

# NRC CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



## The Mid-Year Outlook, Eye's Wide Open

It's June and everyone is busy now. The opportunities available to NRC member companies have been plentiful to date, and we expect that to continue for now. We are all busy putting bids together and scheduling work. This will be another banner year for our industry, keep smiling folks!

Across the country, rail contractors are as busy as they've ever been. Along with our regularly scheduled projects for private industries and short line railroads, we are seeing more chances to fill supporting roles for the Class 1 railroads. Service agreements are being offered by many of the bigger roads to and support them with emergencies and smaller sporadic maintenance needs. Many of our member companies have such agreements in place and are stepping up to support our railroad customers, as and where needed on their systems at any time. It can be a challenge, but we all welcome more and more of these opportunities and the chance to be a railroad's "go-to company".

If your company works within the rail industry and isn't a member of the NRC, the timing to join couldn't be better. The NRC membership committee, chaired by Stephanie Freeman of Coleman Industrial Construction along with David Armstrong of Commercial Insurance Associates, Steve Bolte of Harsco Rail, Danny Brown of V&H Trucks, Mike Choat of Railroad Controls (Wabtec), Jim Hansen of RailWorks, Phil McDonald of Koppers, Jody Sims of Stacy and Witbeck, Dave Stein of Holland Company, and Bob Hirte of Hamilton Construction have all been doing a great job of bringing new companies into the association. The NRC currently includes over 350 company members.

Our membership includes contractors, suppliers and associated professional firms that all serve the rail industry in various capacities throughout the country. The membership committee has done a terrific job getting the message out about the benefits of becoming a member of our association. These benefits include a listing in the annual NRC Directory, which is an important resource for your customers. This directory is distributed to all class I, II and III railroads, private rail served industries, rail transit agencies, and ports with rail infrastructure assets. Membership also includes access to information about federal investment in rail infrastructure, regulatory changes, and legislative proposals. As a member, you will also gain access as a buyer or seller to the annual equipment auction and access to Railroad Day on Capitol Hill.

Railroad Day on the Hill is held annually in Washington, DC. This year, on June 4<sup>th</sup> many of our membership companies sent representatives to converge on Washington for this industry event.

Railroad Day on the Hill has proven over the years to be the single most effective way to get our message out to Congress. Our members participate in literally hundreds of face-to-face meetings and discussions with our elected officials on a single day, all in an effort to voice our concerns and specify what the industry does and doesn't need from government policy to thrive. Attendance was robust, and I will bring everyone up to speed on this year's event in next month's column.

There is certainly no shortage of hot topics on the legislative front, including:

- The impending implementation deadline for Positive Train Control, and the need to extend it to match reality;
- Efforts to increase the maximum size and weight of heavy trucks on the Interstate system, which would amount to an increased subsidy of big trucks, at the expense of regular drivers and the railroads. Not to mention the safety issues!
- The need to maintain the current balanced economic regulatory regime for freight railroads and shippers, as overseen by the Surface Transportation Board. It ain't broke, so let's not fix it;
- The necessity of extending the short line railroad tax credit, which lets these small businesses invest every possible dollar into their infrastructure and preserve safe freight rail service for thousands of small-town shippers; and
- The huge demand for funding for our nation's intercity passenger rail, commuter rail, and rail transit systems, which have close to a combined \$100 billion (yes, billion with a b) State of Good Repair backlog.

Finally, remember to check [www.nrcma.org](http://www.nrcma.org) for events. Conference registration opens soon!

Have a safe day.

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