

Exhibit A

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Date: April 6, 2022 at 12:56:13 PM EDT
To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
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Cc: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
<[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Subject: End of My Employment with BNSF

4/6/22

To Whom it May Concern,

I would like to thank you all for allowing me to be employed by BNSF Railway since June 6th, 2011. This Job has taken me around the United States by rail doing maintenance throughout the system. Successfully raised a family from the road as I am sure most of you have experienced is not easy task. This was managed by going from laborer, machine operator, Forman, to the job I loved as track Inspector. At this time, I can no longer see myself working for BNSF under the Twin Cities East current management. This is the area I lived and worked Since my seniority would hold. I have been involved in many things including being 1st on seen to trains vs public accidents. I managed scenes with dead body's (9), found stolen cars, motorcycles , found missing persons, and dealt with putting myself in areas nobody should ever walk to make sure it is safe for train traffic and the employees. I have been a witness and a victim to many failed leadership issues throughout my career. But the one that is happening in St. Paul right now is downright wrong. For 3/4 of the year of 2021, I was the only inspector for 4 subs , 3 yards, multiple industry tracks. With the answer No help Available. This is where my tolerance stops.

Yesterday I walked out of a Forman meeting that I once again was put into a position to protecting the best interest of railroad on past Fra defects with management. Which I have been trained to do. After many years of falling on death ears and having to elevate issues to Division Engineer. Matter of fact over the last 2 years I have asked for a sit down 3 times with the D.E. and it has never happened. I am sick of fighting to be heard and stressed out (causing health issues). Yet expected to jump for the railroad at any time of day when needed. So, currently, I give up my position effective immediately . The rest of my vacation per union agreement will need to be paid out.

The truck and tools were all left at Jackson Street Shack. Tools and everything verified by work group 0957 4/5/22 . Computers(2), hot spots(3), tablet(1) and phone(1) has been turned over to fellow track inspector Chris Monson (St. Cloud) for trust reasons.

Thanks

Daniel Cooksey

[REDACTED]

Ex - St. Paul , Monticello , Midway , Wayzata Track Inspector

Dear Chairman Oberman,

This is a letter I hope that will raise awareness about the precarious status of the railroad and the services it provides to its customers and the supply chain based on my experiences of over a decade of performing the service of maintaining track maintenance on a class one railroad.

When I was initially hired, we were short-staffed on many gangs but we always seemed to get the job done and keep the railroad running without any major disruptions. But in the last 5 or 6 years, there has been a dramatic increase in furloughed employees, employees that have been fired, and retirements leaving positions that the railroad simply has not backfilled. These actions all appear to be part of a deliberate plan and operation by the railroad as part of their Precision Scheduled Railroad business plan. The furloughs, firings, and refusal to backfill positions provide initial cost savings but have directly hurt the work force by creating skeleton crews that can hardly keep up with the constant demand of work. This impacts culture and morale of the workers. The work that traditionally was performed with a crew 5-10 times larger than the current the workforce has resulted in a physically and mentally overloaded workforce. The railroad has reduced the size of several of their gangs, including their production gangs which perform large scale track construction, maintenance, and repair projects. Then the railroad put several pieces of on-track equipment such as tie inserters, spike pullers, spiking machines, etc. in storage so they were no longer being used. Now the railroad is trying to bring a lot of this equipment back in service and trying to assign the workforce to operate the equipment, but because they have depleted its workforce so much, they cannot assign anyone that has the skills and qualifications to operate it. The end result is that the track is not being maintained as well as it should be, so the track routinely gets slow ordered and the rail service gets riddled with numerous disruptions of service for customers or no service at all for days.

The workforce is exhausted with workloads and responsibilities increasing daily while also having to deal with inflation and rising fuel prices. Many of the maintenance of way employees on the railroad are on system productions gangs and district productions gangs, which requires them to travel 6 to 14 hours to work one way and then 6 to 14 hours back home after the workweek. This is assuming they can even get home. The costs of their commute to work are extremely high and they are not even breaking even to drive to work after fuel and vehicle wear and tear (U.S. average of \$4.11 per gallon for fuel and the U.S. vehicle average of 24.9 MPG). Their commutes continue to get even longer and more expensive as the railroad continues to redistrict its territories, so that we must travel farther to even get to work.

We have not received a wage increase or an increase in our travel expenses in nearly three years. We have watched hundreds of our coworkers get furloughed, get fired, retire early or even quit. Just recently, 10% of the guys from my local lodge and that I worked with, all of whom had anywhere from twelve to nineteen years of service, quit the railroad to find employment elsewhere. Some of them went on to the construction trades, operating heavy machinery and equipment and they joined the Operating Engineers Union. Some of them also went into business for themselves. Regardless of where they went, they left the railroad after over a decade of service, which was unheard of when I first hired on.

The railroad has simply made it clear that we are supposed to be working more and paid the same, all the while the railroad brags of record profits and lower operating ratios. But they never mention how this has ruined the morale of its workforce and diminished their services to their customers or how it has contributed to the supply-chain disruptions. We do not anticipate that the railroad will change its business model anytime soon unless they are forced to do so. But there will likely continue to be more decreases in the experienced and skilled workforce because they will continue to voluntarily quit because they're tired of being overworked and this will only continue to lead to more service disruptions and supply-chain issues.

Respectfully Yours,

An Exhausted Norfolk Southern Maintenance of Way Employee

Surface Transportation Board
The Honorable Chairman Martin Oberman
395 E Street SW Washington, D.C. 20423

RE: Docket No. EP 770 (Urgent Issues in Freight Rail Service) Public Comments Submitted

Dear Chairman Oberman,

The members of this Local work and maintain the track, bridge and equipment infrastructure on strategic rail lines that service the greater Chicago, Illinois area. We would like to give an account of our experiences from workers directly on the ground as relates to the depleted rail service concerns raised by the railroad customers and the STB.

Staffing Issues- Over the past 10 years the railroads have dramatically furloughed, fired, ran off, or did not replace retiring workers. Their policy of “do more with less” has been detrimental in keeping the railroads maintained and unable to transport trains over the tracks in an efficient manner. With less workers on maintenance crews, it takes longer to perform maintenance work and many jobs have been rolled into one job creating an overload on the workers. Lower maintenance standards and repair times create lower train speeds and add into train traffic and congestion. The way the railroads react to winter storm cleanup has significantly changed in the last 5 years to where there are not enough workers to repair and maintain the infrastructure to allow trains to run during and after winter storms.

Inconsistent management practices- Over the past 10 years our members on the Chicago Rail lines have seen no less than 25 different supervisors assigned to our area. Each supervisor has brought different rules, regulations, and policy’s that directly conflicted with their predecessors’ rules regulations and policies. Imagine if you will, the stress this puts workers under that affects maintenance operations of having to change standard track repair operations and relearn every new unworkable idea these inexperienced supervisors come up with every 6 months. The majority of these 25 plus supervisors that have come through this area have little to no experience in the rail industry, and little to no experience in maintenance or construction operations. Cutting corners and trying to get by cheaply has negatively impacted maintenance operations and the ability to keep trains rolling.

Egregious Violations of Labor Contracts- The railroads have a standing policy of purposely violating labor contracts that they entered into with the workers. They then disregard any remedies to address or fix the violations they have committed. Many of these purposeful violations are to hire inexperienced contractors to do the work that rail workers specialize in. While this is a separate issue outside of this board many times our members will have to come back after the inexperienced contractors have left and fix or repair their poor workmanship. Not only does this lower worker morale it adds to the timeliness and performance of maintenance operations, this also affects the ability to keep the trains rolling. Our members are owed hundreds of thousands of dollars from the railroad’s violations of our contracts and they also refuse to remedy these situations.

Deficient Facilities- the railroads have many facilities which are falling apart and they refuse to fix. Some are to the point where they cannot be repaired and are dangerous to inhabit. Many facilities are rodent infested, have inoperable bathroom fixtures, contain mold and do not get cleaned on a regular basis. Again, trying to get by cheaply is the railroad’s standard and when done on every department of the railroad it affects the overall ability to make sure the trains run to their fullest potential.

Closing of facilities- The railroad has closed or sold hundreds of facilities like yards, sidings, maintenance shops, and employee reporting points. They then will reopen them often months or years later. This creates unstable operations by constantly making and restructuring the company and affects the traffic of trains, but also the ability of the workers to be able to focus and adapt to an unstable working environment.

In closing I hope these comments are considered and that they will help you to improve the rail industry and bring it back to its former glory that serves all Americans and not just a few Wall Street shareholders.

Respectfully,

Anonymous Maintenance of Way Worker

I was hired on 11/2006 with BNSF Railway. I have held positions of truck driver, grinder, welder, Group 3 and 4 machine operator, section foreman and Track inspector. I have held the position of track inspector for over 10 years. When I started as a track inspector in Newcastle we had 3 inspectors with 7 day a week coverage. You knew when your days off came they were going to happen because there was someone to cover your territory. When they eliminated the relief inspector that all went away. I worked over 40 days straight last summer due to heat runs. Plan a camping trip, nope have to run heat today because there isn't anyone else qualified to inspect your territory. The other inspector goes on vacation, now you have 100 miles to do for the week. When I was hired on there were 1,800 plus employees on the section man roster in my seniority district (400). That is the date everyone is hired on with in the MOW department. Today that number is closer to 800. BNSF has turned the Maintenance Of Way department into the repair of way department. We have completely eliminated any type of preventative maintenance to maintain the track structure. If it isn't broken, slow ordered or out of service it has become impossible to get the manpower and materials to maintain the track. Here are a couple examples.

Last summer we shared an off track under cutter among 3 roadmasters territories. In that time we had the machine a total of 3 weeks the entire season. When the FRA came through and reported fouled ballast condition due to drainage the answer was to crib the mud with a backhoe and fill it with rock and consider that repaired. Over the winter and this spring all of those locations came back. When I slow ordered it due to surface issues it was put on the list to get to this year. Meanwhile we surfaced with the surface correction gang and put more rock on top saying we will get to it.

As a track inspector on the ATI territory from the begin of the "pilot program" I have seen how the automation has become the end all be all. BNSF stance is if the car didn't find it then it isn't there. I have received push back on slow orders I have placed that the condition was within 1/4 of an inch from being a class drop. I was told the car just came through and didn't find it take the slow order off. We have become a company of reports and graphs and not relying on the people on the ground in the field inspecting the territory every day. I have seen the capital plans in my territory get smaller over time. There is one section that is 1.5 miles long tangent track that I have been asking for new rail for 4 years. We have several broken rails due to base break in there every winter. The MRP at the time and I counted the welds in just 4/10 of a mile section and there are over 40 thermite welds between both rails in that section. He had his boss come out and he got it approved to be relayed this season. This seasons plans come out and it isn't on the plan. I asked questions and was told oh that must have not been submitted on time. We will look at it for 2024!!!

I have given BNSF over 15 years of dedication. I loved my job and loved going to work, but it had become so stressful dealing with the kicking the can down the road mentality but reporting quarter after quarter of record profits that I had to do something else.

I resigned at the end of March 2022.

Dennis Stirmel

April 21st, 2022

To whom this may concern.

I was with BNSF for 15 years before I walked away from the railroad. I have held many positions in my career and for the majority of the time, I have held some sort of a leadership role. I have been exempt with the railroad and worked with the production gangs throughout the system as an exempt officer. I have also run many large production gangs as a scheduled employee. I really enjoyed the exempt position. My only exception was the lack of understanding from company leadership on how the work is performed, and not listening to experienced people, like me, on the ground. This is why I was hired as a roadmaster. I knew what I was doing. But, this is not the place to get into this discussion.

For the most part, from the day I was hired at BNSF, the company pushed and pushed to get new, young and motivated foreman and track inspectors in the field. For a lot of us, this was a way to keep from being furloughed during the winter months. But, as it turned out, it turned into a bigger commitment with all the additional training and requirements to get, and keep the foreman/track inspector certification. Once we started down this path, we all were committed to the position for a long time, but mostly for the rest of our career. Because of staffing, we couldn't really bid down to a lesser job with BNSF, or we would be force-assigned back to a foreman or track inspector position. This not only puts people at risk, but adds a tremendous amount of unwanted stress on that person.

Now for me, and others of course, we are always held to a higher standard. We are the leaders in the field. We have to have the answers to any problems, know how to make repairs and to communicate to our supervisors as needed. There was a time when we had great line supervisors in the field that knew what the heck was going on and actually knew how to do the job. Now, not so much. The company ran off most, if not all, the experienced supervisors from the craft. So, we, I, have to come up with the plans, find supplies, order if needed and make the repairs with little or no help. We have so many other responsibilities already. We don't have the time to do our line supervisor's job.

There used to be a time on this railroad when there was transparency. Not anymore. Everything is one big secret. We have absolutely no clue what's going on. What projects are coming up, do we have money and manpower to do the unknown work, do we have the equipment or vehicles to do the job, do we even have a work window in place? These are questions that need to be answered. And when we ask, we are told, "Sure! We are working on it." Or, "We don't have the money." And when the day comes for the project, nothing. No supplies, we lost the money, wrong part shipped, stuff like that. As a track inspector or foreman, this is extremely aggravating when planning out our days, weeks, and months. And when we ask about what's going on, and what happened, we are considered a non-team player. We are called argumentative and placed under investigation. That's really motivating don't you think?

So, we are looked down on. We are the ones that get audited the most because we ask questions. We push the issues. As a foreman/track inspector, this makes the job that much more difficult. We are on the front lines. We are the ones keeping the tracks together and safe. We are the ones asking for supplies to make repairs. We are the ones trying to make the plan work. We are the ones trying to fix track that is over a 100 years old and can't find parts to make repairs. And god forbid there is a derailment. The blame automatically falls on the shoulders of the track inspectors. Management doesn't care we couldn't get time to make repairs, or there are no parts to make repairs, or no money to pay the crews to make the repairs before the issue. We can almost every single time pick the next derailment location. But, when we make plans or suggest we work the location, nothing is done. So, we remove the track from service or slow order the location to keep from having a derailment. Oh do we hear about that.

Track inspectors are the most likely to be watched, audited and investigated. Now granted, when you make a mistake, you have to answer for it. I get that. But when the track inspectors are at the front lines working their butts off every single day, on-call every hour of the day and night, in every type of weather condition imaginable, understaffed, overworked, sleep deprived, you bet there are going to be times we push the limits of our abilities to keep this railroad on track, so to speak.

Not only is the pressure coming from our supervisors, it's coming from dispatch, DE's, GDLM's, and many others, when we have to pull the trigger and make a decision to slow traffic, remove from service, or force the situation to get time to run first before a train. The railroad says track inspecting has to be black and white, but I know, as well as every other track inspector, roadmaster, DE, or others that are FRA certified that rides track, sometimes uses their training and experience to make decisions out in the field. And when we have to push the limits of our work and abilities, we may make minor errors, and we get run through the coals. Instead of asking us questions, its, let's make an example out of him/her and drag them through a worthless investigation, while all along, wasting major company time and company money. I've seen this first hand.

This alone, is one of the reasons we can't keep people in the foreman/track inspector positions. Why would anyone want to have the added responsibilities, certifications, and "ass chewings" for a few extra pennies on the dollar. As a veteran foreman/track inspectors, we are always looking for new talent to wear the white hat to help us out. And when we finally find someone willing to take the plunge, the railroad beats them up everyday. I know on many occasions, I said "Shoot! I just want to be a laborer and work." "Why would anyone be crazy enough to wear a white hat out here?"

For years and years, the leaders in the field have told management over and over, we need help out here. Nothing is ever done about this, "More with Less." And on top of this, we keep getting told we make too much money. Huh, really? They complain about the overtime every single day. In fact, I was ridiculed for my overtime every single day as a track inspector in Denver. Not to mention I was covering 2 main line track inspector positions in Denver. My assigned job

took me at least eight hours a day to do. Where do I fit in the other territory? So, I worked dark to dark everyday just to keep the tracks in compliance. Noone else would or could do it. I was handed a disciplinary letter for working overtime. Even though they knew I was always having to work overtime. I sent in daily reports of my activities for the day to keep them up to date, but they never read them. I even added non coherent statements sometimes to see if they were actually reading them. Nope! And told management several times, if they keep giving me crap about my overtime, they can cover the other track inspection position themselves. Well, that wouldn't work and they begged me to keep doing it.

And don't get me started on the vehicle issues and conditions. Our vehicles are in shambles. The vendors we have working on our vehicles can't make them fast enough. I had one track inspector in Denver using 3 different trucks on almost a weekly basis. Can you imagine changing vehicles and tools 2 to 3 times a week for almost a full year? The overtime alone was crazy. You don't have time to do it during the regular 8 hour day. So, he had to do this before or after his duties were done. And, he was ridiculed everyday for that overtime. Could we get another vehicle for him that actually works and was safe? No! Even though I told management for years to start planning for it. Maybe it would save on overtime? No, they didn't care.

Track surface condition is another major issue that we constantly deal with. We can't get track time to surface the track conditions because we run a Geo car almost every week. Too much to catch up on each time. The mud hole issue is a major issue too. These creep up in the spring when the surface gangs are shut down, even though we tell management every single year to not shut the surface sets down, and we are always behind. These issues create slow orders all over the place each year. There is tremendous pressure to drop slow orders. We are constantly pressured to shorten or remove them. Sometimes they disappear without us knowing. And, when we add them again because of track notes, we are ridiculed for adding slow order minutes.

These are just a very few of the issues that plague the foreman and track inspectors each and every day. Foreman and track inspectors are a necessity out here. If we keep beating them up, we won't have anyone left to do the work. I know the company prefers this to happen so they can contract them out. But, what the company doesn't realize, contractors will still be held to the same standard by the FRA. Fines and penalties apply to BNSF employees and contractors.

Now for me, I made the decision to walk away from the railroad. The railroad has done what it need to do for me and my family, but the environment it changing for the worse. Not enough people to work, not to mention, we can't find hard working employees. The body is falling apart and I didn't want to get hurt out here due to the long hours anymore. The only thing I could really do is wait for my DOT to expire, and to become a laborer. But, would that really benefit me and my family. It was just time to move on and try something new.

Because I have limited time to type this, these were just the few things that came to mind today.
If further information is needed, please call me and I'll do what I can.

Eric Nelson
Former Main Line Track Inspector
Denver Colorado

