A message to all members and retirees from TD President Jeremy Ferguson

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I would like to begin by recognizing those of you who, in the face of this global COVID-19 pandemic, are continuing to serve the millions of Americans who depend on us and the services we provide every day.

If not for our bus operators, passenger and transit workers, families without alternate means of transportation might not have access to basic necessities such as food, cleaning supplies and medical attention, while essential staff in urban areas might not be able to report to work. If not for our freight rail crews operating around the clock, many of the vital goods and supplies our communities and healthcare professionals so desperately need and other measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

The petitions sought emergency standards encompassing work area sanitation, personal protective equipment and how to deal with workers or passengers expressing symptoms of COVID-19, among other protections.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA); Federal Railroad Administration (FRA); Federal Transit Administration (FTA); and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), as of press time, had not responded to the petitions.

The structure of a coronavirus is shown in this image from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A novel coronavirus, named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), was identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China, in 2019. The illness caused by this virus has been named coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Continued on Page 3

As COVID-19 has spread across America, some carriers and businesses have been caught flat-footed by the pandemic as indicated by field reports we’ve received from members.

The same cannot be said for front-line SMART Transportation Division members who have sprung into action to help their communities and fellow members cope with the effects of the coronavirus.

General Chairperson Justin Wolters (GCA-449) was able to engineer an agreement with a local distillery that provided alcohol-based hand sanitizer to members free of charge.

“I explained our travel ban exemption and our lack of access to running water,” Wolters said. “They seemed more than happy to help our union.

“Decided I can’t rely on the carrier to protect the members, so our officers are donating...”

Continued on Page 3

The structure of a coronavirus is shown in this image from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A novel coronavirus, named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), was identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China, in 2019. The illness caused by this virus has been named coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

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Pandemic affects union gatherings and meetings going forward

SMART Transportation Division State Legislative Boards that have not yet conducted their quadrennial reorganization meetings are directed to cancel their meetings and conduct elections by mail ballot. Taking these steps will assist in meeting the recommendations of the White House and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to stem the transmission of the COVID-19 virus by avoiding unnecessary travel and exposure to gatherings of people.

According to SMART Constitution Article 218, Section 93, lines 18-22: “Beginning in 1972 the Chairperson of each State and District Legislative Board shall convene the full Legislative Board not later than May 31st following the completion of the quadrennial elections for Local Legislative Representatives for reorganization purposes, which shall include the election of officers and adoption of bylaws and procedures.”

As a result of the growing adverse impact of the COVID-19 virus, the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Labor Management Standards (OLMS), on March 17, 2020, issued guidance that provides this organization with latitude regarding the deadline for accomplishing the quadrennial reorganization, but still requires making “a good faith effort to conduct officer elections within LMRDA [Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act] timeframes.”

Accordingly, the quadrennial elections of your board should be conducted as soon as possible, and completed before the constitutionally mandated May 31, 2020, deadline. The DOL has advised that nominations can be taken by email, but elections must be conducted by secret ballot. The elections should be conducted pursuant to the procedures found in SMART Constitution Article 218, Section 57, which calls for the use of “A” envelopes and the employment of three tellers to... Continued on Page 9

Local 204, Pueblo, Colo.

Charlie Skidmore, assistant state legislative director of Colorado and the local’s legislative representative, crossed the border into Nevada in late February to join with SMART Transportation Division State Legislative Boards that have not yet conducted their quadrennial reorganization elections. In February, SMART-TD expressed its deepest sympathies to Virginia State Legislative Director Ronnie Hobbs and members with their wives dressed up to support the local CASA group’s third annual benefit masquerade ball.

Local 854, Portsmouth, Va.

Local 240, Los Angeles, Calif.

Officers and members want all of the following members who have recently retired many long years of happiness!

Robert D. Webb, who served as the local’s president and vice president for 12 years, hired out with Southern Pacific on May 30, 1970, as a brakeman and was promoted to conductor April 12, 1972. He continued working through the merger with Union Pacific on Sept. 16, 1996, before retiring after 51 years of service.

Dale M. Biggs served as secretary and treasurer of Local 240 for 12 years. He hired out with Southern Pacific Aug. 5, 1977, as a brakeman and was promoted to conductor April 12, 1980. He worked through the merger with Union Pacific as well and retired Dec. 2, 2018, after 42 years’ service.

James P. Jones, the California state legislative director and assistant state legislative director over 30 years, also served as local chairperson and legislative representative of Local 1336 for 12 years. He hired out as a brakeman with Pacific Electric Railroad, which later merged with the Southern Pacific, and was promoted to conductor Jan. 28, 1970. He worked through the UP merger and retired Dec. 18, 2019, after 59 years of service.

Harry J. Garvin Jr., the local chairperson and legislative representative of Local 240 for 28 years, also served as a local delegate. He hired out as a brakeman with Southern Pacific Nov. 25, 1972, and was promoted to conductor April 15, 1977, before working through the UP merger. After 48 years of service, he retired Jan. 1, 2020.

Ray C. Salcido, a conductor and brakeman, hired out with Union Pacific in 1998 and also retired on Jan. 1, 2020, after 22 years of service.

Two members lose children in untimely tragedies

Two SMART Transportation Division members and their local union brothers and sisters are in mourning after two sudden and untimely deaths.

Local 1565 member Laura Corley lost her son, Joey Trianders Allen, 43, of Lancaster, Calif., after police said a wrong-way driver slammed into his vehicle on the 405 Freeway in Los Angeles early Sunday, Feb. 16.

The driver suspected of being drunk behind the wheel in the crash that killed Allen has been charged with murder and a number of other counts associated with the crash. Services for Allen took place March 7 in Michigan, the family of Grand Elk Railroad employee and SMART-TD Local 313 Local Chairperson Todd Vaughn is mourning the death of Vaughn’s daughter, Alison Sargent, 22.

The body of Sargent, the mother of two daughters from Pennfield Township, Mich., was found Saturday, March 7, after she had been reported missing March 5. No suspects have been identified in Sargent’s death, and police are continuing to investigate her death as a homicide.

SMART-TD expresses its deepest sympathies to both Sister Corley and Brother Vaughn in this time of unimaginable loss to them and to their families.
Members pull together to assist one another in creating a safer work environment during pandemic

Continued from Page 1

cleaning materials daily and cleaning when they can.”

When asked about the sanitation of work areas also has been a challenge that General Chairperson Larry Miller (GO 386) is doing his best to meet by providing disinfecting wipes to workers in packages provided by the union.

“I wanted to do all I can on my part to keep our members supplied with whatever I could get at our local stores,” said Miller, who was elected an alternate vice president at last year’s Second SMART TD Convention. “I know it is not a lot, but it does make a dent. If we all pull together as the SMART TD team, we will get through this.”

Meanwhile, the Speier of Local 6 (Indianapolis, Ind.) purchased a number of spray bottles from the dollar store, mixing up a bleach solution he brought home, to apply to the surfaces he purchased on his own, and then placing the filled spray bottles around the yard office.

“They can put posters up (until) the cows come home, but that’s not keeping us safe,” Speier said. “It’s cheap to do, I followed the instructions on Google and have been filling them up and giving them to people to protect themselves.”

“If I keep my brothers and sisters safe and healthy, it ensures that I come home safe and healthy.”

If managers would give workers a bit of extra time to sanitize and disinfect their workstations — about 10 minutes — and allow them to pull together, it would help to reduce the risk of the coronavirus spreading, he said.

“You have a half-dozen guys buy bottles and bleach water, and we can really nip this in the bud,” Speier said.

Some employees were doing their best to keep others informed.

On the West Coast, General Chairperson James Sandoval of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District and Local 23 (Santa Cruz, Calif.) has been spreading information during the outbreak.

“The news is a half-dozen carriers are reporting outbreaks at work. Several members are dealing with the stress of being sick as well as with those members, and I have been working tirelessly to bring about a cooperative effort has brought about shift adjustments at both Santa Cruz’s bus stations and at the local rail yard,” he said.

“I must step up to make sure nobody feels alone right now because things are changing at a rapid pace.”

Sandoval says that a cooperative effort has brought about shift adjustments at both Santa Cruz’s bus stations and at the local rail yard. He has been working tirelessly to bring about a cooperative effort to reduce the risk of the coronavirus spreading, he said.

In particular he is raising awareness of the benefits that are available especially for those who may find themselves unable to work now because there is no support for someone they care for dealing with COVID-19.

“Since we are in uncharted waters with this pandemic, it is extremely important to support each other and share information that may help because there is no book on this,” he said.

“If we all work together, we can ensure that Congress will not overlook the rail industry and its employees when legislation is introduced to provide relief to those affected by COVID-19. Likewise, our general committees of adjustment and state legislative boards have been working tirelessly to apply similar protections to our members as carriers, state and local lawmakers and regulatory agencies.

To assist our Legislative Department and general committees in their efforts, we strongly encourage you to reach out to your representatives. It is more important than ever to draw their attention to the fact that our employers and policymakers are relinquishing their duties to act as responsible corporate citizens and government agencies. If you are not already aware, you may find your members are in desperate need of someone to enter your address and zip code in the ‘Find Your Elect ed Officials’ field at the bottom of the following web page: https://www.congressweb.com/SMART _Transportation/take_action/

In addition to those efforts, we have participated in numerous conference calls and meetings to directly address and discuss these matters with members of management, Congress and regulatory authorities. As you might imagine, the discourse in some of these conversations would not be appropriate for sharing verbatim. Nonetheless, you should rest assured they know exactly where we stand and what we expect.

Now more than ever, I am honored and humbled to serve as your President. I have an immense sense of pride and respect for all of you who continue to place yourselves in harm’s way, doing what many are not capable of doing. I do not accept this letter as my personal commitment that your union will not cease or slow its efforts until we procure the workplace safety and security we deserve.

As things develop, we will be posting updates to our website throughout these pages and sending email communications directly to those of you who subscribe. With optimism that our collective perseverance and courage will guide us through this trying time, and with my sincerest gratitude for your continued support, I remain Fraternally yours,

Jeremy R. Ferguson
President, Transportation Division

Ferguson: Union is fighting for the protection of members as nation faces coronavirus pandemic

Continued from Page 1

hasn’t hit all at.

It has been important to overstate the fact that your dedication, professionalism, and skills support the very backbone of our country in this moment of crisis. Not only do we feel a duty to provide for ourselves and our loved ones through this difficult and uncertain time, but we are bound by our moral obliga tion to provide essential goods and services that our nation must have to endure and, later recover, from this ordeal.

Unfortunately, we have already received confirmed reports that some of our members have tested positive for COVID-19. Our thoughts and prayers are with those members and their loved ones, who have either tested positive or are in quarantine. If you or someone you know has difficulty coping with the stress or anxiety brought on by this virus, we want you to know that Optum has established a no-cost, 24/7, emotional support help line at 1-866-342-6892. Please share this information accordingly.

It is unconscionable that in this, the national emergency, some of our carriers have refused to suspend draconian attendance policies that compel us to report for duty when we, or members of our family, are ill or have been in direct contact with COVID-19. Likewise, our general committees of adjustment and state legislative boards have been working tirelessly to apply similar protections to our members as carriers, state and local lawmakers and regulatory agencies.

To assist our Legislative Department and general committees in their efforts, we strongly encourage you to reach out to your representatives. It is more important than ever to draw their attention to the fact that our employers and policymakers are relinquishing their duties to act as responsible corporate citizens and government agencies. If you are not already aware, you may find your members are in desperate need of someone to enter your address and zip code in the ‘Find Your Elected Officials’ field at the bottom of the following web page: https://www.congressweb.com/SMART _Transportation/take_action/

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Jeremy R. Ferguson
President, Transportation Division
By Joseph Sellers Jr.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are making strides in the Bus Department on the issues that have been discussed at the Bus and Transit committee that was a part of the convention. The international has put its team of organizers together and is ready to grow the Bus Department and more importantly, to grow our union to make us bigger and stronger. SMART TD President Jerry Ferguson has made a commitment to provide the resources so that we are successful.

Another issue that needs immediate attention is the coronavirus, while anyone can contract it, make no mistake that we are more susceptible to this than anyone other than maybe health professionals who are treating patients. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by coronavirus. Some symptoms are fever, fatigue and dry coughing, early studies suggest that it affects older adults more than younger adults.

Some things we can do to try and protect ourselves is regularly wash our hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Try to stay at least six feet from someone who is coughing and try to avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, please check with medical professionals immediately. I would be interested to know what your company or transit agency is doing to help combat what we are facing on a daily basis, so please email me at cstudivant@smart-union.org and let me know what they are doing. Another issue we continue to face is operator assault.

On Jan. 24, operator Cecilia Mejia of Local 710 in Newark, N.J., was assaulted while operating her bus. Sister Mejia is a 19.5-year employee with Coach USA, who operates the service.

I would like to extend a big thank you to Katesha Holman, general chairperson of Local 710, New Jersey State Legislative Director Ron Sabol, Jim Rutherford, the general manager of Coach USA in Elizabeth N.J., and also safety manager Guillermo MalDONado. Those four individuals continuously hounded the Newark Police Department and provided them with video footage of the assault and worked tirelessly to get justice for their employee and our member.

I pleases me to announce that a suspect in the assault was apprehended just five days after.

This bus, like all Coach USA buses, was equipped with a safety partition, but the suspect reached around and struck sister Mejia. Our union sister did not suffer major injuries but did have minor contusions due to her glasses.

In New Jersey, there is a seven-year mandatory jail sentence for assaulting a transit worker. Let us hope that the courts now do their job. In closing, I once again urge you all to be safe and remain vigilant.

I remain, fraternal,
Calvin Studivant
VP Bus Department
SMART-TD
216-630-0963

Notes:
- **By Joseph Sellers Jr.**
- **SMART General President**
- **SMART Transportation Division News**
- **Jere-**
- **stronger. SMART-TD President**
- **Amber:**
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- **February / March 2020 SMART TD News**
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**Social Security offices closed due to COVID-19**

All local Social Security offices were closed to the public for in-person service starting March 17, 2020. This decision protects the population we serve — older Americans and people with underlying medical conditions — and our employees during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, we are still able to provide critical services. Online services remain available at www.socialsecurity.gov. Local offices will also continue to provide critical services over the phone.

A notice will be issued when these offices are reopened to the public for regular service.

Correction:
Cameron Johansen was misidentified as Wade Wilde in a photo caption that appeared in last issue’s State Watch.
TRANSPORTATION DIVISION PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

This round, TD and BLET will act in solidarity

Sometimes it takes something major to happen for people to sit up and take notice. A wake-up call, if you will.

From the standpoint of our national contract negotiations, our union got another wake-up call even before our first session.

On February 11th, a U.S. district judge, who was appointed by President Donald Trump last year, ruled against our union in a lawsuit over crew-consist moratoriums. We’re now appealing that decision.

The court ignored the Railway Labor Act strictures with regard to the moratorium provisions which have been upheld for decades. We are being pushed down the tracks where the carriers want this to go.

This fight is not over, and we have another that is about to begin.

There’s a lyric that Anne Feeney wrote that gets at what unions have embraced: “United, we bargain. Divided, we degenerate.”

We are now linked at the bargaining table.

Our two unions are linked in the courts. We’re linked in the halls of Congress. We’re linked in the locomotive cabs. We are now linked at the bargaining table.

Our attorneys are working together on behalf of both our organizations to fight the ongoing court cases as carriers try to manipulate the system with their deep pockets by attempting to get long-standing precedents and legislation overturned.

Legislative representatives from both our organizations are meeting with members of Congress and state legislators to get the word out for two-person crew laws. Professionals, however, are using every means they have to try to get two-person crew laws of seven states thrown out, which we have opposed.

Members from both organizations are sitting in cabs of freight trains staying alert and keeping one another safe through each and every shift, ready at a moment’s notice to respond when things go wrong. We need to carry this effort on in crew consist.

BLET President Pierce recently stated in a message to his union: “I share this information to make it clear to BLET’s membership that our proud Union stands with our Brothers and Sisters in SMART’s Transportation Division in the fight to preserve two-person crews,” Pierce wrote. “Be it on the regulatory front, the legislative front, in court or at the bargaining table, BLET is working with SMART-TD to protect the interests of all operating employees.”

I, as President of the SMART-TD, want to make it clear to our union that we stand united with the BLET.

Any attempt to drive a wedge between our organizations in order to get officers and members alike to disregard the goal at hand — preserving two on the operating crew — plays into the carriers’ hands. It gets them closer to what they want: Fewer workers, money in their pockets, a less-safe (cheaper) work environment and weakens all rail labor. Two unions with members and with leadership going in opposite directions would make it easier for carriers to accomplish their goal of eradicating jobs in favor of their idea of “innovation.”

I also agree with President Pierce when he stated: “The bottom line is this: In order to preserve two-person crews, each union must protect and preserve its member of those crews. With only a few exceptions, SMART-TD cannot bargain nationally for officers; the same is true in reverse; with only a few exceptions, SMART-TD cannot bargain nationally for engineers,” he wrote. “For these reasons, and regardless of the fearmongering going on, BLET cannot ‘sell’ Conductor positions to benefit Engineers in national negotiations, and the same is true in reverse for SMART-TD. Again, each Union must protect its half of our two-person crews for all operating employees to prevail.”

Brothers and sisters, this is an uneasy time for every member of every labor organization involved in

Continued on Page 8

State Watch

News from SMART TD State Legislative Boards

Washington’s ‘zombie’ two-person crew bill made law

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee signed into law H.B. 1841, a two-person crew bill that was championed in various forms for seven years by SMART-TD Washington State Legislative Director Herb Krohn and the other members of the state’s legis­lative board.

Affectionately known as a “zombie” bill — H.B. 1841 had been buried and put on hold numerous times by legislators but kept coming back in the face of carrier opposition — it ultimately became the law of the land March 27.

“We were able to finally prevail by building a cohesive coalition of supporters including police and fire departments, environmental organizations, other labor unions, and interest­ed community organiza­tions to advance this bill across the finish line,” Krohn said. “We not only finally prevailed in our statehouse, we’ve successfully pushed the STRONGEST state train crewing law in the entire nation!”

As written, the bill allows the state Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) to “order railroad carriers to increase the number of railroad employ­ees in areas of increased risk to the public, passengers, railroad employees, or the environment, or on specific trains, routes, or to switch assignments on their road with additional num­bers of crewmembers, and make the placement of additional crewmembers, if it is determined that such an increase in staffing or the placement of additional crewmembers is necessary to protect the safety, health, and welfare of the public, passengers, or railroad employees, to prevent harm to the environment or to address site-specific safety or security hazards.”

The bill survived a last­ditch effort by Senate Minority Leader Mark Schoesler on March 6 to quash it before it passed through the state Senate by a 34-15 vote.

Schoesler, a Republican, attempted to adjourn the legislative session rather than have the bill come up to a vote five minutes before the close of the legis­lative session. Krohn said: “Schoesler attempted to shut down the Washington State Senate rather than allow our crewing bill to come to the floor for con­sideration and a vote.”

Krohn said, “It’s an exam­ple of just how far the rail carriers and their allies are willing to go to kill off our safe train crewing bill as well as any other railroad safety legislation they oppose!”

That motion to adjourn was defeated by a party­line vote, and the bill sub­sequently was heard and voted upon.

Five Republicans and a Democrat who caucuses with them voted with every Senate Democrat in favor of the bill. The 15 senators who voted against H.B. 1841 were all Republican. Krohn said the law is scheduled to take effect Thursday, June 11, 2020, and restores minimum freight crew legislation in the state that had been removed from the books in 1966 thanks to carrier lobby­ists and legislators.

At the federal level, Washington state is a party along with three other states and rail labor unions in the U.S. Court of Appeals Ninth Circuit law­suit against the Federal Railroad Administration’s (FRA) attempt to prevent states from passing laws mandating train crew size.

A hearing in that lawsuit is likely to be held in late summer or fall.

New state legislative directors

A number of changes have happened at the top of state legislative boards due to reorganizing.

• California: Louis Costa (Local 1241), succeeds Mike Anderson, who has retired.
• Iowa: Dennis Smith (Local 17), succeeds Jonathan Todhunter.
• Michigan: Donald Roach (Local 1760) succeeds Jerry Gibson (Local 313), who now serves in the TD Presi­dent’s Office as chief of staff.
• Oklahoma: Kyle Pence (Local 1289) succeeds Dennis C. Scholle.

By Jeremy Ferguson
Wandering girl, 5, rescued from snow in Minnesota

The efforts of a two-person crew in East St. Paul, Minn., helped to save a wandering five-year-old girl and reunite her with her family. Near midnight Saturday, Feb. 1, SMART Transportation Division Local 1293 member Jarrod Campbell and BLET member Angela Knutson were operating a Union Pacific train through East St. Paul when they spotted something unusual alongside the tracks. The shape looked strange to them, so Knutson stopped the train, and Campbell grabbed his lantern and left the cab to investigate. Walking back, he discovered a five-year-old girl wearing a light jacket. She wasn’t wearing a hat or mittens, and her sneakers were filled with snow.

“I introduced myself to her,” Campbell said. “She said that her name was Zoey and that she was cold and wanted her mom.”

The conductor out of the Altoona, Wis., local picked Zoey up and asked her if she would want to come into the locomotive where it was warm so she could meet Angela. “She gave me a big hug and said thank you,” Campbell said. 

Campbell carried Zoey through the snow and they went into the cab. There Campbell and Knutson comforted her by wrapping her in Campbell’s coat, giving her a spare pair of Knutson’s socks, using hand warmers to stave off the early signs of hypothermia and keeping her calm until EMS crews could arrive.

“She was conscious to answer a few questions,” Schwartz said. “It was hard to make out what he was saying due to the blood coming from a 1.5-inch gash in his mouth.” Paramedics arrived and Schwartz helped to bandage the teen’s head wound and to carry him out to where the boy would eventually be air-lifted to Oklahoma University Medical Center for treatment. A sheriff’s deputy reported to management that the actions of Schwartz, who is also his local’s legislative representative and GCA-020 secretary, were considered to be life-saving.

“The sheriff deputy told the road foreman that I went ‘above and beyond’, but would have done it for any body,” Schwartz said later in a phone interview.

“The teen’s position close to the tracks where he had jumped on the train was there just in case the person was in a bad state of mind. I got about 10 yards away and saw the kid was still breathing and radioced, ‘We need an ambulance asap, he’s still alive,’ I opened my phone to take a video to show he was alive when I arrived in case he died between the time I found him and when paramedics arrived.

“I gave the kid my Carhartt coat to reduce the risk of shock and hypothermia and help talk to the kid to keep him conscious. The kid had a major blow to the center of his forehead where it appeared he went headfirst into the spike and rail, maybe causing a skull fracture, and mangled his face up pretty bad.

“He lost lots of blood but was conscious to answer a few questions,” Schwartz said. “My Marine Corps instinct was there to get up and help,” he said. “If I’m in a position to help, it was just first nature.”

Schwartz visited the teen, who apparently had fallen from a train he had jumped on, in the hospital.

Schwartz, familiar with the stretch where he found the teen, said the train could have been going as fast as 50 mph. The teen had a broken nose, fractured cheekbone and went through surgery to have a titanium plate inserted to help stabilize his head injuries with additional surgeries slated for jaw and dental repair, Schwartz said.

The conductor later received a letter from the teen’s adopted mother and biological sister thanking him for his life-saving aid. “They were very, very thankful, and let me know that he was doing well,” Schwartz said. “This easily could’ve been the worst-case scenario.”

The teen’s position close to the tracks where Schwartz found him put him in jeopardy of getting hit by a passing train, and a video of the scene taken by Schwartz shows that the teen collapsed on the ballast.

“For all the thousands in technology, not one penny of it would have detected that person next to the tracks,” Schwartz said. “He was inches away from the cattle guard on the leading unit. He could have been struck by the step rungs ... PTC is signal-to-signal. There’s nothing to warn the crew of an object on near or on the tracks.”

The conductor tends to an injured teenager suffering from a head injury in this screen capture taken from a video from Schwartz’s phone.
Regional Meeting registration is now open

The 2020 SMART-TD regional meeting is scheduled for August 26-28 in Cleveland, Ohio. The meeting provides a platform for educational training, leadership growth and a sense of fraternalism and solidarity among members.

As in the past, the regional meeting will run for 2.5 days, ending early in the afternoon of the third day. The evening of the first day has been left unscheduled so you, your family and friends can explore and enjoy the city that has been home base of SMART-TD and its predecessor unions for decades.

Regional meeting registration and hotel information, as well as links to make hotel reservations online, can be accessed by visiting www.smart-union.org/td and clicking on the “Regional Meeting” link on the right side of the page.

All attending the regional meetings must be registered in order to attend planned social functions. Children ages 11 and under who are pre-registered are complimentary. The registration form is printed on the right of this article, and online registration is available in the “Regional Meeting” section of the TD website.

A completed registration form listing each attendee, regardless of age, and complete payment in U.S. funds must be received at SMART Transportation Division, 24950 Country Club Blvd., Suite 340, North Olmsted, OH 44070-5333, by Friday, July 24, 2020, to be considered pre-registered. The pre-registration fee for the 2020 regional meeting is $200 per member, spouse or child over age 11. An additional fee applies for the tour. You must make your own hotel reservation, and certain deadlines apply. Persons who do not pre-register will be charged an additional $50 for late registration; those choosing to register on-site will be charged an additional $50 for late registration; late registration after July 24th is $250 and on-site registration is $300 per person.

Registering before the regional meeting expedites sign-in procedures, helps organizers plan more accurately and saves on meeting costs. Each person attending the regional meeting, including family members and guests, MUST be registered in order to attend any event. Please note that the meeting lasts 2.5 days and concludes on the afternoon of the third day. Registration fees are $200 per person; children 11 years of age and under are complimentary. All fees must be paid in U.S. funds. Registration forms with payment must be received at the Transportation Division by July 24 for all members, spouses and guests to be considered pre-registered. Late registration after July 24th is $250 and on-site registration is $300 per person.

Tour, event finalized for meeting

The tour, a cruise of the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie, is sponsored and hosted by the SMART Transportation Division Auxiliary. Scheduled for Monday afternoon, food will be provided.

Tickets are $35 for each registered guest, or $75 for each unregistered guest. The Tuesday night event takes place at the Rock ‘n Roll Hall of Fame and Museum on the Cleveland lakeshore where attendees will get the museum all to themselves and a chance to check out the grand assortment of memorabilia. Food and drink are provided.

For more information, visit www.smart-union.org/td and select the “Regional Meetings” link on the right side of the homepage.
Hynes spoke about how PSR is a threat to jobs, the industry and the public because fewer safety inspections are being performed with fewer people. He also said there is a blatant disregard by Class I management toward fatigued and ill individuals who aren’t being allowed time off. When asked if autonomous train technology could come to the U.S., Hynes responded: “Where they have the autonomous trains out in Australia is on a route that doesn’t have any grade crossings, there are no people nearby, and it’s basically cut in the middle of nowhere. But if you try to do that in the United States where you have thousands and thousands of grade crossings, it will be a really bad thing. The people on a train are the first responders in every crossing incident. You won’t have that with an autonomous train.”

Trains closed the interview asking how the 2020 presidential election will impact railroads and unions. Hynes noted that whoever is in the White House determines who runs the FRA. “If we see a continuation of what we have right now, it will not be good for rail safety or labor. This current administration has not been friendly to labor at all. Rail safety is not their primary function anymore, as we saw in their decision to not implement a national crew-size rule. How is that in the best interest of safety? It’s all about protecting the railroads’ bottom line, but that’s not the FRA’s job.”

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**Sellers: In crisis, union here to support, fight for you**

*Continued from Page 4*

In a crisis, our union is here to support, fight for you. We’re the voice for 100,000 railroaders and the organizations in national talks. All of us need to be focused on the situation that lies ahead and the decisions to be made for the future of rail labor and the crew who operate freight trains. We need to reinforce our lines of defense and prepare to go on the offense by reaching out to the public and to the media. Instead of wondering “what’s the union doing for us?” it’s time to get to the local union meetings and get involved. It’s time for the spouses to join the SMART-TD Auxiliary and get involved. It’s time to up your SMART-TD PAC contributions, then get with your state and U.S. legislators, so they know your voice this election year. It’s time to get involved in the SMART Army. It’s time to stand strong!

Brothers and sisters, BLET President Pierce and I are united. We will work in solidarity, together, to keep two on the crew as we bargain. We will work together to keep you informed. We know this issue is too important to our memberships and for the public’s and our safety not to. In solidarity,

Jeremy R. Ferguson
President, Transportation Division
GUEST COLUMN

Local 278 chairperson: What unionism means

By Nick Greficz

‘Unionism’ is a term used among the likes of “solidarity” and “brother” within the older demographic of members with whom we interact daily. The American Labor Movement is etched into our minds as stories and tall tales are told by previous generations of labor-friendly workers. These men and women have fought, cried, endured unspeakable hardships and flourished in life — all because of their union affiliation.

These rights as we know them are under scrutiny more now than ever. Our crafts, working rules and pay rates are all being attacked by the carriers under the guise they need to cut costs to ensure profitability moving into the future. Not every battle is won, but every fight must be fought. We cannot succumb to the corporate tactics of using our human empathy against us. Managers calling employees “brother” and engaging in conversation to determine specific employee weaknesses has to stop. These companies now screen and test for anti-labor traits and characteristics during the hire and interview process. We must keep our sense of solidarity through actions of selflessness to both older and younger union members. I implore all of our members to educate and organize our co-workers. Open your eyes to the attack on our simple way of life. When safe working conditions and prevailing wages are too much to ask for, it’s time to act. Working longer hours to earn the same amount of money is no longer on our agenda. The widening gap on income equality is no longer going to be shoul-

dered by the working class. Unionism is a belief that a union member should be willing to fight for. It’s easy to sit back and ask, “what is my union doing for me?” and complain. But realize: YOU are the union. YOU are the majority. It’s time you became an active participant in securing a stable future for you and your family. Attend the monthly meetings and get involved. Engage in acts of unionism whether it’s explaining an agreement, talking about a federal regulation or sharing what the union has done for you. Too many of our educated members only learn on the union when their job is in jeopardy. You are a union member. Take a moment to self-reflect. You want the perks of the union agreements, so actively support the union. I can assure you that SMART wishes you a safe, long, and prosperous career. You are not just another number to the union, you are a MEMBER. Take a stance to ensure you have a future and a prosperous career, not just a job.

Nick Greficz is GO 687 secretary and the chairperson of Local 278 in Detroit.

Union files petitions seeking worker protections while FRA quick to grant safety waivers to carriers

Continued from Page 1

The president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), Dennis Pierce, co-signed the FRA petition, which was sent March 20 and followed a March 6 joint letter from the unions’ leaders to FRA Administrator Ron Batory seeking FRA action, and the OSHA petition, which was sent March 30.

Class I and other freight rail carriers, on the other hand, received a quick turnaround from Batory and FRA on their request for 60-day waivers on safety regulations because of fears of possible pandemic-related worker shortages.

Both presidents signed a letter sent to FRA seeking clarification on these waivers, especially since Precision Scheduled Railroading has resulted in a workforce decline unrelated to COVID-19.

COVID-19 affects union gatherings

Continued from Page 2

retrieved the ballots from a P.O. box and tabulated the results. A notice soliciting nominations must be distributed to all Legislative Representatives not less than 10 days prior to the deadline for receipt of nominations. Ballots must be mailed at least 15 days prior to the date of tabulation.

Local meetings may be canceled

In line with White House recommendations that gatherings of more than 10 people be avoided to counter the transmission of the COVID-19 virus, SMART Transportation Division locals are advised they may cancel monthly meet-

ings in April 2020. During this period only, officers and members seeking membership approval of expense submissions will be able to utilize a relaxed ver-

ification of a procedure that was previously available only to local chairpersons. In addition, a form is being made available for use by those seeking expense reimbursement. Any officer or member abusing the form and/or submitting fraudulent claims may be subject to removal from office, reprisal, penalties and fines in accordance with the SMART Constitution. Questions on both of these issues should be directed to the TD President’s Office.

For FRB: Richard Deiser passes away

Richard Deiser, a former Bus Department vice president, died Feb. 28. He was 79 years old.

“Rich was a great union brother who will be sorely missed by those who had the pleasure to work with him,” SMART Transportation Division Vice President Calvin Stu-

dvant said. “We extend our deepest and heartfelt condolences to his wife and kids as well as all his loved ones.

Deiser, of Dumont, N.J., was born July 2, 1940, in Bronx, N.Y. After high school, he joined the U.S. Air Force and served for eight years while also attending the University of Maryland at the same time, taking extension courses. After his discharge from the service, he worked for many years with Trans World Airlines in the air freight, meteorology and crew scheduling departments. He began his career as a bus operator with Rockland Coaches in 1983. Immedi-

dately active in the affairs of his local, Deiser was appointed shop steward in 1985 and elected secretary in 1988. In 1998 he was elected as general chair-

person, then was re-elect-

ted three times. He also

attained the offices of Local 558 (Bergenfield, N.J.) delegate and representative.

After serving for six years as alternate vice president—bus-East, Deiser was ele-

vated to vice president and director of the Bus Department in July 2009. He served in that capaci-

ty until his retirement in 2011. Brother Deiser is survived by his wife of 56 years, three children, five grand-

children, a great-grandson and a number of brothers and sisters.

Donations in Deiser’s memory and in lieu of flow-

ers may be made to the Wounded Warrior Project, P.O. Box 758516, Topeka, KS 66675-8516 SMART Transportation Division expresses its con-

dolences to Brother Deiser’s family, friends and his brothers and sisters of Local 1558.
Efforts of alumni member and volunteers continue to fund Illinois veterans scholarships

A volunteer effort continues to help veterans in Illinois and their immediate relatives with education expenses by providing scholarships for them and their immediate families.

Lloyd Holman, an Alumni Association member and retired SMART-TD Illinois state legislative chairperson, and a group of volunteers contributed a $10,000 check toward helping to fund veterans education at Richland Community College in Decatur.

The seven or eight volunteers use the training facility of local plumbers and create shepherd’s hooks and other ornamental gardening accessories. These are later sold at local markets and greatly to the program’s success, especially since Holman estimates that it would actually take about two to three full days of work on the part of each of the volunteers to keep up with the demand.

"Everybody wants to go on with this effort," Holman said. "You couldn’t ask for a better group of guys. It’s been a lot of fun."

Railroad history project turns out to be a winner for granddaughter

Alumni Association Coordinator Carl Cochran passed along some news from Terry Parker, retired out of Local 1035 (Lake-land, Fla.).

Parker’s granddaughter, Zoe, created a project for Polk County History Fair. "The Railroad that opened Florida" after spending a long weekend visiting several South Florida rail museums for research. Along with information and original documentation from Cochran and fellow retiree Kenny Pirkle. Zoe’s project won a top prize in the senior division.

Pictured from left are retired small business owner Stephen Barnes, Lloyd Holman, retired United Association of Plumbers members Dan Reed, Kenny Hill, Bobby Mundy and Bill Hall as they present a prior donation check for scholarships.

The steady effort of the volunteers, who work three to four hours to keep up with demand, contributes greatly to the program’s company. The steady effort of the volunteers, who work three to four hours to keep up with demand, contributes greatly to the program’s success, especially since Holman estimates that it would actually take about two to three full days of work on the part of each of the volunteers to keep up with the demand.

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T H E  F I N A L  C A L L

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

Are you getting close to retirement? You can get the TD News & other benefits for just $9 a year! Call 216-228-9400, email PR_TD@smart-union.org or visit www.smart-union.org/td/alumni

www.smart-union.org/td • www.utuia.org
RRB announces COVID-19 measures, cancellations

From RRB Labor Member John Previsich

The purpose of this notice is to update you on how COVID-19 is impacting operations at the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). Be assured, while it is not business as usual, the agency remains open for business. Listed below are some of the most notable changes.

Field service operations

My office sent a press release to rail labor advising that field offices are closed to the public. Whenever possible, agency personnel, including field personnel, are working from home. Unfortunately, we expect delays with processing incoming work because as you know, much of our work is not automated. We receive applications and claims for both unemployment and sickness benefits by mail and by Form SI-1b. Because of safety concerns surrounding COVID-19, staff is only going into the office or to the post office on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Self-service options

Because of our concern regarding the delay in processing incoming applications and claims, we are encouraging railroaders to set up myRRB.gov accounts on the RRB.gov website. Information on the site goes through all the services available through that account. Please feel free to share with your memberships. With that account, an employee can file for and submit claims for unemployment. A railroader can also submit sickness claims, though not the initial application. Ordinarily, an applicant for sickness benefits must submit an application form and must also submit Form SI-1b, Statement of Sickness. Because the Form SI-1b requires a doctor’s signature and it was recognized that it may be difficult to get a physician to sign a statement during these unique circumstances, the RRB issued guidance indicating that, in lieu of Form SI-1b, a written statement could be submitted for the first claim. Because of the Paperwork Reduction Act and the manner in which federal agencies may collect information, that statement should now be submitted through an RRB.gov Self-Service Claimant or Other Person.

Benefit payments

We have received questions regarding the continuation of retirement and disability benefits. Fortunately, that is an automated process and we do not expect any delays in paying those already established benefits. In addition, our actuary has assured us that the rail trust funds are well-positioned to pay all retirement, survivor, unemployment and sickness benefits. We are actively addressing questions regarding benefits payable under the RUIA and special circumstances raised by COVID-19.

Legislative changes

Related to legislative changes, the statutory 7-day waiting period for unemployment and sickness benefits has been waived; the amount of unemployment benefits has been increased and other changes have been made to enhance RRB benefits as a result of legislation signed into law.

There have also been proposals to increase the RRB’s administrative budget in order to account for increased costs related to COVID-19. My staff, along with the agency’s Office of Legislative Affairs and other agency subject matter experts, are continuing to work with congressional staffers as well as your unions to convey the information needed in order for the legislation to move forward.

Seminars canceled

Based on the best information currently available and guidance issued by public health officials, the Office of the Labor Member has canceled all Pre-Retirement Seminars scheduled from March through June until further notice.

General Chairperson Vanwinkle passes away at age 44

General Chairperson Thomas K. Vanwinkle (GO 919 — Terminal Railroad Association (TRRA) of St. Louis) unexpectedly passed away February 3, 2020. A career railroad man, Brother Vanwinkle worked on TRRA as a trainman from 2003 until present. Prior to working at TRRA, Brother Vanwinkle worked as a trainman on both Union Pacific and Kansas City Southern. He was 44 years old.

Brother Vanwinkle was a long-standing officer of SMART-TD Local 469, serving as legislative representative from 2004 until 2019 and local chairperson from 2008 until 2019. In addition, Brother Vanwinkle served as general chairperson of GO 919 from October 1, 2019, until February 3, 2020.

On the subject of Brother Vanwinkle’s untimely passing, SMART-TD Vice President David Wier Jr., offered the following remarks:

“T.K. was a great man. He was a deeply devoted family man, who unconditionally loved his wife, Kim; his sons, Copelan, Jonathan, and Justin; his daughters, Dailyn and Kaylee; and his mother, Jeannie,” Wier said. “T.K. was a strong-willed union representative, and he always put the best interest of the membership at the forefront. T.K.’s legacy as a strong labor advocate, a dedicated family man and a caring and compassionate person will carry on. He will be sorely missed. T.K.’s tragic passing is both devastating and difficult to comprehend.”

SMART-TD offers its sincere condolences to Brother Vanwinkle’s family and to all who knew him.

Deceased Local 645 retiree remembered fondly in Newsday

Richard Brzozinski, 78, was remembered as a compassionate man and model employee of the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) in a story by Newsday.

“A veteran Long Island Railroad conductor on the Babylon line, Brzozinski made a habit of learning the names of all of his regular passengers and their spouses. He’d arrive to work every morning in a freshly pressed uniform. And Brzozinski would always ensure that a seat was saved for his elderly passengers,” Robert Brodsky of Newsday wrote. The story further gives accounts of praise from passengers who wrote to MTA about Brzozinski and recounts two separate incidences where Brzozinski was called upon to save passengers’ lives with the use of CPR.

SMART-TD Alternate Vice President Anthony Simon is quoted, saying, “Richie was always a professional and always demanded perfection from his co-workers. He wore his uniform impeccably and made sure his crew members did the same. He prioritized the safety and service to our customers, led by example, and received the respect of everyone he overlapped because of those principles.”

Brother Brzozinski began his membership with United Transportation Union Local 645 (Babylon, N.Y.) in August 1961, following in his dad’s footsteps as a conductor for the LIRR. He worked for a time with his father John and younger brother Jack (retired LIRR engineer). He retired with 38 years of service in 1999.

Brzozinski died in his home Nov. 19, 2019, after a three-year battle with heart disease. He is survived by his wife Mary; two sons; brother Jack; sisters Joanne, Linda and Sharon; and two grandchildren Jack and Jenna.

Local 31’s Bassmann passes

The life of Jim Bassmann, a former local chairperson of Local 31 (San Jose, Calif.) was celebrated at Pajaro Valley Memorial Park in Watsonville. In attendance were many former co-workers, including former SMART-TD President John Previsich.

“Jim was a great friend and kept in touch with many of his railroad buddies,” said Local Chairperson Darin Jessup. “He’ll be missed.”

Jessup said many retired Local 31 members have passed away recently, including Mike Kadlebouski, James Mebane, John Jerentina, Donald DeWald, Ricky Rubottom and Eddie Mesa.

SMART-TD offers its condolences to these members’ families and to all who knew them.

Local 240 mourns members


SMART-TD offers its sincere condolences to these members’ families and to all who knew them.

www.smart-union.org/td • www.utuia.org
Guest column: The resilience of union workers will help country through coronavirus challenge

By John R. Risch

The railroad throws at us.

Because of this, we can set an example for our fellow railroad workers and our community. Our military backgrounds in discipline, safety, resilience and being tasked to fix anything so both benefit. Schools are always looking for good photos and your picture can be featured on this page.

SMART Transportation Division is always looking for good photos and your picture can be featured on this page.

SMART TD seeks photographs or digital photos of the railroad or related scenes, such as railroad, bus or mass transit operations, new equipment photos, scenic shots, activities of your local or photos of your brothers and sisters keeping America rolling.

Printed photographs should be mailed to SMART TD, 29450 County Club Blvd., Suite 340, North Olmsted, OH 44070-5311.

High-resolution digital photographs should be in JPEG format and emailed to news_td@smart-union.org. We prefer to receive horizontal photos. Be sure that your camera is set to the large resolution setting when taking the photo or it might not reproduce well in print.

With your photograph please include your name and SMART local number, the names of the persons in the photo (left to right), where the photo was taken, and other pertinent information.

All photographs submitted become property of SMART and can be used in future projects.

Remember to review your employer's policies regarding use of cameras on the property or during work hours.

Featured photo showcase

Have a camera? Get your photo featured on this page

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Indiana State Legislative Director Kenny Edwards turned in this photo from the Eugene V. Debs dinner that took place in Terre Haute, Ind., on August 31, 2019. Among the attendees were, from left, retiring National Legislative Director John Risch, Local 744 (Frankfort, Ind.) Legislative Representative Mike Bennett, Edwards, former Alternate National Legislative Director Francis Brewer and his wife, Rose. This was Brother Risch’s last day of service.

Guest column: The resilience of union workers will help country through coronavirus challenge

Continued from Page 9

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Living in the D.C. area for 20-plus years, I am unfazed by major incidents locally. I’ve been through numerous blizzards, crippling weather and one minor earthquake. Presidential inaugurations, protests and disruptive visits from dignitaries occur frequently. I’ve lived through the 11th attacks — both instances so close that I had stumbled at the Home Depot visited by the snipers and had smelled the Pentagon burning 14 miles away. In all these events, I was essential personnel — tasked to come in both in a medical role and as a conductor. Since 1997, I, like many of us, know that when you are called there is no voicemail or marking off. This coronavirus has caused this to happen again, and it’s now our time to shine.

This crisis may create panic. However, we have what it takes to get through this. We are prepared for long hours, days away from home, and anything thrown at us. We are also nomads who go where the work is. A lot of us are scattered throughout our divisions and stay at different terminals. We can use this to our advantage. You may be able to find needed items that are in short supply at home, in abundance at other locations. They also might be near the terminals or hotels we lay over in. As union members we can be ahead of the game with our wide network of resources. Members who are coming to another terminal can get with each other and pool resources. If outlying members can get paper towels and home terminal members can get mac and cheese, trade with each other so both benefit. Schools are closing and lots of our loved ones are teleworking now. Helping keep our home fronts happy and safe will take a load off while the carriers are working us harder than ever in this national state of emergency. Getting rest is important, and it’s going to be potentially harder and more stressful. If you live near a fellow member and can help with childcare or other things, let them know. This too will help with a lot of stresses we have. When laying over if you are able to go out and get supplies, go as a crew so you both can get items if your home needs them and there is a limit to get them. Only get what is needed and don’t hoard — this helps no one. Lastly, if you like hot lunches or get things from the gas station, make sure you’re prepared for those possible closures. Bring non-perishable alternatives so you are not stuck without food at work or away from home.

As always, we are a crew, so look out for each other if you can. Most times we are the only ones who look out for us. We must keep this up by showing unity through this crisis and beyond.

Get to know your local community and your neighbors. They may not know you or your background or even who you are. My neighbors are mostly government workers who only know my odd hours or that I’m the guy who shows everyone’s walk in a bad snowstorm. With social distancing they know that I’m still working to keep our country moving. I’ve offered to search other stores for provisions that they may need on my way to and from work.

Our trash service was delayed, so while having conversations six feet away, I said I was getting in touch with the trash service to plan on an area away from our homes to stage trash if there is a future disruption, remembering my military sanitary training.

As railroaders, we all have this training and these skills. We know when to use them. I had an old timer tell me, “We are not paid for what we do, we are paid for what we know. You must be a proactive conductor, not a reactive conductor.”

Now more than ever I understand what he meant. Use your skills and training to better our workplace and community in this crisis. Be prepared, vigilant and safe. Please look out for each other in this national state of emergency. And absolutely do not put yourself in danger under the guise of a national emergency. We all need to come home the same way we came into work.

With this and all the amazing things I’ve done over my railroading career, I’m really proud that I can provide service to my country once again even if it’s in a small role like this. This is an amazing time to be a railroader both in great moments and in hardships. We are the nation’s backbone in transportation. We ship more freight in a day than a trucker does in a lifetime. And for over 150 years we have been supplying this nation with its needs.

Through two world wars, the 1918 flu pandemic and numerous other hardships, railroaders have come through. We will not let our nation or each other down. Be safe, brothers and sisters. We will overcome this. Nothing stops a determined union member.

Johnny R. Walker is secretary of the Maryland State Legislative Board and the legislative representative of Local 610 (Baltimore, Maryland).