

**Secretary/Treasurer's Report**  
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In my last column, I outlined the results of our membership survey on bargaining issues for the current round of national contract negotiations. In this column, I want to introduce the preliminary results of the recently completed Track Inspection Survey conducted by BMWED.

The BMWED Track Inspection Survey was commissioned in response to Section 403 of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (RSIA). The RSIA mandates the Federal Railroad Administration to conduct a track inspection study within the industry before October 2010.

Section 403(a) of the RSIA states:

**SEC 403.**

(a) *“STUDY. – Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall transmit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and transportation of the Senate a report containing the results to determine whether—*

- (1) the required intervals of track inspections for each class of track should be amended;*
- (2) track remedial action requirements should be amended;*
- (3) different track inspection and repair priorities or methods should be required;*
- (4) the speed at which railroad track inspection vehicles operate and the scope of the territory they generally cover allow for proper inspection of the track and whether such speed and appropriate scope should be regulated by the Secretary.”*

In view of this Congressional mandate to the FRA, National Division President Freddie Simpson, with the full and unanimous support of the National Division Officers, directed the BMWED Department of Safety to conduct our own track inspector survey in advance of the FRA study. A small committee of BMWED Officers and Staff developed the survey questionnaire in-house with the assistance of the IBT Economics and Contracts Department.

In late July 2009, National Division mailed the survey questionnaire to the homes of 1,543 BMWED track inspectors who are qualified and designated to inspect track under (49 CFR) §213.7 of the Federal Track Safety Standards. I am pleased to report that 454 BMWED track inspectors --roughly thirty percent (30%) --completed and returned their surveys by the August 31, 2009, deadline. Our Department of Safety has tabulated the survey results and the Brotherhood is currently analyzing the data with the assistance of the IBT.

I believe that the preliminary results of this survey reflect just some of the “real-world” challenges, barriers and conditions that can impact a track inspector’s ability to fulfill their safety-critical responsibilities to inspect and protect our nation’s railroads. The data derived through the BMWED survey will allow the Brotherhood to present our own, independent, member-driven views and opinions to the FRA. We will use this data to represent the views and

opinions of BMWED track inspectors in any future legislative or regulatory proceedings related to track inspection.

Thanks to the 454 track inspectors who responded to our survey, we are now in a position to quantify conditions under which mainline track is inspected. Data collected includes information regarding the size of inspection territories, the number of tracks inspected at one time, the number of inspectors in a high-rail inspection vehicle during a multi-track inspection, opinions on optimal high-rail inspection speeds, the availability of local track forces to correct track defects found, the existence and impact of management/supervision pressure, and a whole host of other railroad industry and carrier specific trends.

BMWED will withhold publishing its full BMWED Track Inspection Report until after the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) conducts its own study as mandated by Section 403 of the RSIA. However, both President Simpson and I feel strongly about the continued need to communicate with our members on such important issues. Therefore, we have published a “snapshot” of some of our preliminary findings in this edition of the *Journal*. This information is preliminary and does not include all the data collected. Therefore, we anticipate that these preliminary findings will be subject to further analysis, revision, and review.

The FRA will soon be conducting their own surveys and interviews with track inspectors, track supervisors, railroad managers/officials, and others sometime later this year. I encourage you to respond to the FRA’s survey if you receive one, and participate in interviews with FRA if requested, so that your views and opinions will be heard and documented as part of that federally commissioned study.

In closing, I want to thank all of our track inspectors who took the time to fill out and return their surveys to the National Division. I also want to thank our General Chairmen and System Officers for their assistance and support of our numerous survey efforts. Our mutual communication among all levels of the Brotherhood continues to make our Union stronger, better informed, and more united.

