Proponent Testimony for HB 186

Safe Walking-Working Surfaces component within HB 186

Chairman Green, Vice Chairman McClain, and members of the House Transportation & Public Safety Committee,

My name is Jair Torres and I have been a railroad employee for 8 years. I thank you for allowing me to appear before you today to give testimony in favor of HB 186. It is my intention to explain briefly my support for the entirety of HB 186, and expound upon my personal dealing with walking-working conditions specific to the walk-path stone proposal in the bill.

* **HB 186 is first and foremost about public safety**. Each component, as you will hear testimony today, directly affects the safety of the public and those members of the public that work in the rail industry.
  + Two-person crews provide safety in the event of an emergency and also in the prevention of emergencies,
  + Lighting in rail yards provides protection for the working public to be able to see the movements of rail cars and other persons or equipment in the rail yard,
  + Blocked crossings create a problem for emergency personnel when time is most precious,
  + Walking surfaces are essential to the health and safety of the working public.
* **HB 186 is about safe working conditions.** I have worked in a Class 1 rail yard for over 8 years now, and I can tell you walking-working conditions are a major safety concern. Often times while walking alongside the rail for working purposes I have stepped on stones that are too large to settle into a smooth, uniform surface. The results of stepping on these fist-sized stones have been: a slight stumble, a foot sliding out from under me until I could catch myself, a near fall, or a near injury. I have been fortunate to not stumble into the path of a moving rail car or locomotive. Many times, the larger stones just do not hold together like smaller stones can, or the stones teeter on top of a solid surface or other stones causing instability even when appearances would suggest solid, smooth walking conditions. So even when I check the path ahead for clear and safe conditions, there are still times when larger stones have created a potential hazard.
* **HB 186 allows for the prevention of accidents when other factors curtail safety.** A uniform walking surface assures solid footing in the event the ground cannot be seen. The weather in Ohio affects outdoor working areas. In a few inches of snow, ground conditions can be unknown and this affects the walking conditions in the areas near the rail. A consistent walking surface under the snow can help diminish or eliminate the added hazards of walking in snowy and icy conditions. Rain and fog are also weather conditions that compound the potential to slip or fall while working. Weather is not a controllable factor, but the walking surface is a controllable factor. Consistent, reliable walking-working conditions can actually help prevent accidents during inclement weather.
* **It is reasonable to have safe walking conditions in rail yards where the working public frequently walk and are expected to walk in order to work.** The walkway stone portion of HB 186 is a way to ensure that the working public are able to walk safely while performing other safety related tasks and necessary work duties. While you are considering the other components of HB186, I ask you please to remember that each of these proponent requests are intended to help promote a culture of safety in Ohio’s rail industry.

**HB 186 is the bill that calls for a conservative measure of precaution in the event of an emergency; HB 186 assures safety has a firm foundation at the intersection of private and public railroad interests.**

Thank you for your time and service to Ohio. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Jair C. Torres

Local Legislative Representative

SMART-Transportation Division

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