



Steel Interstate Newsletter

Vol. 2, No. 1
Feb. 1, 2017

Welcome to the RAIL Solution railroad industry update. In this periodic communication we attempt to keep you informed of key developments and place our Steel Interstate advocacy in context. The **Newsletter** is also attached as a PDF to facilitate downloading and reviewing on a wider variety of electronic devices. Prior issues and other creative materials are available at www.railsolution.org

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RAIL Solution Makes Key Decisions

In December the RAIL Solution Board of Directors met for our Annual Meeting in Roanoke, VA and wrestled with some long-range concerns. I want to share several of these issues with you here.

1. **New Name** - Since our founding in 2003, RAIL Solution has used this same name in pursuit of various rail advocacy initiatives. Because we started out opposing the supersizing of Interstate 81 across western Virginia with truck-only lanes, it was important that our name emphasize the rail alternative. But that battle was largely won by the end of 2007, and since that time we have moved beyond the I-81 Corridor of Virginia to embrace the energy, environmental, and

economic advantages of rail as the preferred means for movement of freight and people nationwide.

In the course of this work we were quickly reminded that the overwhelming majority of intercity freight moves by truck over the highway. To capture any meaningful amount of that volume for rail, rail transport as we know it today needs to be transformed into a higher capacity national network capable of highway-competitive speed and reliability – the Steel Interstate.

This quest, and our increasingly national focus, led our Directors to vote to change our name to Steel Interstate Coalition. Over the coming months RAIL Solution will be doing business more and more as the Steel Interstate Coalition.

2. New Directors – Consistent with the new name and more national focus, we seek to add new vitality to our Board with individuals who share our promising vision for the future potential of rail in this country. Diversity is especially important, both geographical and professional. If you, or someone you know, can help advance the cause of rail by joining our Board, please e-mail information on such candidates to railsolution@aol.com for our consideration.

3. New Funding – Like most 501(c)(3) organizations, we are chronically challenged for resources to do a proper job. A vital initiative of the newly-designated Steel Interstate Coalition will be to broaden our fundraising appeal beyond our loyal base of donors and dues-payers who have sustained us since 2003.

A Nevada Update – What's different between I-80 and I-81?

For years RAIL Solution tried to muster support for a Steel Interstate prototype project in the I-81/I-40 Corridor of Virginia and Tennessee, where a Norfolk Southern rail line parallels much of the route. At no time, however, did we get buy-in or support from the railroad or from the state departments of transportation.

More recently, however, we have been working with Nevada DOT to promote a Steel Interstate in the Interstate 80 Corridor all across northern Nevada. NV DOT and University of Nevada Las Vegas co-authored a Phase I feasibility study of a Land Ferry operation in this corridor, showing a benefit/cost ratio of 1.7. Phase II will build on what we know from the [Phase I Engineering and Economic Assessment](#), and [video](#), exploring everything in greater detail.

RAIL Solution's Development Director Robinson Foster in Oregon has been spearheading efforts to build stakeholder support for Phase II. Expanding the Corridor westward to Sacramento, CA and eastward to Salt Lake City, UT is also part of Phase II. CA DOT has shown tentative interest, as has UT DOT, as long as we can demonstrate private sector stakeholder support. An inaugural meeting of stakeholders will be held in Reno, NV on February 7.

Union Pacific has a double-tracked mainline parallel to I-80 over most of this route. Participation by UP in the Phase II analysis is the next major hurdle and may well determine the future of this project. While success is by no means certain, at least in this case we have a state government dealing with the railroad and not just a citizen advocacy group.

Who is Solutionary Rail?

Because of the similar name, we get this question fairly often. Solutionary Rail is a project of the Backbone Campaign and both are headed by a young man named Bill Moyer. Their mission is similar to ours. Solutionary Rail supports a Steel Interstate, electrified rail upgrade in a key freight corridor of the Pacific Northwest. Moyer's youthful enthusiasm, strong belief in rail, and tireless advocacy make up for any pique we may feel for his trespass on our name.

Recently Solutionary Rail has worked hard to put out a book highlighting the advantages of the Steel Interstate and railroad electrification. The group did a good job pulling together in one place a vast amount of diverse background information and building a solid case for rail electrification. Numerous original illustrations by railroad artist Craig Thorpe add to the book's appeal. [The picture at the top of this newsletter is taken from an original Craig Thorpe lithograph commissioned for RAIL Solution by Hal Cooper of Kirkland, WA].

A pre-publication black and white copy of the Solutionary Rail book is on line [here](#). The finished version with cover art and in color is available as a paperback on Amazon [here](#) for \$19.95.

2016 Annual Report Available

The 2016 Annual Report was sent to participants in early December, and is posted on the RAIL Solution website [here](#). **As Much Freight as Possible Should Move by Rail** was a theme underlying our work. Everything else is a case of how to make that happen.



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