

Photo Courtesy of Kyle Korienek



FALL 2019 MRA RAIL UPDATE

A publication of the Michigan Railroads Association

EVERY WEEK IS RAIL SAFETY WEEK

KEEPING PEDESTRIANS & DRIVERS SAFE AROUND RAILROAD TRACKS

While the number of crossing collisions, deaths and injuries has dropped over the past five decades, it's still a startling fact that about every three hours in the U.S., a person or vehicle is hit by a train.

There are countless reasons to never walk, run or play on rail tracks and rail property. Most people don't know it can take more than a mile to stop a train – the equivalent of about 18 football fields. That makes it difficult if not impossible for a train to stop if someone is on the tracks.

Trains are also deceptively quiet. Even when standing on a rail platform it is unlikely a

IT CAN TAKE



MORE THAN ONE MILE

TO STOP THE TRAIN. **See tracks? Think train!**



SeeTracksThinkTrains.org


commuter will hear one approach, especially if wearing headphones. Pedestrians are not the only ones who need to be careful, drivers also need to play it safe behind the wheel at rail crossings. The force of a train hitting a car is equivalent to that of a car hitting a soda can.

Rail accidents involving vehicles and pedestrians are almost always preventable – and everyone has a responsibility to be safe around railroad tracks. That is why railroads dedicate significant time and energy reaching out to communities, with rail safety education at the heart of this effort.

From providing lesson plans and educational toolkits to teachers

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 ►

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Jon Cool, *President*
@MI_FreightRail

We continue to have valuable conversations with legislators and Gov. Whitmer's administration regarding a new Local Grade Separation Program administered by MDOT. The intent of this program is

to find a solution to some of Michigan's most congested rail crossings.

Sen. Dale Zorn introduced SB364 earlier this year and the Senate Transportation & Infrastructure Committee approved the legislation early this fall on a 9-0 vote. The bill would create an 80%-20% program with MDOT contributing 80% of a grade separation project and local units, private sources, railroads and others contributing the 20% portion.

A strong and diverse coalition of supporters has been involved during this process. From law enforcement and firefighter groups to a school

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 ►

IN THIS ISSUE

- Moving Michigan 3
- RSW 2019 4
- Operation Lifesaver 5
- Tours 5
- Identify Your Crossing 6

EVERY WEEK IS RAIL SAFETY WEEK

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1: **KEEPING PEDESTRIANS & DRIVERS SAFE AROUND RAILROAD TRACKS**



Senators Lucido, Nesbitt & Schmidt signing CN Safety Pledge.



Senators Schmidt, Hertel & Bullock signing CN Safety Pledge.

and conducting on-campus visits for college students to meeting with community leaders and law enforcement, railroad employees are active in the neighborhoods where they work and live, sharing their rail safety knowledge.

Railroads also support Operation Lifesaver Inc. (OLI), a non-profit public safety education and awareness organization dedicated to eliminating risky behavior around rail tracks and crossings. OLI reaches millions of people each year through safety presentations, training sessions, social media and special events held nationwide.

OLI maintains a host of online safety tools available for parents, photographers, bus drivers, new drivers, bikers and the list goes on. OLI, together with freight, passenger, commuter railroads and federal safety agencies, launched the "See Tracks? Think Train!" public safety campaign and in 2017, OLI inaugurated National Rail Safety Week.

Railroads and their safety partners are becoming increasingly creative in making sure their safety messages are seen and heard. To attract the attention of young sports enthusiasts, OLI in Canada recently launched a virtual reality video campaign specifically geared to ATV riders who frequently ride near snow-covered railroad lines. Thanks to efforts like these, collisions and incidents involving pedestrians, vehicles and trains have declined in recent years. Railroads will continue their many efforts to promote safe behavior around rail tracks and crossings to reduce these incidents, but they cannot do it alone; we all have a role to play.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO STAY SAFE

- Always expect a train; freight trains don't follow published schedules.
- A typical freight train can take more than a mile to stop.
- The train you see is likely closer and faster-moving than you think.
- The only safe place to cross the tracks is at a designated crossing.
- Being on railroad tracks and property is not only dangerous – it's illegal.

Source: AAR

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1: **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

bus association, a major hospital and regional planning entity. We thank every group that has joined our efforts to advocate for this public infrastructure measure.

Please take a moment to call or write your state legislator and Governor Whitmer's office to voice your support for the Local Grade Separation Program - SB364.

We also look forward to a committee hearing on

SB437, legislation from Sen. Wayne Schmidt that would create the Freight Rail Development and Preservation Act. The legislation would amend the State Transportation Preservation Act by adding a competitive grant program for freight railroads.

This legislation would help Michigan's railroads better serve our key industries and would also help move more freight by rail - instead of on our

roadways. Every rail car carrying freight not only eliminates the need for 3 or 4 trucks hauling the same amount on local streets and highways, but also generates additional monies for purposes other than necessary road maintenance and repairs.

We look forward to working with Governor Whitmer and legislative partners on these priorities.

MOVING MICHIGAN

FEATURING GRAND ELK RAILROAD



The Grand Elk Railroad recently celebrated its 10th anniversary by hosting excursion train rides for legislators, customers, and team members; giving them a unique view of the Michigan countryside. Not usually a passenger line, the railroad typically carries commodities such as fertilizer, frac sand, paper, plastics and stone on its 123 miles of track. The railroad began operations in March 2009, on track leased from the Norfolk Southern Railway (NS). In addition to the NS, the Grand Elk also interchanges with two other Class I railroads: CSX Transportation and CN.

The railroad's name is a combination of the names of the two cities at each end of the line,

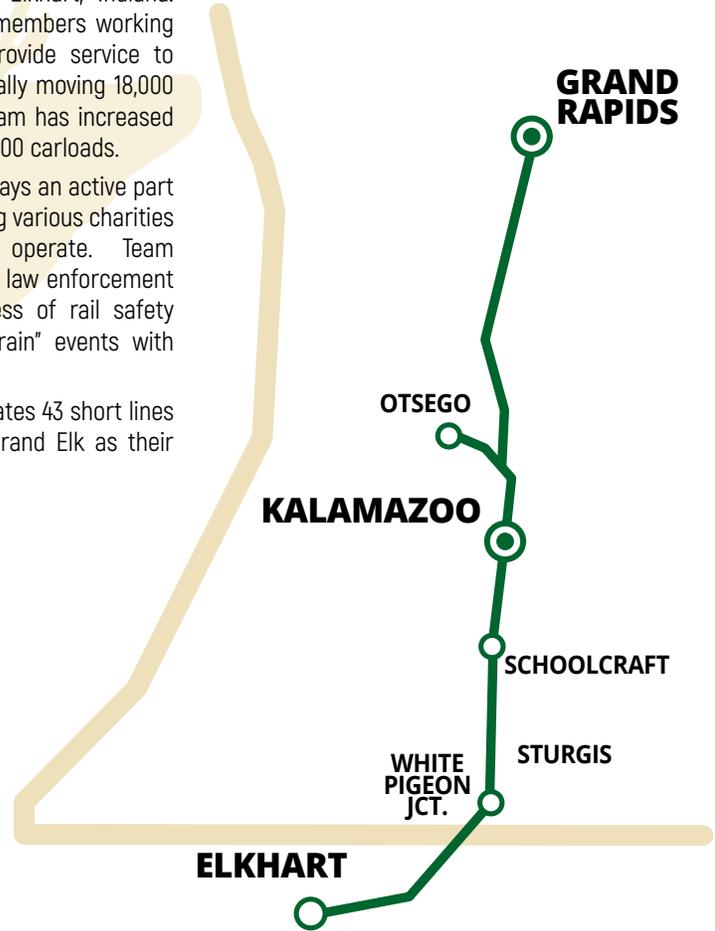
Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Elkhart, Indiana. There are currently 53 team members working for the railroad, and they provide service to more than 50 customers. Initially moving 18,000 carloads the first year, the team has increased that number to more than 40,000 carloads.

The Grand Elk Railroad team plays an active part in the community by supporting various charities in the towns in which they operate. Team members also work with local law enforcement officials to increase awareness of rail safety by hosting "Officer on the Train" events with Operation Lifesaver.

Watco Companies, which operates 43 short lines around the U.S, started the Grand Elk as their



GDLK locomotive 4017 near Wayland. Photo courtesy of GDLK.



(L-R) Sen. Aric Nesbitt and Kirk Small – GDLK enjoying an October excursion train tour. Photo courtesy of GDLK.



Grand Elk locomotive 501 heading south over the St. Joseph river in Three Rivers. Photo courtesy of Jonathon Leese.

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

20th railroad in 2009. Watco has close to 5,000 employees and 88 terminals.

Watco Companies is a privately held company out of Pittsburg, KS.

"Our future growth plans for the Grand Elk Railroad will be predicated on our Customers... we want to service their needs first, and this will lead us into new opportunities for the future. In addition, transloading from truck to rail will be a key driver for our success, as we look for organic growth in underserved Michigan markets." Kirk Small, MBA - Commercial Manager GDLK.

EMPLOYEES 53	MAJOR COMMODITIES FERTILIZER FRAC SAND PAPER PLASTICS STONE
ROUTE MILES 123	
REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS Kalamazoo, Michigan	
CONTACT Chadd Thimesch, General Manager	

RAIL SAFETY WEEK 2019 – MICHIGAN



Rep. Julie Brixie speaks at RSW kickoff in East Lansing.



Rep. Brixie signs CN Safety Pledge at RSW kickoff.



Officer Brian Poynton - Amtrak and Rep. Mary Whiteford at the RSW kickoff in Bangor.

Annually the railroad industry, law enforcement, public officials and many other partners highlight safety around rail crossings and rail right-of-way. We especially want to thank Rep. Julie Brixie and ASMSU President Mario Kakos for speaking at the East Lansing kickoff event at the Amtrak station. Rep. Mary Whiteford also spoke at an event in Bangor highlighting rail safety efforts. We truly appreciate legislative involvement to help highlight Rail Safety Week.

MICHIGAN OPERATION LIFESAVER UPDATE



Rail Safety Week (RSW) was held on the week of September 22, 2019 with a kick-off at the Amtrak Station in East Lansing. The outreach emphasized prevention efforts against trespassing, especially in the area of schools. RSW also warned photographers to not use railroads as backgrounds to glamorize pictures, letting them know that using rail property is an act of trespassing.

The Lake State Railroad set up an 'Officer on the Train' (OOTT) ride for RSW travelling from Flint to Plymouth and back, showing those onboard the many 'near hits' an engineer sees daily. MSP officers on the locomotive called out the violations to local police for handling. MI-OL used donated money to place radio PSA's on radios stations in Ann Arbor, Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo and Lansing during RSW week.

National Operation Lifesaver Inc. announced that it will be launching its new program for emergency responders by the end of the year. The former Law Enforcement (GCCl) and Emergency Responders (RSER) projects will be combined into a shorter version merging them into one presentation.

OLI also announced that it has received a donation of \$100,000 from the Henry Posner

Foundation. The funds will be used for educating the public about trespassing safety and suicide prevention using public service announcements and signage.

In addition, the Posner funds will promote the awareness of the new Emergency Notification System (ENS). The blue signs are required to be posted at all crossings across the nation by FRA rules. The signs feature an emergency number to call in the event of a vehicle is stalled on the crossing. MI-OL distributed posters for use at truck stops and other areas to promote the new blue ENS sign. These posters are available on request to anyone who will display them.

FRA records show that Michigan had 49 train/vehicle collisions in 2018, but for the first time there were no crash related fatalities for the year. However, there were 13 incidents of trespassers/pedestrians being struck with seven of them fatal, along with six more suicides.

MI-OL is recruiting candidates to become OL Authorized Volunteers. Classes are held twice a year to train those interested. The next class will be held in December. For more information contact Sam Crowl - State Coordinator at 248-823-7037 or samcrowl@comcast.net

OFFICER ON THE TRAIN



Officer on the Train Participants - July 17, 2019 (L-R) Nick Mason - GDLK trainee, Phillip Moorlag - GDLK Conductor, Mark Moorlag - GDLK Engineer, Trooper Joel Service - MSP, Martin Mandujano - GDLK Conductor, Sam Crowl - State Coordinator MI OL. Photo courtesy of Chadd Timesch.

LEGISLATORS TOUR RAIL OPERATIONS

Railroads operating in Michigan enjoy hosting state legislators and public officials at their operations to discuss how moving freight by rail makes sense for shippers. These visits include robust conversations covering railroading 101, safety, economic development, tax and regulatory topics. The MRA and host railroads would like to thank legislators this year who spent time "on the railroad" to learn more about how rail serves Michigan's key industries.



Rep. Mark Huizenga tours Marquette Rail operations in Kent County with Charles Hunter - G&W.



Rep. Carter at the tour of Detroit and area rail operations hosted by CSX, Conrail and Norfolk Southern.



(L-R) Larry Lloyd - CN, Herman Searcy-Plunkett - CN and Rep. Tate at the Detroit area rail operations tour.



Senators Bullock and Geiss touring Detroit area rail operations.



Sen. Jim Runestad toured Lake State Railway operations in Wixom.

MRA

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RAILROAD EMERGENCY CONTACT INFO

Identify Your Crossing Location

To improve highway-rail crossing safety, the FRA now requires each railroad to have an Emergency Notification System (ENS), allowing emergency response center staff to identify crossing locations and railroad contacts for reporting safety problems and emergency situations.



Look for a **blue-and-white** emergency notification sign.



The ENS sign should be posted **near the crossing and clearly visible**. It includes the name of the railroad, the **railroad's emergency contact number**, and the USDOT National Crossing Inventory Number.

REPORT PROBLEM
OR EMERGENCY
1-800-555-5555
X-ING 836 597 H
XYZ RAILROAD

Rail Crossing Locator Mobile Application



The Crossing Locator was developed to provide users with access to the highway-rail grade crossing database and map features from a mobile device. The tool allows users to locate crossings by USDOT Crossing ID.

Users may use the app to find and call the Emergency Notification Number (ENS) in case of an emergency or a safety concern about a specific highway-rail grade crossing. The information accessed in the mobile application is derived from the Safety Data website using information submitted by States and Railroads.

SEARCH FOR: Rail Crossing Locator

iPhones and iPads

Download it from The Apple APP Store

Android Phones and Tablets

Download it from The Google Play Store