

A Template for Future Conferences and Seminars

The outpouring of support for a labor-community alliance around rail safety at the March conferences has fueled demand for similar conferences to be conducted around North America. The diverse segments of labor and community which came together to create these first two conferences (see the complete listing below) have the potential to organize such conferences in key railroad communities all across the U.S. and Canada.

While RWU expects to spearhead the efforts to hold such conferences, we are ready, willing and able to work with any and all labor, community and environmental organizations who share our goals and objectives. RWU may have some tactical disagreements with any number of these groups, but the bottom line is this: we must agree that if it moves by rail, then it *must* be moved safely, by well-rested trainmen and engineers, together as a (minimum) two-person crew.

These first two conferences have allowed railroad workers to bring our issues to the community. We encourage all RWU members - and all railroad workers - to consider helping to organize a similar conference in your community. Here's the basic template:

1 — The Idea: A one-day conference that is designed to bring railroad workers and concerned citizens together to discuss railroad safety issues, community perspectives, and means by which we can work together to achieve our common goals.

2 — Garnering Support: Seek endorsements from local labor, community, and environmental organizations that might be interested in: A - supporting the event, B - sending representatives and/or C - encouraging their members to attend. See the listing below for an idea of the array of organizations that may wish to endorse and take part in the conference.

3—Logistics: Select a conference hall that is easily accessible to as many participants as possible, ideally one that is located close to a major rail terminal and residential community. Register people in advance to the extent possible through on-line and paper registration.

4 — Finances: Keep registration fees low to encourage participation from all sectors. Solicit funds on-line through crowd sourcing. Accept donations from endorsing organizations (but do *not* make this a prerequisite for endorsement). Pass the hat after lunch so participants can donate if they like what they are hearing. Raffling off railroad items of interest has proven to be a quick and easy funding source.

5 — Workshops: Focus on rail safety issues that are important to railroad workers and that resonate with the broader community as a whole. Encourage community groups to publicize their struggles for a safe and healthy sustainable environment. Build towards the conclusion that a labor-community alliance around rail safety is possible and highly desirable.

6 — Conclusion: Discussion of ways and means by which railroad workers and community activists can build upon this conference and support each others' efforts on the ground going forward.

If you are interested in hosting a conference in your community, RWU can help. We have funds, speakers, ideas, contacts and experience to get the job done. The American people are hungry for this stuff. They want to know our story and they want to help. It's up to each and every one of us rails to bring our issues out into the light of day, and to help to build this labor-community alliance. For more information, please contact RWU at info@railroadworkersunited.org or call 206-984-3051.