I.C.C. Says Public Should Foot Bill For Safety Devices at Crossings

Motor vehicles rather than trains are usually at fault in grade crossing accidents, the Interstate Commerce Commission found in a three year study on the subject.

A broad safety program adopted by the Commission included a recommendation that Congress give "serious consideration to ... legislation to provide public funds for installation and maintenance of grade-crossing protective devices."

The funding recommendation was based on a finding that "highway users are the principal recipients of the benefits flowing from rail-highway grade separations and from special protection at rail-highway grade crossings."

"For this reason, the cost of installing and maintaining such separations and protective devices is a public responsibility and should be financed with public funds, the same as highway traffic devices."

In the past, the Commission said, "it was the railroad's responsibility for the protection of the public at grade crossings. This responsibility has now shifted. Now it is the highway, not the railroad, and the motor vehicle, not the train, which creates the hazard."

Promotions in Traffic Department

Several promotions have been announced recently by the Traffic Department:

- J. W. Maurice Rucker from Commercial Agent at Montgomery to Division Freight Agent at Columbus, Miss. Mr. Rucker's first job was with the Railroad as a stenographer in the General Manager's office in 1925. He entered Freight Traffic the next year and has held various positions in sales at Jackson, Tennessee, New York City, Chicago and Montgomery where he has been Commercial Agent since 1937.

- J. R. Billingsley from Chief Clerk, Merchandise Department at Mobile to Assistant Manager, Merchandise Department at Mobile. Mr. Billingsley has been with the Company since 1933 when he went to work as a Stenographer in the Traffic Department. He was Secretary to the General Freight Agent from 1934 to 1937 when he was promoted to Chief Clerk, Merchandise Department.

- William H. Davis from Freight Traffic Agent at Kansas City to Commercial Agent at Kansas City. Employed in 1937 as Assistant Agent at Mobile, Mr. Davis was on the prize side of Traffic at Mobile as Junior Clerk, Asst. Rate Clerk and Rate Clerk until 1936 when he transferred to Memphis as Chief Clerk in the Traffic Office there. In April 1933 he became Freight Traffic Agent at Kansas City.

- Clerk Y. Hall III from Freight Service Agent at Mobile to Freight Traffic Agent at Kansas City. Mr. Hall's service began in 1935 as Office Assistant and he held jobs as Clerk-Stenographer and Traffic Clerk before becoming Freight Service Clerk in 1934 and Freight Service Agent in May 1943, all at Mobile.

- Paul C. Jones from Steno-Clerk at Kansas City to Freight Traffic Agent there. After 14 years experience as Clerk in the Agency Stations of Centralia, Mexia, Vandalia and Kansas City, Mo., transferred to office of Assistant General Freight Agent at Kansas City as Steno-Clerk in 1935.

- Roland R. Ford from Rate Clerk at New Orleans to Freight Traffic Agent. New Orleans. Mr. Ford has been with the Company since 1930 when he went to work in the Local Freight Office as a messenger, being promoted to Utility Clerk and then to rate clerk in the downtown Traffic Office in 1932.

Lesson Won't Learn

The St. Lawrence Seaway is running 34,000,000 tons of cargo behind the original projections in its first four years of operation and is $100,000,000 in debt to the U.S. Treasury. Payments made to date show no interest in the loan.

Wen't the taxpayers ever learn? Right now similar claims are being made about how much tonnage the proposed Tennessee-Tombigbee river waterway will generate in an effort to justify another huge government expenditure for give-away transportation.

New Chain Flat Cars

Twenty-five new bulk head chain flat cars designed to handle such commodities as lumber, pipe and steel products will be added to our freight car fleet in late July or August.

The 61-foot cars which will also be equipped with roller bearings are being built by the Thrall Car Manufacturing Co., of Chicago Heights, Illinois. The chains hold loads in place. The cost is around $400,000.

Verbeck Heads Purchasing

C. T. (Claude) Verbeck was appointed Manager of Purchasing and Supply by President Glen Brock on January 1. He succeeds the late H. O. Wolfe, and was Purchasing Agent at the time of his promotion.

Mr. Verbeck was brought with him to the eighth floor desk that overlooks oak-bordered Bienville Square in downtown Mobile and is the top seat for some twenty-five million dollars in purchases annually, 41 years of buying savvy. He was just a lad of 15 when he hired out as an office boy with the Mobile and Ohio Railroad (GM&O) in St. Louis. In the meantime he's bought railroad items ranging up and down the list from Angle irons to Xerox machines and even did a stint purchasing for Gulf Transport, GM&O's highway subsidiary.

Trim figured and neat you just know at a glance that he's the type man that would be careful of the Company’s cash outlay. He has no particular hobby, but does enjoy keeping his flower garden and lawn in shape.

Makes More Cars

With the post-war trend to larger freight cars, average car capacity has been steadily rising. This has been somewhat of a saving factor when cars were short nationwide by actually providing more cars for less cost.

As an example on our own railroad, the average load per car increased from 33,075 tons in 1941 to 37,075 tons in 1963. This means that last year fourteen thousand three hundred more cars would have been needed to transport our business if the average load per car had not increased by 1.19 tons over 1962.

However loadings also enable the railroads and orders during 1964 are expected to continue this trend.

Fifty thousand new freight cars were bought last year by the American Rail- road and orders during 1964 are expected to double this figure.

This year over a million new work- ers will be added to the nation’s work force. And for each of these workers, an average of $15,000 in income may be provided for his tools and plant facili- ties. Your savings and investments, along with those of million of other Americans, will provide this capital.
Custom House Cornerstone Secret Solved; Early Minutes of Railroad Revealed

Ever since the First National Bank announced that it would raze Mobile's century-plus old Custom House building and construct a new 33-story banking home and office building on the site, speculation has been high over what historic mementos of the City's past would be contained in the cornerstone.

For years it has been said that the original charter of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad (now GM&O) dating back to 1848 had been entombed for posterity there. Because the location is just across the street from our General Office building and also because First National's very popular President, H. A. Pharr, is also a Director of GM&O since 1899, railroad interest in the demolition job just outside the windows has been of triple intensity.

One day recently, after all three floors had been flattened with no sign of a cornerstone, the wrecking ball struck into the northeast corner of the foundation. From beneath a marble slab out popped a copper box which apparently had reposed there for the last 116 years.

The old M&O papers, that rumor had identified as the charter, turned out actually to be a copy of the minutes of the first annual stockholders meeting in 1849 and the sixth annual stockholders meeting in 1854. This latter date seemed to be about current with the dedication of the Customs House building, for the latest date on newspapers also found in the box is July 17, 1854.

These and other papers in the box were somewhat soggy due to seepage water but were otherwise well preserved and in most cases the print clear. They dealt with civic and social matters of interest of that day.

There was also a collection of money and of all things a bottle of "Sure Shot Worm Killer" along with 12 pages of manuscript which efforts are being made to restore.

Paper money in the box was reminiscent of the days before a national paper currency. There was a $20 bill issued by the Mississippi-Alabama Real Estate & Brokerage Co. at Decatur, Miss., with the information that the company's stock is "secured by real estate and to be paid in cotton." And there was a $1 bill issued by the Bank of Mason, Georgia.

H. O. Wolfe

The railroad lost a valuable officer in the untimely passing of Heber O. Wolfe, Manager of Purchases and Stores, on January 6. Widely experienced in his field and with a warm and friendly personality he had many friends in all types of business and industry across the country.

He began his rail career with the Alton (GM&O) in 1917 at Bloomington, transferring the same year from the Mechanical to the Stores Department.

During his many loyal years with the company he served in such capacities as Chief Clerk, Traveling Storekeeper, Assistant, and then General Storekeeper; Purchasing Agent at Chicago and Mobile and in 1960, Manager of Purchases and Stores.

"In his 47 years of service he contributed much to the success of our operations," President Brock said upon Mr. Wolfe's death.

Survivors include Mrs. Wolfe, a son and other relatives.

M. D. Carothers

Retired Assistant Chief Engineer M. D. Carothers passed away at Kansas City, Missouri on March 6, 1964. Widely known, particularly on the North-end of our Railroad where he had served at Bloomington and in Chicago in various engineering capacities. Mr. Carothers is survived by his wife and a daughter, Mrs. Mary Jane Carper of Kansas City. Burial was in Bloomington.

G.M.&O. Director H. A. Pharr with cornerstone box and contents.

Willing to Pay Fair Share

"As responsible citizens, railroads have always been willing to pay their fair share of the cost of government in countless communities throughout the nation which they serve. They should not be required to pay more. J. N. Ogden, GM&O Vice President and General Counsel, said in a recent Railway Age article.

In a special report entitled TAX OUTRAGE the national magazine pointed to discriminatory taxation levied by 24 states against railroad property which in one recent year amounted to $112,979,417.

Mr. Ogden, one of the leaders in the struggle to correct the inequalities, affirmed, however, that "railroads want their assessments to be no higher in relation to value than the assessments of all other property subject to the same tax rate."

Illinois has moved in this direction with a bill already passed which promises to do this.

Eagle Eye

Lineman W. B. Freeman of New Albany has an eagle eye and evidently an especially acute perception for detecting broken rails. His latest detection was made while riding in an automobile over the crossing at Mile G-341.

"Your unusual talent is a very valuable asset to our Company... and we greatly appreciate your continued alertness and interest in the welfare of our Company." Chief Engineer Cooper wrote Mr. Freeman.

* 2 *
Impressed

Gulf Transport, GM&O’s able highway arm, likes to think it played an important part in Mississippi State’s win in the Liberty Bowl. The football team traveled aboard three Gulf buses from State College to Birmingham to catch a jet plane for Philadelphia. The band in three buses and fans in two more made the entire round trip via Rebeline.

W. Thomas West, Head of the Department of Music Education and Director of Bands, called Gulf’s service “tremendous” and said the drivers were “very efficient” and did a “magnificent job” in bad weather conditions.

“We are very impressed with your Company’s service,” Mr. West wrote H. B. McIntosh of Gulf’s Mobile headquarters.

Top Level Accounting

Several top personnel changes in the accounting department of The Gulf Mobile and Ohio Railroad were announced March 1 by Vice President Y. D. Lott.

F. N. Johnson, Auditor of Receipts, retired at his own request after 49 years with the company.

T. Claude Adams, Auditor Machine Accounting, assumes the newly created office of Auditor Revenues in charge of all freight, passenger, station and agency and overcharge claim accounting.

Promoted to Assistant Auditor Revenues were the following three veteran employees: J. A. Blackman, formerly Assistant Auditor of Receipts; E. J. Brignac, formerly Auditor Passenger and Station Accounts, and L. R. Lagman, formerly Supervisor of Demurrage. The latter three departments have been consolidated under Auditor Revenues.

J. I. Sutton, formerly Methods Research Officer, is now Manager Data Processing, a new departmental designation replacing the old office of Mr. Adams as Auditor of Machine Accounting which has been abolished.

Mr. Johnson’s retirement will end a rail career which began in 1914 as agent at Crockett Mills, Tennessee for The Birmingham and Northwestern Railroad, now a part of GM&O between Jackson and Dyersburg, Tennessee. He held various positions in the accounting department of the B&NW, moving to Mobile from Jackson, Tennessee, in 1919 as one of the original officers in the early growth of the railroad. Since 1923 he has been in charge of the receipts section of the local road’s accounting division. The Mobilian is the oldest member in point of seniority of the Accounting Division of the Association of American Railroads, formerly the Railroad Accounting Officers Association.

Mr. Adams, the new Auditor Revenues, has 36 years of accounting experience with the company. As chief clerk in the station accounting bureau he was promoted to Auditor Passenger and Station Accounts in 1953 and auditor of Machine Accounting in 1959, the position held until his present promotion.

Mr. Blackman has been associated with the road since 1919 in various capacities in the accounting department.

Mr. Brignac’s service dates back to 1926 with the New Orleans Great Northern Railroad, a part of GM&O’s system between Jackson, Mississippi, and New Orleans.

Mr. Lagman, has worked for the company since 1919, and Mr. Sutton joined GM&O in 1946. The entire service of both men has been with the Accounting Department.

AN ELLIPSE

About 3/4 inch by 5/8 inch — is the area on the rail that a railroad car wheel touches at any one time, Kaiser Aluminum News pointed out recently.

This means that a 100-car train, made up of 100-ton capacity cars weighing over all 263 million pounds and stretching more than a mile long, is supported at any given moment on an area totaling only 294.4 square inches (or a little more than two square feet).

Thus, the surface friction that must be overcome — where the wheels meet the rails — is insignificant when compared to the vast loads that can be hauled over them.

Can any other mode of transportation come even close to matching these basic engineering advantages, this “secret” of railroad efficiency?

Department Changes

F. N. Johnson (left) retired on March 1 and (from left to right) the following were named in Accounting Department top level personnel changes: E. J. Brignac, T. Claude Adams, J. A. Blackman, J. I. Sutton and L. R. Lagman.
The Abraham Lincoln crossing the Kankakee River at Wilmington, Illinois and on-time for Chicago arrival.

By Kay Loring
The Chicago Tribune

I BELONG TO THE CULT of those who enjoy train travel. I like to hear the plaintive whistle of a locomotive as it rushes thru the night. I like the way time seems suspended in a dining car that is resplendent with white linens and white coated waiters. I don't even mind the sloshing of the soup and coffee so long as they don't splatter my best suit.

There's the memory of the almost unbearable excitement of a first train trip when I was all of eight years old. Adult taste is more critical, travel more routine. But the pleasure lingers.

A recent trip was only 92 miles south to Pontiac, Ill., and back — just long enough for cocktails one way and dinner the other. And there was pleasant excitement about boarding the Gulf, Mobile, and Ohio and whirling away thru the evening dusk, the thin snow outside making us feel doubly comfortable in the club car.

Our host, Dennis T. Taillon, division passenger agent, possibly could be a whit prejudiced about merits of train travel. He has been with the railroad some 40 years, originally with the old Alton line before it merged with G. M. & O. He invited us aboard to see for ourselves the pleasant dining and lounge service on G. M. & O. that some travelers seem to think is a forgotten commodity on passenger trains.

We were joined in the club car by another enthusiastic rail traveler, Leonard Fumagalli of G. M. & O. who is kept busy conducting two-day tours for groups of 25 or more sightseers to Springfield and New Salem. It's a program particularly popular with student groups and with Boy and Girl Scouts.

Our leisurely steak and roast beef dining was in the blue and silver diner of the G. M. & O.'s Limited. The railroad actually takes a loss on the food service, Mr. Taillon told us. There is an expenditure of about $1.23 on wage and food costs in the diner for each dollar spent by a customer. It's an accommodation, however, that attracts patrons and ultimately pays off for the railroad...

There are sandwiches and a la carte items, as well as table d'Hote. We started with clam chowder, then savored excellent roast prime rib of beef, along with honey bran muffins, stewed tomatoes, lima beans, and a rather imaginative but tasty enough salad of head lettuce — all to the music of speeding wheels. A few wines are included on the menu.

Stopover in Pontiac

While we waited briefly between the south and north bound trains in the little town of Pontiac, our host discovered a unique tavern where walls are lined with rifles and pistols and a most astonishing display of mounted wild game. The owner, North Ronnow, is no Nimrod himself, we learned. When he did go hunting years ago, he found he couldn't bear to shoot a pheasant because it was so beautiful. So he contented himself with collecting mounted pheasant, duck, crane, deer heads, lynx, and other small animals from a couple of taxidermists, who often found themselves stuck with game that customers failed to call for.

W. E. (Bill) Ferry, the genial Passenger Agent, has been named a Director of the St. Louis Downtown Kiwanis Club.

C. L. (Claude) Fuhr, ticket agent at St. Louis, was recently elected first vice president of the St. Louis Passenger Club.
X Marks The Spot
Cerinth was originally Cross City — so named because it quickly sprung into being when the news leaked out that the Memphis and Charleston and Mobile and Ohio Railroads would make an "X" there.

In a recent article in the daily Corinthian, writer Bill Godwin went on to say that M&O (GM&O) reached Cerinth from the South only five days before Mississippi seceded from the Union and that the Railroad’s coming was hailed a gala ceremony, complete with champagne and a ten-round salute from the newly organized Cerinth Rifles Company.

Smiling Greeting Sells
Passenger Conductor H. J. McGraw of Bloomington is a real good will ambassador. He bestows a smiling “good evening” and a wish for a “pleasant trip” with every ticket he collects.

“He makes many friends for the railroad,” Passenger Traffic Manager Bruce Pete says in appreciation. Superintendent F. E. Wall added his thanks in a message to Conductor McGraw that “this is the type of courtesy that helps to keep passenger business on the rails.”

Time Now To Play
W. F. (Bill) Selph, of Meridian, will now have time to build that camp house which he has put off doing from year to year ever since he started working for the Railroad in 1923. He has never had the time to fish and hunt enough but when he retired on January 1 he decided to remedy this in a big way.

Mr. Selph has been trainmaster of the Mobile-Meridian Districts since September 1, 1951, and prior to that was trainmaster at New Orleans, assistant trainmaster at both Union and Louisville and in his earlier days as a railroad man he worked as a brakeman and a conductor.

In congratulating Mr. Selph on a “job well done” Vice President & General Manager Bodie told him “You are leaving a record of long and faithful performance of your duties and we congratulate you on your retirement and Mrs. Selph have my very best wishes for many years of good health and happiness.”

Railroad Cottage
“All this household stuff makes one feel that it’s strictly in the woman’s bailiwick — so I must put in a few words of praise and encouragement to a gentleman, Mr. H. Ghemmell of Sparta, whose ingenuity around his cottage is worthy of comment.” Katie’s Kolum in The Sparta News_FLanddealer said recently.

“Mr. Ghemmell, a railroader and widower for many years, has turned a rail road boxcar into the most darling gray cottage you ever saw . . . complete with windows, door, pink, white, and beautiful flower beds.” Katie continued.

“It’s worth a special drive to Mr. Ghemmell’s corner just to see it. Unique flower bed around a telephone pole and a R.R. crossing sign makes you kind of purr and smile as you cross the tracks. There are other flower beds of roses, pink, white, and a few zinnias which demand the eye . . . all done by Mr. Ghemmell . . . with a few flower seeds, a talented hand, and the will to work.”

Editor’s Note—Thanks, Floyd Graham, Supervisor of Freight Claim Protection, St. Louis.

Last of Laffey Trackmen
“Laffey’s Track Foremen” are no more. An old and renowned tradition that began with the father 79 years ago and was nurtured through the dedication of five of eight sons to the same job, ended on March 2 when J. J., Laffey of Shipman, Illinois retired.

The last of the Maintenance of Way Laffeys had hoped to work until November to round out a full fifty years with the Company, but because of the illness of Mrs. Laffey who is now recuperating from a serious operation, this goal was forsaken.

I have enjoyed the track work and all of the men I have worked with in the track department — and the old C&A and GM&O have had some good ones,” Mr. Laffey wrote Vice President and General Manager B. V. Bodie. “I have spent all but 11 years of my life on this railroad and I find it not too easy to leave it, but all good things must come to an end.”

One Laffey still remains to carry on the family name so ably in the annals of the railroad — Charlie (C.W.) who is a passenger conductor running out of Bloomington.

The federal government will spend this year an estimated five billion dollars on highways transportation or more than five times the amount President Johnson is seeking Congress to appropriate for his “attack on poverty.”