

RE: EP 770 Rail Service Hearing

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Dear Chairmen Oberman,

As an engineer of a Class I railroad with 10 years of service, I would like to take some time to tell you about my experience thru my career with the railroad. In my short time with the railroad I've seen many coworkers quit or be fired most with little experience on the railroad, but in recent years coworkers with 10+ years of experience have started to leave. This is the number one question that should be asked of all Class I railroads: Why are workers leaving at an alarming rate?

In my opinion this is due to a harsh way of life only made worse with the implementation of points based attendance policies and a lack of being paid for the inconvenience of no schedule (on call 24/7). It's the only industry that treats its customers and employees as if they don't need them to make money, when this is the only way railroads make money.

Since I started with the railroad a lot of things have changed. I will name just a few and how it has impacted service as well as cut the workforce in half at the class I railroad I work for.

1. 0 throttle above 40 MPH. This means that when a train reaches 40 mph you are required to go out of throttle regardless of the track and trains top speed. This may not seem significant, but could delay shipments by days.

2. Throttle limitations to reduce HPT(horse power per ton). Again this limits how quickly a train/shipment will get to its destination. I typically run grain empties and mixed freight with throttle limits of 5 to 7 in order to conserve fuel. This can lead to excess delays to loading facilities and ports.

3. The invention of Power Limited TO (trip optimizer). A new version of a program has come out in recent years that takes the 0-40 throttle and throttle limitations to a whole new level. This program was designed to run the train in a fuel saving setting but in all actuality uses the same amount and slows trains down further. On average this makes a 3 hour trip take 4 hours, which may not seem like a lot but when compiled over the trains final destination can add significant delays to freight.

4. Reduced nightshift Carmen or Roundhouse employees. Typically a station is staffed with Carmen/Roundhouse employees who inspect inbound and outbound trains 24/7. Currently my terminal has neither on duty at night, which may set a train back an additional 12 hours. For example an empty grain train would show up at 2130 and would need an extended haul airtest done, but since the carmen go home at 2200 it would not be done. This inspection would be done on the day shift a full 8 hours later. Another example is an outbound train is waiting for locomotives off another train that arrives during the same time and those require fuel, with no roundhouse employee on duty the locomotives will sit for the day shift to fuel and service them.

5. Over tonnage and insufficient locomotives on trains. Typically a train at my location will be sent out with 1.0 hpt, which means a train will be sent out with a

total weight of 8,800 tons with 2 locomotives. In recent years, a shift has occurred to put as many cars on a train as possible reducing that HPT to .8 and having trains stall out on hills. Another shift is having a train built and more tonnage shows up with the same destination as the train. Instead of waiting for the next train the carrier adds that tonnage and will now have to wait for a third locomotive that's a day away, furthering the delay of the shipment.

6. Poor hiring practices and employee retention. Two times in my career I have seen the carrier hire employees only to furlough them right away. Previously, most of those employees would return but being laid off for 1.5+ years in both cases has not helped them retain employees.

7. Doing more with less. This has been a saying tossed around by management in the past two years. Your guess is as good as mine as to what the less is. They have reduced their workforce by almost half and continue to lose employees at an alarming rate with this new attendance policy. Locomotive fleets have been reduced and put into storage. Currently, they claim locomotives are being brought out of storage, yet we wait for locomotives on a daily basis.

In closing I would like to express how dire this situation really is. We like to talk about a "supply chain crisis" in America that to me means let's get all hands on deck. Class I railroads have taken the opposite approach, at the cost of their employees and customers. Employees and customers without whom, they would not make record profits year after year. Something needs to be done or we will continue to see corporate greed destroy a once great job.

Sincerely,

Joseph Smith

Locomotive Engineer