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# UTU News

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The Official Publication of the United Transportation Union

## An organization is born!

United Transportation Union members have ratified a merger with the Sheet Metal Workers International Association (SMWIA), establishing the 230,000-member International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation (SMART) Workers.

The merger, previously ratified by the SMWIA, becomes effective Jan. 1, creating the 21st largest (of 4,000) transportation political action committees (PACs), and the 7th largest PAC among labor unions, significantly increasing the effectiveness of UTU and SMWIA congressional and state-legislature lobbying.

The merger was almost three years in planning stage. It had strong support from the AFL-CIO.

The more than 71 percent of UTU-member ballots in favor of the merger reflected the agreement's overwhelming support among UTU International officers, UTU general chairpersons and UTU state legislative directors. The UTU Board of Directors called SMART "the right merger at the right time."

Other labor organizations have indicated an



### News and Notes

#### 3 UTU members killed

Three UTU members, **Christopher Blackburn**, **Daniel Riels** and **Gregory Bradley**, were killed in recent accidents.

Blackburn, 37, a BNSF conductor and member of Local 771 at Needles, Calif., was killed July 7 in an industrial-switching accident at Berry, Ariz., near Kingman.

Riels, 46, a member of Local 339 in Jackson, Tenn., was killed in an Illinois Central yard-switching accident in Fulton, Ky., July 27.

Bradley, 35, a bus driver for the LACMTA and member of Local 1564 in Los Angeles, was killed July 26 when a large SUV sped through a red light and crashed into his bus, ejecting him from the huge vehicle and pinning him beneath.

According to reports, Blackburn was riding the point of a string of covered hopper cars being pushed into a siding. Somehow he ended up beneath the wheels of the second car. He died in the helicopter enroute to the hospital.

Riels reportedly was run over and pinned beneath a rail car and suffered what were termed fatal crushing injuries. His brother was working nearby and was one of the first to respond to his call for assistance. It took emergency responders almost two hours to extract him from the rigging — while he remained conscious — but died enroute to the hospital.

#### Rail safety update

For the latest developments in rail-safety legislation pending before Congress, including the Federal Railroad Safety Improvement Act of 2007 (H.R. 2095), and to learn how you can assist in the passage of these important measures, log onto [www.utu.org](http://www.utu.org).

interest in joining SMART. They have asked not to be identified at this time.

UTU International President Paul Thompson said, "SMART will boost the UTU's strength at the bargaining table and bolster substantially the UTU's strength in fighting off attempts by other organizations and carriers to take our jobs."

SMWIA General President Mike Sullivan — who will become general president of SMART — said, "Whether we are sheet metal, production, air, bus operator, bus mechanic, freight railroad, Amtrak, transit, commuter or shipyard workers, we are now one."

Created within SMART will be a trans-

portation division, whose senior officers were those elected at the UTU quadrennial convention the week of Aug. 13. Those officers will have the same duties as they do under the UTU constitution.

The SMART transportation division will include the UTU's air, bus and rail members, but not existing rail and shipyard divisions of the SMWIA.

No UTU general committee of adjustment or UTU local or UTU state legislative board will be closed as a result of this merger, nor will any UTU general committee or UTU local lose its jurisdiction.

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### Thompson outlines 'state of the union' at Pittsburgh regional meeting

"The financial, organizational and productive strength of the United Transportation Union is excellent," reported UTU International President Paul Thompson in his state of the union talk at UTU regional meetings in Kansas City and Pittsburgh in June and July.



today, not tomorrow, not ever."

Thompson explained how belt tightening, productivity improvements and greater employee efficiency have brought the UTU back from financial chaos to financial stability. "Our merger creating SMART — a merger AFL-CIO Secretary/Treasurer Rich Trumka calls 'solidarity smart' — will provide the UTU

with considerable new bargaining, political and financial strength," Thompson said.

"The role of a union is to obtain for its members job security and better wages, benefits and working conditions. To do so successfully, a union must have resources. That is the core purpose of our merger creating SMART."

Thompson explained how the railroad's envisioned "perfect storm" — an anti-labor White House, anti-labor conservatives in control of Congress, and a rigged carrier-favorable presidential emergency board — would deliver to them all they sought in national handling. "But unlike the perfect storm BNSF's Matt Rose predicted, anti-labor conservatives no longer control Congress. You helped to change that last November at the ballot box.

"Labor's best friends now control Congress and key congressional committees," Thompson said. "Together, they have worked with us to write the toughest rail-safety bill in 30 years. But this does not mean we have a Cracker Jack box

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