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Surface Transportation Board

395 E Street Southwest

Washington, DC 20423

Dear board members and staff,

My name is Adam Suess. I am both a locomotive engineer and the division legislative representative BLET division 9. I along with my fellow members operate yard, local and through freight trains in southern Minnesota and northern Iowa. The majority of our work in this area is first mile, last mile movements. With crew shortages as topic of great interest. I'd like to mention some of the issues facing train and yard crews in our area affecting both the retention of existing crew members and the ability to hire new personal.

Rail labor is somewhat of a complicated matter. I will try to touch on a few points of relevance. Our area had seen mass hiring prior to PSR. This was followed by mass layoffs with the advent of PSR. For example, the layoffs had gotten so deep, employees with 10 years seniority were furloughed. For those still working, years spend climbing the seniority ladder were gone. They found themselves back to being low seniority personal'. With jobs in the terminals, they were hired for heavily reduced or even wiped out by PSR cuts. They often were forced to work at locations far from home. Renting apartments or in some cases living out of their cars. It's a hard way to work. Unfortunately, some simply resigned having had enough. There was a time the carrier would pay lodging for employees in that situation. Unfortunately, that was lost early on to cost cutting and a lost arbitration.

Furloughed employees near the top of the furlough list were repeatedly recalled and then furloughed again. They would leave whatever they were doing in the interim. Only to return to rail for a very short time and be furloughed again. In one situation some employees were recalled. Positions they could work were never actually created for them before being furloughing again. Eventually people tire of this and simply resign.

Moral in the ranks isn't great. In addition to the things mentioned above. We have been handed employee policies that are heavy stressors. Being forced to work in unfamiliar areas with minimal training is stress full. PSR trains are difficult to work and often have very stress full operational issues. The public is mad at us for excessively long blocked crossings and some are not shy about showing it. Customers we interact with are understandably frustrated. There is a threat of very unsafe single person crew operation being forced on us. I could go on. I look at all that's going on in the rail industry and it's disheartening. It wears a person down. I've seen long term employees I never thought would leave take other jobs.

Those are not the only factors for crews leaving. Rail wages are not what they once were. Over the years other occupations have caught up. Occupations that offer far better quality of life and similar pay. Rail transportation work is a different sort of job. The 24x7 nature of it consumes a person. You never really seem to get away from it. The wages and benefits of railroad job use to be out weight the draw backs. That's not so much the case anymore. Based on a 2021 list. 3 class one railroads are rated in the top 10 worst companies to work for. With one having been #1 a few years running.

I would like to point out not only is the railroad our lively hood. Many of us employees are shareholders too. With a vested interest in the long-term wellbeing of company and its ability to make money by doing what railroads were built to do. Move freight reliably, effectively, efficiently and profitably. PSR leaves Reliably, effectively and efficiently out of the equation. We have been sounding the alarm on PSR for quite some time. Unfortunately, the alarms and warnings have now turned into emergency lights and sirens.

This industry is fundamental to the wellbeing of the nation. So critical that a common carrier obligation 49 cfr 11101 was written into law. I would assert that PSR operating practices are not and have not been consistent with the intent common carrier obligation. I would encourage the board to take action and hopefully direct the carriers down a better path.

I thank the board for this opportunity to be heard. We look forward to the results of this hearing.

Respectfully,

Adam Suess

Blet Division 9 legislative representative