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Minnesota Legislative Board

A Division of SMART, Sheet metal, Air, Rail and Transit Union
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Chairman Daniel Elliot
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20423

VIA: U.S. Mail and Scanned PDF File.

RE: Surface Transportation Board Field Hearing, Fargo, N.D., Rail Service Delays.

Dear Chairman Elliot,

For our Sheet metal, Air, Rail and Transit Union, (UTU-SMART-TD) Minnesota Legislative Board, I want to thank you, Board Members Begeman and Miller for convening a Surface Transportation Board field hearing in Fargo, North Dakota.

This letter will serve to summarize our State Committee's point of view regarding rail service concerns in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest.

I want to clarify from Congressional comments during the hearing referencing the efforts of the United Transportation Union Minnesota Legislative Board, our specific correspondence has been directed to the Canadian Pacific Railway. We respectfully request the hearing record be corrected as you may deem appropriate.

For our 1200 railroad workers in Minnesota, I want to assure all interested parties that our UTU-SMART-TD train and yard crews are doing the best that they can to provide safe and efficient service with what the Class One carriers are giving them to work with.

Our railroad workers are operating around the clock on every day of the year in all weather conditions. So as to correct a media statement and editorial that were published previously in the Twin Cities market, our train and yard crews work out in the elements for whatever period of time is necessary to complete specific yard and line-of-road tasks. There are no federal or state regulations governing welfare breaks and it is common to find a train or yard crew worker out in severe weather for several hours without welfare break to complete their tasks at hand.

(Railroad crews can be found working twelve hour shifts with two to five or more hours exposed to the elements preparing cars to be switched, switching cars, coupling air-joints between cars, performing mechanical and air-brake inspections, doubling tracks for train departure, performing ground work at sidings and yards, repairing distressed trains en route, working industries, mines and elevators, and responding to emergencies with the public. Our UTU-SMART-TD train and yard crews generally work until their planned train process-tasks are completed).

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From the field hearing, we want to acknowledge improving service trends on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway. We extend our highest encouragement to BNSF to reinstall double mainline tracks on existing right-of way between Big Lake (MP 47.3) to Becker (MP 57) and other locations on the Staples Subdivision. As the BN Railway benefited from the removal of these double main-line tracks in the late 1980's, we believe it is reasonable for BNSF to reinstall these track segments that will enable double main line current-of-traffic operation and increase capacity.

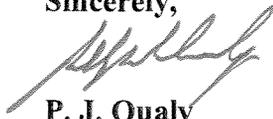
From the field hearing, we extend our highest encouragement to Canadian Pacific to reinstall the Milwaukee Road double mainline tracks on existing right-of way between Hastings, Minnesota, and Portage, Wisconsin. As the Soo Line/Canadian Pacific Railway removed these double main-line tracks in the late 1980's, we believe it is reasonable for Canadian Pacific to reinstall these track segments that will enable double main line current-of- traffic operation and increase capacity.

UTU-SMART-TD remains very concerned with operations on the Canadian Pacific Railway. From Panel VI of the field hearing, we are struck from reports voiced by shippers regarding alleged retaliation against customers who complain about deteriorating service. If this is in fact true, our train and yard crews identify with concerns of retaliation from the current management team at Canadian Pacific. With respect to carrier testimony projecting a train crew attrition rate of twenty percent, since early 2013 we have experienced excessive employee discipline and mismanagement of crew resources which has led to many employees leaving train service. Additional information in support of this statement from our State Committee or General Committees of Adjustment can be provided upon request.

The UTU-SMART-TD Minnesota Legislative Board has worked with respective Class One and Two rail carriers to identify and improve safety and efficiencies. Our industry correspondence is appropriately before those carriers and other governmental agencies toward the goal of no injury or fatality to railroad workers and the general public. We appreciate your review of our concerns listed herein.

As railroad workers who are stakeholders in this industry, we value our customers. We want to provide safe and efficient service to each and every shipper. Thank you.

Sincerely,



P. J. Qualy
Minnesota Legislative Director
UTU-SMART-TD Minnesota

cc Mr. Joseph Nigro, SMART General President
Mr. John Previsich, UTU-SMART-TD Transportation President
Mr. James Stem, UTU-SMART-TD National Legislative Director
Mr. John Risch, UTU-SMART-TD Alternate National Legislative Director
Mr. Jim Chase, UTU-SMART-TD North Dakota Legislative Director