



Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Tony D. Cardwell
President

Dale E. Bogart, Jr.
Secretary-Treasurer

October 27, 2023

Dear members of the Surface Transportation Board,

I am writing on behalf of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (BMWED-IBT), which represents the dedicated individuals who are responsible for maintaining the nation's railroad right of way, tracks, buildings, and bridges. We are bringing your attention to an urgent matter that will seriously put the safety and reliability of our nation's railroad network at risk. Union Pacific Railroad, one of the largest railroad networks in the United States, is preparing to lay off approximately 1,350 Maintenance of Way employees.

Union Pacific is laying off these workers without a guarantee of when these workers will be brought back. This drastic reduction in Maintenance of Way employees will only compromise the quality and frequency of inspections and necessary maintenance, thereby endangering the safety and reliability of our nation's railroad infrastructure. The last time Union Pacific furloughed such a large number of Maintenance of Way employees was in 2015. Importantly, the staffing levels of Maintenance of Way in 2015 were dramatically above where they are currently. In fact, on July 1, 2015, the BMWED had **8,791** members employed on Union Pacific Railroad. By January 1, 2016, after Union Pacific announced their 2015 furloughs, BMWED membership was reduced to 7,886 on Union Pacific. After 2016 the steady decline in Union Pacific BMWED membership continued and by September 1, 2023, BMWED membership on Union Pacific was at **6,087**. Furloughing an additional 1,350 Maintenance of Way employees will shrink Union Pacific BMWED employment numbers down to approximately **4,737**.

Over the past several years Union Pacific management has recklessly reduced the number of its Maintenance of Way workers far below the minimum needed to operate a safe and reliable railroad. It has done this with little regard for reliability, safety, or longevity. Now, Union Pacific is showing more disregard for reliability, safety, and longevity by flying in the face of the STB's emphasis on the importance of hiring and retaining enough personnel to properly maintain the nation's railroad right of way, tracks, buildings, and bridges. Indeed, the proposed layoffs by Union Pacific Railroad are in direct contradiction to this stance. According to an e-mail sent to the BMWED from a Union Pacific Official (Attached), its upcoming layoff will not be because a reduction of maintenance work is required. Instead, Union Pacific outright acknowledges that it is

41475 Gardenbrook Road
Novi, MI 48375-1328
Telephone 248.662.2660 Facsimile 248.662.2659
www.bmwe.org



pushing projects into next year for fourth quarter financial gain. In other words, Union Pacific intends to defer much-needed maintenance on its right of ways, tracks, buildings, and bridges for the sole purpose of showing a larger profit to its shareholders in the fourth quarter. As you are well aware, deferred maintenance will only lead to catastrophic outcomes.

This recent and unnecessary decision to furlough over 1,300 Maintenance of Way employees is yet another drastic step further into the world of Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR) under the new CEO's drive for a lower operating ratio. Reducing the operating ratio should never come at the cost of safety. Maintenance of our nation's railroads should never fall victim to an investor model that admires profits more than it cares about the safety and integrity of the United States of America's railroad network.

In summary, if Union Pacific's furloughs are permitted it would result in Union Pacific Railroad diminishing its workforce by nearly 50% in less than 10 years- from **8,791** BMWED represented employees in 2015 to a projected **4,737** BMWED represented employees in 2023. Union Pacific Railroad may assert that this workforce reduction is temporary, however, such a claim contradicts empirical evidence. Historical patterns clearly demonstrate that significant workforce reductions through systematic furloughs tend to have enduring consequences.

We strongly urge the STB to challenge Union Pacific on this matter and emphasize to the management at Union Pacific Railroad that it has a responsibility to maintain a safe and reliable railroad network.

We look forward to your prompt attention and action on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Cardwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tony" being more prominent than the last name "Cardwell".

Tony Cardwell
BMWED President

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Enclosure

CC: National Division Officers
Dennis Albers
Brian Rumler
Patrick Charters
Rich Edelman
Zachary Wood