

## ***RWU builds Bridges with the Rail Advocacy Community***

Railroad workers have many potential allies in the greater society, as RWU has leaned over the course of the last few years. These allies include various sectors of the workforce (e.g. long-shoremen, truckers); trackside communities concerned about rail safety, environmental activists, shippers, and passengers. In 2017, in the face of threats to dismantle Amtrak, RWU sought to reach out to various passenger rail advocacy groups.

Historically, rail unions and passenger advocacy groups have had almost no contact with one another. This is unfortunate as it should be obvious to both that an alliance between them could be highly advantageous to both in achieving their respective goals. Passengers and their advocacy groups are concerned with expanded service, on-time performance, modernized equipment, and quality transportation. Likewise, rail workers and their unions share these concerns, as improved and expanded passenger service translates into expanded employment opportunities and an enhanced workplace experience.

After a few years of contact with the group Rail Users Network (RUN), RWU affiliated with this organization over the summer. A loose amalgamation of various state and local groups, RUN works to build passenger service mostly in the east. The organization has adopted a position against single employee operations of trains, and has published an article in their newsletter about RWU. In the fall, RWU joined the largest and oldest of the advocacy groups, the National Association of Railroad Pas-

sengers (NARP). As an affiliate member organization, each RWU member in good standing will receive email posts on a regular basis from NARP. And when RWU delegates attended the NARP 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in Chicago in November, we were invited to host a literature and merchandise table. We were able to disseminate RWU leaflets and flyers, put forward a railroad worker presence on the floor, and made valuable connections at this event.

In addition to our overture to RUN and NARP, we also have made connection with RailPAC of California and Nevada, a grassroots style advocacy group with a focus on passengers. Tentative plans are in the works for a series of conferences in Northern California in 2018 that will revolve around questions of rail safety and other issues of mutual concern to rail workers, advocates, communities and environmentalists.

All RWU members are encouraged to individually join one (or more) of these or other advocacy groups. The important thing is that railroad workers come out of the shadows and take our rightful place in these valuable organizations. We have a lot to add, a lot of valuable information to share, and can influence these organizations to become more aware of and sensitive to our interests. See the websites to learn more and/or join: [www.run.org](http://www.run.org); [www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org); [www.railpac.org](http://www.railpac.org).

RWU is hopeful that the rail unions will likewise seek out mutually beneficial relationships with these organizations.