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ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE

Successful young rail engineers will lead the way to the future

By David C. Lester, Editor-in-Chief

As usual, we had approximately 50 nominations for the RT&S 2024 10 Under 40 engineering honors. Railroad engineering is very challenging, both mentally and physically. Mentally because of the highly technical nature of the work, physically because of the need to work in all types of weather, including scorching summers and harsh winters. While all professional railroaders work hard at their jobs, the engineering team faces special demands. The work is also very gratifying though. As many rail engineers have told me, it's a great feeling when you finish a project on which you've worked with a team

for relatively short times or relatively long times to significantly improve or build new infrastructure. Rail engineering is a constant learning process as new technologies seem to become available every week. With artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data analytics making its way into the industry, it will become a more critical part of the engineer's tool kit. Also, while there has been a lot of mechanization for various types of MOW, there is still plenty of opportunity for hands-on work. While the rail industry competes on many fronts, without first-class engineering capability, any road would be hard-pressed to operate safely.

Photo Credit: Shutterstock.com / Nattawit Khomsantit

DARWIN SCHAFER II, P.E.

Vice President Rail Civil Group Manager
Benesch

Mr. Schafer's work as a leader and technical expert for track and terminal design has been critical to the success of numerous fast-tracked Class I railroad capacity expansion projects. Mr. Schafer specializes in track and terminal design, utilizing his skills to contribute to the railroad industry in his career as a rail designer, a construction inspector, a project engineer, a project manager and currently as a group manager overseeing a nationwide staff of railway engineers. Mr. Schafer has personally contributed to the design of over 30 railroad intermodal and automotive terminals, both new facilities and upgrades and expansions to existing facilities. His first project was as a track designer for Union Pacific's Global IV Intermodal Terminal in Joliet, IL. Recently, Mr. Schafer has led the design team for the expansion of Norfolk Southern's 47th St. Intermodal Facility to expand the existing facility footprint south of Garfield Blvd. in Chicago, Ill. Mr. Schafer's contributions to these projects included track, grading, stormwater, site, pavement and utility design. Mr. Schafer has also contributed to the design of numerous other highway-rail grade crossings, railroad yards and mainline capacity projects. In his current role as a group manager, he mentors and nurtures the upcoming generation of railroad engineers.



CONGRATULATIONS

RODNEY SMITH

PROJECT MANAGER

RT&S 2024 10 UNDER 40 HONOREE!

Thank you for embodying the core values of Modern Railway Systems, where customer satisfaction and project excellence take precedence above all else.

Your dedication and contributions play a crucial role in the success of our company, and we truly value your commitment.

