

PRESS RELEASE

On behalf of the following Rail Labor Unions: American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA); Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET); Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BMWED); Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS); International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM); International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers (IBB); International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW); National Conference of Firemen & Oilers (NCFO); Sheet Metal Workers International Association (SMWIA); Transportation•Communications International Union (TCU); Transport Workers Union of America (TWU); United Transportation Union (UTU).

There have been many misleading articles recently from various news sources that have badly mischaracterized the railroad retirement occupational disability program and the railroad retirement system itself.

The occupational disability program is the direct result of agreements between rail labor and the rail industry. Contrary to published reports, funding for the occupational disability program is derived *solely* by taxes imposed on covered railroad workers and the railroads themselves. ***There are no public funds involved in this program and no revenues from any other source are used in the occupational disability program.***

These published articles have brought certain issues regarding the private pension plan at the Long Island Railroad to light. The impact this unique private pension plan has on the occupational disability program may be an anomaly and is not indicative of a systemic situation. There is currently an investigation underway to determine if this is the case and all of rail labor fully supports this investigation. Rail labor would be prepared to meet with Long Island management if the investigation determines that any anomalies exist as a result of this private pension plan.

The occupational disability program is financially sound and administratively efficient. It continues to provide much needed assistance to those railroad employees who are no longer able to do their railroad jobs. Of the approximately 575,000 individuals receiving an annuity under the railroad retirement system, 11 percent receive this critical annuity. It should be noted that approximately 70 percent of these individuals have also been found to be totally and permanently disabled for all work in the national economy, as defined under the Social Security Act.