



November
2016

2016 Annual Report and Membership Renewal

RAIL Solution Annual Report Highlights

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→ As Much Freight as Possible Should Move by Rail

Compelling energy, economic, and environmental advantages derive from movement of freight by rail, especially over mid- to long-distances. Over three times the energy is required to move comparable freight over the road by truck. That means three times the oil consumption, three times the pollution and greenhouse gases contributing to climate change. Railroad electrification can double rail's advantage over trucking.

Rail is the preferred method of adding new freight capacity, especially where new highway capacity would be economically prohibitive and environmentally devastating. Doubling Interstate Highway capacity can mean four new lanes, and a real estate requirement equal to a football field in length along the entire route.

An additional track can be added to a railroad in a space of 15 to 20 feet, frequently using the existing right-of-way, and increasing throughput sevenfold.

It follows then that enhanced rail capacity is at the core of RAIL Solution's advocacy work. The nation would benefit from having many more trucks move on trains, but this requires that railroads be able to offer highway-competitive speed, reliability, and cost. However, the rail industry is capacity constrained from decades of downsizing, and each recession triggers more disinvestment, so little capability exists today to divert more trucks to rail.

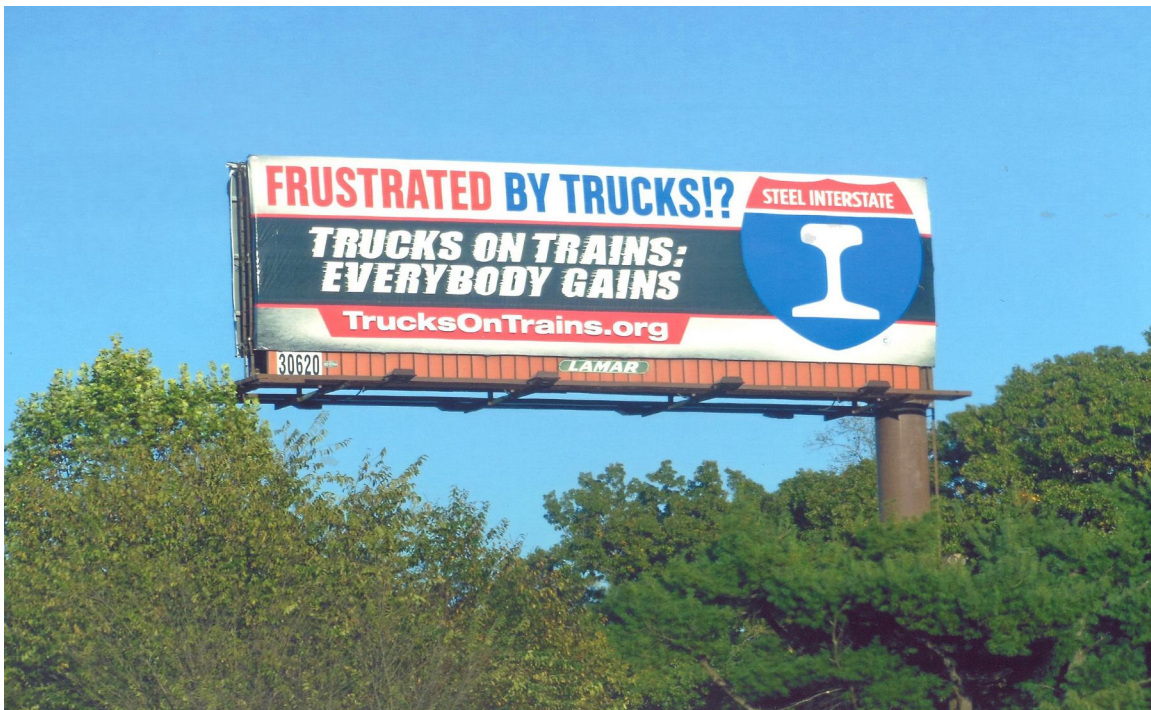
For the rail mode to achieve its full social benefit, it follows that a lot of new capacity will be needed for movement of people and goods. So a key piece of our advocacy is the Steel Interstate, a core national network of high-capacity, grade-separated, electrified railroad mainlines.

→ Communicating our Message

Any non-profit organization is challenged on how best to communicate its message to the public. This year we tried two new things:

- **Billboard Campaign**

For nine months, from fourth quarter of 2015 to summer of 2016, RAIL Solution funded a large Steel Interstate billboard on Interstate 81 in northeast Tennessee.



The billboard faced northbound I-81 traffic on the right-hand side of the road immediately north of the US 23 exit at Kingsport. It was hard to miss, even when coming up the entrance ramp from US 23. To gather feedback, we created a new website, trucksontrains.org

Although the campaign generated a lot of response, much of it was from truckers unhappy with our message, and very little from the public, who we hoped would be inspired to join and help.

- **Steel Interstate Newsletter**

During 2016 we achieved a long-held goal of getting a newsletter out on a regular bi-monthly basis to communicate more effectively with our member participants and other interested parties in state government, environmental organizations, and other rail groups. Four issues were published, and if you have a current e-mail address on file with us, you should have received them via our listserv. If you did not get them, you missed some important updates on current issues in the railroad industry. You can find all the back issues on the railsolution.org website under the blog section at the lower right.

→ Full-time Development Director

Starting in May, Robinson Foster, our West Coast director and no relation to our Executive Director (nepotism disclaimer!), has been working full-time as RAIL Solution's Development Director. In our 14 years of operation, this is our first experiment with a full-time employee. Like the billboard campaign, it is a quest for new ways to communicate our message more widely and effectively.

Robinson has been reaching out to the logistics industry, rail shippers, trade organizations, and state DOTs, among others, to solidify support from stakeholders with an interest in a healthy rail industry. The Steel Interstate and the Land Ferry concepts have been integral to his efforts.

Especially noteworthy is the relationship RAIL Solution has established with Nevada DOT in support of the Land Ferry concept for trucks in the I-80 Corridor across the northern tier of the state. A double-track, electrified Steel Interstate offers Nevada an attractive alternative to expanding highway capacity on I-80, and Nevada has substantial geothermal, solar, and wind resources that could provide the electricity from renewable sources.

Of course our goal with Robinson's industry coalition-building is to see if we can generate sufficient buy-in and support for our work through financial contributions to pay for the on-going work of the Development Director.

→ Message from the Executive Director

Many of you receiving this update have been involved with RAIL Solution from as far back as 2003, when Rees Shearer organized the group to fight massive widening of Interstate 81 across 325 miles of western Virginia for dedicated truck lanes. Eventually, in concert with resolutions of support from over 50 local governments, and other grassroots groups, we won that battle.

But the threat has not disappeared! Billions of dollars are pouring into autonomous vehicle research and some pundits now see “platoons” of automated trucks on a whole new tier of highways as the freight movement paradigm of the future. The concept is being touted because of its “efficiency”, which, no doubt, means getting rid of the drivers. But drivers or not, all the trucks still have to operate, and that means the same oil consumption, pollution, and greenhouse gases as always.

So the threat we were originally organized for is reappearing. Our rail advocacy is as relevant as ever. True, we are no longer focused chiefly on the I-81 Corridor, but are taking a more “swat team” approach by pursuing fruitful opportunities nationally. Earlier I mentioned Nevada and the I-80 Corridor there, where, like I-81 in Virginia, very heavy truck traffic moves through the state but the burden of highway capacity and maintenance is local. Nevada DOT has seriously turned to rail as an alternative, and we have been helping and encouraging their efforts.

→ December 8 Annual Meeting to Feature Strategic Planning

RAIL Solution’s annual meeting will be held on Thursday, December 8, in the Bent Mountain Room of Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke, Virginia. All paid-up participants are welcome. We will devote a substantial part of the day-long gathering of directors to planning our future direction. So we know who and how many to expect, please e-mail us at railsoluton@aol.com if you can join us.

→ Appeal for Continued Participation and Support

Enclosed is a donation form and postpaid return envelope. We hope you will find the work we do worthy of your continued support. RAIL Solution is an independent 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization and receives no corporate or government funding. We rely on our member participants in this once-a-year appeal to keep us going. Without your support we cannot continue. Many of you have been loyal, long-time contributors and we need you now more than ever.

If the return envelope has become lost, you can mail dues and donations to RAIL Solution Treasurer, 8131 Webster Drive, Roanoke, VA 24019, or you can use PayPal at either of our websites: www.railsolution.org or www.steelinterstate.org