Railroad Workers United

Solidarity ● Unity ● Democracy
The Rank & File in Action!

Railroadworkersunited.org ♦ info@railroadworkersunited.org

RWU Convention Resolution #4

RWU Resolution in Support of Electronically Controlled Pneumatic (ECP) Brakes

Whereas, traditional current air braking systems in most all freight and passenger trains in the U.S. and Canada suffer from many weaknesses, including:

— Delayed reaction time up to two minutes for a commanded brake application to reach the end of a long train
— Possible depletion of the air brake pipe and system, which can result in a runaway train
— Inability of the engineer to know the exact state of the train's braking potential at any given time during application and release of the brakes

Whereas, Electronically Controlled Pneumatic (ECP) Brakes provide many benefits over the traditional braking system, including:

— The brakes are applied uniformly and instantaneously on all cars in the train, providing improved train control, shortening the stopping distance and providing a lower risk of derailment, broken knuckles or drawbars.
— The brake pipe remains charged during operation, allowing continual recharging of each car in the train, preventing the operator from exhausting the air supply used for braking.
— The engineer can more easily monitor the state of the train and be more aware of the braking capabilities as any time.
— The brakes on the rearmost cars can be applied slightly before the brakes on the headend, reducing the run-in potential to practically none.
— The engineer can make a partial release of the brakes; and can then make another set as needed without first making a full release.
— Braking distances are greatly reduced, allowing for shorter stopping distances, immensely reducing the chances of an incident, but if still unavoidable, collisions, over speeds and derailments are less likely to be as catastrophic.
— Improved train handling reduces slack action, break-in-twos and derailments, resulting in a reduction in draft gear maintenance.
— Brake shoe and wheel wear are reduced; and

Whereas, as outlined above, ECP braking has the potential to make train operations infinitely safer and more reliable; and

Whereas numerous studies laud ECP brakes, including the 2006 FRA funded one which calls ECP brakes "a tested technology that offers major benefits in freight train handling, car maintenance, fuel savings, and network capacity" which "could significantly enhance rail safety and efficiency"; and

Whereas, on December 4th, 2017 the US Department of Transportation (DOT) announced its intention to rescind the mandate from the original regulation, promulgated by the DOT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration in mid-2015, requiring that oil trains have ECP braking systems by 2021; and

Whereas, the DOT's action will no doubt directly result in an increased loss of life of railroad workers, pedestrians, motorists and citizens living close to the tracks in the coming years that otherwise could have been prevented had the mandate been allowed to stand;

Therefore, Be it Resolved that Railroad Workers United lends its full support to the adoption of ECP braking by the Class One railroads in North America; and

Be it Further Resolved that RWU encourages community and environmental groups and all citizens who care about rail safety to demand the implementation of ECP brakes; and

Be it Finally Resolved that RWU calls on the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to do the right thing and reinstate the mandate as originally outlined by Congress in the FAST Act.

Adopted by the RWU 6th RWU Biennial Convention Assembled in Chicago, April 5 & 6, 2018