

## LaPorte to D.C. to Miami



I thanked RailWorks and E&L Paving in this column last month for hosting the recent NRC Railroad Construction and Maintenance Equipment Auction in LaPorte, Ind., but as more data comes in from the auction, I wanted to mention it one more time. In addition to the excellent hosting and the auctioneering by Blackmon Auctions, a big thank you goes to those companies that donated pieces to the auction for the benefit of the NRC Safety DVD program: Balfour Beatty Rail, Delta Railroad Construction and Nordco. In total, dozens of consignors sold more than 200 pieces of rail construction equipment to in-person and online bidders for a total of more than \$500,000 and it was another excellent NRC event.

After the auction, the main action for our NRC staff is in D.C., working on the surface transportation reauthorization legislation. This legislation is very important to essentially all of our customers: rail transit agencies, streetcar systems, intercity passenger rail operators, freight railroads from the largest Class 1 to the smallest shortline and even ports. The NRC has written a letter to the congressmen and senators working on this legislation in Conference Committee focusing on our priorities, which include:

- Dedicated funding for the Section 130 Rail-Highway Grade Crossing Safety Program;
- Flexibility for state DOTs to invest in freight rail projects;
- Funding for the multi-modal merit-based Projects of National and Regional Significance program;
- Provisions to expedite project delivery and streamline environmental permitting;
- Expansion of the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program;
- Maintaining the current truck size and weight limits;
- Improving the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan program and
- Restoring parity between the pre-tax commuter benefits for parking and transit use.

If you'd like to also weigh in with your congressmen and senators directly (and I strongly encourage you to do so), you can do it very easily online at [www.capwiz.com/nrcma](http://www.capwiz.com/nrcma).

The NRC also finds other ways to get our message to Capitol Hill. Recently, the NRC participated in a congressional staff briefing organized by the OneRail Coalition on the economic impact of the rail industry. The NRC was represented by Board Member Greg Lippard, who is the vice president of rail sales for L. B. Foster Company. The other panelists were:

- Richard Timmons, president, American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association;
- John Gray, senior vice president, policy and economics, Association of American Railroads;
- Gerald Hanas, general manager, Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District and chairman, American Public Transportation Association Commuter Rail Committee;
- Joe McHugh, vice president, government affairs and corporate communications, Amtrak; and
- Don Itzkoff, executive counsel of public policy and government relations, GE Transportation.

Lippard did a great job showing the congressional staffers the variety of products that L.B. Foster sells and explaining the economic impact of L.B. Foster's 15 sales offices, four business offices, 22 manufacturing facilities and more than 850 employees. You can see all of the presentations and a recap of the event online at <http://oneraill.org/press/2012/05/oneraill-hosts-congressional-briefing-american-rail-industry>.

I know it's still early summer, but it's not too early to get your calendar in shape for this fall and early 2013. In September, AREMA will be holding its excellent annual conference at the historic Hilton hotel in downtown Chicago, Ill. I'll be there and if you've never attended before, you should really consider giving this one a try.

And save the date for the next NRC conference, January 9-12, 2013, at the Loews Miami Beach Hotel in Miami, Fla. More information will be announced shortly in this column, via the NRC e-mail bulletin and online at [www.nrcma.org/go/conference](http://www.nrcma.org/go/conference). I hope to see you there.

Work safe and keep those around you working safe.

by Terry Benton,  
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