

## Full steam ahead into 2015!



It has been another good year for the rail industry and NRC member companies. 2014 saw positive growth into new businesses, along with continued investments in rail infrastructure across the country. Bridges were rebuilt and upgraded, new intermodal facilities were constructed, second mainlines and longer sidings were built, and private industries built storage yards, all due to growth!

The coming year looks promising for our industry as well, and we need to keep the momentum going. We are being told that freight rail, passenger rail, and rail transit will all continue to charge forward, all due to customer demand. We welcome and look forward to seeing these positive trends continue: full steam ahead!

Another positive for 2014 was safety. We continue to see improvements regarding incident and accident rates in the rail industry. The safety culture on the railroad has continued to evolve and expand over the years. Safe practices and procedures have gotten more detailed and our employees are better trained for it. The continuing efforts being made to improve safety by eliminating accidents is showing positive results, and zero still remains the goal. The NRC will be releasing our next two safety training videos at this year's conference in January. These videos, #17 & #18 of our ongoing series, both pertain to grade crossing replacement. These videos will address the detailed planning, safe practices, and procedures for doing this type of complicated work.

On the legislative front, less progress was made. Congress just kicked the can down the road on the major surface transportation reauthorization bill for highway and transit policy and investments - we'll have to figure out next steps by May of 2015.

As of this writing, the FY2015 transportation appropriations bill also remains to be finalized. The House has passed a version of this bill and a Senate sub-committee has passed a larger version. The NRC will be advocating for the higher funding levels for the various rail infrastructure programs, such as FTA New Starts, Amtrak capital grants, and TIGER grants. However, this was supposed to be finished by September 30, 2014. Congress' inability or

unwillingness to do basic governing remains frustrating, and hinders our industry's ability to grow as quickly as we could. We'll see if the next Congress is any different.

This session of Congress will also expire without seeing any action on the three pieces of rail legislation that were introduced in September - the passenger rail reauthorization (PRRIA), STB reauthorization, and rail safety bills. We do however expect to see updated versions of these bills early in 2015.

On a positive note out of DC, on September 12, the U.S. DOT announced the award of \$552 million in TIGER VI discretionary grants to 41 construction projects and \$32 million to 31 planning projects in 46 states and DC. Among the awardees were 17 rail-related projects receiving over \$131 million, including multiple short line, streetcar, light rail transit, and commuter rail projects.

With the conclusion of 2014, the focus changes to the coming year and what it will bring. The NRC will kick off the New Year as we always do, with our annual conference. This year's conference will be held at the Diplomat Resort & Spa in Hollywood Florida. The conference is scheduled for Wednesday January 7 through Saturday January 10. This year's agenda is packed with great speakers from our industry, including engineering executives from the Class 1s, short line holding companies, and some of the biggest and most active rail transit agencies in the country. And we expect that good times will be spent with friends and colleagues in what will hopefully be beautiful January weather in South Florida. There is still time to register for the conference if you haven't done so already. The main hotel room block is sold out, but there are some good overflow hotel options in close proximity. To register for the conference and get all related information, go to [www.nrcma.org](http://www.nrcma.org).

In closing for the year, I would like to wish all NRC member companies, the Board of Directors, the staff at CC&H, as well as everyone in the rail industry, a safe and happy holiday season. Hope to see you at our conference in January!

Have a safe day.

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