



# Railroad Workers United

***Unity—Solidarity—Democracy: The Rank and File in Action!***

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## Press Release

**Subject:** Railroad Workers United urges 'NO' Vote on single person train crews

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### **RWU Urges a “NO” Vote on Tentative SMART001 Contract**

Railroad Workers United (RWU) is a caucus of rank-and-file railroaders in North America that has campaigned against the implementation of single-employee train crews since the organization was founded in 2008. The 24-hour, safety-sensitive nature of railroad operations makes single-employee train crews a potential danger to the environment, to railroad workers and the general public. The recently announced tentative agreement between BNSF Railway and the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Union (SMART) would implement engineer-only operation of mainline freight trains on portions of the BNSF railway system.

In the aftermath of recent rail disasters in North America, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has demanded wide-ranging changes in safety measures for trains carrying hazardous shipments. The FRA has also recommended that a minimum crew size of two persons is essential for safe operation of through freight trains. Following the announcement of the tentative agreement between SMART GO-001 and BNSF Railway, SMART-TD President John Previsich reiterated that it is the official position of the union's leadership that safe operation of trains requires a minimum of a two-person crew. RWU agrees with both of these recommendations and urges all BNSF employees who would be affected by this agreement to vote 'No'!

This tentative agreement would create a new position of “master conductor,” who would be notified when a train is stopped and requires assistance. In these cases the master conductor would drive to the train and perform the normal duties of a conductor on the ground. But unlike the current conductor, the master conductor would no longer be on board the train to oversee operation of the train along with the engineer from the cab of the locomotive when the train resumes its trip. Master conductors would no longer perform what is currently the primary responsibility of a conductor - supervising the safe operation and administration of the train. Without an on-board conductor, there is no one to assist the engineer to observe wayside signals and to watch other trains for defects, no one to remind him/her of impending speed restrictions or other hazards ahead, no one to keep him/her focused and alert. And the inability of a traveling “master conductor” to arrive on scene in a timely fashion in the case of an emergency presents a serious threat to the safety of the engineer, emergency response personnel, and the public in the event of a derailment, grade-crossing accident, or other emergency.

For years the railroad carriers have been trying to implement single-employee train crews to cut labor costs with total disregard for the safety of its employees and the communities that are affected by railroad operations. RWU strongly urges railroad workers to stand strong against BNSF Railway's efforts to undermine the safety of its operations in the interest of cutting costs at a time when the company -- under the ownership of Berkshire Hathaway -- is enjoying all-time record profits generated by the hard work and dedication of its workforce. This tentative agreement is an attack on the safety of our workplace and our communities -- RWU urges all effected BNSF employees to vote 'NO'!