

Ready, Set, Go!



While we can all hope that the extreme winter weather the country has endured will bring an early spring, in any case, the 2014 construction and maintenance season will be upon us quickly. NRC member companies have spent the last few months getting their equipment in good working order and their employees retrained on safety, prepared to hit the ground running when the weather breaks. We are gearing up for another strong year based on the capital spending programs of the railroads and rail transit agencies that the membership heard first-hand at the NRC conference in January. I would like to wish our entire membership a safe and productive 2014. Plan well and think safety!

The next major event the NRC is participating in "Railroad Day on The Hill", set for March 13 in Washington, DC. There is strength in numbers at an event like this, and we are anticipating a large turnout from NRC members to support our customer Class 1 and short line railroads. If we don't see you at this year's event, we hope you'll plan to join us in future years at this annual gathering.

Both passenger and freight rail safety are dominating the regulatory and legislative discussions in DC at this time. After extensive consultation with the USDOT and the FRA, the AAR has recently announced a new crude-by-rail safety initiative which encompasses a variety of actions, including increased inspections, additional wayside detectors, increased use of distributed braking systems, rail routing solutions, reduced speeds in urban areas, and an increased focus on emergency response planning and training. Updated standards for new rail cars to move CBR and an agreement on how to handle existing tank cars moving CBR are still to come.

In addition, the federally mandated PTC deadline of December 31, 2015 is looming ever nearer. While Class 1 railroads and major commuter agencies are now spending more than a billion dollars per year implementing this mandate, there is also a growing consensus that the deadline isn't realistic and will need to be pushed back eventually.

Congress is also working on a passenger rail reauthorization, which may perhaps become part of the broader surface transportation reauthorization bill that will need to move shortly. The NRC staff and Board will be actively working on these bills – we will advocate for increased passenger and rail transit/

commuter rail investment, RRIF loan reforms, provisions to expedite project delivery, expansion of the Section 130 grade crossing program for enhanced public safety, funding a Projects of National and Regional Significance program which could support major freight rail projects with public benefits such as CREATE, and establish permanent parity for the pre-tax commuter benefits provided for transit use and parking of an individual car.

The NRC will also support the short line railroads and their shippers as they push to restore the Section 45G tax credit that expired on December 31, 2013. This tax credit was originally enacted in January of 2005 and enables short lines to claim a tax credit of 50 cents for every dollar spent on infrastructure improvements up to a cap of \$3,500 per mile of track. This program has been very successful, and we need to work hard to keep it in place.

The next big NRC event to follow our efforts in Washington DC will be our equipment auction. This year's auction will be held at Quality Track Equipment, a division of Delta Railroad Construction, located at 2950 Industrial Drive, Austinburg, OH 44010. The equipment auction will be held on May 1, 2014. The auction will start at 9am with an anticipated finish of 2PM. Everyone planning on attending will be afforded a day in advance of the auction to visually inspect the equipment to be included. The inspection will be 9am-5pm on April 30.

The NRC has secured a block of discounted rooms at The Lodge & Conference Center at Geneva-on-the-Lake located at 4888 North Broadway, (RT 534) Geneva, OH. 44041. The room block rate is \$95/night. To make your reservations, call 800-801-9982 and refer to the Delta Railroad Group #4G72ZF.

There will also be a Happy-Hour / Social Event the night of April 30 from 5PM until close at the Lodge & Conference Center at Geneva-on-the-lake. If you plan on attending, it is suggested that you make your reservation early for this event; we expect another strong turnout this year. Auction details are available at www.nrcma.org.

I hope to see many of you in DC and/or Ohio, and I look forward to getting the 2014 construction and maintenance season off to a safe and strong start.

Have a safe day.

by Bill Dorris,
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