



DuPage Railroad Safety Council

The Complete Chronological History

1994 - 2002

DuPage Railroad Safety Council
A Chronological History
1994 -1996

April 30, 1994

- DuPage County Railroad Safety Conference is convened by County Board Chairman, Aldo E. Botti.

May 21, 1994

- DuPage County Railroad Crossing Safety Task Force meets for the first time. Dr. Lanny F. Wilson is appointed, Chairman.

June 18, 1994

- Senators Fawell and Dillard join the Task Force and discuss recommendations for legislative action. Dennis Mogan, Director of Safety and Rules Department, METRA, is selected Vice Chairman.

July 30, 1994

- Bernard Morris (ICC) discussed video cameras at crossings and other safety measures for consideration. Subcommittees were organized following the Operation Lifesaver 3 E's: Education (Chairman, Rose Humiston), Enforcement (Chairman, Paul Froehlich) and Engineering (Chairman, Ed Lysne).

August 27, 1994

- Videos from cable and network T.V. stations were reviewed featuring members of the Task Force speaking out for railroad safety.
- Police Chief George Graves (Downers Grove) provided the Task Force with suggestions about what law enforcement leaders can do to promote safety.
- John Small, Legislative Leader for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, joins the Task Force.
- Judge Donald J. Hennessy (18th Judicial Court) joins the Task Force.
- Members support the \$500 fine levied against trespassers on railroads.
- "Enthusiastic support" of photo enforcement systems is given after a thorough explanation by Paul Froehlich.

September 17, 1994

- Rose Humiston (Chair of the Education Subcommittee) takes Operation Lifesaver information to Regional Girl Scout and Boy Scout Troops, Regional offices of Education and pushes to include more rail safety information in Drivers Education and "Rules of the Road."

October 22, 1994

- Don Richardson (State Coordinator, Operation Lifesaver) made a presentation and indicated that Operation Lifesaver would like to work with the Task Force.
- Ken Lanman (Crossing and Trespasser Regional Manager, FRA) joins the Task Force.

November 19, 1994

- A Legislative subcommittee was formed to assist Senators Fawell and Dillard with recommendations for the 1995 legislative sessions. Bruce George, Chief of the Highway Rail Crossing and Trespasser Program of the FRA, gave a Washington D.C. update; elimination of crossings, a 1-800-number, whistle bans, and the Swift Rail Development Act of 1994.

December 17, 1994

- The Illinois Railroad Association relayed its support of the Task Force.
- Photo Enforcement was further discussed by Paul Froehlich.

January 21, 1995

- New DuPage County Board Chairman, Gayle Franzen, assured the Task Force of the County's continued support.
- Michael Stead (IDOT) presented the High Speed Rail Initiative in Illinois.

February 18, 1995

- Douglas Frost (Director of Marketing, U.S. Public Technologies) provided a thorough explanation of Photo Enforcement Systems used in California and throughout the world.
- Ed Lysne reported on an audit which he and other Task Force members performed on-site at the Downers Grove main crossing.

March 18, 1995

- Pat Schwarze left her position in the DuPage County Public Information Office.
- The Task Force felt that it should inform the DuPage County Mayors and Managers about the impending whistle blowing requirements and the 'quiet alternatives' that are available.

April 29, 1995

- Task Force members were encouraged to contact Legislators regarding the \$500 fine and Photo Enforcement Bills now being debated in Springfield.
- Chairman Wilson, and his son, Luke, prepared a railroad safety film produced and edited by Sandra Coyner (WCTV). George Swimmer contacted Illinois high school driver's education programs. Later, 700 films would be prepared and distributed.

May 20, 1995

- Steve Bernth (Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission) came to observe and share ideas since a Railroad Safety Task Force is being started in Indiana.
- SB 1078 (Dillard/Fawell), the Bill increasing the Railroad Trespassing penalty to \$500, was sent to the Governor's desk for signature.

June 17, 1995

- DuPage County removed Saturday secretarial support services and the Public Information Office would be available only upon request.
- The Task Force resolved to continue, but it would reassess its mission and choose a new name. Although founded in DuPage County, the group would seek ways to broaden its scope of influence throughout northern Illinois and seek national attention whenever possible.

July 15, 1995

- Doug Callahan, a Hinsdale Boy Scout, announced his plans for an Eagle Scout project to promote railroad safety. He asked for recommendations and support from our members.
- Although the Photo Enforcement "Cop-in-the-Box" legislation did not pass in 1994, Senator Fawell promised to resubmit the Bill in the 1995 Illinois legislative session.

August 19, 1995

- Officer Jim Kveton (Elmhurst Police Department) made a slide presentation on the Grade Crossing Safety Program he developed. Other departments have contacted Officer Kveton for information about his program.
- The whistle sounding requirement was explored. Further public discussion was recommended.

September 16, 1995

- The group elected to become a not-for-profit corporation. David Schmidt offered the assistance of his law firm (Lord, Bissell & Brook) to prepare the documents.
- Chairman Wilson asked the members to host a Railroad Safety Summit next April to celebrate their second anniversary.
- Ed Lysne shared information from the Internet and suggested that our organization establish a "home page."

October 21, 1995

- Printed material is beginning to give our organization some of the credit for a notable decrease in the number of railroad accidents in DuPage County.
- Chief George Graves (Downers Grove Police Department), Don Richardson (Operation Lifesaver) and Chairman Wilson cooperated to prepare a railroad safety presentation for the DuPage Chiefs of Police.

- Rose Humiston will contact the Illinois Railroad Museum to help them with railroad safety issues.
- A Chicago Sun Times article was quoted: "Carelessness Should Not Be A Death Sentence."

November 18, 1995

- Dale Bina (Delta Design & Development, Inc.) presented a new articulated gate which might serve as an economical alternative to four quadrant gates.
- Deep concern was expressed for the families in Fox River Grove where seven children were killed in a tragic bus/train accident. It was agreed that speculation about the incident was not appropriate.
- The Task Force developed a policy statement regarding whistle blowing authored by Paul Froehlich, essential elements included an urgent need for additional safety measures whether they be sounding whistles, installing barriers or other devices to deter accidents. The status quo is unacceptable. Those who oppose whistles have the obligation to support safety alternatives.

December 16, 1995

- JoEllen Courtney helped formulate our Mission Statement.
- L. Sokolski was present from the Mayor Daley group in Chicago, formed to promote grade crossing safety.
- Pat Schwarze and Rose Humiston presented details of the April Summit.

January 20, 1996

- The \$500 fine for railroad crossing violations began January 1st.
- Rose Humiston, George Swimmer, and Paul Froehlich testified January 3, 1996 at the Federal hearing on railroad safety with Transportation Secretary Federico Pena. FRA Administrator, Jolene Molitoris, publicly recognized and praised our Task Force. Suggestions about "Cop-In-The-Box" and one agency to coordinate safety matters won media attention.
- After considering various proposals, a new name was unanimously approved: DuPage Railroad Safety Council.

February 24, 1996

- SB 1154 (Fawell), the Bill allowing a video enforcement pilot program at three DuPage County grade crossings was sent to the Governor's desk for approval. Senator Fawell has another Bill ready in the Senate that would permit other counties to use photo enforcement. George Swimmer promoted oscillating and/or ditch lights for all METRA trains and freight trains. He is receiving Federal and Local approval of his observations and recommendations.
- Paul Froehlich visited courtrooms to gather court dispositions on the new enhanced penalties (mandatory \$500 or 50 hours).
- Lourdes Beard became the first Treasurer and Leo Ditewig accepted the nomination as the first Secretary of the DuPage Railroad Safety Council.

- George Swimmer volunteered to take over the job of media announcements of council meetings.

March 16, 1996

- George Swimmer, Rose Humiston, Senator Fawell, Senator Dillard and Chairman Wilson make presentation before Jolene Molitoris and U.S. Congressmen from northern Illinois at a Swift Rail Act Hearing.

April 27, 1996

- "Prevent Tragedy On The Tracks," the Railroad Crossing Safety Summit is convened by the DuPage Railroad Safety Council.

DuPage Railroad Safety Council
A Chronological History
1996 - 1998

April 27, 1996

- “*Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks*”, the Railroad Crossing Safety Summit was convened by the DuPage Railroad Safety Council.
- Officer Jim Kveton was presented with the Public Sector Champion Award and George Swimmer received the Champion Award for his private citizen involvement.
- Patti Smith gave an insightful presentation from the engineer’s perspective. Donald M. Itzkoff, Deputy Administrator of the FRA, enlightened the gathering with his national perspective; and Aaron J. Gellman, Ph.D., Director of the Transportation Center at Northwestern University, provided a scholarly overview of transportation safety.

May 18, 1996

- JFK Health World hosted this meeting. Dennis Mogan described the safety program METRA had designed to educate the thousands of children who would visit the Health and Education Center each year.
- The FRA recently held a six-state conference in Chicago. The DRSC Summit was praised at the conference and leaders emphasized their commitment to close crossings.

June 15, 1996

- “Cop-in-the-Box” legislation (SB 1154, Fawell) was signed into law. The Illinois Commerce Commission has the task of identifying the three highest accident crossings in DuPage County for placement of the video cameras.

July 13, 1996

- The DRSC recommitted its energies to the three E’s of Operation Lifesaver. Enforcement of existing laws would be encouraged by recognizing top police departments. Engineering efforts would continue to focus on safer crossings, closure of crossings, and second train warning.
- Lifesaver presentations make use of the Internet, encourage video presentations, and look to improve written materials such as driver’s education “Rules of the Road”. JFK Health World provides a model for large-scale children’s education.

August 17, 1996

- Legislation introduced by Senator Carol Moseley-Brown delayed implementation of the Swift Rail Act’s whistle-sounding requirements. This would give states more time to look at quiet alternatives.
- George Swimmer asked for public opinion about overpasses and underpasses in a newspaper article. The council would research this issue in DuPage County.
- The Council agreed to set the third Saturday of the month as the regular meeting date so members can better plan their schedules

September 21, 1996

- Hinsdale's Police Department began a 'positive reinforcement' campaign similar to Elmhurst's initiative. Prior to issuing legitimate tickets for railway violations, they would handout 'reward' tickets redeemable for free coffee and ice cream cones when people obeyed the law at crossings. Simultaneously, they distributed educational literature about existing railway safety laws.
- Members of the enforcement subcommittee met with Burlington Northern/Santa Fe police to explore opportunities to enhance safety along the BNSF corridor between Chicago and Aurora.

October 19, 1996

- Joseph J. Gorski, Jr., Safety Officer for the Veterans of Foreign War Memorial Post, 10778, presented Chairman Wilson with their annual safety award. He accepted the Award on behalf of the entire membership of the DRSC.
- Senator Beverly Fawell introduced a stepped approach to Drivers Licensing in Illinois which Secretary of State, George Ryan, is proposing to the legislators.
- Dennis Mogan (METRA) and Debbie Hare (Amtrak) discussed high-speed rail initiatives. Safety is intrinsic to those plans along with satellite signaling, crossing closure and improved signaling at crossings.

November 16, 1996

- Ken Lanman (FRA) reported that a new Federal Transportation Act provides incentives to municipalities who close a grade crossing? "Highways or Dieways" is a comprehensive public relations educational campaign about grade crossing safety which includes award winning public service announcements. Operation Lifesaver and the A.A.R. are making plans to bring this campaign to Illinois.
- A Wood Dale crossing has been selected as the most dangerous crossing in Illinois. The first video safety camera will be placed at that crossing.

December 21, 1996

- The METRA sponsored 'Santa Trains' were a tremendous success, bringing the safety education message to hundreds of Chicago-area children and their guardians.
- Despite increased railway usage, there are 8.3% fewer crossings nationally in 1996 than in 1991. An FRA goal, set in 1991, was to close 25% of the nation's crossings by 2001.
- Commander Richard Jacobsen (METRA, Director of Public Safety) reported that METRA police had issued 306 tickets for violating signals since the beginning of the year; 28 of these were issued to school bus drivers.

January 18, 1997

- Ed Lysne brought the DuPage Railroad Safety Council onto the worldwide web at www.drsc.com. 1996 statistics showed fewer railroad crossing deaths than in any other year in Illinois history. Commander Jacobsen (METRA) reported 562 broken gates last year caused by hit-and-run drivers along the METRA line.

February 15, 1997

- Rodney Slater is the Secretary of Transportation. Jolene Molitoris continues as top administrator of the FRA. All DuPage County firemen and policemen have been invited to learn about emergency train evacuation procedures in the "Train the Trainer" program organized by the METRA Police Department.

March 15, 1997

- Bernie Morris, Administrator of the Illinois Commerce Commission, was an invited guest. Many have claimed that he is the most knowledgeable person in Illinois regarding railroad crossing engineering; 1997 will be his last year with the IC.C. His presentation and insights were invaluable. In 1996, Illinois remained second in crash and death statistics at nationwide crossings. In crashes, Texas had 428, Illinois had 230, and Louisiana had 228. In deaths, Texas had 60, Illinois had 37, and Louisiana had 31.

April 19, 1997

- Chairman Wilson took the DRSC message to Texas. His presentation, "Railroad Safety, Mission Possible", was presented at the annual meeting of the Texas Safety Association, affording another opportunity for nationwide networking. The audience was impressed and appreciative.
- Ed Lysne videotaped the Downers Grove Main Street crossing two years after his original videotaping. He demonstrated some behavior modifications because of the \$500.00 fine and enforcement of the new law, but not so much as would have been expected.

May 17, 1997

- The 1998 Railroad Safety Conference is being organized. Lourdes Beard generously agreed to take charge of public relations and advertising. The DRSC Board would round out the rest of the planning committee.
- National Operation Lifesaver day was celebrated on May 14. The day commemorated their 25th year of existence. An awards ceremony and press conference at Union Station in Chicago preceded an Operation Lifesaver train ride for the Illinois organization. Similar events were held nationwide.

June 21, 1997

- "An Engineer's Story" was reviewed. It is an Amtrak training and information video used to make truck drivers aware of the dangers they may cause by violating railroad crossing laws. The heroic engineer, Billy Parker, was introduced to the DRSC in the video. He now delivers inspirational safety messages around the country.
- NBC Dateline completed filming and editing of their railroad safety story. Part of the television footage was filmed at a DRSC meeting and members contributed helpful information during its production.

July 19, 1997

- Patti Smith accepted the position vacated by Ken Lanman. She will become the Midwest regional Manager for the FRA. Her profession as a railroad engineer and her active leadership in Operation Lifesaver make her a natural for the job. She will have the opportunity to stimulate railroad safety progress on a larger scale, and the DRSC highly endorses her appointment.
- Because of the Internet, APART (Active People Against Railroad Tragedies) from Lansdowne, PA began networking with the DRSC.

August 16, 1997

- McDonald's Corporate campus has been selected for the 1998 Safety conference. It will be held on Friday, April 17, 1998.
- Proposals for alternatives to the whistle ban legislation are being considered. Grady Cothen is the lead person to develop the notice of proposed rule making for the FRA.

September 20, 1997

- The ICC was allocated \$1.4 million by IDOT for grade crossing safety. Contracts are being negotiated with METRA, JFK Health World and the State Board of Education.
- Fox TV released a 15-minute video called "Look, Listen and Live". It was reviewed and recommended by the DRSC.

October 18, 1997

- Dave Visney, (FRA, Texas) was in attendance at the monthly DRSC meeting. His message, that "the safest crossing is a closed crossing" was much appreciated. Later, he wrote "The success of your council is extraordinary; now we need to learn how to 'franchise' this type of activity throughout the United States.
- Patti Smith and Chairman Wilson will speak at the National Safety Council Conference in Chicago later this month. METRA has put a locomotive into JFK Health World as a visual educational tool to enhance their safety message.

November 15, 1997

- Dateline NBC gave the railroad safety message a national audience on 10/31/97, with its program "Blood on the Tracks". Interviews with Billy Parker (Amtrak Engineer),
- Donald Itzkoff (Deputy Administrator, FRA), Chairman Wilson and his son, Luke, were featured along with many other informative individuals.
- The Norfolk Southern/North Carolina Sealed Corridor Project received very favorable attention. Cable channels have replayed the program on several occasions. Although somewhat controversial, the presentation seemed balanced and informative. It should help further the networking activities of DRSC, along with their safety message.
- The 1998 Conference title was chosen: "*Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks, Today's Successes, Tomorrow's Challenges*".

December 20, 1997

- Amanda Joyce and Analee Voss are Hinsdale High School students introduced by Lourdes Beard. They will attend DRSC meetings, write press releases and help provide publicity for the April Conference. In turn, scholarship assistance will be offered to each of them.
- An act of Congress was passed preserving America's National Passenger Railroad System (Amtrak) through the year 2002.
- Qwick Kurb, Inc., is a company, which provides a system of centerline curb and delineators. These were featured on the cover of the August issue of "Railway Age" and their use was demonstrated on the NBC Dateline show (refer to the 11/15/97) entry above). Mr. Robert J. Schindler (President) noted the DRSC website on the Internet, and began correspondence. METRA has agreed to seek one or more crossings suitable for the system to be installed. Qwick Kurb will be invited to attend the April Summit.

January 17, 1998

- 1997 Statistics showed fewer railroad crossing deaths than in any other year in Illinois history, breaking the 1996 record. While crossing deaths are declining, trespasser deaths are increasing. This disturbing trend must be addressed.
- Bernie Morris retired from the ICC and Dan Drewes took his place. The three sites for 'Cop-in-a-Box' have been selected by the ICC: Wood Dale, Winfield and Naperville.
- A Qwick Kurb median will be installed at the Fairview Avenue crossing in Downers Grove.

February 21, 1998

- Debbie Hare (Amtrak) discussed the concept of advertorials.
- ISTEA (the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act), enacted in 1991, was discussed in light of new, proposed legislation.
- Global Positioning Satellites were discussed along with their relevancy to present and future train movements.

March 21, 1998

- Money is being made available to provide Qwick Kurb technology to municipalities in the Chicagoland area. These prefabricated median safety barriers are planned for five Downers Grove crossings.
- The following quotes seem especially appropriate during elections:
 - "You may be disappointed if you fail, but you are doomed if you don't try."
Beverly Sills
 - "But the bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what lies ahead, glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding, go out to meet it".
Thucydides
- Members, Bev Fawell and Kirk Dillard are both State Senators. Their brave dedication to public service has been immeasurably helpful to the DRSC.

- George Swimmer heroically attempted to win a seat in the Illinois House of Representatives, without success. Paul Froehlich ran a successful campaign against a longtime incumbent for Republican Committeeman from Schaumburg Township. Congratulations to all who ran.
- An enthusiastic pre-conference meeting was held. Rose Humiston will organize the picture on the front page of the April 1st Doings Newspaper to celebrate and advertise the April Conference.

April 17, 1998

- “*Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks, Today’s Successes, Tomorrow’s Challenges*”, the third Railroad Crossing Safety Summit is convened by the DuPage Railroad Safety Council at McDonald’s Oak Brook Campus in Oak Brook.

DuPage Railroad Safety Council
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1998 – 2000

April 17, 1998

- “Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks; Today’s Successes, Tomorrow’s Challenge”, the third Railroad Crossing Safety Summit is convened by the DuPage Railroad Safety Council. Paul Froehlich (Illinois Secretary of State’s office) and Debbie Hare (Amtrak) were presented with the ‘Public Sector Champion’ Awards. Lourdes Beard (Treasurer, Board Member, Graphic Artist) and Rose Humiston (Education Chair, Board Member, Professional in the Telephone and Wireless Communication Industry) received the ‘Private Sector Champion’ Awards.
- Billy Parker (Amtrak) gave a courageous talk from the Engineer’s Perspective. Donald Itzkoff, Deputy Administrator of the FRA, returned to his second conference, by popular demand, to discuss railroad-crossing safety nationwide. George Camille (Norfolk Southern) reviewed North Carolina’s ‘Sealed Corridor’ project. Professor Fred Coleman (University of Illinois) talked about ongoing research projects and future challenges.
- The Summit was concluded as State Senator Kirk Dillard monitored a forum where Secretary of State Candidates, Al Salvi and Jesse White, discussed and debated their plans for managing the office of Illinois’ Secretary of State.

May 16, 1998

- Council Members began making plans for the Y2K Conference while debriefing about Summit 1998. Outstanding speakers and influential leaders had been present.
- Improved attendance would be sought by changing the invitations and developing a significant mailing list.
- For time-sensitive issues, the council would try to develop other means of communicating our concerns, including fax communications, a newsletter, electronic information on our web site, media contacts and personal appearances.

June 20, 1998

- Periodically, student interns might be sought, and if approved, a \$500 scholarship will be awarded. Amanda Joyce and Anna Lee Voss became the first recipients.
- Officer Talerico is seeking a law enforcement task force consisting of policeman from any communities and police agencies who would move from town to town in enforcement blitzes. The problem identified for this task force occurs when large numbers of pedestrians cross tracks illegally at commuter stations and one or two officers are incapable of ticketing such throngs.
- Since the beginning of 1998, Metra Police has written 135 tickets for gate violations. Nineteen bus drivers have been ticketed.

July 18, 1998

- Truck-train crashes are a major problem nationwide. This problem was evaluated and recommendations made.
- Union Pacific police are now sworn officers able to issue tickets at grade crossings in the same way that Metra Police have functioned. This has the potential of significantly improving railway safety.

- Paul Froehlich reported that the video enforcement pilot program, scheduled to begin January 1, 1996, is finally making significant progress toward completion.

August 15, 1998

- Officer Talerico reviewed the Illinois Vehicle codes with reference to stopping, standing or parking on railroad grade crossings. Two contradictory traffic laws were found which pertain to railroad grade crossings. Conflicting fine structures create a loophole for violators to slip through. This will be addressed by DRSC championed by Officer Talerico.
- A proposal was brought before the Council to assist in funding a model train, which Officer Talerico will use in Operation LifeSaver presentations. Members enthusiastically supported the project.

September 19, 1998

- The DRSC sent a letter to the U.S. Congress regarding recommendations as new regulations are planned to replace the 1994 Swift Rail Development Act.
- Ed Lysne created the original DRSC web page, and stated that one can not simply be “a fair-weather” Web Master. The Internet information was soon to become dormant for a while since Ed announced that he was taking a new job with his company and moving his family to Ohio. We were about to lose our “all weather” Web Master.
- Debbie Hare (Amtrak) discussed some of the national issues effecting railroad safety. She also offered to provide a “communications plan” which would organize and facilitate the work of the Council.

October 17, 1998

- Rick Talerico is putting together a subcommittee to write a proposal on how the Illinois vehicle code can be changed to improve railroad safety.
- Brian Sweeney, member from the Burlington Northern, will be relocating to Minnesota. A new BN/SF representative will be sought.
- Debbie Hare developed a draft ‘communications plan’. This was presented and discussed.
- Brooke Geiger, high school student from Benet Academy, joined and offered to help with the Internet communications.

November 21, 1998

- Several towns in DuPage County are considering proposals to locate parks alongside railroad tracks. Members will be expressing their concerns to communities about children playing along tracks.
- E-mail addresses were exchanged.

December 19, 1998

- In an effort to expedite cop-in-a-box, Paul Froehlich held a meeting to which he invited representatives from the three sites (Wood Dale, Naperville and Winfield). Current technologies were discussed. Paul predicts that one site will finally be operational before the end of 1999.
- Operation Lifesaver statistics suggest that 1998 will not continue the downward trend in deaths and injuries we had seen in prior years.

January 16, 1999

- County Board Chairman, Bob Schillerstrom, stopped in to introduce himself and offer his support. Transportation is a top priority for him and grade crossing safety is part of that agenda.
- Ed Lysne, Web Master and engineering chair tendered his resignation with regrets. He is moving his family to Ohio due to a job transfer.
- On 'Black Monday' (January 4) three people (two motorists and one pedestrian) lost their lives in separate incidents at grade crossings around DuPage County. Chaos caused by extreme weather conditions was a major contributing factor.

February 20, 1999

- The first issue of the DRSC Newsletter was mailed.
- DRSC has been working vigorously to prevent the construction of a grade-level crossing proposed for Bloomingdale.
- Downers Grove removed their Quick Curb safety barriers despite DRSC concern.
- Leo Ditewig has consented to be the Engineering 'Point-Person'. Rose Humiston will continue with Education and Paul Froehlich with Enforcement.
- Denny Mogan (Metra) shared an important statistic. Metra has 565 crossings at grade on railways.
- Tom Zapler reported that the Union Pacific has 52,498 crossings (31,000 of these are public crossings). They were able to close 143 crossings in 1997 and they closed 397 in 1998.

March 20, 1999

- Dan Wagner, representing County Board Chairman Bob Schillerstrom, presented a proposal for grade separation at three crossings in the county (County Farm Road in Wheaton, Belmont Road in Downers Grove and Wood Dale and Irving Park Road Intersection in Wood Dale).
- The Bourbonnais tragedy (March 15, 1999) was evaluated. As with Fox River Grove, these large events spotlight the value of our work. Statistics from 1996 and 1997 suggest that four out of ten collisions at grade crossings involve trucks.
- The DRSC will work toward a moratorium on new crossings at grade on railways. Whistle-at-a-crossing technology (as opposed to train whistles) was discussed and evaluated.

April 17, 1999

- DRSC has been communicating with national leaders regarding the need for a moratorium on any new crossings at grade on railways.
- The three legislative proposals written by Rick Talerico, with the assistance of Paul Froehlich, the Union Pacific Railroad and the FRA are embodied in Senate Bill 741 which unanimously passed in the Illinois Senate last week. In Paul Froehlich's words: "Looks like the DRSC will have another legislative accomplishment under its belt."
- The Aurora train car crash (4-11-99) was discussed in light of the rapid urban development which is occurring along railways in suburban Chicago. Preventable grade crossing improvements are being recommended.
- The year 2000 Conference is being planned.

May 22, 1999

- SB 741 unanimously passed through both Illinois Houses.
- Elmhurst is targeting high school students who walk across and along tracks to and from school. New signs are going up.
- Randy Pros of Proscan, a Glen Ellyn company, educated DRSC regarding new video technologies.
- Leo Ditewig reported on his investigation of other innovative technologies.

June 19, 1999

- The title "Preventing Tragedy on the Tracks in the New Millennium" was selected for the biennial conference. Topics and speakers were discussed.
- Jim Bedell reported that Naperville had signed a contract for their video enforcement system. He also announced that Naperville would be holding a mock rail crash on September 26 as training for police and emergency personnel. Participating agencies include Metra and BN/SF.

July 17, 1999

- The second issue of the DRSC Newsletter was mailed.
- Bob Meyer, FRA Railroad Safety Inspector who works with Patti Smith out of the Chicago office, became the council's newest member.
- Leo Ditewig reported on the upcoming 'Intelligent Transportation System' Conference.
- Randy Pros and Steven Northrup presented information about new technologies which may set safety standards. Video enforcement, early warning devices, and grade crossing separation were highlighted.
- Rose Humiston is working with Rick Kelly, of Indigo Productions, to establish a new web page.

August 21, 1999

- S.B. 741, our newest legislative effort, championed by Officer Rick Talerico from Clarendon Hills, became a new law on August 15, 1999.
- Illinois is hosting the Operation Lifesaver Region 4 Workshop at JFK Health World in Barrington on August 24th and 25th. Several member participants will represent the DRSC.
- George Swimmer was congratulated for receiving the *Citizen Initiative Award* sponsored by the Citizen Advocacy Center. His work as a railroad safety advocate was recognized.

September 18, 1999

- During his talk at the Operation Lifesaver Regional Workshop, Chairman Wilson quoted Operation Lifesaver's National President, Gerri Hall: "our work will not be complete until the number of collisions, deaths, and injuries at highway-rail grade crossings and along railroad rights-of-way is zero."
- NTSB hearings on Bourbonnais were held. Debbie Hare attended all three days. The topic of four-quad gates emerged several times.
- On September 26th, Naperville will host a disaster drill. Three hundred people will participate in responding to a simulated collision involving Metra and the BN/SF.

October 16, 1999

- Secretary of Transportation, Slater, contacted the nation's governors urging them to consider photo enforcement at grade crossings and red light intersections.
- It was agreed to set up a subcommittee to draft a bill which would achieve a moratorium on construction of new crossings at grade on railways.
- Downers Grove plans to build an underpass at the Belmont Avenue Crossing. George Swimmer and Representative Patti Bellock are members of a steering committee to address this task.
- Our web address has made a simple change to www.drsc.org (formerly, www.drsc.com). Rose Humiston has become the new Webmaster, and is working to make it user-friendly and effective thanks to the help of Rick Kelly of Indigo Productions.
- Wood Dale installed their video enforcement camera system. Paul Froehlich will organize a press conference.

November 20, 1999

- Randy Pros is presenting new microwave transmitter technology to the Village of Wheaton. It is applicable to modern rail safety devices.
- Amtrak is making progress in developing high-speed rail corridors. Our safety initiatives are enhanced along these corridors.
- There were 293,000 crossings-at-grade-on-railways in 1992. This number has decreased to 259,240 this year in the USA (158,590 public and 100,650 private).

December 18, 1999

- DRSC held a subcommittee meeting on our new legislative initiative... no new grade-level crossings. As expected, we had support from the railroad industry and FRA. The ICC has a mandate to promote economic progress, and a moratorium might be misconstrued as a hindrance to progress. Therefore, the ICC Representative, Tom Meyer, expressed his concerns.
- Crossing closure has been steadily occurring in Illinois, from 15,000 crossings in 1978 to 9,400 today. Many of these crossings were eliminated when the railroads abandoned unprofitable branch lines.
- Wood Dale's 'cop-in-a-box' photographed 50 drivers going under or around crossing gates in the first 2.5 days of operation. Tickets are being mailed to violators.

January 15, 2000

- Illinois had 51 deaths at highway-rail grade crossings in 1999. Even without the Bourbonnais tragedy, Illinois was number one in fatalities nationwide. Illinois fatalities increased by more than 15 percent in 1998 and by 70 percent in 1999.
- There was discussion about the new rules on the use of horns at grade crossings and about the reaction of suburban public officials to those rules.
- Mike Conoscenti of 'safe-hit', whose office is in Glen Ellyn, gave a presentation about their retractable automatic lane delineator. Installed in the middle of a street just before railroad tracks, plastic posts are raised when gates are activated. The posts deter motorists from swinging into the other lane to drive around gates. The retractable posts are an alternative to the prefabricated median Qwik Kurb with plastic posts that Downers Grove found aesthetically unappealing.

February 19, 2000

- Patti Smith (FRA) has been communicating throughout her multi-state region regarding whistle blowing. The notice of proposed rule making and draft environmental impact studies have been available and are generating the expected debate between train whistle proponents and whistle ban proponents.
- As always, the DRSC reaffirmed their five-year stance... in favor of quiet alternatives. The status quo is unacceptable. It is necessary that action be taken to enhance safety from among a range of safety measures. Given Illinois' worst-in-the-nation fatality record in 1999, it is not acceptable to say no to horns and refuse to do anything else to save lives. The solution is to protect communities from noise and make crossings safer.
- Debbie Hare (Amtrak) discussed the progress being made toward a Midwest Regional Rail system. When a high-speed rail network is developed, many crossings at grade on railways will be eliminated and safety measures will be enhanced.

March 18, 2000

- Dennis Mogan (Metra) reported that whistle blowing at crossings versus whistle blowing from trains will be studied in Mundelein, IL.
- Randy Pros relayed his communication with Chief Williams of the Wood Dale police. The photo enforcement system has detected more than 200 motorist violations, since it was placed approximately three months ago.
- DRSC members will have a second chance to oppose the opening of a crossing-at-grade on a railway in Bloomingdale. Local citizens are concerned about safety issues and endangerment of wetlands. DRSC members will join the local citizens in their mutual cause.
- George Swimmer discussed his idea of a Grade Separation Trust Fund which would support the closure and/or grade separation of existing grade level crossings. He suggested that this could be discussed at the upcoming conference during the Transportation Safety Forum.
- Growing Memories, a memorial tree-planting service that has beautiful motives and inspired philosophies, has offered to contribute a portion of their sales to DRSC.

April 15, 2000

- Public hearings on the Notice of Proposed Rule Making and on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the use of Locomotive Horns will be held April 25, 26, 27 in the Chicago area. Paul Froehlich, Ed Sirovy and Lanny Wilson will each present at one of the locations to represent views of DRSC.
- The 2000 DuPage Railroad Safety Conference was discussed in detail. Assignments were matched with volunteers. Excitement and emotion were at an all time high.
- The 2000 DRSC Champions, Leo Ditewig and Rick Talerico were featured on the front page of the April 13th Doings Newspaper in Hinsdale.
- Wearing his hat as President of the DuPage County Medical Society, Dr. Lanny Wilson persuaded the delegates at the annual meeting of the Illinois State Medical Society to pass a resolution calling for No New Grade-Level Railroad Crossings. The resolution reads as follows:

"Be it resolved, that the Illinois State Medical Society prepare and cause to be introduced state legislation that would prohibit the creation of any new grade-level railroad crossings, requiring instead, overpass or underpass construction for all new crossings."

April 28, 2000

- “*Prevent Tragedy On The Tracks, Countdown to Zero in the New Millennium*”, the fourth Railroad Crossing Safety Summit is convened by the DuPage Railroad Safety Council at McDonald’s Oak Brook Campus.

DuPage Railroad Safety Council
A Chronological History
2000 - 2002

April 28, 2000

"Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks, Countdown to Zero in the New Millennium", the fourth Railroad Crossing Safety Summit is convened by the DuPage Railroad Safety Council at McDonald's Oak Brook Campus.

- Officer Rick Talerico (Clarendon Hills Police Department) was presented with the 'Public Sector Champion' Award.
- Leo Ditewig (Engineering Chair, Board Member) was presented with the 'Private Sector Champion' Award.
- Senator Beverly Fawell was given a 'Lifetime Achievement Award' because of her successes while chairing the Illinois State Senate Transportation Committee.
- DuPage County Board Chairman, Bob Schillerstrom, received a 'Future Generations Award' because of his efforts toward solving future problems in DuPage County especially with regard to transportation and the environment, while attending to present and ongoing governmental issues.
- Other awards were given, but one of the most notable was to Gordon Bowe, the 'Educator of the Year', (Union Pacific employee and Operation Lifesaver presenter), for his unselfish, energetic and numerous Operation Lifesaver presentations.
- Gerri Hall (President, Operation Lifesaver – National) gave one of the most enlightening and memorable talks of the day.
- The law enforcement panel, moderated by Officer Rick Talerico, was a predictable highlight.
- Professor Joseph Schwieterman (DePaul University) discussed railroad transportation issues during a fascinating slide presentation focused on the history of railroad development.
- Patti Smith (FRA) updated everyone on the 'Whistle Blowing Debate'.
- Mike Stead (ICC) discussed highway-rail grade crossings in Illinois from the perspective of the rail safety program administrator.
- An emotional conclusion to the day was provided by Mayor Grover Brooks (Bourbonnais, IL). He shared with the audience the courage and spirit of goodwill demonstrated by his community's response to the March 15, 1999 Amtrak crash there.

May 20, 2000

- This was primarily a debriefing session for the Y2K Conference. Gerri Hall received multiple compliments. The luncheon food, environment and speaker were all great. Attendance was good...but as always, could have been better. More work would be needed on our mailing list and the date would be changed from Friday to Wednesday. The 2002 summit would be an agenda item for future meetings, and the April, 2002 Summit would be the best ever!

June 24, 2000

- Closing railroad crossings supports the mission of DRSC. What a tribute it would be to those who lost their lives in the Bourbonnais crash if that crossing could be closed. The Amtrak representative in attendance, Nancy Calvert, would report back to us with a status report about engineering changes at the crossing. A suggested goal, for the DRSC, was to assist in closing one crossing per year in DuPage County. We are energized to push beyond the status quo in improving safety. Partnering with railroads, operation lifesaver, ICC and the law enforcement community continues to be our focus.
- The North Carolina 'sealed corridor' project is one of the best American models for railroad safety improvements. What would it take to implement a sealed corridor throughout out the Chicago Metropolitan area?

July 15, 2000

- Senator Durbin convened a task force on railroad safety issues. Increased enforcement was one of the recommendations.
- Cortland, IL has been designated an official "quiet zone" since median barriers were installed at the town's three crossings. Cortland is located in DeKalb County.
- Progress is being made toward funding an underpass at the Belmont Avenue crossing in Downers Grove.
- Plans for high-speed rail are proceeding. IDOT proposed closing 90 crossings along the route between Chicago and St. Louis.
- A recent motor vehicle death at the Mount Prospect crossing on Route 83 focused attention on that intersection. In the last two years, there have been two fatalities, one serious injury and several near collisions there. Left hand turns across the tracks will be prohibited and other engineering changes will be explored.

August 19, 2000

- Sergeant Jim Bedell and the Naperville Police Department hosted the DRSC to demonstrate the Video Enforcement System implemented there. The "Automated Crossing Enforcement System" (ACRES) utilizes a computerized multiple digital video camera system that records images of drivers and vehicles who disregard the railway crossing warning lights and gates. If convicted, the registered owner of the vehicle is responsible for a \$500 fine or 50 hours of community service.
- Metra recently produced a new video: "Die Hard If You Are Dumb".
- Congressional hearings continue regarding the whistle blowing controversies.
- John Simpson, Manager of Public Safety for the Union Pacific Railroad, attended the DRSC meeting. He offered their continued support.
- As Illinois proceeds with high-speed rail service between Chicago and St. Louis, one of the most important decisions remaining is whether trains will be routed through Kankakee or Joliet.

September 9, 2000

- The FRA will designate new high-speed rail routes around the country. Both political parties mention high-speed rail in their presidential political platforms. By necessity, high-speed rail will be a driving force for enhanced safety at grade crossings.
- Retired Downers Grove Police Chief, George Graves, is being appointed the F.R.A. law enforcement liaison for this region.
- Wisconsin is considering installation of stop signs at all crossings without gates.

October 21, 2000

- "Cop-In-A-Box" Video Enforcements are facing judicial challenges. The Naperville System, championed by Sergeant Jim Bedell, is not facing the problems seen in Wood Dale because their automated crossing enforcement system uses a digital video camera system which meets the "chain-of-evidence" criteria needed to enforce the citations and bring about convictions. There may need to be some minor changes in the law to allow the Wood Dale video system to be used.
- A public service announcement (PSA) was suggested: "Red lights mean STOP! It doesn't matter whether the lights are on highways or railways."
- Chuck Tokarski, DuPage County Engineer, provided a summary of the proposed railroad/highway grade separation projects in DuPage County:
- The County farm Road at Union Pacific Railroad Crossing in Wheaton is being constructed.
- Since the Wood Dale/Irving Park road at Metra has experienced the highest number of crashes in the State, it is being recommended and investigated.
- The third location that would increase safety and alleviate hazardous conditions is the Belmont Road at Burlington Northern-Santa Fe crossing in Downers Grove.
- Dave Visney, with the FRA was sent to Chicago to investigate the feasibility of 'quiet alternatives' to whistle blowing. The DRSC recommendation was that a Chicagoland system-wide "closed-corridor" should be developed similar to that implemented in North Carolina. Rather than looking at each individual community, the entire Chicagoland area should be viewed as a railroad network requiring a unified systematic solution.
- Amtrak is working with Mayor Grover Brooks and the city of Bourbonnais to support engineering changes at the fatal crossing there.

November 18, 2000

- Sergeant Jim Bedell reported that violations have dropped by 20% per month at the monitored crossing in Naperville, and the city has yet to lose a case in court.
- A Sun Times article (November 6) reports that "quiet zones don't have to break the bank". An FRA analysis of 12 crossings in LaGrange, Western Springs and Hinsdale concludes that those suburbs would spend a combined \$65,000 to \$90,000 a year to create quiet zones.

- Dan Powers (Illinois Commerce Commission) described a planned four-quadrant gate test site in Maywood with a radar system to detect vehicles on the tracks. He reported that the limited experience with four-quad gates in the USA reveals no collisions at any of the five crossings.

December 16, 2000

- Wood Dale is sending out warnings instead of tickets to violators caught on camera. No crashes and nearly 600 citations have been issued since the Wood Dale program went into effect late last year.
- The Michigan State Congress approved a bill (on 12/06/2000), which will allow state and local highway agencies to install video cameras at railroad crossings throughout the state.
- Jolene Molitoris will resign as FRA Administrator on (12/31/2000). She will become President and CEO of Trans Success, Ltd.
- Patti Smith is resigning her position as regional representative for the F.R.A.

January 20, 2001

- Representative Patti Bellock has introduced legislation (HB 123) to extend the "Cop-In-A-Box" pilot program an additional two years.
- Three cameras were installed in Bourbonnais.
- Downers Grove is seeking to install video cameras.
- The new secretary of transportation, Norm Minetta, is an excellent choice from the railroad's perspective since he seems to have a greater interest in railroads than his predecessor.
- Sergeant Jim Bedell will have a traffic safety display at the Chicago Auto Show in February. He will distribute Operation Lifesaver information there.

February 17, 2001

- The DuPage County Board has recently formed a Public Transit Committee. Mr. John Noel, a DuPage County Attorney and Board Member, instrumental in forming the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), has been named chairman of the new committee.
- Lyn Hartley and Cheryl Townlian of the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe (BN/SF) reported on their railroads' commitment to safety. In the year 2000, the BN/SF closed 635 grade crossings, with plans to close an additional 134 during 2001.

March 17, 2001

- The second anniversary of the Bourbonnais tragedy was March 15.
- 'No New Grade Crossings' was drafted as an amendment to the Illinois Highway Code by adding Section 9-122.05. If the bill is passed, there will be no new grade crossings for public highways with railroads in the State of Illinois on or after July 1, 2001.
- Officer Kevin Simpson, of the Hinsdale Police Department, reported that in-car video taping of pedestrians is a useful tool.

- HB 123 was approved by the Illinois legislators and is awaiting the governor's signature.

April 21, 2001

- President Bush intends to nominate Allan Rutter to be the new FRA Administrator. He was Deputy Executive Director of the Texas High-Speed Rail Authority (1990-1995) and Transportation Director in the Texas Governor's office (1995-Present).
- Illinois has abandoned the experimental steel net crossing safety devices. The high-tech "Safety Nets" had been tested at three downstate railroad crossings.
- The 'No New Grade Crossings' Bill never made it out of the Senate's Transportation Committee. Although the FRA and the Railroads are behind the Bill, the Illinois Commerce Commission was a formidable opponent. More work needs to be done...the concept is too good to be dropped!
- SB 532 creates the Rail Carrier Crossing Delay Liability Act. It required a minimum \$500 fine when a rail carrier's train or other equipment blocks a crossing for more than 20 minutes.
- Operation Lifesaver presenters (in 2000):
 - Gave 2,870 presentations
 - Educated 244,188 people
 - Gave 1,469 driver's education classes
 - Educated 42,946 drivers' education students

May 19, 2001

- The Public Transit Committee, chaired by John Noel, will focus on such issues as:
 - Ride-sharing amongst county employees and other businesses
 - Working with PACE to get their routes more recognizable and more usable in DuPage County
 - Sponsoring a summit to educate community leaders about public transit. This is a major educational task since public transit is viewed as an "oxymoron" in DuPage County.
- "*Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks*", the 2002 DRSC Conference has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 10, 2002 in Oak Brook. High-Speed Rail will be the focus since safe engineering of railroad crossings is integrated into its development.
- SB 172 amends the Illinois Vehicle Code to make Video Enforcement Systems more defensible in court. It passed both the Senate and the House with three major flaws:
 - 1) Wording requiring a "clear picture of the driver" was not removed from the bill.
 - 2) Community service was removed as an option for paying the fine. If a person cannot afford \$500, he or she probably won't be able to afford a \$250 fine either. Providing community service as an option allows for better enforcement.

- 3) It now costs \$250 for vehicular violations, but \$500 for pedestrian violations. This discrepancy must be corrected.
- The new Region 4 Highway Grade Crossing Manager is Tammy Wagner, from North Dakota. Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan and Minnesota are included in her territory.
- The JFK Children's Museum and Health World, in Barrington, has begun a free train-safety program for bus drivers while waiting for children on field trips to the museum.

June 23, 2001

- Amtrak's Chicago-based Midwest Regional Rail Initiative is focused on producing high-speed rail systems much like the system serving Washington, D.C., New York and Boston.
- The Midwest Highway/Rail Safety Conference was held in Bloomingdale between June 18 and 21.
- The Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police approved a resolution (on May 2), which supports adoption of the Operation Lifesaver program. All new recruits will have Operation Lifesaver training in the academy. George Graves was highly instrumental in bringing this to pass.

July 21, 2001

- Naperville has issued over 600 "Cop-In-The-Box" tickets. Only two have been dismissed in court. The majority of violators elect community service.
- Winfield's "Cop-In-The-Box" is detecting few violations, perhaps because of the imposing structure of the camera system.
- DRSC is attempting to change the flawed SB 172 before the Governor signs it into law.

August 18, 2001

- The DuPage Public Transit Discovery Conference was held on July 27 at Medinah Country Club. More and more interest is being generated about public transit issues in DuPage County.
- Flawed SB 172 was signed and went into effect on August 3. A legislative subcommittee of DRSC will attempt to correct the problems. Our local legislators (especially Senator Kirk Dillard and Representative Patti Bellock) are sensitive to the issues.

September 15, 2001

- The September 11th "Attack on America" was discussed. Americans need to share the same kind of confident relentlessness that railroad safety advocates and Operation Lifesaver workers have exhibited for years.
- Allan Rutter, FRA Administrator, was recently in DuPage County reviewing the whistle blowing issues as one of his first official acts.

- George Graves is receiving national attention for his work as the liaison between the FRA and police agencies in the Midwest multi-state region.
- Year 2000 statistics reveal that Illinois ranked second in fatalities at crossings, third in injuries at crossings, third in pedestrian trespass fatalities, and third in pedestrian trespass injuries.

October 20, 2001

- The September 11th “Attack on America” was memorialized with a moment of silence. Railroad safety advocates have seen the erosion of community memories and political promises after such railroad tragedies as Fox River Grove and Bourbonnais. We understand the importance of September 11; we added another cause ... we didn’t forget the ones we already champion.
- The DRSC Legislative subcommittee met and provided remedies for the defective law, SB 172.
- Operation Lifesaver’s Region 4 Workshop was held in Green Bay, Wisconsin (September 11, 12, 13). Those assembled were some of the most sensitive, caring safety advocates in the country. Although challenged by the nation’s tragedy, they completed their Operation Lifesaver assignments.

November 17, 2001

- Richard Harnish, executive director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Coalition, introduced DRSC to his organization. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting a network of fast, frequent trains connecting over 200 cities and hub airports in nine midwestern states.
- Zeke Rodriguez described a “IDOT” system when we were discussing the seamless, intermodal nature of an ideal department of transportation which would oversee air, water, highway and railroad travel with fairness toward all.
- Suzanne Bonner, a Montana Operation Lifesaver volunteer, is making a quilt of “retired” Operation Lifesaver logos. The quilt will be on display at the 2002 symposium in Jacksonville, Florida.

December 15, 2001

- The “Cop-In-A-Box” program at Wood Dale has been extended for two more years.
- The City of Naperville held a public hearing to discuss a “Strategic Transportation Plan” on December 1, 2001.

January 19, 2002

- Cheryl Townlian, Manager of Public Projects for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe, sent an appreciation letter to DRSC for the work we “have done to promote railroad safety in the Chicago area and abroad.”
- Illinois Operation Lifesaver will now meet quarterly.

- Because of the irrational disparity in our current law between pedestrian and vehicular fines at railroad crossings, the Elmhurst Police Department simply issues \$75 fines for either type of violation.

February 16, 2002

- Cheryl Townlian, Burlington Northern/Santa Fe, announced that several grade crossing separations were being targeted for the Chicago area. Targeted crossings include Belmont Road and Maple Avenue (Downers Grove), LaGrange Road (LaGrange) and Harlem Avenue (Riverside).
- State Senator Kirk Dillard, State Representative Patti Bellock, State Representative Randall Hultgren, County Board Member John Noel (Chairman of the Public Transit Committee) and others contribute regularly to the activities of DRSC.

March 16, 2002

- Stop signs are being proposed for all railroad crossings where only crossbucks are presently being used, in Illinois. Crossbucks inform the motorist to yield; so that discrepancy must be addressed. Indiana has already instituted stop signs at all “passive” crossings. Their statistics will prove to be very valuable for the Illinois legislators.
- The FRA is strategically involved with the future of Amtrak as America’s passenger train system is fighting for survival.
- NTSB determined that the probable cause for the 1999 Bourbonnais collision was the truck driver’s inappropriate response to the grade crossing warning devices.

April 10, 2002

- “Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks. High Speed Rail, Overcoming the Barriers”, the fifth Railroad Crossing Safety Summit, is convened by the DuPage Railroad Safety Council at McDonald’s Oak Brook Campus