

**Rail Topic Group Conference Call Friday, November 13, 1998 11:00 a.m.--12:30 p.m. EST**

Participants on the call included:

Ira Baldwin, NCSTS	Bob Fronczak, AAR
Kevin Blackwell, FRA	Daren Gilbert, State of Nevada
Mike Butler, UETC	Thor Strong, Michigan Dept. of Environmental Quality
Sandy Covi, UPRR	Jim Williams, Planning Information Corporation
Ray English, DOE-NR	

The call began at approximately 11:00 a.m. EST. Mike Butler welcomed participants and mentioned that he would like to deviate from the agenda slightly by discussing the letter submitted by Jim Williams of the Planning Information Corporation first. He noted that this letter touched upon several important points for the Group, and therefore should be discussed on this call. Participants agreed.

Mr. Butler asked Mr. Williams to begin the discussion of PIC's letter. Mr. Williams remarked that the motivation behind the letter was to ensure that the parameters guiding the Group's "WIPP-PIG review" were well-defined, particularly in the light of some of the potential implications for future rail campaigns. He noted that the letter was crafted before he had the opportunity to review the "Statement of Purpose" section, which he felt did an adequate job in outlining most of the points he made in the letter. Sandy Covi said that by reading the "Statement of Purpose", it was clear to her that the Group was only attempting to describe what was in place for rail operations pertaining to potential shipments of TRU waste to WIPP. Mr. Williams agreed, but emphasized the importance of the second bullet on the first page of his letter, pertaining to the possibility of suggesting "enhancements" for a prospective campaign of high-level waste and spent fuel. He remarked that if the Group were not willing to develop these enhancements for other prospective campaigns, it must do a better job of articulating that. Ray English commented that it was never the intention of the Group to develop "enhancements" for either the WIPP-PIG document or the rail mode in general; the Group's only intent in the review of the WIPP-PIG was to craft a document that could serve as a starting point in relating what is covered in the original document to the rail mode, in the event that rail shipments to WIPP are contemplated at some point in the future. Mr. Williams reiterated that his main concern was that the Group's work not be drawn into the debate over re-authorization of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act or the siting of a repository in Nevada. As such, he suggested a greater emphasis be placed in the introductory and concluding sections of the document on the fact that the Group is neither considering nor suggesting any issues pertaining to campaigns other than those consisting of shipments of TRU waste to WIPP. The Group concurred with this suggestion, and Mr. Butler said that he would further enhance those sections.

Mr. English and Bob Fronczak both pointed out that the purpose of the topic group is only to disseminate information to the TEC/WG on matters of rail operations and safety, and to point out areas in which operational and safety factors differ from the highway mode. Mr. Williams said that he understood this distinction, and that if the Group was intent on only serving an informational function, perhaps it should not treat the review of the WIPP-PIG as an effort towards constructing a "rail companion." He suggested instead that the Group simply develop a summary of how the rail industry currently deals with the 13 issues covered by the WIPP-PIG in a general sense. Mr. English agreed with this approach of presenting the Group's review of the WIPP-PIG as a review simply of the elements covered by that document, rather than a treatment of the specific campaign to WIPP which may never include a rail shipment. Mr. Butler noted that this might better reflect the Group's stated intent of drafting a document that could serve as a starting point for campaign planners should consideration of using the rail mode in shipping transuranic waste to WIPP begin. Mr. English said that, in addition to its other clarifications, the Group should state in the document that this review is not intended to provide a framework for rail shipments to WIPP, or for HLW or SNF to an interim or permanent repository, but only to serve as a summary of how the rail industry treats the issues outlined in the WIPP-PIG. He noted that since the regional compact organizations and others consider the issues in the WIPP-PIG important enough to endorse it as a starting point for all campaign-specific planning, covering these issues for rail in a general way seems like a useful exercise. Bill Naughton and others agreed with this characterization; Dr. Naughton suggested the comparative aspects (with the highway mode) be highlighted, much as was done in the two matrices the Group completed.

The Group then resumed its discussion of the WIPP-PIG document, starting with Section 10: Training and Exercises. Participants initially did not perceive a great deal of difference in training needs or capabilities by mode; Mr. English asked if the industry worked with LEPC's in emergency response exercises along routes. Ms. Covi said that in the particular case of UP, the railroad works very closely with LEPC's and the emergency response community on developing and carrying out exercises, and added that she assumed that was true from an industry-wide perspective as well. Mr. Fronczak said that he would contact Pat Brady with BNSF as well as the AAR's Training & Technology Center to attempt to get a sense of that perspective. Mr. Williams suggested referencing the DOE training modules which are currently in development; Mr. English agreed that the Group might mention those exercises where applicable. Mr. Williams added that the Group should highlight those exercises that are mode-specific. Mr. Fronczak replied that the DOE material is not rail-specific, and therefore might not be worth referencing; he added that the TTC has developed material specific to radmat response for the rail mode, and that he would provide some of that information as a reference point for this section.

The next section discussed was Section 11: Public Information and Participation. Participants again did not notice any significant areas in this section that required a special treatment for the rail mode, although Mr. Fronczak pointed out that the Group has not reviewed the background documents which are referenced throughout the WIPP-PIG. Mr. Butler said that he would be sure to point this fact out in the introduction. Mr. English pointed out that while communication plans coordinated by the shipper (in this case, DOE) exist for both rail and highway shipments, the distinction is clearer for rail, in that the shipper takes the lead for communications. Ms. Covi concurred with Mr. English, stating that the rail industry carefully avoids releasing information unless directed by the shipper, as it views such information as proprietary in nature. Mr.

Williams inquired as to the setup of a communications network within a major railroad such as UP; he asked if there were "area" offices. Ms. Covi said that the network was centralized in the sense that plans and communications were coordinated from a central office, but that the network has regional offices with regional directors assigned to communications concerning specific materials. Mr. Williams asked what UP does in the instance that a shipment is to be handled by more than one carrier. Ms. Covi said that since the railroad considers information about the shipment the property of the shipper, that type of transfer would require additional coordination efforts on the part of the shipper. The shipper in that case would simply take the lead in developing multiple communication plans with the various carriers. Mr. English noted that inter-carrier agreements routinely take into account that shipments are frequently handled by more than one carrier.

The Group then considered Section 12: "Rail Routing" of WIPP Shipments. Mr. Fronczak and Mr. English both pointed out that specific requirements for routing do not exist for rail. Mr. English suggested that this section refer the reader to the TEC/WG Routing Topic Group Routing Discussion Paper. Mr. Williams agreed with this suggestion, but added that the section should also mention that the routing discussion paper was drafted with a particular future campaign in mind, which differs from the Rail Group's intent. Dr. Naughton stated that there were several "high level" differences between rail and highway (such as the enhanced possibility of multiple carriers and/or inter-modal transfers for rail, and the fact that the rail right-of-way is private) that should be discussed in this section, but those seeking a more specific discussion of the issue should be referred to the Routing Group's paper.

The final subject discussed was Section 13: Program Evaluation. Ms. Covi asked, given the restrictions from policy proclamations faced by the topic group, how "program evaluation" could be considered. Mr. Williams said that, in the WIPP-PIG, the "program evaluation" appeared to be evaluation of a particular transportation program developed by DOE-Carlsbad in concert with WGA, which conflicts with the Group's earlier agreement to avoid a campaign-specific focus. Mr. English noted that it appeared to him that this section of the WIPP-PIG seemed to refer to itself, i.e. it proposes ways in which the WIPP-PIG document be monitored and modified as needed. But he also added that the section acknowledges such evaluation is not really possible before shipments to WIPP are made, which is an analogous situation to what the topic group is facing. Dr. Naughton suggested detailing what he called the "feedback loop" for industry programs, describing interactions between shippers, carriers and communities and how these are reflected by industry practices. Mr. Butler interjected that perhaps what the Group should do in this section is to describe what the industry has in place already in terms of program evaluation for the safety of radmat shipments, in line with the Group's decision to describe "the world as it exists today." Ms. Covi said that she would assist in providing information about UP's on-going program evaluation methods, which exist for all hazmat shipping. She also highlighted the CMA's "Responsible Care Program" and some of the AAR efforts in this regard. Dr. Naughton agreed, saying that the Group should indicate that the industry conducts on-going evaluations in the short and long-term, which are in some cases altered to a specific campaign. Daren Gilbert noted that mention should also be made of the FRA oversight and assistance in safety program assessment.