the safety of equipment, driver qualifications, insur-
ance levels, and safety of operations. The com-
mision must issue a written report for each char-
gent crew hauling vehicle, regardless of seating capacity, as the minimum safety standards.”

“I am really excited about how we’ve advanced these bills in the legislature,” Krohn said. “They are reasonable bills that won’t break the bank of the railroads. They are a rea-
necessary precaution to protect the public and our members.”

Krohn encourages Transportation Division members and all concerned railroad employees to contact their lawmakers and seek their sup-
port of these legislative proposals.

### Safety Team member assisting NTSB in Calif.

The SMART Transportation Division’s National Safety Team has been assigned one of its members to assist the National Transportation Safety Board in its investigation of the crash and derailment of an NST train of a commuter train in Ventura County in California Feb. 24.

Twenty-eight people were injured, four of them critically, when the five-car Metrolink commuter train traveling from Ventura to Los An-
geles struck a truck on the tracks and derailed.

Safety Team Investigator Louis Costa of Local 1241 at Richmond, Calif., will assist the NTSB in determining the facts of the accident.

Safety Team members are selected by the

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Retiree Gary York transcends his disability while heading for the green.

“Golf camaraderie, like that of astronauts and Antarctic explorers, is based on a common experience of transcendence: fat or thin, scratch or duffer, we have been somewhere together where non-golfers never go,” said the late, great American writer John Updike. While playing golf, retired UTU member and Union Pacific trainman/brakeman Gary E. York can attest to this common experience of transcendence. What makes his experience even more transcendent, though, is that he and his golfing partners are all veterans of the U.S. armed forces and they all have disabilities.

Thanks to the project “Boots on the Green,” York and his veteran buddies are able to continue playing golf and are enjoying its therapeutic and social benefits, despite their physical limitations. “Boots on the Green is a great organization created by guys at the Department of Veterans Affairs for disabled veterans. We have helped many disabled veterans who initially seemed to have given up on life. They were depressed and felt that there simply wasn’t much they could do anymore. But, after a little training and a couple rounds of golf, a transformation takes place. A smile appears, laughter ensues, and pretty soon they are having fun and enjoying themselves and life. And it is for this very reason that BOG exists,” York said.

Unlike many of his golfing buddies, who became disabled while serving their country in active duty, York suffered his disability years after he left the military. He served as an infantryman in the U.S. Army from 1966 through 1968, being stationed in Vietnam from 1967 through 1968 and achieving the rank of sergeant.

“I was known as Sgt. York in Vietnam. This was a sad time in my life. Sad for the people and sad for the returning U.S. soldiers, who were not always welcomed home, but I would not give up this experience for anything. I would not want to do it over again, either. I learned a lot about life while there,” York said.

He survived the war physically unscathed and made it back home. In 1970, he hired out as a brakeman with the Missouri Pacific Railroad and after two years, he became a conductor. He maintained a successful railroad career for over three decades until Dec. 14, 2005, when both of his legs were severed in a horrific railroad accident. On that day, his life was permanently and irrevocably changed. “I really did enjoy my job and the people I worked with. They were like family,” York said.

Despite his accident, York continues to enjoy life and BOG has helped. It is a partnership between the University of Missouri Extension, the St. Louis Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Gateway PGA and H.E.R.O.E.S. Care, a support network for military families. Jerry Hirthsen, UM associate professor of parks, recreation and tourism, is the project coordinator. Hirthsen works with VA recreation therapists, PGA golf professionals and volunteers to organize golf clinics and tournaments for the program. He has been involved with therapeutic recreation for more than 40 years.

Danny Baker is a volunteer adaptive golf instructor with BOG and is credited for recruiting York.

“A about six years ago, I was contacted by Danny Baker. He sells solo rider golf carts and informed me of a golfing program for veterans. I eventually tried one of the carts on the golf course and realized that ‘I can do this. This is fun.’ My brother, the late David York, and I were fortunate enough to play in the first BOG tournament. I have been involved ever since. Also, the winner of a golf course in Arlington Heights, Ill., has been very generous and has allowed all of our tournaments to be played there. We are very grateful,” York said.

Advances in assistive technology have allowed golf courses to become accessible to players with limited mobility and BOG utilizes this accessibility. York plays golf at least twice a week by driving a single-rider golf cart. It is designed in a way that lets disabled golfers drive onto teeing grounds and let disabled golfers drive onto teeing grounds and lets disabled golfers drive onto teeing grounds and lets disabled golfers drive onto teeing grounds and lets disabled golfers drive onto teeing grounds and helps them to navigate the ball w ithout ever having to dismount. Also, swingless golf clubs assist in driving the ball across the fairway. These clubs utilize small explosive charges that help to propel the ball. York, a member of Local 1823 at St. Louis, has inspired many people beyond measure, so much so that he was recently invited to speak before an audience of 250 attendees of a professional golf association meeting. Although he expressed some anxious reservations about what he could possibly say to these golf pros, certainly he can speak to his fellow golfers about their common experience of transcendence. Fat or thin, scratch or duffer, disabled or not, they all have been somewhere together where non-golfers have never gone.

Learn more about Boots on the Green by visiting: http://cafemedia.com/2014/05/boots-on-the-green-2/
Secretary of Labor’s statement on union membership

U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez issued the following statement on the department’s Bureau of Labor Statistics report released Jan. 23 on union membership in 2014:

“Today’s report confirms what we’ve always known: that belonging to a union makes a powerful difference in people’s lives, providing greater economic security and helping them punch their ticket to the middle class.

“The 2014 BLS data shows that among wage and salary workers, those in a union have median weekly earnings of $970, compared to $763 for those not in a union. That’s not pocket change – it amounts to greater than $10,000 a year more for union members. There is also a smaller gender pay gap for unionized workers – women who are in a union come closer to parity with their male counterparts than do non-union women. The report also finds that the union membership rate was 11.1 percent last year, 35.7 percent for public-sector workers.

“The economy is resurgent, with an unemployment rate well below six percent and job growth we haven’t experienced since the late 1990’s. The challenge we face now is creating shared prosperity, ensuring that our growing economy works for everyone. To do that, we need to turn up the volume on worker voice.

“There is a direct link throughout American history between the strength of the middle class and the vitality of the labor movement. It’s not a coincidence. When unions are strong, working families thrive, with wages and productivity rising in tandem. But when the percentage of people represented by unions is low, there is downward pressure on wages and the middle class takes it on the chin.

“President Obama said in the State of the Union that middle-class economics requires ‘laws that strengthen rather than weaken unions, and give workers a voice.’ That means protecting and strengthening collective bargaining rights, and it also means exploring new organizing strategies and other innovative approaches to empowering workers in a modern economy.

“Across the country at the grass-roots level, workers and their advocates are doing just that. Whether it’s auto workers emulating the German works council model, or the dynamic movement of fast-food workers seeking a raise, or efforts by taxi drivers and home health care workers to stand up for their rights, we are seeing more people seeking creative ways to make their voices heard.

“Doing so can and must be done in collaboration with employers. We reject the old false choice and zero-sum thinking – the kind that suggests either workers or their employers can thrive, but not both. Unions succeed not at the expense of business, but in partnership with business. Forward-looking employers recognize that they can give their workers a voice while giving their bottom line a boost.

“To maintain robust economic growth, to create more shared prosperity and a better life for millions of middle-class families, we need full-throated worker voice.”