

Submitter: Stephen Parks
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB723

Honored Ladies & Gentlemen,

As a railroad engineer, I am asking you to support the 2 person crew measures whenever possible. Working in mountain territory presents many challenges, and break downs due to equipment, terrain, and/or weather can happen without warning. Once that happens, having a conductor on board becomes a "god send" to both the dispatchers, and the people on site. When trains run into problems it can take hours for someone to arrive at the location, where a second crew member can start checking for problems as soon as the train stops, and it is safe to inspect the train. In addition, if there is an on-board emergency (medical or other) a second person can at least call for assistance, and notify the dispatcher should an engineer become incapacitated. Make no mistake, having a one man crew on a train can be a death sentence in a medical emergency.

The railroads argue that having a mobile person can be faster at correcting problems on a train because they would be able to drive to the location faster than a person could walk. Funny how they always start the time at the arrival at the train. They do not tell you that just getting to the location can take hours, or they may have multiple calls for assistance from other trains miles or even hours away.

As for an on-board emergency, the company suggests that the train will bring itself to a stop, and notifies the dispatchers through an alerting system. That is only partly true. The truth is the system will bring the train to a stop after it times out, but no one is notified of the problem except the crew on board. I can't begin to count the times that I have been on a train and called the dispatchers for a status up-date only to hear "I didn't know you guys were still out there." Just imagine what would happen if the only member of the crew had to rely upon the dispatchers, who are under staffed and can take 20 minutes or longer to answer radio calls, noticing that a train was no longer moving.

Should you vote in favor of the railroad companies to allow one man crews on trains, you are issuing a death sentence to anyone having a medical emergency on a train.

I hope you remember that when you vote on this measure.

Sincerely,

Stephen Parks