



UE Demands Public Ownership of Railroads

For more information contact: Jonathan Kissam, UE Communications Director
(802) 343 1745 | jkissam@ueunion.org

UE's General Executive Board unanimously endorsed a [statement](#) on Friday demanding that Congress "immediately begin a process of bringing our nation's railroads under public ownership." The statement notes that "the private owners of our nation's Class 1 railroads have shown themselves utterly incapable of facing the challenge of the climate crisis, dealing fairly with their own workers, or even meeting the most basic needs of their customers."

Jessica Van Eman, a rail crew driver and president of UE Local 1477, decried the effects of longer trains on small communities like hers, where the longer and longer trains demanded by the railroads' "endless thirst for profit" can block access to crucial emergency services. "Just in our little town of Belen, New Mexico, we've had three people die because they could not get to the other side of the tracks," she said. "These rail yards are not made for 20,000-foot trains."

In 2021, UE launched the [Green Locomotive Project](#), which aims to encourage the railroads to upgrade their locomotive stock to cleaner and more efficient "Tier 4" locomotives, and to adopt zero-emissions technology for use in rail yards. This would significantly reduce both the pollution around rail yards and their carbon footprint, while creating good, union jobs — a concrete example of what a "Green New Deal" could accomplish.

Scott Slawson, the president of UE Local 506, said, "The emissions from old, polluting diesel locomotives are harmful to the people who work in rail yards and they're harmful to the communities around rail yards. We are committed to getting all locomotives out there to Tier 4 or better." Local 506 members manufacture locomotives for Wabtec in Erie, PA.

The full statement can be found at go.ueunion.org/railroads.

UE is an independent national union representing over 35,000 workers across many sectors of the economy, including over 1,000 workers who manufacture locomotives and locomotive parts, and over 2,000 subcontracted rail crew drivers, who pick up and drop off rail crew members wherever their shifts begin or end. The UE General Executive Board consists of rank-and-file union leaders from across the country,