

COMMEMORATING

30
YEARS

PREVENT TRAGEDY ON THE TRACKS

Sharpening Our Focus On
Pedestrian Safety

Thursday, October 24, 2024
8:30 AM - 3:30 PM (CT)

In Person or Virtual

Chicago-Kent College of Law
565 West Adams Street
Chicago, IL 60661

Presented by

The
DuPage
Railroad Safety
CouncilSM



www.dupagerailsafety.org

Table of Contents

Section	Page
• Table of Contents	3
• Mission Statement	4
• Welcome from Dr. Lanny Wilson, Chairman	5
• Program	
○ Agenda	6
○ DRSC Award Winners – 2024	8
○ Hosts	
▪ DuPage Railroad Safety Council (DRSC)	9
▪ Metra Commuter Railroad	11
▪ Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC)	12
▪ Illinois Operation Lifesaver (IL OL)	14
○ Conference Participants	16
• Railroad Safety Facts and Statistics	
○ Rail Facts and Statistics	24
○ Illinois Safety Statistics: 1975 – 2024	25
○ USA Safety Statistics: 1975 – 2024	26
○ Railroad Fatality Trends: 1994 – 2023	27
• Proclamations and Essays	
○ Illinois Municipal League	28
○ Illinois Commerce Commission	29
○ Lanny Wilson – The Answer is Blowin’ in the Wind	30
○ Steve Laffey – Illinois Railroad Fatalities: 2012-2023	33
• DRSC Information	
○ Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks	
▪ 1996 – 2022 Conference Highlights	38
▪ 1996 – 2022 DRSC Award Winners	41
▪ DRSC Officers & Directors	44
▪ DRSC Members & Friends	45
○ Acknowledgements	46
○ Special Thanks	50

Mission Statement

Adopted December 16, 1995

**Eliminate deaths and injuries
at railroad crossings and
along railways.**

The DuPage Railroad Safety Council exists
because Jonathan Goers was so severely injured
and

Lauren Elizabeth Wilson was later killed at a
quiet little railroad crossing in Hinsdale, Illinois.
The deaths of Michael DeLarco, Victor Olivera,
and Kristie Topel motivate us to press on.

On the stage of life, history has assigned
each of these children the role of inspirer.

Vision Statement

Adopted May 19, 2012

- Create a culture of collaboration with partners in safety to accomplish our mission.
- The work which we inspire extends beyond the borders of DuPage County.
- The railroad safety improvements and awareness we seek have national and global implications.

Welcome

We are commemorating the 30th anniversary of the DuPage Railroad Safety Council's founding. From the time of its inception as a grassroots organization in 1994, its members have sought to create a culture of collaboration with partners in safety who will help achieve our mission: "Eliminate deaths and injuries at railroad crossings and along railways". Thank you for partnering with us as we host the 16th railroad safety summit.

Every two years, we have hosted conferences with the serious theme "Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks". In 2016, the subtitle was "A Call to Action—Eliminate Trespasser Deaths and Injuries". By focusing on trespasser and suicide incidents along railways, we had the audacity to believe that the 2016 conference would be the historic event which would inspire our collaborators to help us achieve the same dramatic decrease in trespasser and suicide deaths that had been achieved in highway-rail crossing collision deaths.

In 1972, then Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe declared a goal of reducing the number of highway-rail crossing accidents and fatalities by one third within ten years. That goal was met. Twenty-two years later, in 1994 (the year the DRSC was organized), Secretary of Transportation Federico Pena, announced a Highway-Rail Crossing Safety Action Plan which set forth a goal of reducing crossing incidents and fatalities by 50% within 10 years. While the 50% reduction took until 2008 to be achieved, the goal and consistent funding by Congress continue to reap benefits for highway-rail crossing safety.

While highway-rail crossing statistics were improving, trespasser and suicide statistics were worsening. So, in 2016 (22 years after the highway-rail crossing safety action plan), the DRSC set the goal of reducing trespasser and suicide deaths on railroad property by 50% in the next 10 years (2016-2026). Metra, Chicago's Commuter Rail System, has been in harmony with this goal from the beginning and in 2018, the Federal Railroad Administration, with the agreement of Administrator Ronald Batory, also adopted this goal. During today's conference, we will explore what has happened with that goal and the challenges we face as we continue with our mission guiding us.

Lanny F. Wilson, M.D.
Chair, DuPage Railroad Safety Council

Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks 2024

Sharpening Our Focus on Pedestrian Safety

Thursday, October 24, 2024
Chicago-Kent College of Law
565 W Adams St; Chicago, IL 60661
And Virtually via Zoom

7:30 a.m. Check-in and Continental Breakfast

8:30 a.m. Welcome and Invocation

Dr. Lanny Wilson, Chairman, DuPage Railroad Safety Council (DRSC)
Rev. Linnea B. Wilson

8:35 a.m. Legislative Address

United States Representative Jesús G. “Chuy” García

8:45 a.m. Awards

The Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Founders Award

The DuPage County Board

The Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Culture of Collaboration Award

The DuPage County Health Department

The Jonathan Goers Award

Private Sector Champion – Edward Strohbehn, Private Citizen

The Victor Olivera Award

Public Sector Champion - Officer Samantha Glynn, Downers Grove Police Department

The Michael S. DeLarco Award

Educator for Railroad Safety – Tony Mills, Metra

9:00 a.m. Keynote Speaker

Kris Habermehl, Reporter for CBS News Chicago.

9:20 a.m. Pedestrian Issues: How They are Changing

Moderator: Hilary Konczal, Chief Regulatory Compliance Officer. Metra Commuter Railroad.

Panelists:

1. Ian Savage, Ph.D., Professor of Instruction; Associate Department Chair; Director, Transportation and Logistics Program. Northwestern University.
2. Scott Gabree, Ph.D., Engineering Psychologist. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center Human Factors Division.
3. Lori Carnahan, Deputy Director of Behavioral Health. DuPage County Health Department.

10:30 a.m. Break

10:45 a.m. How a Community Responds to a Rail Tragedy

Moderator: Rodney Craig, Mayor. Village of Hanover Park.

Panelists:

1. Todd Nahigian, Committee Representing Our Young Adults (CROYA) Manager. Village of Lake Forest.
2. Joe Meade, Director of Safety. Brightline Trains.
3. Brian Vercruyse, Rail Safety Program Administrator. Illinois Commerce Commission.

12:15 p.m. Lunch

1:30 p.m. Pedestrian Issues: How are We Reacting?

Moderator: Michail (Mike) Grizkewitsch, Transportation Analyst. Federal Railroad Administration; Office of Safety.

Panelists:

1. Monica Shaw, Transportation Analyst. Federal Railroad Administration; Office of Safety.
2. Katherine (Kate) Elkins, MPH, CPH, NRP. Director, EMS Division, Office of Health Security, Department of Homeland Security.
3. Danielle Hiltunen, Engineering Research Psychologist. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center Human Factors Division.
4. Jake Rzewnicki, Public Projects Manager. BNSF Railway.

3:10 p.m. Closing and Summary

DRSC Award Winners – 2024

Many of our previous award winners deserve them again this year, but we try to spread the praise around. As always, our champions are well known to the DuPage Railroad Safety Council, and their partnership is invaluable to us. There are many champions of safety and education, but we have narrowed the field to the following recipients:

The Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Founders Award

The DuPage County Board

The Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Culture of Collaboration Award

The DuPage County Health Department

The Jonathan Goers Award

Private Sector Champion – Edward Strohbehn, Private Citizen

The Victor Olivera Award

Public Sector Champion - Officer Samantha Glynn, Downers Grove Police Department

The Michael S. DeLarco Award

Educator for Railroad Safety – Tony Mills, Metra

The DuPage Railroad Safety Council

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

—Margaret Mead

On Saturday, April 30, 1994, the Chairman of the DuPage County Board, Aldo Botti, convened the DuPage County Railroad Crossing Safety Conference. Railroad and government officials, engineers, educators, and private citizens gathered to discuss safety concerns with the realization that automobile and train traffic was increasing throughout the county. Multiple ideas were discussed, but one concrete action occurred at the end of the day—a railroad safety task force was formed.

The DuPage County Railroad Safety Task Force began their monthly meetings on Saturday, May 21, 1994, in the DuPage County Board Room. Dr. Lanny F. Wilson was asked to chair the group. His daughter, Lauren, had been killed at a railroad crossing in Hinsdale, IL, a few weeks earlier (March 2, 1994). Although Dr. Wilson was passionately motivated, he had to work with diverse groups to help solve railroad safety problems; and he had to maintain his objectivity as much as possible. After 30 years he continues to be the chair of the organization that followed.

The Task Force set about gathering information by inviting guest speakers from key areas of government and the railroad industry. The networking and education paid off—two major legislative successes would soon be implemented: the first law markedly increased penalties for vehicular and pedestrian violations at railroad crossings; the second allowed the use of photo enforcement installations at railroad crossings in Illinois. The first three installations would be in DuPage County.

As the second anniversary approached, its members realized that they were no longer simply a task force. Therefore, the name was changed to the DuPage Railroad Safety Council (DRSC). The DRSC was incorporated as a not-for-profit in February 1996, and its mission statement was formally adopted:

To prevent deaths and injuries at railroad crossings and along railways.

In May 2012, a vision statement was also crafted to explain that the work of the DRSC extends far beyond the borders of DuPage County:

Create a culture of collaboration with partners in safety to accomplish our mission. The work which we inspire extends beyond the borders of DuPage County. The railroad safety improvements and awareness we seek have national and global implications.

The DuPage Railroad Safety Council meets on the third Saturday of every month to heighten awareness, network, and improve safety conditions at railroad crossings and along railways. Membership is open to anyone who has a concern for railroad safety. Operation Lifesaver is one of our partners; we appreciate their “**3 E**” approach to solving railroad safety problems (**E**ducation, **E**ngineering, and **E**nforcement). We adopted a fourth “**E**” – **E**liminate Grade-Level Crossings—because it is virtually impossible to create a completely safe crossing at grade-level.

Three new “**Es**” were utilized at the 2014 Global Level Crossing Safety and Trespass Prevention Symposium: **E**mergency Response addresses how railroad companies, police, fire departments, emergency responders, chaplains, and the media address each incident; **E**ncouragement is the major focus of such groups as the DRSC and the Community Safety Partnerships in the United Kingdom; and **E**valuation refers to the scholarly collection of data and analysis which will help inform the best use of resources as we move forward towards achieving our mission.

Those who join us regularly experience first-hand our culture of collaboration. Networking is key to our success. DRSC is always open to new ideas and new partners. The contact information below will prove useful if you are interested in collaborating with us. We can also be found on Facebook.

DuPage Railroad Safety Council

P.O. Box 477

Hinsdale, IL 60522-0477

www.dupagerailsafety.org

Metra Commuter Railroad

Metra is the commuter rail system in the six-county region of northeastern Illinois, providing service to 243 stations on 11 lines.

Metra’s Mission: Metra provides safe, reliable, efficient, and affordable commuter rail service that enhances the economic and environmental health of Northeast Illinois.

Metra’s Vision: To proactively address evolving transportation needs, Metra will provide regional rail service that supports sustainable connected communities.

Strategic Goals

- Enhance service to grow ridership and provide mobility choices
- Ensure the Metra experience is safe, easy, and enjoyable for all customers
- Attract a diverse workforce and invest in our employees
- Innovate to become more efficient and effective
- Be a socially responsible organization committed to equity and sustainability

Safety

A central pillar of the *My Metra* philosophy is about taking personal responsibility for riders and for co-workers, and nowhere is that more important than with safety, Metra’s number one priority. That’s why Metra proactively reinforces the importance of railroad safety externally and internally across a broad spectrum of activities, including the Operation Lifesaver Train Safety Awareness Program, Safety Blitzes and our annual Safety Competition for area schoolchildren.

Through Operation Lifesaver, Metra employees give presentations to community and school groups about safe behaviors around trains. In Safety Blitzes, they visit stations across the rail system to talk to riders and distribute safety materials. The Metra Safety Competition helps to reinforce rail safety messages by encouraging children to create artwork, social media posts, videos and essays illustrating the importance of a specific safety theme. Both programs help keep safety at the forefront of our children’s and customers’ minds as they interact with the region’s rail system. Metra just concluded its 17th Annual Safety Competition, whose theme asked students across Chicago to “Become a Safety Influencer.”

Illinois Commerce Commission: Rail Safety Programs

Background

Illinois statutes direct responsibility for rail safety oversight of railroad operations, including highway-rail grade crossings, within the state to the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC). The statutes contained in Subchapter 7 of the Illinois Commercial Transportation Law (ICTL) grant the Illinois Commerce Commission authority to promulgate laws and rules, which apply to all railroads and companies that are a part of the general railroad system in Illinois. The rules are enforced by the ICC’s Rail Safety Section.

The general railroad system is comprised of all six Class I rail carriers (BNSF, CN, CPKC, CSX, NS, UP), Amtrak, and numerous regional carriers, short lines, terminal carriers, independent companies, and municipalities that own and operate rail facilities. Illinois has approximately 7,400 miles of railroad track, which is the second-largest rail system of any state in the nation. Approximately 500 million tons (1 trillion pounds) of freight are moved on Illinois’ rail system each year. In addition, Illinois has the third-largest highway system of any state in the country. The combination of these transportation systems results in many opportunities for trains and highway vehicles (and pedestrians) to meet.

Crossing Safety

As of September 2024, there were 7,531 public highway-rail grade crossings in Illinois (746 on state highways and 6,785 on local roads and streets).

Type of Crossing or Structure	Count	Percent
Public Highway At-Grade	7,531	52.0%
Public Highway RR-Over Hwy	1,721	11.9%
Public Highway RR-Under Hwy	948	6.5%
Private Roadway At-Grade	3,687	25.5%
Private Roadway RR-Over Hwy	127	0.9%
Private Roadway RR-Under Hwy	19	0.1%
Ped-Pathway At-Grade	170	1.2%
Ped-Pathway RR-Over Path	65	0.4%
Ped-Pathway RR-Under Path	42	0.3%
Ped-Station At-Grade	152	1.0%
Ped-Station RR-Over Station	17	0.1%
Ped-Station RR-Under Station	1	0.0%
Total	14,480	100.0%

The majority of public highway-rail grade crossings are equipped with train activated warning devices (5,424 or 72.0%), including over 180 crossings with four-quadrant gate installations, such as at Monroe Street in Hinsdale.

Safety at highway-rail grade crossings is one of the ICC's highest priorities. The ICC's Crossing Safety Program has become one of Illinois' most effective public safety programs. The challenge is to continue improving statistics during a period of steady increase in train length and in the number of registered motor vehicles and licensed drivers in Illinois. The ICC continues to look for ways to keep Illinois' public grade crossings as safe as possible.

The Grade Crossing Protection Fund

The Illinois Commerce Commission administers the Grade Crossing Protection Fund (GCPF) of the Motor Fuel Tax Fund. The GCPF is intended to assist local highway agencies and railroads with the cost of making safety improvements at public highway-rail crossings on local roads and streets. Each year the ICC publishes a Crossing Safety Improvement Program 5-Year Plan (<https://www.icc.illinois.gov/rail-safety/crossing-safety-improvement-program>).

The Crossing Safety Improvement Program assists railroads and local communities with identification and mitigation of safety hazards associated with public grade crossings. GCPF project applications can be found on the ICC website (www.icc.illinois.gov). GCPF assistance may be used for public highway-rail crossings located on local roads and streets. The following highway-rail crossing safety improvements are eligible for assistance from the GCPF:

- Installation of new crossing warning devices, signs and pavement markings
- Upgrade of existing crossing signal system control circuitry
- Highway approach grade improvements
- Construction of connecting roads to facilitate crossing consolidations
- Construction or reconstruction of grade separation structures
- Traffic signal-railroad warning device interconnect improvements
- Pedestrian grade separation structures
- Incentive payments for voluntary crossing closures
- Upgrading circuitry at grade crossings where warning signals are connected to adjacent traffic signals, so the two systems operate in a synchronized manner
- Crossing surface renewals

Questions or Concerns

Contact the ICC's Rail Safety Section with all of your rail safety questions or concerns:

Brian Vercruysse, P.E.
Rail Safety Program Administrator
Illinois Commerce Commission
527 E. Capitol Avenue
Springfield, IL 62701
(312) 636-7760
brian.vercruysse@illinois.gov

General Contact Information:
E-mail: railsafety@illinois.gov
Website: www.icc.illinois.gov

Illinois Operation Lifesaver

Operation Lifesaver (OL) is the officially recognized railroad safety education and outreach program not only in Illinois but also nationally. The OL program started in Illinois in 1976 and has served as the primary mechanism to bring railroad safety education and outreach to the Illinois public. Representatives of the rail industry, local law enforcement and emergency response personnel, as well as members of the general public have received the necessary training to become OL authorized volunteers and thus provide presentations to virtually every age group and audience.

The materials are not only age appropriate but also audience specific. That way, the information has real meaning to the group for which it is designated. Illinois Operation Lifesaver currently has over 100 authorized volunteers who conduct over 2,000 presentations that reach an audience of over 100,000 individuals annually. Approximately 20 percent of all OL presentations made in the United States, are made in Illinois.

Railroad personnel account for 46 percent of the presenters by affiliation type, while police/fire and emergency services personnel account for 34 percent of presenters. The remaining 20 percent is comprised of individuals who are educators, government representatives from the Federal Railroad Administration and the Illinois Commerce Commission, as well as members of the general public.

Each year, approximately 70 percent of presentations are made to elementary, junior or senior high school children. Twenty percent of presentations focus on educating new drivers and occur in traditional driver education classes, or in more specialized classes provided to professional commercial drivers.

Operation Lifesaver provides public service announcements and concentrates them in areas of Illinois not served by authorized volunteers. OL also participates in special events, ranging from OL safety trains, booths at community fairs, corporate safety days and fairs, and enforcement and education blitzes conducted at commuter rail stations. OL also conducts mock crashes involving trains and vehicles as a way for students to see first-hand the results of a bad decision. These simulated incidents also provide first responders the opportunity to experience working on an incident of this nature.

Railroad safety education is a vital component of the State's comprehensive railroad safety program. Operation Lifesaver partnerships with the railroads, local communities and other governmental agencies forge an alliance that has seen the number of crashes, injuries, and fatalities decline since the program's implementation. Interactive and innovative approaches to creatively provide redundant railroad safety lessons is the foundation of Illinois' railroad safety education program. Operation Lifesaver's safety-campaign, "**See Tracks? Think Train**" uses this simple phrase to remind people to stay out of the path of oncoming trains.

Questions or Concerns

Contact Aisha Jackson, State Coordinator, with all of your rail safety questions or concerns:

Aisha Jackson, State Coordinator—Illinois Operation Lifesaver

Aisha.jackson@illinois.gov

(773) 762-9535

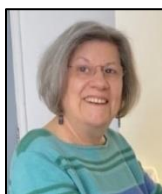
<https://sites.oli.org/state/il#about>

Conference Participants



Welcome and Awards Presentation: Dr. Lanny F. Wilson, Chairman. DuPage Railroad Safety Council.

Dr. Lanny F. Wilson grew up in rural Western Kentucky near the small town of Fancy Farm. He was valedictorian of his graduating class in 1968 and received a scholarship to attend Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Dr. Wilson received his B.A. in Psychology (1972) and M.D. at Northwestern's Chicago campus (1975). His Residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology was at Loyola University in Maywood, Illinois (1975 - 1979). Dr. Wilson practiced Obstetrics and Gynecology in Hinsdale, Illinois, beginning in 1980. During his career, Dr. Wilson delivered more than 6,000 babies while performing all of the other duties of an Ob/Gyn practice. Since his retirement, he has been Dean of Clinical Sciences for Avalon University School of Medicine. Dr. Wilson has held positions as President and Chairman of the Board for the DuPage County Medical Society and was a member of the Board of Trustees for the Illinois State Medical Society for nine years. Dr. Wilson has been on the DuPage County Board of Health since 2001 and has been its Vice President for most of those years. In 2022, he became a Board member of the Coalition for Physician Well-Being. Over the 30 years since its inception in 1994, Dr. Wilson has chaired the DuPage Railroad Safety Council. His daughter, Lauren, was killed at a railroad crossing in Hinsdale, Illinois, on March 2, 1994, and his railroad safety advocacy began shortly thereafter. In 2006, Dr. Wilson received the Dr. Gary Burch Memorial Safety Award, presented at the annual reception of the National Association of Railroad Passengers in Washington, D.C. In 2016, he also received the National Operation Lifesaver Inc.'s Safety Champion Award at their Leadership Conference in San Antonio, Texas.



Invocation: Reverend Linnea Wilson

Reverend Linnea Wilson has been an ordained minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for almost 25 years. Though 'mostly' retired, her professional joy continues to be teaching about the love of God reflected in each of us. When not filling in for her colleagues when they are away from their congregations, Rev. Wilson enjoys trying out new recipes on her husband, Lanny, a willing guinea pig; recent ventures into vegetarian cooking have met with mixed results! Having lost the 'battle-of-the-rabbits' in her garden, she is spending more leisure time reading novels from the New York Times best seller list and writing letters to far-flung friends. Rev. Wilson is pleased to be here today as you do the important work of saving lives.



Legislative Address: United States Representative Jesús G. "Chuy" García.

In 2019, U.S. Representative Jesús G. "Chuy" García became the first Mexican American from the Midwest to serve in Congress. Throughout his time in public service, he's been a progressive voice fighting to improve conditions for immigrant and working-families through equitable access to quality education, affordable housing, and economic opportunity. Drawing on his history working with Mayor Harold Washington and Rudy Lozano, he is a coalition builder committed to empowering the next generation of progressive leaders. Currently, he serves on the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and the House Judiciary Committee, and is Deputy Whip of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.



Keynote Speaker: Kris Habermehl is a traffic and breaking news reporter for CBS News Chicago (WBBM-TV).

Habermehl returned to CBS News Chicago in March 2022. Kris is CBS News Chicago's eye in the sky from Skywatch, providing traffic reports during the morning news and following breaking news from the air all day long. He's a five-time Emmy Award winner, a licensed pilot and a lieutenant and training officer at the Kirkland Fire Department. Habermehl has been a pilot since he was a young boy. He is known for his voice and incredible range of knowledge, not to mention his pristine attention to detail. CBS News Chicago's Ed Curran put it, "Kris doesn't just tell you there's a fire; he tells you what's burning by the color of the smoke."

Pedestrian Issues: How They are Changing



Moderator: Hilary Konczal, Chief Regulatory Compliance Officer. Metra Commuter Railroad.

Hilary Konczal serves as Metra's Chief Regulatory Compliance Officer. He has over 34 years of service with Metra and has an extensive background in safety, environmental compliance, industrial hygiene, railroad operations, regulatory compliance and security. He is responsible for establishing, monitoring, and ensuring regulatory compliance which governs the safe operation of the railroad across all Metra's operating departments, issuing directives and procedures, overseeing and coordinating Metra's involvement with Federal and State regulatory committees and meetings, as well as coordinating formal communications with regulators and conducting Executive and Board briefings. He is an Associate Instructor for the U.S. Department of Transportation, Transportation Safety Institute, serves on the Boards of the World Safety Organization, the DuPage Railroad Safety Council, and Illinois Operation Lifesaver. He is past Chair of the American Public Transportation Association's Commuter Rail Safety and Security Sub-Committee. He is a member of the FRA's Railroad Safety Advisory Committee, and the American Association of Railroads' Safety and Operations Committee.



Ian Savage, PhD., Professor of Instruction; Associate Department Chair; Director, Transportation and Logistics Program. Northwestern University.

Ian Savage has been a member of the faculty of both the Department of Economics and the Transportation Center at Northwestern University since 1986. His research has been concentrated in two areas: urban public transportation, and transportation safety. He has published widely on the economics of transit finances and operations. He has conducted research into the safety performance, and the effectiveness of safety regulations, in most modes of transportation -- with particular emphasis on the trucking and railroad industries.



Scott Gabree, PhD., Engineering Psychologist. Manager of Grade Crossing Safety and Trespass Prevention. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center Human Factors Division.

Scott Gabree is the manager of the grade crossing safety and trespass prevention research program for the Human Factors Division at the Volpe Center. Scott joined the Volpe Center in 2009 and has worked across all modes of transportation. Since 2011 Scott has focused the majority of his effort on railroad safety and trespass and suicide prevention. Alongside an amazing team at Volpe and with consistent FRA support, Scott has helped to build a research program that continues to advance our knowledge about how to effectively prevent railroad trespassing and suicide events and mitigate the impacts of these incidents on railroad staff. Scott has a PhD in Psychology from Northeastern University and lives just outside Boston, Massachusetts.



Lori Carnahan, Deputy Director of Behavioral Health. DuPage County Health Department.

Lori Carnahan is a Deputy Director at the DuPage County Health Department, responsible for all behavioral health services. She joined the Health Department in 2011 and has over 20 years of experience in the behavioral health field. Within her role, Lori provides strategic vision and leadership on all mental health and substance use programs and initiatives in the organization. She holds a co-chair position on the Behavioral Health Collaborative (BHC). In this role, she helps lead collaborative efforts with community stakeholders to enhance the accessibility and quality behavioral health services for all DuPage County residents. Lori's involvement extends further as a board member of the Community Behavioral Health Association (CBHA). Most notably, Lori has been leading the efforts to expand the crisis services system in DuPage County. The expansion will allow residents, both adults and youth, to have somewhere to go when they are experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis. This expansion will allow for a more robust continuum of crisis services available in the community, ensuring a more comprehensive and responsive set of services for those in need. Lori is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. She is a graduate of Illinois State University and earned a Master of Arts degree in Counseling Psychology from Lewis University.

How a Community Responds to a Rail Tragedy



Moderator: Rodney S. Craig, Mayor. Village of Hanover Park.

Mayor Rodney S. Craig has served as Village President of Hanover Park since 2007, and is now in his fifth term. He served as Village Trustee from 2001-2007. In 2013, Craig was elected to the Illinois Municipal League Board, a statewide organization representing 1,294 municipalities. In 2014, he was appointed to the Metra Board of Directors by the suburban members of the Cook County Board. Craig also serves as the elected President of the Northwest Municipal Conference. He serves on the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and also served as Past President of the DuPage Mayor & Managers Conference. He first entered public service when he was appointed a trustee of the Hanover Park Fire Protection District in 1995. He later served as their president, providing leadership in the transition to a municipal fire department and was recognized as Citizen of the Year. He and his family have resided in Hanover Park since 1974 following Craig's six-year tour of duty in the United States Navy including three tours in Vietnam. He later worked on systems operations with the Federal Aviation Administration in Air Traffic Control, retiring with 39 years of public service in 2009.



Todd Nahigian, Committee Representing Our Young Adults (CROYA) Manager. Village of Lake Forest.

Todd grew up in Northfield and attended Glenbrook South High School. He studied Psychology at Miami University (Ohio) and earned his master's degree in clinical psychology at the Illinois School of Professional Psychology, now Argosy University. Todd began working at CROYA as a High School Youth Worker in 1995 and became the Assistant Director of CROYA in 2000. Todd and his wife Amy have twin daughters (Addison & Brooke). Todd is an avid Cubs fan and still plays on a men's baseball team in Chicago. On working at CROYA, Todd says he "most enjoys working with youth to provide them with opportunities where they can feel good about themselves as a person. Adolescence is a challenging time. Anything I can do to help kids in their social-emotional development is rewarding to me."



Joe Meade, Director of Safety. Brightline Trains.

Joe Meade, a seasoned transportation professional with nearly 50 years in the railroad industry, is the Director of Safety for Brightline Florida Railroad. In this role, he played a pivotal role in developing Emergency Action Plans and ensuring compliance with local, state, and federal rail safety laws. Mr. Meade is the key liaison with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), overseeing incident responses and compliance with FRA regulations. His extensive background includes serving as an FRA Railroad Operating Practice Safety Inspector and a successful four-decade career at NJ TRANSIT, where he rose to the position of General Superintendent. Beyond rail, Mr. Meade brings 25 years of Level III Firefighter experience in New Jersey, contributing to the establishment of railroad emergency response programs.



Brian Vercruysse, Rail Safety Program Administrator. Illinois Commerce Commission.

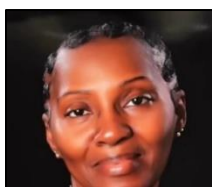
Brian Vercruysse is the Rail Safety Program Administrator with the Illinois Commerce Commission. He started with the ICC in 2000, and is responsible for managing the Commission's Inspection, Rail Safety Education & Outreach, and Crossing Safety Improvement Programs. Prior to the Commission, Brian worked for the Illinois Department of Transportation from 1992 to 2000. Brian is a Professional Engineer in the State of Illinois and graduated from Purdue University in 1994. Brian lives in the Village of Lombard and has enjoyed his service to all areas of the State of Illinois.

Pedestrian Issues: How are We Reacting?



Moderator: Mike Grizkewitsch, Transportation Analyst. Federal Railroad Administration; Office of Safety.

Michail Grizkewitsch is a Transportation Specialist with FRA. Mike has been with FRA since 2004 and together, we coordinate the agency's involvement in trespass prevention programs, partner with federal, state, and local government officials throughout the United States to establish and implement trespass prevention programs.



Monica Shaw, Transportation Analyst. Federal Railroad Administration; Office of Safety. Suicide Prevention Grants – Current Obligations for Implementation.

Monica Shaw is a Transportation Specialist with the Federal Railroad Administration's Office of Railroad Safety with a tenure of 37 years with the Federal Railroad Administration. In her role, she coordinates the agency's efforts to implement trespass prevention programs nationwide working closely with federal, state, and local government officials. Monica oversees the Operation Lifesaver Inc. Grant, FRA's Law Enforcement and Suicide Grant Programs ensuring their successful execution and effectiveness. Additionally, Monica is a Federal Acquisition Certified Contractor Officer Representative-Level 2 and serves as a Collateral Duty Equal Employment Opportunity Counselor. Monica holds a bachelor's degree in business administration.



Katherine Elkins, MPH, CPH, NRP. Director, EMS Division, Office of Health Security, Department of Homeland Security. White House National Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Kate works as the Director of the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division in the Office of Health Security at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The EMS Division supports the EMS clinicians and programs in all the components of DHS. Before this role she worked for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) and the National 911 Program. She has a background spanning over two decades in EMS, disaster response, public health and injury prevention. Kate has a Master of Public Health degree from Hopkins with a focus on epidemiology and injury prevention. She completed the Key Executive Leadership Certificate from American University in 2021. Kate is currently a DrPH student with a focus on health policy and a Bloomberg American Health Initiative Fellow at Johns Hopkins.



Danielle Hiltunen, Engineering Research Psychologist. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center Human Factors Division. Community Based Prevention Pilot – Implementing a CARE Model for Suicide Prevention.

Danielle Hiltunen is an Engineering Psychologist in the Human Factors Division at the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts where she has worked to help improve safety across transportation modes for almost 20 years. She has been a member of the trespass and suicide prevention research team since 2014 where she closely collaborates with her team, FRA, rail carriers, and other stakeholders to improve our understanding of what may be done to help reduce the frequency of these events and mitigate their impact on rail workers and communities. When she is not conducting research at Volpe, Danielle is also a practicing mental health clinician. She brings her human factors and clinical mental health expertise to several national and international working groups dedicated to both suicide and trespass prevention.



Jake Rzewnicki, Public Projects Manager. BNSF Railway. Cook County Trespass Prevention Program (CRISI).

Jake Rzewnicki is a Manager Public Projects at BNSF Railway out of Kansas City. He graduated with an Industrial Engineering degree from Kansas State University and an MBA from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He has been with BNSF for 7 years including 3 years in his current role as Manager Public Projects covering a 3-state area of Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. In this role he helps communities and public agencies coordinate, plan, and implement construction and improvement projects that may involve the Railroad. Recently, that role has expanded to assist with State and Federal Grant efforts and he has taken a special interest in in trespasser prevention. Jake is a member on the Transportation Research Board's (TRB) Standing Committee on Highway/Rail Grade Crossings while also participating on the Joint Subcommittee on Railroad Trespass & Suicide Prevention.

Rail Safety Facts and Statistics

In 1972, when Operation Lifesaver began, there were approximately 12,000 collisions in the United States between trains and motor vehicles annually. By 2023, the most recent year for which statistics are available, the number of crossing collisions decreased by over 80 percent to about 2,200. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) within the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) is responsible for collecting information about highway-rail grade crossing and pedestrian/trespasser incidents.

- According to statistics from the FRA: in 2023, 247 people were killed and 764 injured in 2,192 highway-rail grade crossing collisions (combined public and private crossings including vehicle operators, as well as pedestrians).
- In 2023, 715 trespassers not at a crossing were killed on railroad property. An additional 662 trespassers were injured nationwide.
- In 2023, 215 individuals were fatally injured in verified rail-suicides. An additional 20 individuals were injured.
- On average, more people die in highway-rail crashes than in commercial airline crashes each year.
- When a vehicle-train collision occurs, it is equivalent to a car crushing a soda can.
- A typical 100-car freight train weighs the same as 4,000 automobiles combined.
- About two-thirds of all collisions at crossings in the United States happen in daylight.
- Approximately every three hours, either a vehicle or a pedestrian is struck by a train in the U.S.
- A motorist is almost 20 times more likely to die in a crash involving a train than in a collision involving another motor vehicle.
- More than half of all grade crossing collisions occur where train speeds are 30 mph or less.
- Focusing on railroad fatalities overall in 2024; 247 occurred at highway-rail grade crossings, but almost three times that number—920—occurred as a result of trespasser/suicide incidents.
- As of June 2024, there were 203,674 highway-rail grade crossings in the United States and over 140,000 miles of railroad lines.
- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, three out of four collisions occur within 25 miles of a motorist's home. Fifty percent of all collisions occur within five miles of home.

Illinois Highway-Rail Crossing Collisions, Trespassing & Suicides: 1975-2024

Year	Total Killed	Tpass Killed	Tpass Injured	Tpass Incidents	Crossing Collisions (Public & Private Xing)	Crossing Killed (Public & Private Xing, No Suicide)	Crossing Injured	Pedestrian Collisions	Peds Killed	% Peds Killed of Total Crossing Killed	Illinois Suicide Killed	Illinois Suicide Injured
1975	133	30	41	67	870	94	316	19	6	6.4%		
1980	101	24	21	45	703	71	256	16	12	16.9%		
1985	64	17	32	47	445	45	161	11	7	15.6%		
1990	99	35	43	74	345	57	133	16	10	17.5%		
1995	89	36	38	69	295	48	139	9	6	12.5%		
2000	65	31	26	56	217	31	68	16	7	22.6%		
2005	50	19	20	38	180	31	83	15	9	29.0%		
2010	60	31	24	54	128	28	40	19	15	53.6%		
2011*	62	26	28	51	106	17	73	15	8	47.1%	17	2
2012	71	16	18	33	109	17	40	13	12	70.6%	36	7
2013	62	19	28	47	126	13	40	20	13	100.0%	29	2
2014	70	27	19	43	136	21	54	13	8	38.1%	22	4
2015	71	12	16	27	142	22	89	22	15	68.2%	36	2
2016	68	18	18	31	120	19	50	18	16	84.2%	31	7
2017	69	15	27	41	112	24	32	16	11	45.8%	29	4
2018	64	20	20	37	111	16	36	19	13	81.3%	26	2
2019	61	26	20	45	123	18	33	16	14	77.8%	16	1
2020	51	16	27	42	99	14	32	12	9	64.3%	19	0
2021	55	16	20	36	127	21	32	13	12	57.1%	18	1
2022	80	36	25	53	148	25	45	24	16	64.0%	19	0
2023	73	33	20	53	102	18	21	20	16	88.9%	21	0
24 thru May	25	13	7	20	51	11	28	12	8	72.7%	1	0
49.4 Year Total	3,881	1,355	1,412	2,669	15,664	2,043	6,241	743	488	23.9%	320	32

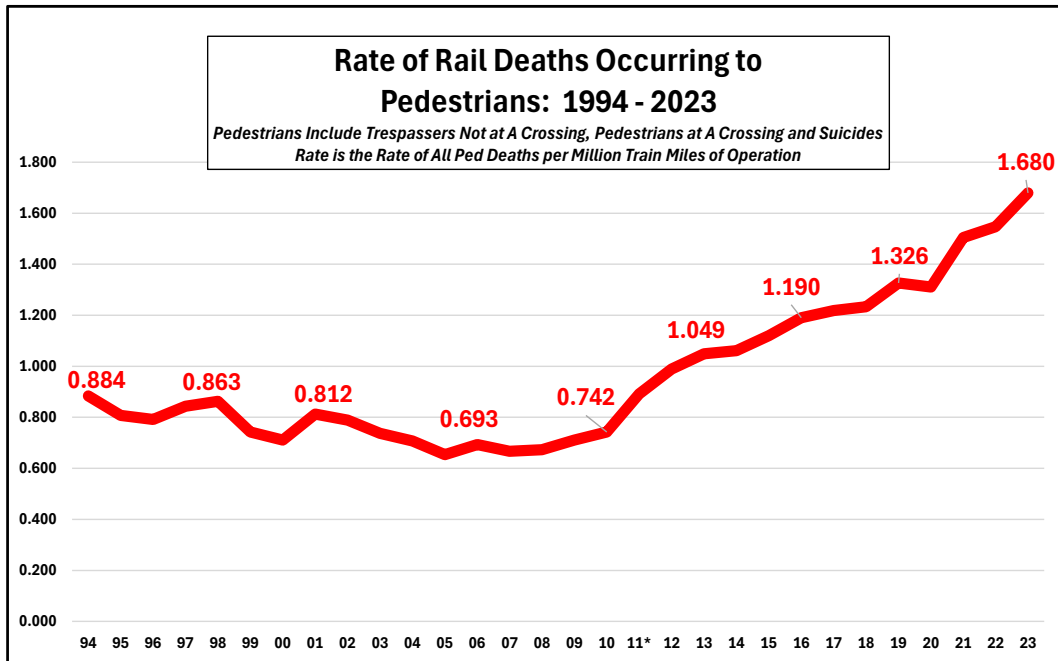
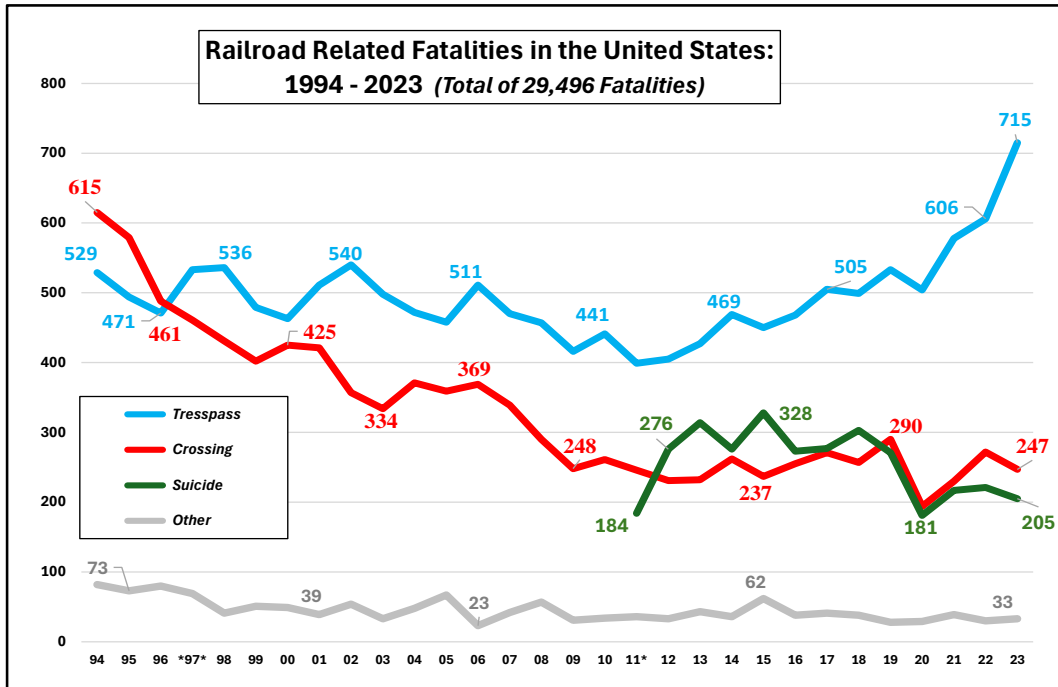
Data as of June 2024; suicide data collection began June 2011.

USA Highway-Rail Crossing Collisions, Trespassing & Suicides: 1975-2024

Year	Total Killed	Tpass Killed	<u>RATE</u> <u>Tpass</u> <u>Killed</u> <u>per mil</u> <u>train</u> <u>miles</u>	Tpass Injured	Tpass Incidents	<u>RATE</u> <u>Tpass</u> <u>Incident</u> <u>per mil</u> <u>train</u> <u>miles</u>	Crossing Collisions (Public & Private Xing)	<u>RATE of</u> <u> Hwy-rail</u> <u>Collisions</u> <u>per mil</u> <u>train</u> <u>miles</u>	Crossing Killed (Public & Private Xing, No Suicide)	Crossing Injured	Pedestrian Collisions	Peds Killed	% Peds Killed of Total Crossing Killed	USA Suicide Killed	USA Suicide Injured	USA Suicide Incident	<u>RATE</u> <u>Suicide</u> <u>Incident</u> <u>per mil</u> <u>train</u> <u>miles</u>
1975	1,469	442	0.585	557	962	1.274	12,126	16.06	917	3,860	118	48	5.2%				
1980	1,387	457	0.637	474	911	1.269	10,796	15.04	833	3,890	91	57	6.8%				
1985	1,019	391	0.685	492	852	1.492	7,073	12.39	582	2,687	53	32	5.5%				
1990	1,281	543	0.892	560	1,050	1.725	5,715	9.39	698	2,407	89	60	8.6%				
1995	1,107	494	0.738	461	913	1.363	4,633	6.92	579	1,894	74	47	8.1%				
2000	912	463	0.640	414	840	1.162	3,502	4.85	425	1,219	88	51	12.0%				
2005	842	458	0.580	420	836	1.060	3,066	3.89	359	1,053	115	58	16.2%				
2010	722	441	0.626	390	788	1.118	2,052	2.91	261	888	144	82	31.4%				
2011*	850	399	0.556	366	733	1.021	2,064	2.88	246	1,048	132	82	33.3%	184	23	207	0.288
2012	928	405	0.554	410	791	1.081	1,988	2.72	231	971	133	85	36.8%	276	45	321	0.439
2013	987	427	0.571	432	821	1.097	2,104	2.81	232	977	158	102	44.0%	314	27	341	0.456
2014	1,017	469	0.612	423	853	1.114	2,296	3.00	262	870	161	102	38.9%	276	39	315	0.411
2015	1,026	450	0.609	412	836	1.132	2,080	2.82	237	1,048	152	99	41.8%	328	30	358	0.485
2016	1,010	468	0.679	479	908	1.317	2,050	2.97	255	853	174	125	49.0%	273	36	309	0.448
2017	1,064	505	0.716	510	974	1.380	2,124	3.01	271	848	172	116	42.8%	277	41	318	0.451
2018	1,076	499	0.698	489	965	1.350	2,239	3.13	257	848	203	125	48.6%	303	39	342	0.478
2019	1,103	533	0.783	529	1,033	1.517	2,241	3.29	290	846	189	138	47.6%	271	22	293	0.430
2020	889	504	0.877	558	1,033	1.798	1,904	3.31	194	702	160	93	47.9%	181	18	199	0.346
2021	1,036	578	1.006	535	1,087	1.891	2,154	3.75	230	690	144	108	47.0%	217	9	226	0.393
2022	1,109	606	1.036	553	1,112	1.900	2,213	3.78	272	851	164	108	39.7%	221	20	241	0.412
2023	1,174	715	1.189	663	1,331	2.214	2,192	3.65	247	764	192	123	49.8%	205	19	224	0.373
24 thru May	466	291	1.172	237	521	2.098	918	3.70	117	286	109	73	62.4%	54	7	61	0.246
49.4 Year Total	53,214	23,656	0.704	23,886	45,660	1.358	246,422	7.33	24,277	91,601	5,522	3,365	13.9%	3,380	375	3,755	0.112

Data as of June 2024; suicide data collection began June 2011.

Railroad Fatality Trends: 1994-2023



Proclamations and Essays



RESOLUTION 2024-12

September 19, 2024

Resolution Honoring the DuPage Railroad Safety Council on its 30th Anniversary

Whereas, the DuPage Railroad Safety Council (DRSC) was founded on April 30, 1994, as a positive response to a fatal rail incident in DuPage County, Illinois; and

Whereas, DRSC adopted a mission statement at its incorporation as an Illinois not-for-profit to eliminate deaths and injuries at railroad crossings and along railways; and

Whereas, to further its mission, DRSC has engaged in educational, enforcement and engineering enhancement efforts in collaboration with federal, state and local governments, transit agencies and rail partners, holding 14 biennial conferences focused on preventing rail tragedies, with a 15th to be held on October 24, 2024, in Chicago; and

Whereas, the efforts of DRSC have included advocacy for legislation and policy changes at the federal and state levels to further rail safety; and

Whereas, DRSC membership has actively participated with municipal police departments, transit agency police and safety teams and Operation Lifesaver efforts to educate citizens and support rail safety enforcement; and

Whereas, there has been a more than 50 percent decrease in railroad crossing collisions in the United States and Illinois from 1995 through 2023; and

Whereas, from 2012-2023, despite a decrease in railroad crossing collisions, there has been an increase in rail trespass incidents in the United States and Illinois; and

Whereas, 95.9% of Illinois rail-related deaths in 2023 were pedestrian deaths; and

Whereas, DRSC is committed to continuing its many efforts to prevent rail-related injuries and deaths, especially reducing trespasser and suicide rail deaths, in collaboration with its national, state, regional and municipal partners.

Now, therefore be it resolved, that the Illinois Municipal League Board of Directors honors the DuPage Railroad Safety Council on its 30th Anniversary for its commitment to reduce rail-related deaths and injuries and pledges to support its rail safety efforts in partnership with municipalities throughout Illinois.


Mark T. Kupsy
President, Illinois Municipal League
Mayor, City of Fairview Heights
September 19, 2024

500 East Capitol Avenue | P.O. Box 5180 | Springfield, IL 62705 | Phone: 217.525.1220 Fax: 217.525.7438 | iml.org

**STATE OF ILLINOIS
ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION**

Illinois Commerce Commission :
On Its Own Motion :
: :
A Resolution Acknowledging 30 Years of Service :
By the DuPage Railroad Safety Council :
From The Illinois Commerce Commission :

RESOLUTION

By the Commission:

WHEREAS, The DuPage Railroad Safety Council (DRSC) has diligently served the state of Illinois for three decades, tirelessly working to enhance rail safety across the region; and

WHEREAS, The DRSC has demonstrated remarkable endurance, consistently advocating for safety improvements at highway-rail crossings and promoting awareness among motorists and pedestrians; and

WHEREAS, The DRSC has fostered collaboration across diverse fields, including engineering, medicine, education, and public health. Their commitment to interdisciplinary cooperation has been instrumental in reducing injuries and fatalities at highway-rail crossings;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY the Illinois Commerce Commission:

- 1. The Illinois Commerce Commission hereby acknowledges the outstanding contributions of founding member Dr. Lanny Wilson and countless volunteers from the DuPage Railroad Safety Council over the past 30 years.**
- 2. We commend their unwavering dedication to rail safety, which has positively impacted communities throughout Illinois and beyond.**
- 3. The DRSC's collaborative efforts serve as a model for other safety councils and organizations.**

ADOPTED by the Commission this 12th day of September 2024.

**Douglas P. Scott
CHAIRMAN**

The Answer is Blowin' in the Wind

by Lanny F. Wilson, M.D.

“Yes, and how many deaths will it takes ‘til he knows that too many people have died? The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind. The answer is...” - - Bob Dylan

Almost every death on railroad property is preventable! During her eight years as the administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Jolene Molitoris set the goal of “zero tolerance of railroad-related injuries and deaths”. She helped to make significant progress toward that goal between 1993 and 2000. When the DuPage Railroad Safety Council (DRSC) began its work in 1994, she was our shining light, our beacon of hope; during that time, there were significant decreases in railroad crossing collisions, injuries, and deaths. Bridges and underpasses for automobiles and pedestrians were being built. A less expensive option, four-quadrant gates, started proliferating, and has been found to be tremendously successful where implemented. Grade-crossing closures, the least expensive of these grade-crossing options (but requiring impressive powers of persuasion), were successfully carried-out. These engineering marvels continued marching statistics toward ‘zero tolerance’ until 2012, after which the statistics have steadily risen. With increasing availability of engineering solutions, why have incidents at railroad crossings increased over the past twelve years? “The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind. The answer is...”

While railroad crossing incidents were declining, an interesting phenomenon occurred in 1997 when trespassing fatalities exceeded crossing related fatalities for the first time. Trespassing has remained the leading cause of railroad related fatalities. Whereas we are able to implement engineering improvements to decrease motor vehicle incidents, pedestrian death elimination is more complicated but still achievable. In earlier days, many people in the industry felt that suicide elimination was essentially impossible and not worth the effort. However, even “suicides as a cause of death are preventable”, according to *The Lancet* in a series of articles published on September 9, 2024. Deterrent options to prevent railway-related fatalities are difficult, expensive, and time-consuming. Passion and persistence will win-the-day! But how will we accomplish it, how expensive will it be, and how long will it take? “The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind. The answer is...”

As stated in the DuPage Railroad Safety Council (DRSC) vision statement, we are intent on collaboration with partners in safety who will implement the railroad safety features we discuss. Our biennial symposia provide the primary forum for us to disseminate and promote the adoption of best practices in highway-rail crossing and pedestrian/trespass/suicide safety initiatives. Because of the increase in railroad crossing collisions, deaths and injuries, we cannot take our ‘eyes off the ball’ with regard to railroad crossing incidents. However, we feel that sharpening our focus on pedestrian safety at this summit is important since many people in politics, and even in the railroad industry, still do not understand that these deaths are far more frequent than grade crossing vehicular deaths.

We are thrilled with this year's moderators and panelists who are focusing on railroad pedestrian safety issues:

On the first panel, Hilary Konczal, Metra Safety Leader, will be the moderator. He championed Metra's Mental Health Awareness Initiative, including QPR Gatekeeper training. QPR - which stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer - has saved many lives. His panelists are:

- Volpe's Scott Gabree, who is a longtime friend of the DRSC. Scott is one of the most knowledgeable people in the world with regard to railroad pedestrian safety. Scott will share where we have been with regard to pedestrian safety and will bring us up-to-speed on the present state of pedestrian safety initiatives.
- Dr. Ian Savage, who is a Northwestern University Professor. His 2006 luncheon speech at that year's DRSC Summit awakened many to the increasing problem of pedestrian incidents on the railways. His valuable insights may help us develop future life-saving plans.
- Lori Carnahan, who is the Deputy Director of Behavioral Health at the DuPage County Health Department. She will emphasize the importance of the 988 Suicide & Mental Health Crisis Lifeline. People in Crisis need "Someone to Call, Someone to Respond, and Somewhere to Go". DuPage County is building a Crisis Recovery Center which will be a model for the nation in providing Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis care.

On the second panel, Rodney Craig, Mayor of Hanover Park, will be the moderator. His panel will discuss how communities respond to rail tragedies. His panelists are:

- Todd Nahigian, who is Manager of the Committee Representing Our Young Adults (CROYA) in Lake Forest, Illinois. After a series of pedestrian youth deaths in Lake Forest, the village took steps to prevent its recurrence. Todd will share his role in railroad safety.
- Joe Meade, who is Director of Safety for the Brightline in Florida. He will share what this relatively new commuter rail system is doing to focus on pedestrian safety.
- Brian Vercruyse, who is Rail Safety Program Administrator for the Illinois Commerce Commission. He will discuss how Illinois communities focus on pedestrian safety.

On the third panel, Michail (Mike) Grizkewitsch, Transportation Analyst for the FRA and close friend of the DRSC, will be the moderator. Over the past decade, Mike has helped with our "Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks" summits, both as panelist and panel moderator. His panelists will tell the story of how we, as a railroad safety community, are reacting to pedestrian, railroad safety issues. His panelists are:

- Monica Shaw, who is a Transportation Specialist in FRA's Office of Safety. She brings years of experience to our summit. Monica will share highlights of this year's "Grade Crossing Safety and Railroad Trespass Prevention Workshop" which took place at Rutgers University in Piscataway, New Jersey.
- Katherine (Kate) Elkins, who has been Director of the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division, in the Office of Homeland Security. Her service at the intersection of public health and emergency response makes for good story-telling and even better policy-making expertise.

- Danielle Hiltunen, who works with Scott Gabree at the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, Human Factors Division. Danielle will offer guidelines about where our reactions to pedestrian railway tragedies could take us in the future.
- Jake Rzewnicki, who is the Public Projects Manager for BNSF Railway. He works in the Cook County Trespass Prevention Program. As with the Brightline perspective in panel two, private industry's reaction and response to pedestrian incidents will be insightful.

Every life is precious! Thirty years ago, there was comparatively little in the way of time, talent, or treasure spent to prevent pedestrian incidents. In fact, I was personally focused solely on changing the railroad crossing where my daughter Lauren died. As time has gone by, and that crossing has become much safer, I realize that four of our most active members and friends joined the DRSC because of their children dying as pedestrians either at railroad crossings or along the railroad right-of-way. Thus, the DRSC's focus turned to a greater awareness of, and focus on, pedestrian safety. Today, many more people are taking on this challenge.

Organizations such as those who presented today – Northwestern University, the Federal Railroad Administration, the DuPage County Health Department, Metra, Brightline, the Villages of Hanover Park and Lake Forest, BNSF Railway, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Transportation, and Volpe are taking it on! Railroad crossing safety continues to be our singular goal. Preventable deaths are responding to engineering technologies and a variety of other solutions already available. Private-public partnerships and well-informed research will help us achieve future goals.

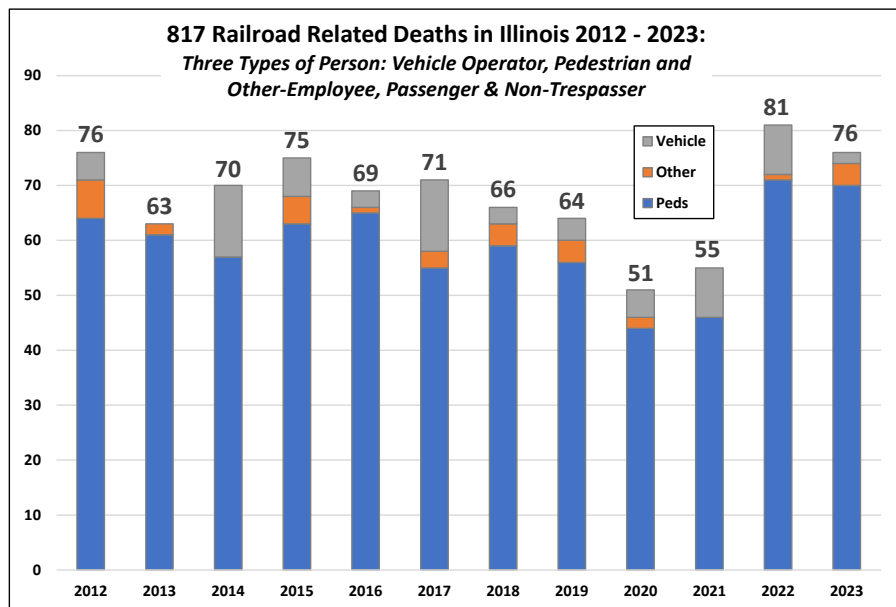
Neither death nor disability should be the punishment for impatience, ignorance, or mental illness when on (or near) railroad property. So, we must continue our railroad safety advocacy. As with random acts of kindness, we may never know how many families have been spared the tragedy of death and injury on railroad tracks; but despite our best efforts, the number of railroad-related crashes, injuries and deaths have been rising rather than falling for the past 12 years. We must be diligent in our attempts to provide the very best railroad safety education, to mobilize law enforcement's powerful influence, to engineer safer railroad crossings and safer railroad rights-of-way, to be each other's keepers, and to bring light into the dark places where suicidal ideation exists.

Our efforts must not be derailed by the depressing statistics that show increased deaths and injuries at railroad crossings and along railways since 2012. We must not listen to the nay-sayers who say that we are wasting our time since we will probably not achieve a 50 percent reduction in the total number of railway-related fatalities between 2016 and 2026. Instead, we ask: How many lives have been saved as a result of the DRSC's work? How long will it realistically take to achieve that elusive 50 percent goal? And how many families will needlessly suffer from a tragedy on the tracks while we are doing our best to prevent those tragedies? The answer my friend, may not be blowin' in the wind. But the answer may just be with the work we, and our partners, are doing here today and in days yet to come. ♦

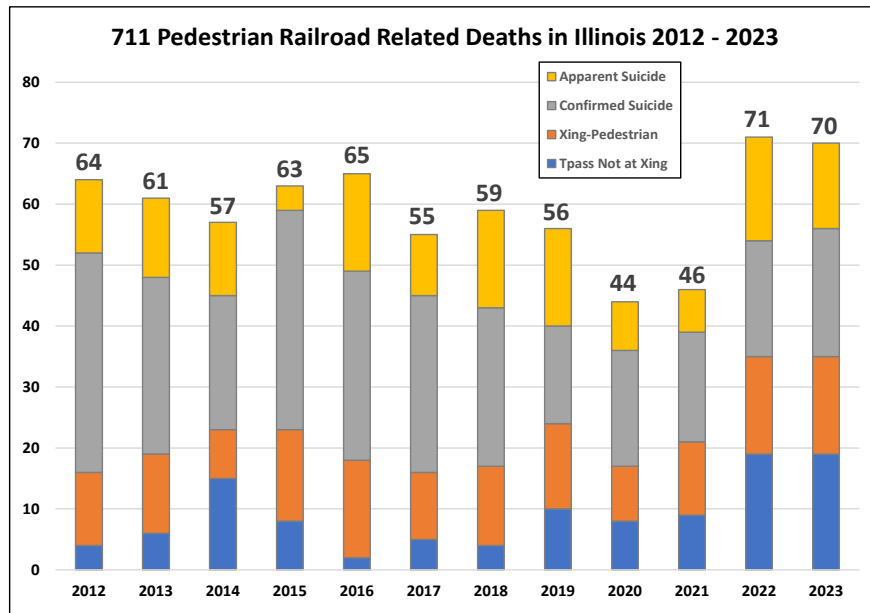
Illinois Railroad Fatalities: 2012 – 2023

In Illinois between 2012 and 2023, 817 individuals were fatally injured by trains, an annual average of 68 rail-related fatalities per year. The overall trend in the number of fatalities between 2012 and 2023 is an increase in quantity and rate. The trend in Illinois follows the national pattern of (1) increase in number of fatalities (2) increase in the rate of fatalities per million train-miles of operation; and (3) an increase in the relative proportion of pedestrian fatalities compared to vehicle-related fatalities.

Within Illinois, 12 counties accounted for 85 percent of rail fatalities with Cook County (39.5%) experiencing the most due to the heavy concentration of rail lines, rail traffic and people. It is helpful to have a basic grasp of the nature of rail fatalities when establishing priorities and allocating funding to reduce the number of fatalities. To help provide context, this analysis divides rail fatalities into three types based upon the type of person involved: (1) pedestrians, (2) vehicle operators at a crossing, and (3) employees, contractors, and others authorized to be on rail property.

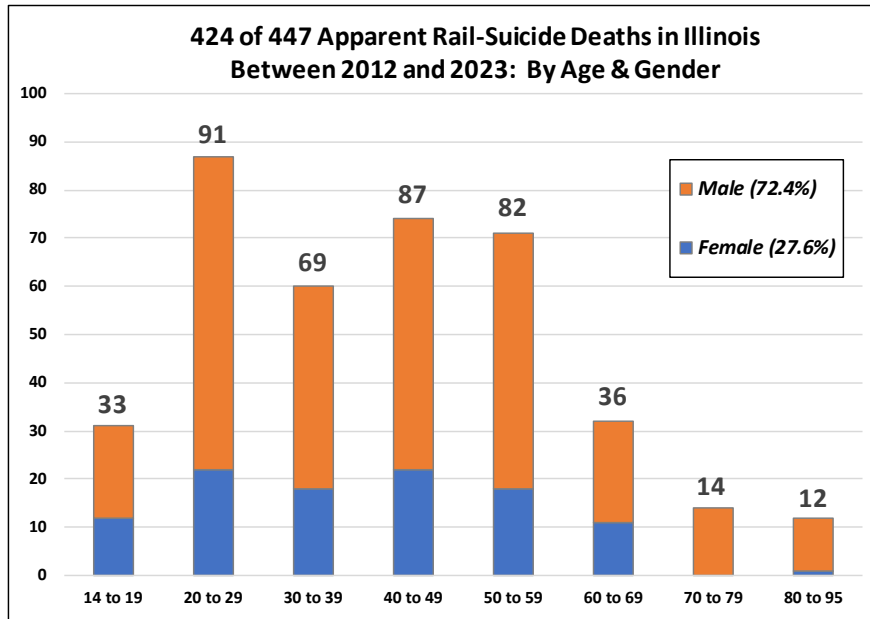


Pedestrians accounted for 87 percent of rail fatalities in Illinois between 2012 and 2023. Pedestrian fatalities can be further sub-divided into four types: (1) trespassers not at a crossing, (2) rail-suicide not at a crossing, (3) pedestrians at a rail crossing, and (4) pedestrian rail-suicides at a rail crossing. It is important to distinguish the types of fatalities from each other as the counter measures suitable for each type of fatality differ. The characteristics of someone trespassing in order to harm themselves are different than a trespasser using the railroad as a shortcut.



Taking a closer look at rail-suicide; 54 percent of fatalities were apparently intentional where a pedestrian or motorist deliberately chose to be struck by an oncoming train in a rail-suicide, an annual average of 37 rail-suicide fatalities per year in Illinois. Rail-suicide is divided into two types: coroner or medical examiner (ME) determined rail-suicides and apparent rail-suicides based on applying a subjective judgement “as to whether a death is more likely to have been suicide than not.” (Ovenstone) In 67.6 percent of rail-suicide fatalities, a coroner or ME, determined suicide to be the manner of death. The remainder were apparent rail-suicides.

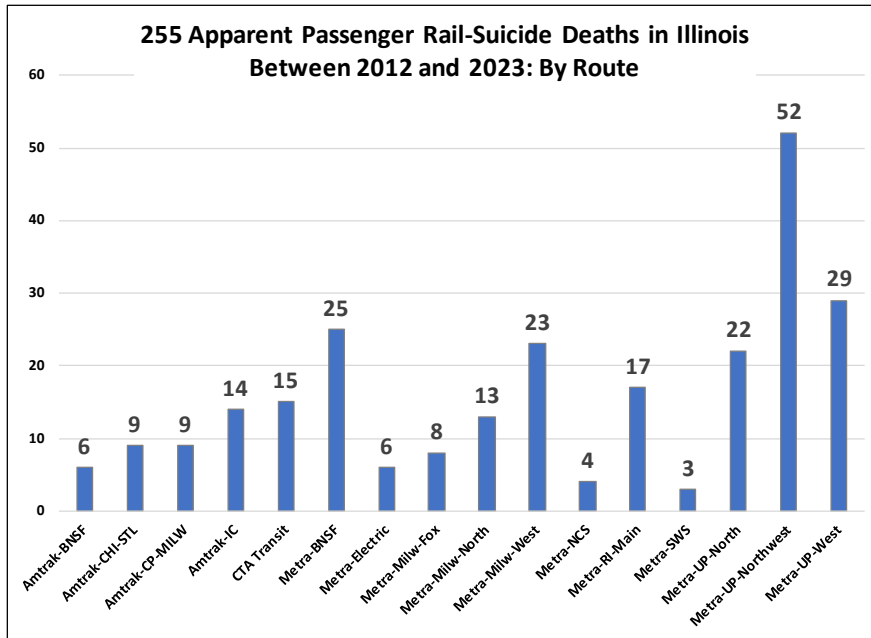
Most rail-suicide fatalities do not occur at a crossing but happen elsewhere along the railroad right-of-way (78.1%). For 98 rail-suicide fatalities that occurred at a crossing, 75.5 percent occurred at a public highway-rail crossing, as opposed to a private road or pedestrian only crossing. Only two percent of rail-suicide fatalities involved a motor vehicle operator stopped on the tracks; the rest involved pedestrians. Men comprised 72.4 percent of rail-suicide fatalities. The mean age for men was 42.7 and 39.6 for women.



The peak month for rail-suicide is May with 12 percent of rail-suicide fatalities; February has the fewest. By hour of day the peak is at 6:00 p.m. and the fewest occurred at 3:00 a.m. Twelve counties accounted for 85.5 percent of rail-suicide fatalities with Cook County accounting for 39.5 percent. Twenty-eight cities had five or more fatalities, accounting for 51 percent of rail-suicide fatalities in Illinois between 2012 and 2023.

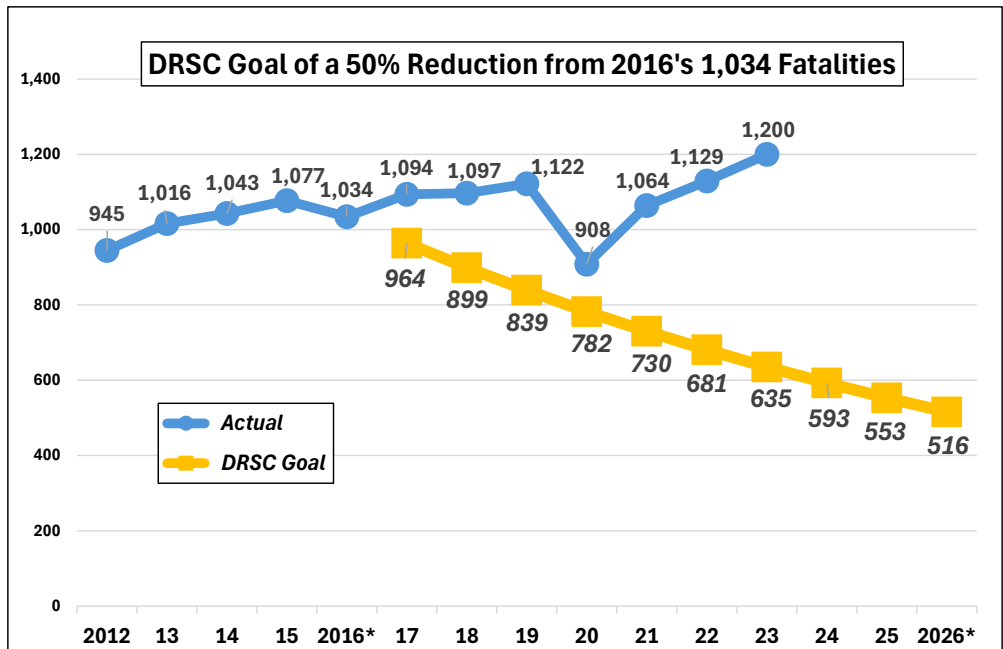
28 Cities w/ 5 or > Deaths	Deaths	Percent	City	Deaths	Percent
Chicago	52	11.6%	LaGrange	6	1.3%
DesPlaines	11	2.5%	Lake Forest	6	1.3%
Villa Park	10	2.2%	Lombard	6	1.3%
DeKalb	8	1.8%	Northbrook	6	1.3%
Morton Grove	8	1.8%	Palatine	6	1.3%
Naperville	8	1.8%	Springfield	6	1.3%
Downers Grove	7	1.6%	Woodstock	6	1.3%
Galesburg	7	1.6%	Aurora	5	1.1%
Hinsdale	7	1.6%	Barrington	5	1.1%
Tinley Park	7	1.6%	Cicero	5	1.1%
Wheaton	7	1.6%	Evanston	5	1.1%
Arlington Heights	6	1.3%	Round Lake	5	1.1%
Carbondale	6	1.3%	28 Cities w/ 5 or > Deaths	229	51.2%
Elgin	6	1.3%	149 Other Cities	218	48.8%
Elmhurst	6	1.3%	Total Deaths	447	100.0%
Glen Ellyn	6	1.3%			

In terms of the type of train involved, passenger trains accounted for 255 (57%) of fatalities. Freight operations were responsible for the remaining 43 percent. The UP-Northwest line was responsible for 11.6 percent of rail-suicide fatalities in Illinois between 2012 and 2023.



In the larger realm of rail-safety, rail-suicide prevention deserves special attention. Historically, rail-safety programs have focused on preventing collisions at highway-rail crossings since they were once the leading cause of death, and it is relatively easy to focus effort on a fixed geographic point with a specific highway engineering solution. Unfortunately, trespassing can occur anywhere at any time and is difficult to address both for the railroad property owner, as well as the local community.

In 2016, the DRSC set a highly aspirational goal of reducing rail-related fatalities nationally by 50 percent by 2026. Unfortunately, rail-related fatalities have actually increased since 2016 so this goal is not likely to be met.



Steve Laffey, Railroad Safety Specialist
 Illinois Commerce Commission
stephen.laffey@illinois.gov.

Data Sources

- 10-Year Summary Statistics for all but suicide: <https://safetydata.fra.dot.gov/OfficeofSafety/publicsite/Query/TenYearAccidentIncidentOverview.aspx>
- Suicide data since June 2011: <https://safetydata.fra.dot.gov/OfficeofSafety/publicsite/Query/suiabbr.aspx>
- Classifying incidents as suicide: <https://www.college.police.uk/app/mental-health/suicide-and-bereavement-response>
- Ovenstone Criteria: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/abs/psychiatric-approach-to-the-diagnosis-of-suicide-and-its-effect-upon-the-edinburgh-statistics/348030197A495649E6E8236752344749>

Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks: 1996-2022

DRSC Conference Highlights

1996 Railroad Crossing Safety Summit

- Saturday, April 27, at Inland Meeting & Expo Center in Westmont.
- Featured Speakers: Donald M. Itzkoff, Deputy Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration and Patti Smith, Locomotive Engineer, CSX Transportation.
- Luncheon Speaker: Aaron J. Gellman, PhD., Director of the Transportation Center, Northwestern University.

1998 Today's Successes ... Tomorrow's Challenges

- Friday, April 17, at McDonald's Oak Brook Campus.
- Featured Speakers: Glen L. Bowen, Assistant Secretary of State, Illinois Secretary of State's Office; Donald M. Itzkoff, Deputy Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration and Fred Coleman, III, PhD., Assistant Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Illinois.
- Luncheon Speaker: Professor Fred Coleman, III—University of Illinois.

2000 Countdown to Zero in the New Millennium

- Friday, April 28, at McDonald's Oak Brook Campus.
- Featured Speakers: Gerri L. Hall, CEO/President Operation Lifesaver, Inc., Patti Smith, Regional Grade Crossing and Trespass Prevention Manager, Federal Railroad Administration and Michael E. Stead, Railroad Safety Program Administrator, Illinois Commerce Commission.
- Luncheon Speaker: Professor Joseph Schwieterman, Director of the Chaddick Institute, DePaul University.

2002 High Speed Rail: Overcoming the Barriers

- Wednesday, April 10, at McDonald's Oak Brook Campus.
- Featured Speakers: John Noel, Chairman Public Transit Council, DuPage County Board, Ron Ries, Staff Director Grade Crossing Safety and Trespass Prevention Division, Federal Railroad Administration, Rob Roy & Lyn Hartley, BNSF Railway and Top Zapler, Union Pacific Railroad, and Wende Gannon, Director of Education, Operation Lifesaver, Inc.
- Luncheon Speaker: David F. Schulz, Director of the Infrastructure Technology Institute, Northwestern University.

2004 The Chicago Connection and the CREATE Initiative

- Thursday, April 29, at McDonald's Oak Brook Campus.
- Luncheon Speaker: Professor Robert E. Gallamore, Director Transportation Center, Northwestern University.

- 2006 Teaming Up for Pedestrian Safety**
- Thursday, September 14, at McDonald's Oak Brook Campus Lodge.
 - Luncheon Speaker: Professor Ian Savage, Department of economics, Northwestern University.
- 2008 Promoting Sealed Railroad Corridors**
- Thursday, September 18, at McDonald's Oak Brook Campus.
 - Featured Speakers: Ford Dotson, Locomotive Engineer, Union Pacific Railroad / Metra.
 - Luncheon Speaker: Daniel Tani, NASA Astronaut.
- 2010 New Frontiers in Rail Travel: Environmental and Safety Implications**
- Wednesday, September 29, at McDonald's Oak Brook Campus.
 - Luncheon Speaker: Gil Stricklin, CEO & Senior Railroad Chaplain, Railroad Chaplains of America.
- 2012 Safety is Good Business**
- Thursday, October 11, at the Hyatt Lodge at McDonald's Oak Brook Campus.
 - Featured Speakers: Paul Worley, Rail program Director, North Carolina Department of Transportation, Lyn Hartley, BNSF Railway and Tom Livingston, CSX Transportation, Michael E. Stead, Railroad Safety Program Administrator, Illinois Commerce Commission, and Dr. Barry Kaufman, WBBM Radio.
 - Luncheon Speaker: Ann Schneider, Secretary, Illinois Department of Transportation.
- 2014 Celebrating Twenty Years of Rail Safety Collaboration**
- Thursday, August 7, at the Chicago History Museum.
 - Featured Event/Reception: Standing Exhibit—Chicago: Crossroads of America and Special Exhibit—Railroaders: Jack Delano's Homefront Photography.
 - Dinner Guest Speaker: Leah Waymark, Metro Train, Melbourne, Australia.
- 2016 A Call to Action—Eliminate Trespasser Deaths and Injuries**
- Thursday, September 15, at the Drake at Oak Brook.
 - Featured Speakers: Dr. Chris Barkan, Ph.D. University of Illinois; Dr. Shashank Joshi, M.D., Stanford University; Adrian Hellman, Volpe Center; Dr. Scott Gabree, Ph.D., Volpe Center; Bonnie Murphy, Operation Lifesaver; Dr. Ian Savage, Ph.D. Northwestern University; Sgt. Eric Munson, Plainfield Police Department; Special Agent Eric Graf, Canadian National Railroad Police Department; Deputy Chief Lou Jogmen, Park Ridge Police Department; Chief Special Agent Jeff Savage, BNSF Railway.
 - Luncheon Speaker: Christopher A. Hart, Chairman, National Transportation Safety Board.

2018 The Trespasser/Suicide Reduction Goal

- Thursday, September 27, at the Drake at Oak Brook.
- Featured Speakers: Scott Gabree, Volpe National Transportation Systems Center; Patrick Sherry, PhD, National Center for Intermodal Transportation at the University of Denver; James Buckley-Waterman, Network Rail U.K.; Michail Grizkewitsch, Federal Railroad Administration; Mike Drugan, DuPage County Sheriff's Office; Rich Gent, Hot Rail Security; Brian Windle, Metra Police Department.
- Keynote Speakers: Norman Carlson, Metra; Ron Batory, Federal Railroad Administration.
- Luncheon Speaker: Rev. Timothy F. Perry, Nationwide Chaplain Services.

2020 Keeping Families Together

- Thursday, October 20, hosted virtually Via Zoom.
- Featured Speakers: Diane McGinley, Village of Glen Ellyn; Catherine Adduci, Village of River Forest; Jessica Jennings, National Association of Counties; Deidre Mitchell, MTA-Metro-North Railroad; Victor Garcia, South Florida RTA-Tri-Rail Commuter Railroad; Hilary Konczal, Metra; Tasha Bartolomew, SamTrans, Caltrain, California; April Foreman, American Association of Suicidology; Starr Kidda, Federal Railroad Administration Human Factors; Michelle Jennings, Amtrak.
- Keynote Speaker: Ronald Batory, Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration.

2022 Public. Health. Crisis.

- Thursday, October 20, hosted virtually via Zoom.
- Featured Speakers: Robert Coppenhaver, Denso Wave; Kevin Stuehler, Metra Police Department; Barry Carta, Kroy Railway Group; Jeff Warner, Texas A&M Transportation Institute; Scott Gabree, Volpe National Transportation Systems Center; Lori Carnahan, DuPage County Health Department; Brian Krajewski, DuPage County Board; Carrie Anne Ergo, Village of Itasca; Erin Aleman, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.
- Keynote Speaker: Amit Bose, Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration Invited. Deputy Administrator Jennifer Mitchell spoke on his behalf.

DRSC Award Winners: 1996 – 2022

1996 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Officer James Kveton
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – George Swimmer

1998 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Paul Froehlich, Deborah Hare
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – Lourdes Beard, Rose Humiston
- ❖ Public Awareness Award – The Daily Herald
- ❖ Law Enforcement Award – Metra Police Department
- ❖ Model Community Award – The Village of Downers Grove

2000 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Officer Rick Talerico
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – Leo A. Ditewig
- ❖ Lifetime Achievement Award – Senator Beverly Fawell
- ❖ Future Generations Award – Chairman Robert Schillerstrom
- ❖ Success Award – Henry Humphries
- ❖ Public Awareness Award – The Daily Herald Suburban Life
- ❖ Law Enforcement Award – Metra Police Department, Clarendon Hills Police Department
- ❖ Model Community Award – Naperville, Illinois
- ❖ Educator Award – Gordon Bowe

2002 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Sergeant Jim Bedell
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – Randy Pros
- ❖ Educator Award – Zeke Rodriguez

2004 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Carole A. Messina
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – Bob Meyer
- ❖ Educator Award – Chip Pew

2006 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Steve Laffey
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – George Graves, Beatriz M. Olivera
- ❖ Educator Award – David Franson

2008 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Mark Wodka, William Lyons, Tom Zapler
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – Fred and Barbara Biederman
- ❖ Educator Award – Dr. Barry Kaufman
- ❖ Future Generations Award – Joyce Stupegia

2010 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Michael and Linda DeLarco
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – BNSF Railway Company
- ❖ Educator Award – Helen Sramek
- ❖ Success Award – Tom Zapler

2012 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Brian Vercruyssen, Paul Worley
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – Jim Speta, Lynn Hartley
- ❖ Victor Olivera Educator Award – Dr. Ian Savage
- ❖ Michael S. DeLarco Educator Award – Dr. Joseph Schwieterman

2014 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Hilary Konczal, Liz Chaplin
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – Kurt and Laura Topel
- ❖ Michael S. DeLarco Success Award – Carole Messana (Posthumous)
- ❖ Educator Award – Joyce Rose
- ❖ Public Awareness Award – Marni Pyke

2016 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Lou Jogmen; Park Ridge Police Department
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – David Mattoon; Retired Railroad Pro
- ❖ Victor Olivera Award – Don Orseno; Metra Executive Director/CEO
- ❖ Michael S. DeLarco Award – Christopher P. L. Barkan, PhD; University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign
- ❖ Kristie Topel Award – Mary Wisniewski; Chicago Tribune

2018 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Metra Board of Directors: Norman Carlson, Chairman; Romaine C. Brown, Vice Chairman; John Plante, Treasurer; Rodney S. Craig, Secretary; Tim Balderman, Don A. DeGraff, Alexandra Holt, Ken Koehler, Steven K. Messerli, Stephen Palmer, John P. Zediker
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Public Awareness - Media Award – Bob Johnston, Trains Magazine
- ❖ Victor Olivera Success Lifetime Achievement Award – Michael E. Stead, Illinois Commerce Commission
- ❖ Michael DeLarco Educator for Railroad Safety Award – Larry Green, Metra
- ❖ Future Generations Award – Scott Gabree, PhD; Volpe National Transportation Systems Center

2020 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Future Generations Award – Ronald Batory, Federal Railroad Administration
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – Rodney Craig, Mayor Hanover Park, Illinois
- ❖ Victor Olivera Success Award – Paul Piekarski

2022 Awards

- ❖ Lauren Elizabeth Wilson Award – Karen Darch, President Village of Barrington
- ❖ Jonathan Goers Award – Joe Amore, Village of Villa Park
- ❖ Victor Olivera Success Award – Chip Pew, Illinois Commerce Commission and Illinois Operation Lifesaver

DRSC Officers and Directors

Lanny F. Wilson, M.D., *Chairman* lannyfwilsonmd@ameritech.net

Deborah Hare, *Vice Chairman* deborah.m.hare@gmail.com

Betty Olivera, *Vice Chairman* bmolivera@sbcglobal.net

Joe Amore, *Treasurer* amoreexpress@sbcglobal.net

Steve Laffey, *Secretary* stephen.laffey@illinois.gov

Hilary Konczal, *Director* hkonczal@metrarr.com

Karen Darch, *Director* kdarch@barrington-il.gov



DuPage Railroad Safety CouncilSM

2024 DRSC Members & Friends

Christopher Barkan, PhD	Bob Johnston
Terrell Barnes	Richard Jorgensen, MD
Fred & Barabara Biederman	George Canary
Tina Blumenberg	Barry Kaufman
Shelly Burke	Kroy Railway Group
Tim Butler	Jim Kveton
Norman Carlson	Jack Laude
Barry Carta	Chief Bryan Laurie
Liz Chaplin	Rick Leschina
Debra Chappell	Tom Livingston
Carl Cicero	Larry Lloyd
Commander James Cihak	John Loper
Deputy Chief Ryan Conway	David Mattoon
Bob Coppenhaver	Deputy Chief Dan McCann
Steve Cork	Sheriff James Mendrick
Mayor Rod Craig	Tony Mills
President Nick Cuzzone	Dennis Mogan
Sgt. Dino Dabezic	Phil Pasterak
Jennifer DeAngelis	Trustee Kevin Patrick
Mike & Linda DeLarco	John Plante
Cecilia Diaz	Connor Polomsky
Leo Ditewig	Deputy Chief Geoffrey Pretkelis
Scott Gabree	Jeffrey Price
Dick Goers	Marni Pyke
Eric Graf	John Radzinski
George Graves	Chief Mike Rivas
Michail (Mike) Grizkewitsch	Jim Samsula
Kris Habermehl	Ian Savage, PhD
Ron Haggh	Chief Nick Sikora
Det. Eric Haimann	Ron Simpson
Matthew Harline	Roger Smock
Sgt. Bryan Hruby	Ed Strohbahn
Rose Humiston	George Swimmer
Bella Insignares	Kurt Topel
Aisha Jackson	Brian Verduyse, P.E.
Chief Lou Jogmen	Deputy Chief Brian Windle

Acknowledgements 2024

“Silent gratitude isn't very much use to anyone.”

—G.B. Stern

This is our 15th set of acknowledgements, appreciating **30 years of generosity** from many, many people. Neither words nor awards are sufficient to show our sincere thanks to all who have supported the DuPage Railroad Safety Council leading up to today's event. **Your passion and your perseverance** have been priceless in helping us move closer to achieving our mission. That is especially true for all those members who gather on the third Saturday of every month, and for the board members who give us direction. **You all have true grit!**

Admittedly, it is risky business to start mentioning names because there will surely be obvious omissions in names or deeds done; but since silent gratitude isn't very much use to anyone, the effort seems worthwhile to me. So, here goes, beginning with our Board members:

Steve Laffey is our secretary, but he is so much more! He creates our meeting agendas and keeps our minutes. Steve's **impeccable statistics are famous** statewide and nationwide; and we get a firsthand look at them monthly. This booklet was mostly Steve's work. Steve is honest, hardworking, and always (sometimes painfully) honest and authentic. He is DRSC's "True North"!

Debbie Hare is **DRSC Communications** and our first Vice President. Her social media and other media posts are fresh and inviting. Her communication is **better than most diplomats**. Debbie helped design our booklet cover and save-the-date. She became our webmaster about two years ago and recently totally redesigned our website – a dream come true! Debbie is the embodiment of grace and kindness – a treasure of immeasurable value!

Betty Olivera is DRSC's second Vice President and our **legal eagle**. Betty joined the DRSC shortly after her nephew, Victor Olivera, sustained fatal injuries while riding his bicycle too close to the train tracks on May 25, 2004. Our decision-making is more secure knowing that Betty approves. She gives generously of her legal advice and her kindness. We are blessed!

Hilary Konczal is a longtime Board member. As the highest-ranking safety officer at Metra for years, his title occasionally changes, but never **his heartfelt dedication to saving lives**. We frequently ask him to moderate our panels because he knows so many people in the industry! Hilary is on the cutting edge of passenger rail safety and is asked to bring his expertise to conferences all over the U.S. He helps keep the DRSC on track and we are indebted!

Karen Darch is the Village President of Barrington, Illinois and one of our newest Board members. With **her gentle nature**, many are surprised by her strength of leadership and her bountiful knowledge. Karen's legal background gives her insights that many cannot even imagine. She comes prepared at every meeting to share something new and insightful. We are grateful that she brings **her wisdom, courage, kindness, and friendship**. We are in awe!

Joe Amore, a retired railroad conductor for the U.P. Railroad Company, is our newest Board member. He designed the handheld fans with the blue & white ENS signs on one side and the DRSC logo on the other. He hosted our 30th anniversary picnic this summer. **He is a master at setting-up table displays at safety fairs**, train station safety blitzes, and so much more. Joe's boundless energy, enthusiasm, and **can-do attitude** are nothing short of amazing!

Fred and Barbara Biederman have provided a great deal of funding for the DRSC and for railroad safety through the years. Most notably, they funded an ad in *Trains Magazine* advertising this year's summit and a professional CBS/Kris Habermehl television campaign to educate the public about the **blue & white ENS signs** as part of a "**How to stop a train, Campaign**". Longtime Operation Lifesaver members, they volunteer at safety blitzes, safety fairs, and multiple other locations spreading the railroad safety message. We appreciate you!

Tim Butler, President of the Illinois Railroad Association, joined the DRSC and has been an active participant. He brings State and National legislative information to our conversations. We are honored by Tim's participation and hope that we add to his information bank a fraction of what he brings to ours. Tim, you are truly a gentleman and a scholar!

Rod Craig is the Mayor of Hanover Park, Illinois and is a member of the Metra Board (among his many other responsibilities). His **valuable insights** are only matched by his **enthusiasm for life**. That enthusiasm has made him a profound safety advocate. His leadership in local, state, and national municipal governance provides him with an incredible wealth of information that the DRSC is able to use for its own advocacy. We are all made better by **his indomitable spirit!**

George Graves is retiring from the DRSC this year. He was **one of its founding members**. Whenever Chief George Graves is mentioned in law enforcement circles, it is always with **respect and utmost admiration**. He has attended many of our safety fairs and tabling events throughout the years. Along with his wife Shirley, they almost never missed an in-person meeting. Zoom meetings were never his thing, always feeling more like an observer than a participant. He will be missed for his **wisdom, connections, integrity, and guidance**. God bless!

Kris Habermehl attends meetings when his busy schedule allows. He was integral in helping to create the CBS-produced blue & white ENS sign videos. **Kris was a Godsend** by being able to fill-in to become our keynote speaker for this year's event when neither the FRA Administrator nor the NTSB Chair were able to fill that slot. One of the first times he communicated with the DRSC, he signed off – "**Your Partner in Safety**", and we appreciate his closing statement when giving his traffic reports "**...Let's be nice to one another.**" He's our kind of guy!

Rose Humiston was one of DRSC's founding members and served on the Board for two decades before her work and family moved to St. Louis. It has been good to have Rose back this past year. Her knowledge of the telecommunications industry has helped us along the way, and most recently, has guided our decisions with the new and improved webpage. Thank you!

Bob Johnston is an author and journalist who has been writing for Trains Magazine about passenger trains since 1991. He brings the latest information to us, regularly, about the rail industry, locally and nationally. He is the **ultimate gentleman** and **authentic** as can be!

Rick Leschina is a legislative representative for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. He attends meetings regularly, bringing the latest from the locomotive engineer's perspective. Rick contributes positively to our social media posts and is **one of the kindest people in the room** at almost every DRSC gathering!

David Mattoon was our previous webmaster and has been a loyal member of the DRSC for many years. Well-known to Operation Lifesaver for his many activities with that organization, David brings his **wealth of information to safety blitzes, safety fairs, and other events**. He and the Biedermans have provided safety education together for many years. Thank you David!

Tony Mills is one of DRSC's newest members but has quickly gained our admiration because of his **joy and enthusiasm**. He won DRSC's **Educator of the Year Award** because of his passion and knowledge, providing safety education to children and adults alike. One cannot be in Tony's presence long without a smile. What more can we say? **We simply admire you, Tony!**

John Plante became a regular attendee after our 20th anniversary event ten years ago. John was on the Metra Board when he joined and chaired their safety subgroup for several years. We appreciate his **insights and sage advice!**

John Radzinski has become a regular attendee, working for Metra and bringing his Hazardous Material background to our conversations. John is **hard-working, smart, strong, yet humble**. Thanks for giving up your mornings on the third Saturday of the month to make us smarter!

Nick Sikora is the Chief of Police for the Elburn Police Department. He attends meetings regularly and said that **Chief George Graves was one of his mentors**. Whenever there is a question about police affairs around railroad property, we can look to Chief Sikora for an answer. Chief, you could be doing many things on the third Saturday of each month. Spending it with the DRSC is a real gift to us, and **we thank you wholeheartedly!**

Ed Strobehn is our member from Northern Indiana. He is receiving the **Private Sector Champion Award** because of his generosity of time, talent, and treasures – educating the community where he lives. In fact, he missed our September DRSC meeting because he was **distributing railroad safety information at an apple festival** near his hometown. Thanks Ed!

Brian Vercruyse is the Railroad Safety Program Administrator for the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC). He was a **friend of the DRSC** long before becoming the ICC's Railroad Safety Program Administrator. Because of his advocacy on the DRSC's behalf, the Board of the ICC created a resolution "**Acknowledging 30 Years of Service By the DuPage Railroad Safety Council.**" We are grateful for this gift of acknowledgment and for the gift of **your trust in this grassroots organization!**

Thanks to the Speakers, Moderators, and Panelists who have made the 2024 "Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks" Conference possible. We are indebted to you for your pursuit of authentic knowledge, your willingness to share what you have learned, and for your genuine desire to make this earth a safer place on which to live.

Thanks to Every Person who took the time out of your busy schedules to join us today. We hope that you were inspired by something that you learned. Through a culture of collaboration with partners in safety like you, **we have the audacity to believe that our mission of eliminating deaths and injuries at railroad crossings and along railways is achievable.**

Blessings to each of you and to your families. Let us endeavor to keep one another safe; and as Kris Habermehl reminds us, "Let's be nice to one another."

The DuPage Railroad Safety Council

Special Thanks To:

Our Major Donors:

Fred and Barbara Biederman
Lowell Bostrom
The Family of Lauren Elizabeth Wilson

Our In-Kind Donors:

Deborah Hare, DRSC
Steve Laffey, Illinois Commerce Commission
DuPage Railroad Safety Council Board



DuPage
Railroad Safety
CouncilSM