

June 25, 2022

The Honorable Martin Oberman, Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Docket No.: EP 770

Dear Mr. Oberman

Thank you for the work you are doing for the STB and the investigation of the railroad's current issues. I would like to inform you of some information of position eliminations that have and will clearly continue to impact the deteriorating efficiency of the railroad. Yardmaster's position are being eliminated in different depots across the nation and the elimination is continuing, which is going to cause an increase of deteriorating train times. In particularly, Green River Wyoming Yardmaster's.

During the recent STB hearing, it was declared that no employees would be eliminated due to the employee shortages crisis and the railroad inability to provide services that are critically needed nationwide. However, at this very time, Union Pacific is in fact, has and is continuing the elimination of Yardmasters. Recently, Union Pacific eliminated the critical positions at El Paso, Texas; Cheyenne, Wyoming; Memphis, Tennessee; and Avondale, Louisiana. These yards have suffered dramatic decrease in productivity of trains moving across the county. And at this time, they are in the process of eliminating Yardmaster's in Green River, Wyoming.

Yardmasters are the backbone and the front-line supervisor of all activity that takes place in railroad yards. Yardmaster's manage track use in yards, as well as communicate and coordinate with yard track users. They interact with a number of different yard employees and crafts to include engineers, switchman, conductors, and yardmen. The employees rely heavily on the Yardmaster's for their everyday assignments and communicate with them daily about different issues. Yardmaster's are responsible for, and must be aware of, inbound/outbound trains, switch crews operating in the yard, and the yard infrastructure. Yardmaster's are also responsible for communicating with local authorities when there are emergencies and their assistance is needed. They are responsible for the building of the train and the safety it entails.

The rail yard environment is fast-paced and highly dynamic, with constant changes to train makeups, track occupancies and assignments, track conditions, and traffic flow. It is the Yardmaster's responsibility of all movement coming to and leaving the yard. In essence, Yardmaster's are the hub of the yard, the air traffic controllers of the railroad.

As recent as May 2022, a Yardmaster at the Green River depot prevented a catastrophe. A train was instructed by dispatch hundreds of miles away to enter on the main line in front of the depot. However, the main line was having maintenance conducted on it at the time with a maintenance crew actively working on the repair. Fortunately for all involved, the Yardmaster on duty was able to stop the train and no injuries occurred and community was safe. This near miss could have been devastating if it wasn't for the knowledge and skill of the Yardmaster. Another example of the Yardmaster's going above and beyond, is the transporting of train crews. This takes the Yardmaster miles from the depot and his job duties. And unfortunately, this unsafe act is done under direction of leadership to get trains moving. This requirement, because of executives decisions to eliminate transport crew

contracts, has many possibilities for disaster and slows the moving of trains. The examples given here are to show you, even with threats of losing their positions, Yardmaster's continue to perform beyond the highest standards because of their pride of the job, they know they are keeping community and other employees safe, and because of their integrity. And no, there was no recognition for their outstanding performances.

The executives and management continue to create, what some may describe as a hostile environment, with the battering and stress of losing their positions they worked so hard and work so many years to achieve and perfect. Over the last two and half years, executives and management have threaten the Yardmaster's positions numerous times stating Yardmaster's will be replaced by managers, then they are told they are safe. This back and forth as gone on too long and causes unnecessary stress to an already extremely stressful position. Management expects the highest work performance, but the lack of communication to staff is less that desirable to the employees.

A Yardmaster's experience in a valuable position extremely needed to effectively and efficiently move trains across the nation. Yardmaster's have a background that are not obtain by sitting behind the desk in a corporate office. Many of them were previously engineers, railcar switchman's, and or conductors, that gave them upfront experience on how to move trains and develop schedules in the yards to move trains with increased productivity. This is not a position that could be held by managers due to the fact that management has little railroad and yard operation experience.

Furthermore, I would question Union Pacific "Work as a Team" motto. *We work together, embrace diversity and create opportunity for all. We promote an inclusive environment where people from varied backgrounds can be their best, reflect the communities where we live and work, and deliver a competitive advantage.* If this statement was true, why is that the Yardmaster's are not given insight of the proposal of eliminating the Yardmaster position at any of the depots? Why are managers and executive keeping secrets? Maybe because they know the Yardmaster's know what they are doing? Also, many of the men and women travel from other areas for work, and this hardship is not considered. Many have held their positions of Yardmaster for many years, and some for decades. Yet no opportunity is given or considered.

Union Pacific "Values" are described as *Passion for Performance. Passion, determination and expertise drive our safety, customer experience and financial results.* If you eliminate experts such as the Yardmaster's, how can this be a true statement when they are such an intricate position to how the railroad system works and performs.

I would like to invite you visit areas were the Yardmaster's have been eliminated and were Yardmaster's are still utilized. I do believe you would instantly observe the dramatic differences between the yard operations in comparative. I would also ask of you to question Union Pacific as to the reasoning of the eliminating of such a valuable position.

And lastly, please speak to some Yardmaster's, one on one. I know they would provide you with in-depth information that is critical to the railroad operations. Their experience is unequaled, they are the men and women on the ground, doing the work, making sure everyone is safe, building the trains, and getting the trains out of the yards, onto the rails to deliver the products so greatly needed.

Thank you for your valuable time on this matter. Please contact Tracy Sperry, Yardmaster, Green River, Wyoming at 307-321-0265, if you should have any questions. I look forward to your assistance and response.

