



North American Section

IRSE North American Section 2009 Activities



2009 was another busy year for the North American Section, and the members and Local Committee work has paid off in a number of ways. Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) was continued with the format of a conference and planned field trip held in conjunction with the Railway Systems Suppliers Inc. product show. We expect to continue to provide the members with exciting opportunities for professional enhancement in 2010 in Omaha, Nebraska.

This year's Annual General Meeting was held at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center, Nashville, Tennessee. On Monday, May 18th, 2009 the Institution of Railway Signal Engineers (IRSE) North

American Section (NAS) held a technical meeting that consisted of a half day conference divided into two different sessions each with three presentations. The themes of the sessions were: "PTC Current Status in Government and Industry" and "The Engineering Resource Gap in C&S". The event was well attended by over 60 interested guests as the "packed house" below shows.



The speakers included:



- **Kendrick Bisset**, NAS Local Committee Chair from **Safetran**– Kendrick provided an introduction of the Conference as well as adding comments in the second session on engineering education.



- **Bill Scheerer**, IRSE North American Country Representative with **GE Transportation** - Bill discussed the IRSE NAS beginnings from 2002 and the progress made since. In addition, Bill moderated the first session of the Conference on Positive Train Control.



- **Tom McFarlin**, was the first speaker for the Conference. Tom is the Staff Director, Signal and Train Control for the **Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)**. He provided insight into the current rule making process for Positive Train Control and the current status of PTC from the FRA's perspective.



- **Dr. Mark Hartong**, a Senior Electronics Engineer for **FRA**, provided additional details about PTC. In addition, Dr. Hartong discussed PTC development plans required and what is expected from the Railroads in the coming months



- **Jeff Fries**, with **GE Transportation** gave a presentation of the magnitude of the PTC project in the US with over 75,000 locations to be interfaced into PTC nationwide. In addition, Jeff highlighted some of the criteria for the wayside interface units developed by the large US railroads.



- **Ed Mortlock**, with **Parsons Brinkerhoff** (but representing **Caltrain** in Southern California) talked about the CBOSS (Communications Based Overlay Signal System) being developed by Caltrain to implement PTC with some advanced functionality unique to their operational requirements.



- **Dave Thurston**, with **Parsons**, and NAS Local Committee Vice Chair, introduced the second session of the conference dealing with “Filling the Gap in C&S Engineering”, and later (with Kendrick Bisset) discussed the NAS Certification Program with the attendees.



- **Professor Dave Clark**, Ph.D., P.E. **University of Tennessee, Knoxville** gave an excellent presentation on the Railroad-University relationship, and what can be done to increase the level of effort related to C&S engineering.



- **Professor Chris Barkin**, along with **Jon Roma** from the Railroad Engineering Program at the **University of Illinois** discussed the Railway Engineering program at Illinois, and specifically the course taught their on Railway Signaling and Control. Dr. Barkin mentioned that the IRSE NAS book on signaling is part of that coursework, and recommended reading for all of his students.



After the last presentation by NAS members on the work that the Section is continuing with in the field of education and certification, the floor was opened to questions from the attendees.

At the conclusion of the Conference, Kendrick Bisset, NAS Committee Chair called the Annual General Meeting to order. Noting that a quorum was present, the minutes of AGM held on May 20th 2008 were approved.

The Section was again fortunate to have significant representation from London at this year's Annual General Meeting as **Frans Heijnen, President of the Institution** was on hand and gave some very relevant remarks on the "sustainability" of the Railway Engineering Practice. The speech by President Heijnen were very much in line with the NAS work on education and professional development.



The business of the Section concluded with the election of a new Chair, Vice Chair two members to the Local Committee. These positions were filled by:

Chairman: David Thurston, Parsons - to a two year term

Vice Chair: Kendrick Bisset, Safetran - to a two year term

Committee Members: Rob Burkhardt, ISIS Consultants - to a two year term

Committee Members: Joe Noffsinger, GE Transportation - to a two year term



The AGM and Conference meeting room was graciously provided by the Railway Systems Suppliers, Inc, who also provide the NAS with booth space at the RSSI annual product show.

Shown in the photograph to the left can be seen Kendrick Bisset and Frans Heijnen during their time at the show. Many information packets and book orders were passed out during the two day show, and the members wish to thank the individuals that volunteered their time to man the

booth. A special thanks to Vic Babin for setting up the booth and organizing our efforts there. The planned field trip unfortunately was cancelled.

Preparations for the 2010 AGM are just getting underway. In cooperation with the Railway Systems Suppliers Inc at their annual product show, we will once again hold a technical conference on subjects relevant to the membership. As is our custom, a business meeting and technical visit will also be arranged. Any members interested in presenting a paper should contact Kendrick Bisset (Kendrick.Bisset@safetran.com) or Dave Thurston (david.thurston@parsons.com) to find out more about this exciting opportunity. We look forward to seeing all of you in Omaha, Nebraska.

What is the Institution of Railway Signal Engineers? The IRSE is an international organization of professionals in the railroad communication and signal field. The United Kingdom based organization was chartered in 1912, and presently has 4,500 members worldwide. The goals of the Institution are, first: “The advancement ... of the science and practice of signalling ... by the promotion of research, the collection and publication of educational material and the holding of conferences, seminars and meetings”, and second: “The maintenance of high standards of practice and professional care amongst those working within the industry...”.

The IRSE sponsors technical papers at section meetings such as the NAS and general conferences throughout the world. Each year the papers are gathered in the Annual Proceedings, which are provided free to all IRSE members, along with a summary of the discussions. In addition, the IRSE publishes a monthly magazine for members, the IRSE News, with technical articles and information on the Institution.

The North American Section (NAS) was formed on May 24, 2002 to support the goals of the Institution in North America. The NAS presently has over 50 members, and is encouraging railroad communication and signal professionals to join. While prospective

NAS members must also be members of the IRSE, the NAS Local Committee would be pleased to offer assistance to anyone interested in the applying for the benefits of membership with their application. NAS membership at present is free. IRSE membership is available at several levels, from Associate to Fellow with appropriate membership fees. Information on IRSE and NAS membership can be found at www.irse.org.

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