By better than a 9-to-1 margin, members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) ratified a new collective bargaining agreement with Amtrak on April 2, 2018. The final tally was 90.5% in favor and 9.5% against, with nearly 65% of eligible members casting a ballot.

The five-year deal protects all existing work rules and provides members with general wage increases of 18.84% compounded over the life of the contract. It runs through December 31, 2021, with full retroactive pay dating to July 1, 2015. Employee health care contributions are frozen at $228.00 per month over the life of the deal. The new contract provides much needed improvements for employees entitled to paid time off for active duty in a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces.

The agreement governs more than 1,400 locomotive engineers who operate Amtrak’s passenger and commuter trains over its 21,000-mile, 46-state route system. BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce thanked BLET members for participating in the balloting and ratification process. He also thanked Amtrak General Chairman Mark Kenny and his negotiating team for their diligent work at the bargaining table.

“Coming on the heels of our National Freight Agreement, this contract protects the work rules that our Amtrak members work under while also capping their health care contributions and providing real wage increases,” President Pierce said. “I want to thank Brother Kenny and his negotiating team for bringing this round of bargaining to a successful conclusion.”

General Chairman Kenny said: “Given the stalemated status of our previous collective bargaining efforts with Amtrak prior to the settlement of the 2017 National Freight Agreement, and the exorbitant health care costs proposed by the Carrier at that time, it stands plainly evident that this agreement represents a significant improvement in both general wage increases and employee health care contributions over the life of the agreement, and without forfeiture of any existing work rules.”

BLET members ratify Amtrak contract
“RIGHT TO WORK” IS WRONG FOR RAILROADERS

President Pierce addresses members and guests at the Ohio State Legislative Board’s 16th quadrennial meeting in Columbus, Ohio, on April 23, 2018.

In March of this year, I attended the annual meeting of the BLET’s National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen, which was held in New Orleans. This Association has made official communications between BLET members and the National Division. Our officials require a hard copy of the correspondence, bearing a signature, being received by the National President to be considered an “official communication.” This is to provide that the actual question(s) are addressed, and ensures that when official interpretations are made they have reference to a specific request and can be used in future correspondence.

The volume of e-mails received makes it impossible for the National President to answer all unofficial communications. Therefore, it is the policy of the BLET that e-mails addressed to the National President will be reviewed and forwarded to the appropriate officer or staff for a timely response; however, an e-mail message is not considered an official communication.

Moreover, anonymous e-mails and e-mails that do not provide sufficient information concerning the sender to enable National Division staff to confirm the sender’s membership status will not receive any reply or acknowledgement. This policy is intended to allow the National President to be aware of the opinions and suggestions of the membership, while at the same time providing a timely response to the member’s unofficial communication, if a response is necessary, without needlessly expending limited BLET resources.

Adopted at Cleveland, Ohio on July 21, 2008, 906.

Stay up-to-date with the latest Brotherhood news by going to the BLET website and signing up to receive BLET News Flash alerts via email. To register online, just go to www.ble-t.org and click subscribe to begin receiving the most current news from the BLET National Division. It is a great way to keep informed on the most recent issues impacting your job, your contract and your Brotherhood.

BLET NATIONAL DIVISION ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

The primary tool in their attack on Unions is their push for so called “right to work.” These corporate-backed efforts date as far back as 1955. In fact, as early as 1959, Eleanor Roosevelt stood up against Right to Work saying, “it does nothing for working people, but instead gives employers the right to exploit labor.” Nothing has changed in the 60 years that the American labor movement has been under this attack, other than the intensity with which corporate forces are wiling to remove Unions from the American landscape.

Since the Association meeting in March, I have attended State Legislative Board Meetings in Michigan, Ohio, California and Missouri. My message at each meeting has been the same. If Corporate America succeeds in eliminating the Union movement, our lives as railroad employees will change dramatically. At its core, “right to work” is no more than a clever slogan intended to make you work for less, and to hogtie the organization that fights on your behalf … your Union.

It allows those who don’t want to support the Union movement to stop paying dues, but at the same time requires Unions to provide representation to those same employees who would freeload on the Brotherhood. It’s actually a simple formula: impose a financial obligation to represent freeloaders and eventually the Union collapses under financial obligations that it cannot meet.

Here is how this negatively impacts all BLET Teamsters. If and when Corporate America succeeds and your Union collapses under the weight of this unfunded representation mandate, so disappears your Union contract. No Union, No Contract! No seniority roster, no standard rates of pay, no right to due process, those are what the workplace looks like without a Union contract.

I know many of you, I did not grow up in a Union household. My first jobs as a young adult were not Union jobs. Looking back now, I am convinced that my non-Union experience is what motivates me to support the Union workplace with all of my being. That is because I know the difference; I know what it’s like not to have access to adequate health care. I know what it’s like to have no voice in the workplace, and I know what it’s like to face termination with no recourse for speaking up against the injustice that many American workers face every day.

Today, the Union movement is in the fight of its life. Anti-Union forces with their catchy slogans like “right to work” have convinced many Union members that they would be better off on their own. As I have shared at all the meetings that I have attended, the term “getting railroaded” isn’t an exaggeration. It’s what happens to railroad employees who do not have the protections of a Union contract. I have yet to meet a BLET member that wants to work at a Class I Railroad without a seniority roster, a seniority district, a standard rate of pay, or a contractually protected health care plan.

It’s been said that you are not paranoid when they are actually shooting at you. Brothers and Sisters, there is an anti-Union movement in this country that will not stop until all of the contractually protected workplace rights that we all take for granted are gone. Perhaps the most important part of that fight is to elect politicians who support the working middle class, and more importantly, are not afraid to say the word Union. Unions are what help build this nation’s middle class by pulling countless Americans out of the poverty that Corporate America has long imposed when unchecked. We must not succumb to the catchy slogans that would take us back to those times by wiping out the Union movement. Join me in our fight to protect our way of life. Be involved in your Union, and be involved in our efforts to protect the Union movement.

Dennis R. Pierce
BLET National President
**General President’s Message**

**By James P. Hoffa**

The deadline for room reservations is a few months away, but BLET members and guests are encouraged to register now for the BLET’s regional meeting at the Capital Hilton in Washington, D.C., which will be held August 13-17, 2018.

Guests at the Washington D.C. regional meeting will stay at the Capital Hilton (1001 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20036, (800) 774-1500). BLET convention registration as well as hotel registration can be made through the BLET’s regional meeting website, www.bletregionals.org. If making reservations by telephone, you must mention the group code “BLET.” Room reservations must be made by July 7, 2018.


The Washington D.C. regional meeting kicks off with registration and a welcome reception on Monday, August 13 for those who purchased tickets for the event. Opening ceremonies will take place the morning of Tuesday, August 14, with a closed meeting for BLET members that afternoon. A golf tournament will be held on Wednesday, August 15, at the Nation Country Club in Fort Washington, Md. There is an additional cost to register for the golf tournament. Non-golfers will be on their own to explore the many entertainment options that Washington, D.C. has to offer.

Workshops will be held for Local Chairmen, Secretary-Treasurers and Legislative Representatives throughout the day on Thursday, August 16. The BLET’s Washington D.C. regional meeting will conclude with a banquet the evening of August 16.

Attendees will travel home on August 17. Meanwhile, registration continues for the BLET’s Monterey regional meeting, June 18-22, 2018. Guests will stay at the Hyatt Monterey Hotel & Spa (1 Old Golf Course Rd., Monterey, Calif., (831) 372-1234). BLET convention registration as well as hotel registration can be made through the BLET’s regional meeting website, www.bletregionals.org. If making reservations by telephone, you must mention the group code “BLET Regional Meeting.” Room reservations must be made by May 21, 2018.

Plan ahead for BLET’s Washington D.C. regional meeting

Social justice and economic justice go hand in hand. Now is the time for elected officials to listen to the demands of working people. It’s time to fulfill King’s final clarion call for economic justice.

**Malcolm X’s Economic Dreams Remain Unfulfilled**

**A** pril 4 marked the 50th anniversary of the tragic assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., a man who stands forever tall as one of the greatest leaders in U.S. history. I was in Memphis in April, where King was murdered, with my fellow Teamsters, other union members, civil rights leaders and social justice activists to remember the life of a man who was an icon not only for African-Americans, but all who faced injustice, including the working poor.

Many may not know that King was in Memphis at that time because he was advocating for striking Memphis waste workers who faced unsafe working conditions and low pay. Two months earlier, two city sanitation workers had died when the vehicle they worked on malfunctioned and killed them. The reverend made it clear in his famous “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech, delivered the night before his death, that he was sure justice would come for all those disenfranchised, just not sure when.

The Memphis strikers did eventually prevail in their fight. But the struggle for sanitation workers, both in Memphis and elsewhere, continues. Half a century later, the Teamsters are standing with waste workers fighting for workplace safety, because these jobs are still the most dangerous in the nation. This union and our members are still fighting for a living wage. And we’re still fighting for dignity and respect on the job.

The Teamsters have always stood at the forefront of equality, going back to contracts negotiated more than 100 years ago. The union, when my father was its president, joined the March on Washington, provided financial support to King and the civil rights movement and participated in actions across the nation. Viola Liuzzo, wife of a Teamsters Local 247 business agent, gave her life in 1965 standing up against hate. King knew that civil rights and labor rights were one and the same. Social justice and economic justice go hand in hand. Now is the time for elected officials to listen to the demands of working people. It’s time to fulfill King’s final clarion call for economic justice.

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA

Teamsters General President
RRB Q&A: Comparison of benefits under Railroad Retirement and Social Security

E
mployees and employees covered by the Railroad Retirement Act pay higher retirement taxes than those covered by the Social Security Act, so that railroad retirement benefits remain higher than social security benefits, especially for career employees who have 30 or more years of service.

The following questions and answers show the differences in railroad retirement and social security benefits payable at the close of the fiscal year ending September 30, 2017. They also show the differences in age requirements and payroll taxes under the two systems.

1. How do the average monthly railroad retirement and social security benefits paid to retired employees and spouses compare?

The average age annuity being paid by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) at the end of fiscal year 2017 to career rail employees was $3,415 a month, and for all retired rail employees the average was $2,730. The average age retirement benefit being paid under social security was over $1,370 a month. Spouse benefits averaged $1,010 a month under railroad retirement compared to $790 under social security.

The Railroad Retirement Act also provides supplemental railroad retirement annuities of between $23 and $43 a month, which are payable to employees who retire directly from the rail industry with 25 or more years of service.

2. Are the benefits awarded to recent retirees generally greater than the benefits payable to those who retired years ago?

Yes, because recent awards are based on higher average earnings. Age annuities awarded to career railroad employees retiring at the end of fiscal year 2017 averaged about $4,030 a month while monthly benefits awarded to workers retiring at full retirement age under social security averaged nearly $1,855. If spouse benefits are added, the combined benefits for the employee and spouse would total $5,560 under railroad retirement coverage, compared to $2,790 under social security. Adding a supplemental annuity to the railroad family benefits increases average total benefits for current career rail retirees to over $5,590 a month.

3. How much are the disability benefits currently awarded?

Disabled railroad workers retiring directly from the railroad industry at the end of fiscal year 2017 were awarded more than $2,920 a month on the average while awards for disabled workers under social security averaged approximately $1,295.

While both the Railroad Retirement and Social Security Acts provide benefits to workers who are totally disabled for regular work, the Railroad Retirement Act also provides disability benefits specifically for employees who are disabled for work in their regular railroad occupation. Employees may be eligible for such an occupational disability annuity at age 60 with 10 years of service, or at any age with 20 years of service.

4. Can railroad workers receive benefits at earlier ages than workers under social security?

Railroad employees with 30 or more years of creditable service are eligible for regular annuities based on age and service, whereas railroad retirement benefits remain payable to those who retired at any age with 20 years of service. Age annuity at age 60 or older is under railroad retirement, compared to $2,780 under social security. Adding a supplemental annuity to the railroad family benefits increases average total benefits for current career rail retirees to over $5,590 a month.

No early retirement reduction applies if a railroad employee retires at age 60 or older with 30 years of service and his or her retirement is after 2001, or if the employee retired before 2002 at age 60 or older with 50 years of service.

Early retirement reductions are otherwise applied to annuities awarded before full retirement age, the age at which an employee can receive full benefits with no reduction for early retirement. This ranges from age 65 for those born before 1938 to age 67 for those born in 1960 or later, the same as under social security.

5. Can the spouse of a railroad worker receive a benefit at an earlier age than the spouse of a worker under social security?

If a retired railroad employee with 30 or more years of service is age 60, the employee’s spouse is also eligible for an annuity the first full month the spouse is age 60.

Certain early retirement reductions are applied if the employee first became eligible for a 60/30 annuity July 1, 1984, or later, and retired at ages 60 or 61 before 2002. If the employee was awarded a disability annuity, has attained age 60 and has 30 years of service, the spouse can receive an unreduced annuity the first full month the employee is age 60, regardless of whether the employee annuity began before or after 2002, as long as the spouse’s annuity beginning date is after 2001.

The social security lump sum is generally only payable to the widow(er) living with the employee at the time of death. Under railroad retirement, if the employee had 10 years of service before 1975, and was not survived by a living-with widow, the lump sum may be paid to the funeral home or the payee of the funeral expenses.

6. Does social security offer any benefits that are not available under railroad retirement?

Social security does pay certain types of benefits that are not available under railroad retirement. For example, social security provides children’s benefits when an employee is disabled, retired or deceased. Under current law, the Railroad Retirement Act does not provide children’s benefits if the employee is deceased.

However, the Railroad Retirement Act includes a special limited guaranty provision which ensures that railroad families will not receive less in monthly benefits than they would have if railroad earnings were covered by social security rather than railroad retirement laws. This guaranty is intended to cover situations in which one or more members of a family would otherwise be eligible for a type of social security benefit that is not provided under the Railroad Retirement Act. Therefore, if a retired railroad employee has children who would otherwise be eligible for a benefit under social security, the employee’s annuity can be increased to reflect what social security would pay the family.

7. How much are monthly benefits for survivors under railroad retirement and social security?

Survivor benefits are generally higher if payable by the RRB rather than social security. At the end of fiscal year 2017, the average monthly benefit for railroad retirees was $4,755, compared to $4,380 for social security. Survivor benefits paid to retired railroad employees under the Railroad Retirement Act also included a $255 lump-sum death benefit payable to those who retired before 2002, whereas benefits payable to those who retired after that year were not included.

8. How do railroad retirement and social security lump-sum death benefit provisions differ?

The railroad retirement lump-sum benefit is generally payable only if survivor annuity is not immediately due upon an employee’s death. The social security lump-sum benefit may be payable regardless of whether monthly benefits are also due. Both railroad retirement and social security provide a lump-sum benefit of $225. However, if a railroad employee completed 10 years of creditable railroad service before 1975, the average railroad retirement lump-sum benefit payable is $1,000. Also, if an employee had less than 10 years of service, but had at least 5 years of such service after 1995, he or she would have to have had an insured status under social security law (counting both railroad retirement and social security credits) in order for the $225 lump-sum benefit to be payable.

The social security lump sum is generally only payable to the widow(er) living with the employee at the time of death. Under railroad retirement, if the employee had 10 years of service before 1975, and was not survived by a living-with widow, the lump sum may be paid to the funeral home or the payee of the funeral expenses.

9. How do railroad retirement and social security payroll taxes compare?

Railroad retirement payroll taxes, like social security payroll taxes, are calculated on a two-tier basis. Rail employees and employers pay tier I taxes at the same rate as social security taxes, 7.65 percent, consisting of 6.2 percent for retirement on earnings up to $128,400 in 2018, and 1.45 percent for Medicare hospital insurance. In addition, railroad employees pay an additional 0.9 percent in Medicare taxes (2.35 percent in total) will be withheld from employees on earnings above $200,000. In addition, rail employees and employers both pay tier II taxes which are used to finance railroad retirement benefits payments over and above social security levels.

In 2018, the tier II tax rate on earnings up to $95,400 is 4.9 percent for employees and 1.45 percent for employers.
J. Trumble was reelected by acclamation to his second term as Chairman of the Michigan State Legislative Board at the Board’s Fourth Quadrennial meeting in Lansing, Mich., March 19-20, 2018.

A CN/Grand Trunk Western locomotive engineer, Brother Trumble is a member of BLET Division 33 in Battle Creek, Mich. He has held continuous membership in the Brotherhood since July 1, 1997. Brother Trumble was elected 1st Vice Chairman at the Board’s Second Quadrennial meeting in 2010, and moved up to Chairman following the retirement of Gregory D. Powell, the Board’s founding Chairman, on August 1, 2012. Brother Trumble was reelected by acclamation to his first full term at the Board’s Third Quadrennial meeting in March of 2014.

Also reelected by acclamation during the meeting was Andy J. Goulet of BLET Division 304 (Saginaw, Mich.), who will serve as 1st Vice Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer. Brother Goulet has served the Board as Secretary-Treasurer continuously since he was first elected in 2006. He was also elected 2nd Vice Chairman in 2010 and 2014, moving up to the 1st Vice Chairman’s position each time to fill vacancies on the Board.

Elected to serve as 2nd Vice Chairman was Ryan M. Morris of BLET Division 2 (Jackson, Mich.); Dave P. Morgan of BLET Division 19 (Detroit, Mich.) was elected to serve as Alternate Secretary-Treasurer. The Audit Committee members are: Ed Doney, Division 542 (Detroit, Mich.); Chris King, Division 831 (Detroit, Mich.); and Matt Lashley, Division 122 (Port Huron, Mich.).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting was National President Dennis R. Pierce; First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman; and BLET Director of Political and Legislative Affairs Robert F. Hagan.

“I am proud to congratulate Brother Trumble and all officers and members of the Michigan State Legislative Board,” President Pierce said. “I thank them all for their willingness to serve our Brotherhood and have every confidence they will do an excellent job of representing our members in the proud state of Michigan.”

Three fellow BLET State Legislative Board Chairmen were also in attendance: Paul S. Piekarzki, Illinois; David K. Brown, Minnesota; and Chuck M. Schulz, Wisconsin. William H. Black, Legislative and Community Affairs Director of Michigan Teamsters Joint Council 43, also was in attendance and addressed the group.

The Michigan State Legislative Board was founded on February 28, 2002. It represents more than 1,000 active and retired members from 14 different BLET Divisions.

Trumble elected to second term as Michigan State Legislative Board Chairman

RRB announces additional 2018 informational conferences
Federal income tax and Railroad Retirement benefits

1 How are the annuities paid under the Railroad Retirement Act treated under the Federal income tax laws?

A railroad retirement annuity is a single payment comprised of one or more of the following components, depending on the annuitant’s age, the type of annuity benefit, and whether or not the annuitant was entitled to a railroad retirement annuity account:
- A railroad retirement annuity that is a supplemental annuity.
- A railroad retirement annuity that is a retirement annuity in excess of the certain minimum amount, if any, that is attributable to the same railroad retirement annuity account.
- A railroad retirement annuity that is a special minimum guaranty payment.
- A railroad retirement annuity that is a special minimum guaranty payment in excess of the certain minimum amount, if any, that is attributable to the same railroad retirement annuity account.
- A railroad retirement annuity that is a supplemental annuity.
- A railroad retirement annuity that is a retirement annuity in excess of the certain minimum amount, if any, that is attributable to the same railroad retirement annuity account.

In most cases, part of a railroad retirement annuity is treated like a social security benefit for Federal income tax purposes, while other parts of the annuity are treated like private pensions for tax purposes. Consequently, most annuitants are sent two tax statements from the RRB each January, even though they receive only a single annuity payment each month.

2 Which railroad retirement benefits are treated as social security benefits for Federal income tax purposes?

The SSEB portion of tier I (the part of a railroad retirement annuity equivalent to a social security benefit based on comparable earnings) is treated for Federal income tax purposes the same way as a social security benefit. The amount of these benefits that may be subject to Federal income tax, if any, depends on the annuitant’s income. To determine if any amount of a SSEB benefit is taxable, please refer to IRS Publication 956, Social Security and Equivalent Railroad Retirement Benefits. The SSEB portion of tier I along with tier II are considered contributory pension amounts and are shown as a combined amount in the Contributory Amount Paid Box (Item 4) on the statement. The vested dual benefit and supplemental annuity are considered non-contributory pension amounts and are shown as separate items on the statement. The total gross paid amount shown on Form RRB-1099-R is the sum of the NSSEB portion of tier I, tier II, vested dual benefit, and supplemental annuity amounts. So also shows the amount of any offset for workers’ compensation and the amount of Federal income tax withheld from these payments is also shown. Illustrations and explanations of items found on Form RRB-1099-R and Form RRB-1042S can be found in IRS Publication 956, Social Security and Equivalent Railroad Retirement Benefits.

The other statement, Form RRB-1099-R (for both U.S. citizens and non-residents), shows the NSSEB portion of tier I along with tier II are considered contributory pension amounts and are shown as a combined amount in the Contributory Amount Paid Box (Item 4) on the statement. The vested dual benefit and supplemental annuity are considered non-contributory pension amounts and are shown as separate items on the statement. The total gross paid amount shown on Form RRB-1099-R is the sum of the NSSEB portion of tier I, tier II, vested dual benefit, and supplemental annuity amounts. So also shows the amount of any offset for workers’ compensation and the amount of Federal income tax withheld from these payments. The statement also shows the amount of any of these prior year benefits that were repaid by the annuitant to the RRB during the tax year. This amount is not subtracted from the gross amounts shown on the statement, but it affects the computation of the taxable amounts reported to the IRS on prior year income tax returns. The statement also shows the amount of any offset for workers’ compensation and the amount of Federal income tax withheld from these payments. The statement also shows the amount of any of these prior year benefits that were repaid by the annuitant to the RRB during the tax year. This amount is not subtracted from the gross amounts shown on the statement, but it affects the computation of the taxable amounts reported to the IRS on prior year income tax returns. The statement also shows the amount of any offset for workers’ compensation and the amount of Federal income tax withheld from these payments. The statement also shows the amount of any of these prior year benefits that were repaid by the annuitant to the RRB during the tax year. This amount is not subtracted from the gross amounts shown on the statement, but it affects the computation of the taxable amounts reported to the IRS on prior year income tax returns.

What is the significance of the employee contribution amount?

For railroad retirement annuitants, the employee contribution amount is considered earned the amount of railroad retirement benefits is taxable, payed by the employee that the exceeds the amount that would have been paid in social security taxes if the employee’s railroad service had been covered under the Social Security Act. The employer contribution amount is referred to by the IRS as an employee’s investment, or cost, in the contract. An employee contribution amount is not a payment or income received during the tax year. Only employee and survivor annuitants may have an employee contribution amount shown in Item 3 of their Form RRB-1099-R.

The contributory amount paid (NSSEB portion of tier I and tier II) is considered income and is reported to the IRS. The contributory amount is paid is either as fully taxable or partially taxable depending on whether the employee contributory amount has been used to compute a tax-free (nontaxable) portion of the contributory amount paid. If no employee contribution amount is shown on Form RRB-1099-R, then the contributory amount paid is fully taxable.

The use and recovery of the employee contribution amount is important for annuitants since it is the amount of taxable income to be reported on income tax returns. There is a tax savings advantage in using (recovering) employee contributions since it is not taxable up to the amount of the contributory amount paid and in turn the amount of taxable income.

Annuitants should refer to IRS Publication 575, Pension and Annuity Income, and Publication 939, General Rule for Pensions and Annuities, for more information. Annuitants should also refer to IRS Publication 575, Pension and Annuity Income, and Publication 939, General Rule for Pensions and Annuities, for more information. Annuitants should also refer to IRS Publication 575, Pension and Annuity Income, and Publication 939, General Rule for Pensions and Annuities, for more information.
The RRB does not calculate the net taxable amount of the contributory pension amounts paid for annuities. Annuitants should contact the IRS or their own tax preparer for assistance in calculating the nontaxable and taxable portion of their pension.

For annuities with annuity beginning dates from July 2, 1986, through December 31, 1986, the contributory amount paid is fully taxable. For annuities with annuity beginning dates before July 2, 1986, the contributory amount paid is partially taxable. For annuities with annuity beginning dates from July 2, 1986, through December 31, 1986, the contributory amount paid is fully taxable.

Can an employee contribution amount change?

The employee contribution amount shown on Form RRB-1099-R is based on the latest railroad service and earnings information available on the RRB’s records. The employee contribution amount and the corresponding employee contribution amount paid is computed using IRS actuarial tables, annuitants should refer to IRS Publication 939, Pension and Annuity Income.

FRA Says PTC Operating on 56 Percent of Freight Route Miles

The leading provider of job income protection since 1912!

DAILY BENEFIT

$60-$81

$120

$150

$200-$250

$250-$525* 

BR&CF Monthly Dues

$30.40

$45.60

$57.00

$76.00

$95.00

*LCMPA #16

Monthly Premium

$47.25

$70.00

$87.50

$117.25

$147.00

SMART - TD (UTU)

Monthly Assessment

$64.80

$97.20

$121.50

$162.00

Not Offered

Apply today - www.brcf.org

Start saving today with membership in the BR&CF. We offer multiple benefit levels to meet your needs. If you have any questions call our office at:

(800) 233-7080

FRA said PTC operating on 56 percent of freight route miles as of March 20, 2018, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) released a status update on freight and passenger railroads’ efforts to implement Positive Train Control (PTC) by the Congressionally-mandated deadline of December 31, 2018. FRA reported that as of December 31, 2017 — PTC systems were in operation on approximately 56 percent of freight railroads’ routes miles that are required to be governed by PTC systems. The FRA said that is up from 16 percent as of December 31, 2016.

FRA said that passenger railroads have made less progress, however, with PTC systems in operation on only 24 percent of required route miles. FRA further said that 15 railroad reported that they have completed installation of all hardware necessary for PTC system implementation and another 11 railroads reported that they have installed over 80 percent of PTC system hardware. In addition, all but three railroads reported having acquired sufficient spectrum for their PTC system needs.

For more key implementation dates for the fourth quarter of 2017, see the FRA websites: www.fra.dot.gov/ptc.

Between January 2 and February 14, 2018, FRA reported that it hosted face-to-face meetings with executives of each of the 41 railroads subject to the statutory mandate. The purpose of the meetings was to evaluate each railroad’s PTC status and learn what remaining steps each needs to take to have a PTC system fully implemented.

The RRB does not calculate the net taxable amount of the contributory amount paid for annuities. Annuitants should contact the IRS or their own tax preparer for assistance in calculating the nontaxable and taxable portion of their pension.

For annuities with annuity beginning dates before July 2, 1986, the contributory amount paid because their employee contribution amount has been fully taxable. Since the contributory amount paid is fully taxable, the total gross pension paid in Item 7 of Form RRB-1099-R is fully taxable.

For annuities with annuity beginning dates from July 2, 1986, through December 31, 1986, the contributory amount paid is partially taxable. For annuities with annuity beginning dates from July 2, 1986, through December 31, 1986, the contributory amount paid is fully taxable.

Can an employee contribution amount change?

The employee contribution amount shown on Form RRB-1099-R is based on the latest railroad service and earnings information available on the RRB’s records. The employee contribution amount and the corresponding employee contribution amount paid is computed using IRS actuarial tables, annuitants should refer to IRS Publication 939, Pension and Annuity Income.

FRA Says PTC Operating on 56 Percent of Freight Route Miles

The leading provider of job income protection since 1912!

DAILY BENEFIT

$60-$81

$120

$150

$200-$250

$250-$525* 

BR&CF Monthly Dues

$30.40

$45.60

$57.00

$76.00

$95.00

*LCMPA #16

Monthly Premium

$47.25

$70.00

$87.50

$117.25

$147.00

SMART - TD (UTU)

Monthly Assessment

$64.80

$97.20

$121.50

$162.00

Not Offered

Apply today - www.brcf.org

Start saving today with membership in the BR&CF. We offer multiple benefit levels to meet your needs. If you have any questions call our office at:

(800) 233-7080

FRA said PTC operating on 56 percent of freight route miles as of March 20, 2018, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) released a status update on freight and passenger railroads’ efforts to implement Positive Train Control (PTC) by the Congressionally-mandated deadline of December 31, 2018. FRA reported that as of December 31, 2017 — PTC systems were in operation on approximately 56 percent of freight railroads’ routes miles that are required to be governed by PTC systems. The FRA said that is up from 16 percent as of December 31, 2016.

FRA said that passenger railroads have made less progress, however, with PTC systems in operation on only 24 percent of required route miles. FRA further said that 15 railroad reported that they have completed installation of all hardware necessary for PTC system implementation and another 11 railroads reported that they have installed over 80 percent of PTC system hardware. In addition, all but three railroads reported having acquired sufficient spectrum for their PTC system needs.

For more key implementation dates for the fourth quarter of 2017, see the FRA websites: www.fra.dot.gov/ptc.

Between January 2 and February 14, 2018, FRA reported that it hosted face-to-face meetings with executives of each of the 41 railroads subject to the statutory mandate. The purpose of the meetings was to evaluate each railroad’s PTC status and learn what remaining steps each needs to take to have a PTC system fully implemented.

The RRB does not calculate the net taxable amount of the contributory amount paid for annuities. Annuitants should contact the IRS or their own tax preparer for assistance in calculating the nontaxable and taxable portion of their pension.

For annuities with annuity beginning dates before July 2, 1986, the contributory amount paid because their employee contribution amount has been fully taxable. Since the contributory amount paid is fully taxable, the total gross pension paid in Item 7 of Form RRB-1099-R is fully taxable.

For annuities with annuity beginning dates from July 2, 1986, through December 31, 1986, the contributory amount paid is partially taxable. For annuities with annuity beginning dates from July 2, 1986, through December 31, 1986, the contributory amount paid is fully taxable.

Can an employee contribution amount change?

The employee contribution amount shown on Form RRB-1099-R is based on the latest railroad service and earnings information available on the RRB’s records. The employee contribution amount and the corresponding employee contribution amount paid is computed using IRS actuarial tables, annuitants should refer to IRS Publication 939, Pension and Annuity Income.

FRA Says PTC Operating on 56 Percent of Freight Route Miles

The leading provider of job income protection since 1912!

DAILY BENEFIT

$60-$81

$120

$150

$200-$250

$250-$525* 

BR&CF Monthly Dues

$30.40

$45.60

$57.00

$76.00

$95.00

*LCMPA #16

Monthly Premium

$47.25

$70.00

$87.50

$117.25

$147.00

SMART - TD (UTU)

Monthly Assessment

$64.80

$97.20

$121.50

$162.00

Not Offered

Apply today - www.brcf.org

Start saving today with membership in the BR&CF. We offer multiple benefit levels to meet your needs. If you have any questions call our office at:

(800) 233-7080

FRA said PTC operating on 56 percent of freight route miles as of March 20, 2018, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) released a status update on freight and passenger railroads’ efforts to implement Positive Train Control (PTC) by the Congressionally-mandated deadline of December 31, 2018. FRA reported that as of December 31, 2017 — PTC systems were in operation on approximately 56 percent of freight railroads’ routes miles that are required to be governed by PTC systems. The FRA said that is up from 16 percent as of December 31, 2016.

FRA said that passenger railroads have made less progress, however, with PTC systems in operation on only 24 percent of required route miles. FRA further said that 15 railroad reported that they have completed installation of all hardware necessary for PTC system implementation and another 11 railroads reported that they have installed over 80 percent of PTC system hardware. In addition, all but three railroads reported having acquired sufficient spectrum for their PTC system needs.

For more key implementation dates for the fourth quarter of 2017, see the FRA websites: www.fra.dot.gov/ptc.

Between January 2 and February 14, 2018, FRA reported that it hosted face-to-face meetings with executives of each of the 41 railroads subject to the statutory mandate. The purpose of the meetings was to evaluate each railroad’s PTC status and learn what remaining steps each needs to take to have a PTC system fully implemented.
STB investigates as shippers complain of deteriorating rail service

In March 2018, the Surface Transportation Board (STB) requested that all Class I railroads provide their service outlook plans in the near term and for the remainder of 2018 due to increased concerns over deteriorating service. One shippers’ association accused railroads of trying to impress Wall Street investors rather than investing in train crews and networks. In a March 10 letter to the STB, the National Grain and Feed Association complained about deteriorating rail service due to lack of locomotives and train crews.

“STB there is a fundamental concern among rail customers that the underly- ing root cause of these service... issues is Class I railroads’ aggressive effort to re- duce their operating ratios to impress Wall Street investors and shareholders. This, in turn, has resulted in the systemic shedding of key resources by Class I carriers, including locomotives and crews, that has degraded service to unacceptable levels, and resulted in virtually non-existent surge capacity to meet rail customers’ needs.”

The STB asked for information about each railroad’s network, including locomotive availability, employee resources, local service performance, service demand, communication strategies, and capacity constraints. The STB said it was “increasingly concerned about the state of freight rail service in the U.S.”

In recent weeks, the Board has become increasingly concerned about the overall state of rail service based on the weekly data collected by the Board pursuant to 49 C.F.R. pt. 1250, the STB wrote. ”Al- though there are exceptions, most Class I railroads’ data indicate that service is deteriorating, while system average dwell time has climbed. For those same railroads, other key metrics such as the av- erage number of cars in revenue service and cars that have not moved in 48 hours or more are trending in an unfavorable direction.”

The Board’s Rail Customer and Public Assistance Staff will begin holding week- ly calls with these carriers. STB leadership requested that each Class I railroad provide a written re- sponse related to their respective outlooks for rail operations across their networks to address various issues related to rail ser- vice adequacy, including: locomotive availability; employee resources; local service performance; demand, communication, and capacity constraints.

---

**Advisory Board March 2018 Activity**

In accordance with the BLET Bylaws, summaries of BLET Advisory Board members’ activities are published monthly.

**NATIONAL PRESIDENT DENNIS R. PIERCE, National Division Office, Independence, Ohio:** General supervision of Accounting Department, Discussed D&H crew management, BLET Union Track FDV, D&H’s response to recent NMB legal actions, and continued discussion of Class I rail lines.

**VICE PRESIDENT JAMES P. LOUIS, BLET Division 81, Long Island Rail Road, New York: 1st Vice President, Teamsters Rail Conference; Policy Committee, BLET Union Track FDV, R&L (Robert and Lawrence); Radio Committee, BLET Division 81; General Committee and SLB monthly Trustee reports; Mtgs. regarding DRC, assisting CSXT GCs; Holiday.

**VICE PRESIDENT R.C. (RICK) GIBBONS, BLET Division 15, New York Western, MEC, Pennsylvania Railroad: RTA, Terminal issues, assist GC Moore; MidSouth issues, assist GC Craddock; DM&E, Soo and CP; NASLBC annual mtg., New Orleans, Advisory Board meeting; Mtgs. regarding CSXT/GTW assistance and training, BLET Union Track FDV, R&L (Robert and Lawrence); Radio Committee, BLET Division 81; General Committee and SLB monthly Trustee reports; Mtgs. regarding DRC, assisting CSXT GCs; Holiday.

**VICE PRESIDENT JOSEPH H. GILLEN, BLET Division 11, Delaware Valley: Teamsters Rail Conference; Policy Committee, BLET Union Track FDV, R&L (Robert and Lawrence); Radio Committee, BLET Division 81; General Committee and SLB monthly Trustee reports; Mtgs. regarding DRC, assisting CSXT GCs; Holiday.

**VICE PRESIDENT JOHN W. HURST, BLET Division 113, New York, New Jersey, and the Northeast: New York LIRR, NYSW; Advising on: All Northea... South Union & Eastern; Advising on: All NewYork State; Advising on: All Northeastern Conferences.

**FIRST VICE PRESIDENT E.L. (LEE) PRUITT:** National Division Office, Independence, Ohio; Gen- eral supervision of Accounting Department, Discussed D&H crew management, BLET Union Track FDV, D&H’s response to recent NMB legal actions, and continued discussion of Class I rail lines.

**VICE PRESIDENT G.O. GORMAN, BLET Division 81, Long Island Rail Road, New York: 1st Vice President, Teamsters Rail Conference; Policy Committee, BLET Union Track FDV, R&L (Robert and Lawrence); Radio Committee, BLET Division 81; General Committee and SLB monthly Trustee reports; Mtgs. regarding DRC, assisting CSXT GCs; Holiday.

**VICE PRESIDENT JOHN M. FITCH, BLET Division 81, Long Island Rail Road, New York: 1st Vice President, Teamsters Rail Conference; Policy Committee, BLET Union Track FDV, R&L (Robert and Lawrence); Radio Committee, BLET Division 81; General Committee and SLB monthly Trustee reports; Mtgs. regarding DRC, assisting CSXT GCs; Holiday.

**NATIONAL DIVISION OFFICE STAFF:**

---

**April 2018**

**Photo of the Month:** April 2018

---

**NICKEL PLATE 765:** After hearing from a friend that the famed Nickel Plate steam locomotive No. 765 would be making an appearance at Glenview, Illinois to Fox Lake Illinois, Brother Peter J. Pelke II rushed to round Lake with his camera equipment. He managed to arrive in time to capture this piece of living history.

---

---