



## Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

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Brothers and Sisters,

BMWED wants to recognize everyone who submitted photographs, documented defects, wrote reports, shared videos, and told the truth about what you see on the track every day. This is the reason our Brotherhood had the tools to confront the most aggressive railroad safety rollback proposal in decades. Your participation and work resulted in countless pieces of evidence being entered into the FRA record demonstrating that a reduction in track inspections will create a serious safety risk. You were honest, direct, and unfiltered about the dangers that automated systems cannot see, hear, or interpret. Your voices were heard because you refused to stay silent, and you carried the weight of this moment for the entire industry. That is what solidarity looks like.

On December 5, 2025, the Federal Railroad Administration issued a waiver that allows the railroads to move from twice weekly inspections to once weekly on selected subdivisions, but only within strict limits that exist for one reason: BMWED members forced those limits into place. The carriers came in expecting a broad, nationwide reduction in visual track inspections. Instead, they walked away with a narrow, heavily conditioned waiver that reflects exactly what our filings proved. Reducing visual inspections introduces real risks for rail workers, for families living near the tracks, and for the national rail network. Because you documented the truth from the field, any reduction is now tightly controlled, temporary, and subject to immediate reversal the moment safety declines. This is not the victory the carriers wanted. It is a reminder that when our members stand together and speak with evidence and experience, we change outcomes that were supposed to be foregone conclusions.

We also need to correct a false narrative that the railroads and their well-funded AAR lobbyist machine continue to push. They claim the BMWED opposes TGMS, even though every filing and press release we have issued says exactly the opposite, and TGMS has been used on railroads since the 1970s. Their claim is political messaging, not fact. The truth is that the AAR knows as much about track safety as you can learn from a conference room PowerPoint in downtown Washington. Their lobbyists have never built or maintained track, yet they feel comfortable lecturing federal regulators at cocktail hours about what “real safety” should look like. If they cared about safety, they would listen to the men and women who actually inspect and maintain the track. What the AAR is selling is not safety. It is a political product designed to justify weaker regulation and higher profits, and it falls apart the moment it touches ballast.

When the AAR’s narrative leads to another railroad disaster, BMWED will not be silent. We have been clear from the start: reducing visual inspections reduces safety and places the physical risk and emotional turmoil on the communities they are entrusted to serve. No railroad or lobbyist will be able to claim they were not warned, because they chose cost cutting over genuine safety. Automated systems cannot replace the full judgment of trained inspectors, and using them to justify fewer inspections endangers workers, the environment, and every community along the rail line.

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Wherever this waiver is used, our members must stay vigilant. Every dangerous condition, every defect ATI misses, every environmental hazard, and every inconsistency between automated data and real track conditions must be documented. Your reports will be essential to exposing the consequences of the AAR's push to weaken safety. We ask that you remain engaged as we monitor this waiver and hold the carriers accountable for every condition placed upon them. Together, we will ensure that rail safety never becomes a bargaining chip for corporate interests and that the truth from the field continues to shape the future of this industry.

Fraternally,  


Tony D. Cardwell  
BMWED President