Deep in the Heart of Texas – Grapevine 2008

May 2008 found the 48th Annual RSSI C&S Exhibition “Deep in the Heart of Texas” with yet another very successful event. The Gaylord Texan Hotel and Convention Center was an outstanding venue for the 2008 event and provided attendees a taste of “Texas hospitality.” The “everything in one place” setting gave exhibitors ample opportunity to mix business and pleasure in a relaxed atmosphere before, during and after show hours.

A total of 144 RSSI member companies occupied 314 booth spaces. As can be seen in the photos throughout this issue, business was brisk at times and at other times folks had a chance to engage in uninterrupted conversation with folks that they don’t normally get to interact with. Although the ten and twelve hour days were tiring, most said the long hours were worth the tired feet and aching back. They were able to see all of the customers on their hot list. “Hands On” (technical) people were once again a good percentage of the attendees.

Attendance, although not at record levels, consisted of quality people from our railroad and transit C&S counterparts. A total of 427 railroad, transit and government representatives along with 896 suppliers attended the two day exhibition. The supplier to customer ratio of 2.07 to 1.0, although again not a record, is much better than any show in our industry. Included in the customer attendees count was a new group this year. Railroad Public Works and state DOT representatives from eleven states took the opportunity to visit the exhibition. The IRSE program is of great interest to railroad signal engineers and we are hoping to have the IRSE program sessions as part of our exhibition in future years.

The RSSI Board of Directors, members and the RSSI staff extend a big thank you to the railroads, especially to the BNSF and UP who served as co-hosts for the 2008 exhibition.
Message from RSSI President Phil Hess

Serving the past ten months as RSSI President has been a wonderful experience. In October, I will pass the torch to George Rudge and resume my duties as an RSSI Board member. I am grateful to Rails Company President Gar Burwell for supporting my involvement in RSSI. All of the RSSI Board Members represent RSSI Member Companies and serve without pay, covering their own expense and donating their time for the success of our association. The efforts of the RSSI Board and staff have resulted in the continued great success of our annual Exhibit. I thank them all for their support and guidance.

The 2008 RSSI Exhibit in Grapevine, Texas continued the run of successful shows, drawing the participation of two industry groups who held meetings just prior to the Exhibit. The Midwest Region Rail-Highway Safety Conference and the Institution of Railway Signal Engineers – North American section held their respective meetings prior to the RSSI Exhibit. Both meetings were well attended, and the members of both groups attended the Exhibit, a mutual benefit to us all. The current Exhibit format has been an impressive success, and we continue to examine new ideas that will keep our Exhibit format fresh and interesting for all who participate.

Looking to the future, you may have heard that a Joint Technical Conference and Exhibition is being planned for 2011. RSSI, AREMA, REMSA, and RSI are planning this all-industry event at the request of the North American Chief Engineers. If successful, the joint event would happen every other year. In that scenario, RSSI would still hold a C&S Targeted Exhibit every other year on the even years.

RSSI will still hold our own Exhibits in 2009 (Nashville) and 2010 (Omaha).

Freight Railroads and Rail Transit Systems stand to increase their share of transportation markets in this era of high fuel costs. Signal & Communications departments are big contributors to the efficiency and safety advantage enjoyed by our Rail Freight and Transit customers. RSSI Member Companies have an unprecedented opportunity to participate in the current and future growth of these transportation industries.

2009 Back to “Music City”

The Annual RSSI C&S Exhibition will return to Nashville, Tennessee in 2009. The 49th Annual event will be held May 19-20 (note date change) “under glass” at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. Those of you who attended the 44th annual event in 2004 will recall what a fabulous venue the Gaylord Opryland provides for our attendees and guests. If you liked the Gaylord Texan in Grapevine, then I can assure you that you will be impressed with the Opryland facility. It is MUCH larger! And yes, still under one roof. If you will be attending the RSSI C&S Exhibition for the first time in Nashville, you are in for a real treat. Sometimes referred to “a city under glass” the Opryland not only features three huge glass covered atriums and over 2800 rooms; but, also a spacious and convenient exhibition/convention facility. The members of RSSI extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to our CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern communication and signal counterparts for serving as co-hosts for the 2009 event in Nashville.
Exhibition Format Changes Under Consideration

The results of the Exhibition Evaluation forms for the 2008 C&S Exhibition in Grapevine, Texas presented several suggestions that will be taken under consideration by the RSSI Board of Directors and staff. The overwhelming suggestion dealt with shorter hours on both days of the exhibition. The suggested change in exhibition hours is being reviewed with the railroad C&S leaders who were a major influence in establishing the long hours when the exhibition format was established in 2001. The results of these discussions will heavily influence any change.

Some of the other suggestions that were received are as follows:

- Carpeted aisles
- Bottled water (instead of Spring Water coolers)
- Develop a program to increase booth visitation
- Develop program for technical presentations
- Open breakfast buffet earlier for exhibitors only
- Open registration desk earlier for exhibitors only
- Better participation by the railroads
- Pool break in the afternoon
(Would your boss support this?)

Following the review with our railroad C&S counterparts, the Executive Director will make recommendations to the RSSI Board of Directors. Any changes approved by the Board will be incorporated into the 2009 exhibition in Nashville.

2009 & 2010 Exhibition Dates Change

The show dates for the 2009 RSSI C&S Exhibition in Nashville and 2010 exhibition in Omaha have been changed. As a result of discussions with the railroads involved, the dates will be as follows:

2009 Nashville, TN:
Previous Dates: May 20-21
New Dates: May 19-20
Opening Reception/Dinner: Monday, May 18

2010 Omaha, NE:
Previous Dates: May 19-20
New Dates: May 18-19
Opening Reception/Dinner: Monday, May 17

The change simply means moving the exhibition from Wednesday and Thursday to Tuesday and Wednesday. The move will not only allow the railroads to better schedule their people; but, also will allow attendees to get away before the 2009 Memorial Day weekend.

We are also considering changing the exhibit hours (primarily on the second day); however, this has been placed on “hold” pending further discussion with the railroads involved.

New RSSI Member Companies

RSSI would like to extend a warm welcome to the twenty-one new members who have joined RSSI since the 2007 Exhibition. The new members who exhibited at the 2008 Exhibition in Grapevine, Texas are shown in bold print.

ABB ETNA
All Railroad Services Corp.
Ameresco Solar
Convergent Communications Inc.
Critical Link, LLC
CTC, Inc.
Cummins Power Products
D.A.S. Rail Enterprises, LLC
Dayton T. Brown Inc.
Emerson Network Power
Hax Technologies, LLC
Herzog Contracting Corp.
JEM Communications Inc.
M.C. Dean, Inc.
McML Systems, Inc.
Pantel International
Red Hawk Energy Systems LLC
Riley, Park, Hayden & Associates
Sinclair Technologies
Snake Tray
Unipart Rail Ltd - Dorman
Are You Invited?
(an editorial by D.F. Remaley)

The comments received on a few Evaluation Forms from the 2008 event in Grapevine regarding the need for “better booth visitation” were interesting and anticipated. During the exhibition, I had the opportunity to discuss this subject with a couple of the railroad attendees. I asked them what enticed them to stop and visit any given booth and secondly what would make them likely to walk by a booth (even one that had product that interested them).

The following are some of their comments:

Would Stop In, if:
• Products of interest on display
• Exhibitor invited and welcomed them in
• No barrier (table or otherwise) blocking their entry
• Exhibitor was alert and did not appear bored

Likely would pass by, if:
• No products of interest
• Barrier or congestion at front of booth
• Saw it last year, the booth was the exact same as it has been for previous years
• Exhibitor looked otherwise occupied, reading a book, working on laptop, pda, etc.
• Not greeted or made to feel welcome by exhibitor

These are rather simple. Certainly no different than if customers were to visit your office or home. As for those who suggest that RSSI develop a program to increase booth visitation, the only thing that RSSI could offer is a session on “How to set-up and man an exhibit.” If you would like some individual advice on booth set-up, please contact the RSSI office. Maybe a review of your exhibit set-up and word to the people that man your booth is in order. RSSI can only continue to provide the best venue possible for the exhibitor to display their products and services. Getting attendees to visit your booth – that’s in your hands.

I hope you will give this some thought as you prepare for the show in Nashville in May 2009.

What is the Institution of Railway Signal Engineers?

The IRSE is an international organization of professionals in the railroad communication and signal field. The United Kingdom based organization was chartered in 1912, and presently has 4,500 members worldwide. The goals of the Institution are, first: “The advancement...of the science and practice of signalling...by the promotion of research, the collection and publication of educational material and the holding of conferences, seminars and meetings”, and second: “The maintenance of high standards of practice and professional care amongst those working within the industry...”.

The IRSE sponsors technical papers at section meetings such as the NAS and general conferences throughout the world. Each year the papers are gathered in the Annual Proceedings, which are provided free to all IRSE members, along with a summary of the discussions. In addition, the IRSE publishes a monthly magazine for members, the IRSE News, with technical articles and information on the Institution.

The North American Section (NAS) was formed on May 24, 2002 to support the goals of the Institution in North America. The NAS presently has over 50 members, and is encouraging railroad communication and signal professionals to join. While prospective NAS members must also be members of the IRSE, the NAS Local Committee would be pleased to offer to assist anyone interested in the applying for the benefits of membership with their application. NAS membership at present is free. IRSE membership is available at several levels, from Associate to Fellow with appropriate membership fees. Information on IRSE and NAS membership can be found at www.irse.org.

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IRSE North American Section 2008 Activities

2008 brought new challenges to the North American Section (NAS), and the members and Local Committee responded with very gratifying results. Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) was expanded from the former format and our first major project for the Body of Knowledge was completed. Overall it was a banner year for the NAS, and we expect our 2009 results to continue to provide the members with exciting opportunities for professional enhancement.

This year’s Annual General Meeting was held at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center, Grapevine, Texas. The meeting was held in conjunction with the Railway Systems Suppliers Inc. (RSSI) annual C&S Exhibition, and was one of the more important industry meetings of the year. It should be noted that the North American Section is deeply grateful for the support received from the RSSI. Since the inception of the IRSE North American Section, RSSI has made booth space available for the Section at the Exhibition, and made meeting rooms available to us for holding our Annual General meetings. In 2008, RSSI provided outstanding support in the form of the conference meeting facilities that included the room, loudspeaker systems, and the production of a Conference DVD showing video of all of the speakers and their presentations. The AGM and Conference described below would not have been possible without RSSI support. The North American Section looks forward to the 2009 Exhibition in Nashville where we will build on this year’s success with another technical conference supporting the goals of both the IRSE and RSSI.

On May 20th 2008 the Institution of Railway Signal Engineers (IRSE) North American Section (NAS) held its first technical forum. This was in reality a half-day conference consisting of six presentations from internationally renowned speakers. The overall theme of the conference was “Lessons learned here and abroad on the Safety Approval Process for microprocessor based train control and train management”, and the event was well attended by over 50 interested guests. The speakers included:

- Kendrick Bisset, NAS Local Committee Chair – provided an introduction of the IRSE and the NAS as well as acting as the moderator for the first session.
- Bill Scheerer, IRSE North American Country Vice President - discussed the IRSE NAS beginnings from 2002 and the progress made since.
- Joe Noffsinger, NAS Local Committee Member – introduced the theme for the conference and how it is strikingly relevant to the members.
- Allen Fisher, IRSE President – introduced the global reach of the IRSE, and provided insights into Safety approvals from a UK perspective.
- Grady Cothen, Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Standards and Program Development, FRA – gave those present an in depth discussion on the Federal Railroad Administration view of the process and approach to compliance for the safety case.
- Mark Hartong, Electronic Engineer, FRA – provided those present with practical assessment of the Signal Product Safety approval and assessment within the FRA, and how the process is conducted.
- Wim Coenraad, Past IRSE President – discussed the European Safety Acceptance practice and experience with it.
- David Thurston, NAS Local Committee Vice Chair – acted as the second session moderator and provided backgrounds on the last presentations.
- Al Fazio, General Manager of NJ Transit’s RiverLINE LRT operation
- Rob Troup, Signal Manager for SYSTRA Consulting

Mr. Fazio and Mr. Troup provided details on FRA applications for joint operation of LRT vehicles and freight train.

Bill Petit, Past NAS Local Committee Member – gave insights into the new Interoperable Communications Based Signaling as prescribed by the new AREMA manual (photo at left).

Larry Light, Senior Director, New Technology for Amtrak – presented an evaluation of two key projects (ITCS in Michigan and ACSES on the Northeast Corridor) and the experience with the FRA.

Immediately following the last session of presentations, the North American Section held its Annual General Meeting to review the business for 2008. Remarks were made by Mr. Alan Fisher, IRSE President concerning the business of the IRSE. The business of the Section included the election of two members to the Local Committee. These positions were filled by Vic Babin, Chief Electrical Engineer, Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District - to a two year term and Ed Mortlock, Manager of Signals and Train Control, Parsons Transportation Group - to a two-year term.

Also at the Business Meeting, Chairman Bisset announced that the first NAS publication was completed and available for purchase in June. The book is titled: Introduction to North American Railway Signaling, and is available at the Simmons Boardman web site at http://www.transalert.com/. Special IRSE member pricing has been established to provide significant savings. All members are encouraged to utilize this new resource in their activities. Special thanks go to Kendrick Bisset and to the other authors and editors for all of their hard work.

As is the tradition with NAS Annual General Meetings, a Technical Visit was made to local rail facilities. This year’s visit was made to the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Control Center and Car Shop in Dallas, Texas. Members were treated to an inside look at the DART operations and maintenance techniques for railcar systems.

As you can see from the photo, this year’s NAS shirts were made in yellow and black to honor our Technical Visit host, DART.
RSSI Members Support Open Letter to Congress

The RSSI office received a joint request from the AAR and GO21 urging our members to support the railroads in their effort to defeat the proposed reregulation legislation. RSSI members joined forces with the members of RSI, REMSA and the AAR by signing on to an “Open Letter To Congress” urging Congress to oppose HR2125 and S953, legislation which would reregulate the railroads.

The request was forwarded via e-mail to the Contact Officer of all the RSSI member companies on June 30th with a follow-up e-mail on July 9th after receiving word from GO21 that only 44 RSSI members had signed the document. We were informed by a few members that they had “signed” on via another association. The final count of RSSI members was a disappointing 47 out of our 230 members.

Signees will be listed in a trade magazine ad and given to all railroad CEO’s and AAR Board members. To those RSSI members who signed the document, our sincere thanks. We have been assured that the railroads greatly appreciate the support.

RSSI Annual Membership Meeting

The Annual Membership meeting of the association was held on Tuesday, May 20th at the Gaylord Texan Hotel and Convention Center. The results of the Directors election were announced and the following Directors were seated:

For Three Year Terms (Expiring in 2011):
Phil Hess – Rails Company
Jim Higginbottom – The Okonite Company
Joe Noffsinger – G.E. Transportation
George Sokulski – Railway Age
Tom Ulrich – Arthur N. Ulrich Co.

For One Year Terms (Expiring in 2009):
Mike Choat – Railroad Controls, ltd.
Walter Winzen – ARMS, Inc.

Ms. Nicole Brewin, AVP Washington – Railway Supply Institute provided attendees an update on legislative issues impacting the rail and rail supply industry.

Attendees were also briefed on the early progress of the Working Group planning for the combined conference and exhibition involving RSSI, AREMA, REMSA, and RSI. The multi-association event will be held September 18-20, 2011 in Minneapolis, MN.

2008 RSSI Scholarship Winners

The Scholarship Program, since its introduction in 1992, has proven to be a valuable service offered to RSSI member company employees. Fifty-two young adults have been awarded scholarships since the inception of the program.

Three scholarships expired at the end of the spring 2008 semester. The RSSI Board of Directors has elected to award two new scholarships from the thirty-two qualified applications received during this year’s competition. The $8,000 scholarships ($1,000 per semester) are being awarded to the following:

Alicia R. Bekeny
GE Transportation Global Signaling/University of Pittsburgh

Zieana F. Chang
Union Switch & Signal/Dartmouth College

Jack F. Ellingsworth IV
Alstom Signaling/Cornell University

Jeffrey A. Green
HNTB Corporation/Yale University

Mark I. Koch
Transportation Technology Center/ Texas Tech University

Sriram Rajan
GE Transportation Global Signaling/University of Pennsylvania

Josh Z. Tan
GE Transportation Global Signaling/Yale University

In addition to the two new scholarships, the following are also active:

Sarah E. Anderson
Sponsor: Father, Howard Anderson, employed by GE Transportation Global Signaling
Attending: University of Kansas
Intended Major: Medicine

Preethi V. Rajan
Sponsor: Father, Ranga Rajan employed by GE Transportation Global Signaling
Attending: Emory University
Intended Major: Biology
Plans for the first combined conference and exhibition to be held at the Minneapolis Convention Center September 18-20, 2011 continue to progress. The “Working Group” consisting of the Executive Director’s of the four associations (RSSI, AREMA, REMSA, and RSI) have held a series of meetings to plan and coordinate the many details of such a large undertaking. It is a slow process due to the different operating formats of the associations. However, good progress has been made.

To publish the details at this time would be premature since most are subject to change as planning and coordination continues. A few items have been established and most likely will not change. Exhibit hours have been coordinated with the AREMA technical conference and (pending no change) are scheduled as follows:

- **Sunday, September 18:** 12 Noon – 5:00 PM
- **Monday, September 19:** 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM
- **Tuesday, September 20:** 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM

The exhibits for all three associations (RSSI, REMSA, and RSI) will be in one exhibit hall; however, each will be located in a designated area. Details regarding space rental, food and beverage, security and other details are still under consideration.

Each association will have their own headquarters hotel:

- **RSSI** – Marriott City Center
- **AREMA & REMSA** – Minneapolis Hilton
- **RSI** – Minneapolis Hyatt Regency

As previously mentioned, the differing exhibition formats have presented many problems during the planning process. While REMSA and RSI permit hospitality rooms and private parties sponsored by member companies, RSSI under our present format prohibits such activities. Therefore, in Minneapolis, present plans for RSSI include a common RSSI hospitality room in a large ballroom at the Marriott. Private parties and member company hospitality rooms will be prohibited in accordance with the RSSI Policy on Entertainment.

Registration is another difficult issue being addressed by the Working Group. The goal is to have a single registration with several categories to accommodate those attendees with varying interests.

All of the items mentioned in this article should be considered preliminary information subject to modifications as detail planning progresses. And of course, once the Working Group completes their planning process, the Board of Director’s of each of the four associations must approve the recommendations of the Working Group.

RSSI members will be updated on the planning process at the Annual Membership Meeting on September 18, 2009 in Nashville. Members should plan to be in attendance at that meeting.