



# Connections



From left, Superintendent Jason Charbonneau, President Jerry Peck and Locomotive Engineer Mike Holic



## Peck brings five decades of experience to Belt

On March 1, the Belt welcomed President Jerry Peck.

After 12 years of retirement, his passion for railroading has not wavered.

Peck's career began 52 years ago as a trainman for the Illinois Central Railroad, a job that saw him operate Amtrak, Metra and freight trains and work in yards.

"I've been in the industry for a long time, and I appreciate all the opportunities it's provided," he said.

Peck started as a supervisor of locomotive engineers for Illinois Central in 1991, a role he took to immediately given his strong relationship with those he was overseeing. His most recent role was at Canadian Pacific in Bensenville as a general manager.

Peck said the Belt is crucial to American railroading and that he will take an ownership attitude in leading it. He

expresses confidence in the team and the organization's future.

"The people are fantastic," he said. "They do the right thing."

Peck said that mentoring will be a vital part of his work and that he looks to reinforce the existing safety culture, which he categorized as strong and essential to the Belt's mission.

### Meeting

Peck met with several employees representing the vast majority of labor unions on March 17.

He appreciated the opportunity to introduce himself during lunch.

"They genuinely care about the people they represent, and they are interested in the direction the railroad is going," Peck said. "I let them know I am available and will listen to their concerns."



# CARMEN DEVELOP SKILLS

Carmen Matt Ferrin, Mike Janke and Greg Pikul are foremen in training.

The program, which includes two months of training and is overseen by General Foremen Jason Prosser and Jose Medina, began a year ago.

Foreman Tom Sipple, who has 50 years of experience, is mentoring the trainees, who were selected for their acumen as carmen and demonstration of leadership skills.

The trio praised Sipple for sharing his wealth of knowledge.

All three believe the program is helping them as

**“I’m a learner and like knowing the why of things.”**

— Carman Matt Ferrin

carmen. Janke said it’s been beneficial seeing the Car Department from a foreman’s perspective and that it’s helped him work more efficiently in the field.

Assistant Superintendent Bob Perham said that in addition to broadening the skill base of carmen, this helps prepare the Car Department for the future as foremen retire.

“I’m a learner and like knowing the why of things,” Ferrin said.

Pikul said his involvement in the program is part of his work ethic and desire to do the best he can.

From left are Carmen Matt Ferrin, Greg Pikul and Mike Janke.



## BELT UNIVERSITY takes root

Transportation has rolled out Learning Management System (LMS).

The software platform, dubbed “Belt University,” already has been adopted by Signal and Mechanical. It tracks employee training activity and acts as a clearinghouse for training material. Eventually, all departments and work groups will use it, and all employees will have access to it.

Manager of Human Resources and Labor Relations Caitlin Kerney led the effort to bring LMS to the Belt. Digital Media Coordinator Joe Chacon immediately recognized its utility, as it will allow employees to view training videos on demand.

Designated Supervisor of Remote Control Operators Jim Scarsellato and Assistant Director of Safety Mark Labbe are excited to use Belt University with the Belt’s five present Transportation trainees, and they are brainstorming ideas to get



New hire RCOs, including Isaac Duran, Enrique Gonzalez-Alarcon, and Alexander McClure, use LMS.

the most out of it. They said in addition to eliminating paperwork by automatically uploading data, LMS will alert them when an employee needs a certain certification and related training.

“That way no one slips through the cracks,” Labbe said, noting that the platform will allow leaders to have many options and facilitate creativity.

Scarsellato said Belt University is a welcome update to how training is administered.





## Belt joins other agencies to bolster public safety

Manager of Track Jeff Mateyack participated in a safety blitz at 59th Street recently.

He said he was heartened to be joined by representatives from the FRA, Chicago Police Department and Operation Lifesaver and appreciated their support in keeping the public safe.

Mateyack and others engaged pedestrians in the high-train, automobile and public transit traffic area, some of whom were disobeying train safety laws.

“Talking to people about it potentially could save their life,” he said, noting that if he reached even one person and helped them stop unsafe behaviors the effort was well worth it.



From left, FRA Inspector Cecilia Diaz, Chicago Police Department Officer Deb Preus (CPD Ofc.) and Manager of Track Jeff Mateyack promote public safety.



## McCarron, Perham value time in new roles

Chief Mechanical Officer Pat McCarron and Assistant Superintendent Bob Perham recently completed cross-training.

Starting Sept. 1, McCarron oversaw Car while Perham oversaw Locomotive. The training offered the practical benefit of allowing each to cover the other's role going forward. Both believe it enhanced their abilities in their current role by broadening their perspective and teaching them new skills.

“It got us out of our comfort zones,” McCarron said, noting that he learned to delegate more and grow comfortable learning new things.

From left are  
Assistant  
Superintendent  
Bob Perham  
and Chief  
Mechanical  
Officer Pat  
McCarron.

Perham said he now can better diagnose issues with locomotives that affect carmen during pulling or humping operations.

“I had very little locomotive experience,” he said.

McCarron said that due to his inexperience with cars, cross-training was humbling. He added the lessons were valuable, making the endeavor more than worthwhile.

“I learned how the Car Department fits within the entire system,” he said. “Bob and I have known each other for a long time, and it was good to have fresh eyes on things.”

The two remarked that their mutual trust and continuous communication made the process easier. Both said that over time they adjusted to a different work pace and gained patience.



Manager  
of Human  
Resources and  
Labor Relations  
Caitlin Kerney  
interviews  
Switchman  
Tracy Johnson.

## Employee spotlight series features Johnson, Heikes

The employee spotlight video series continued in February with Switchman Tracy Johnson and Signal Foreman Mike Heikes.

Manager of Human Resources and Labor Relations Caitlin Kerney interviewed both.

Johnson discussed the sense of community he enjoys at the Belt and teammates who have supported him. He also talked about his extensive Converse shoe collection.

Heikes chatted with Kerney about his dedication to his family.

"It was very sweet when he was talking about his daughter," Kerney said. The interview includes Heikes discussing his daughter's adventures in roller skating.

More employee spotlights are in editing and soon will be released.



**CONGRATULATIONS,  
Eddie!**



From left are  
East Yardmaster  
Nick Pehlke  
and Conductor  
Eddie Jimenez.

Conductor Eddie Jimenez retired after 30 years of service.

The stalwart member of the team also was an experienced locomotive engineer and yardmaster.

His teammates organized a retirement party in the General Office Building Feb. 14. Recently retired Machine Operator Alfredo Hernandez returned to take part in the celebration.



# Police grateful for Tasers

Members of the BRC Police underwent Taser training on March 20.

The famed devices are used to administer non-lethal force to de-escalate potentially dangerous situations.

Sgt. Young Lee, who is the police training coordinator, participated. A former law enforcement agent was provided by Taser's manufacturer to conduct the eight-hour training course as a master instructor. He taught Belt officers how and when to use the device and how to safely handle subjects after deployment.

Lee, who is now a Taser instructor and can train others on its use, said officers are trained to use words first before other actions, and that having the Taser allowed officers a vital tool when words do not suffice.

"The Belt is providing a device to help us do our job safely and we're grateful," he said.



From left are Sgt. Young Lee and Patrolman David Sass at Taser training.



The Columbus Avenue highway-grade intersection

## CREATE projects starting

Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) projects continue on Belt main line.

Grade separation work at Columbus Avenue and Archer Avenue in Chicago will start in late spring and summer respectively. This will take more than two years to complete.

Chief Engineer Tom Lyons said that in eliminating crossings and adding new landscaping and sidewalks, this will "provide a lot of community benefit," including less train interference for motorists and pedestrians.

The City of Chicago is managing both projects. A contractor has been selected for the Columbus Avenue project and Archer Avenue soon will go out to bid. For both

projects, Belt employees will close down the crossing and install a shoofly, 1,500 feet at Columbus Avenue and nearly a mile long at Archer Avenue. The temporary tracks will reroute Belt main line and facilitate construction, which will include digging underpasses.

"There's a lot more going into the Archer Avenue project due the number of switches and track geometry," Lyons said, noting it would require multiple phases and outages.

An even larger CREATE project is in the early design stage. It will extend the Harlem Avenue Bridge in Bedford Park at 65th Street and eliminate a crossing at 59th Street. Lyons estimates it will be as many as five years before ground is broken for this effort.





## Multitalented McGee changes crafts

Carpenter Unika McGee is excited for her new role.

"I'm loving it," the former conductor said. "I wanted to do something that's in my soul. I was taught in my 20s to love what you do, and I always have followed that."

McGee has a varied work history and skill set that includes supporting her family's real estate business, so she's versed in carpentry.

Known for often smiling, McGee said the work environment at the Belt makes it easy for her to be upbeat. She said her co-workers are like family to her, which is why the Belt feels like home to her.

"It's so important that we watch each other's back," McGee said. "I have been trained to the utmost."

She praised Assistant Director of Safety Mark Labbe for being concerned about the safety and development of employees and patiently answering questions. McGee added that all those who trained her as a conductor gave her a



Carpenter Unika McGee, center, briefs with teammates, including B&B foreman Elvis Medina, right, and an employee from Industrial Fence.

sense of comfort and empowerment.

She's presently remodeling an office and soon will be pouring asphalt in the parking lot. McGee finds enhancing

the facility fulfilling because she knows she's making things better for the Belt's people. She also will be working on bridges this summer.

## IT making enhancements to bolster security, performance

The Belt's computer network is in the midst of an overhaul.

The project will enhance performance and security and increase capability and capacity.

Director of Information Technology Bob Whitlock said many network components are at end of life. He added that without the overhaul it wouldn't be possible to add new technology, which is not tenable.

"Belt Apps is growing every day," Whitlock said. "That requires more networking resources."

Part of the overhaul will see a purpose-built cybersecurity disaster recovery building. If the General Office Building is



out of service, including power outages, the equipment in the disaster recover building, remote location, can be put to use.

He said that plans are for the new network equipment to reach the "point of connectivity" in July. That's when the team is expected to start practicing disaster recovery.

Another enhancement related to disaster recovery also is in the works. In an emergency situation, systems used on premises in the General Office Building can be backed up and run off-site via the cloud.

# Jonas, Chacon savor chance to showcase careers

Digital Media Coordinator Joe Chacon and Signal Instructor Clint Jonas participated in Sawyer Elementary's career day March 5.

The Chicago school is home to more than 2,700 students, grades kindergarten through eighth grade.



From left, Signal Instructor Clint Jonas and Digital Media Coordinator Joe Chacon interact with a student.

The duo addressed classes in 15-minute blocks, adjusting their presentation to different age groups.

"Seeing the kids light up when they saw us in our PPE was great," Jonas said. "It's a different type of education showing them what we do."

The children were engaged and asking questions. For older children, a six-minute video was played. It was produced by Chacon and features Transportation Clerk Car Operations Alyssa Mendez, a former conductor. It details her journey at the Belt, showcasing the company's commitment to employee development and ability to provide a broad range of opportunities.

"I hope we were able to make working at the Belt attractive for local kids and that they become railroaders in the future," Jonas said.

**“Seeing the kids light up when they saw us in our PPE was great.”**  
— Signal Instructor Clint Jonas

## C3RS process making difference at the Belt and beyond

The C3RS Peer Review Team (PRT) met March 18.

"It went great," Signal Instructor Clint Jonas said. "There isn't a situation where someone doesn't have pertinent experience."

With 10 craft employees on the team, all unions are represented at meetings.

Since the start of the year, the team has reviewed 11 cases. These initially are submitted by Belt employees to NASA. The agency ensures that the submission is entirely anonymous and then places them on a portal where the PRT can download it. Then during the PRT meeting, the facilitator, most recently Machinist Ryan Dolatowski, will read through the case. It will be discussed by the team in the hopes of eliminating or mitigating any issues discovered with corrective actions. Pertinent data from the case, such as incident time of day, department and employees' years of experience, will be recorded to help note trends and guide safety efforts.

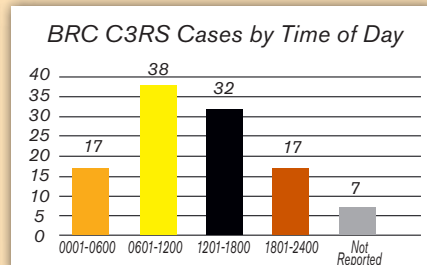
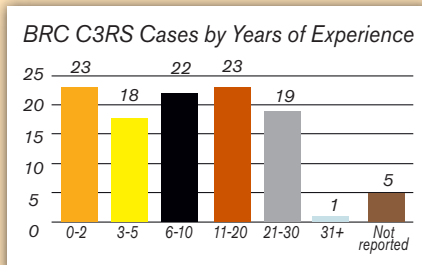
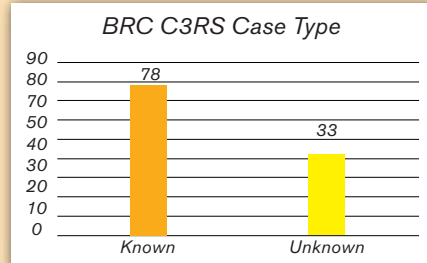
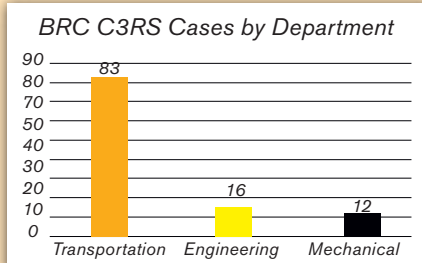
Jonas said the PRT's work has led to several safety enhancements. He notes that NASA uses case data to chart industry trends, so Belt submissions help enhance industry safety.

Affiliation/PRT Role/Name	
BRC Engineering Dept. Scribe (1) Clint Jonas	BRC Engineering Dept. Member Lucas Jimenez
BRC Transportation Dept. Scribe (2) Sean Niziolek	BRC Mechanical Dept. Member Mark Walztoni
BRC Mechanical Dept. Facilitator (1) Joe Czerwinski	BRC Mechanical Dept. Member David Charniak
BRC Mechanical Dept. Facilitator (2) Ryan Dolatowski	BRC Transportation Dept. Member Simeon Brandon
BRC Superintendent Jason Charbonneau	BRC Transportation Dept. Member Tim Mutzbauer
BRC Safety Dept. Process Manager Mark Labbe	BRC Transportation Dept. Member Carl Billingham
BRC Mechanical Dept. Process Manager Robert Perham	FRA Member James Hass
	FRA Member Robert Ferrari



**C3RS**

**Peer Review Team**





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# MECHANICAL COMES TOGETHER FOR SAFETY

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The Mechanical Department has begun celebrating their safety achievements as one for the first time.

Both Car and Locomotive employees enjoyed a celebratory barbecue of burgers and hot dogs on March 20 at the locomotive shop. Both work groups completed February without a reportable injury or critical rule violation.

Chief Mechanical Officer Pat McCarron said that having a joint celebration inspired greater unity.



General Car Foreman Jason Prosser serves a burger to Carman Ontario Drake.

