

# RailTEC/UIUC's Chris Barkan Explores Long-Train Safety at NGFR 2025

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Dr. Christopher P.L. Barkan

**The 2025 edition of Railway Age's Next-Gen Freight Rail (NGFR) conference will feature Christopher P.L. Barkan, Ph.D., Executive Director, RailTEC and The National University Rail Center of Excellence, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in a presentation focused on long-freight train safety research initiatives.**

The National University Rail Center of Excellence opened last year. Supported by the Federal

Railroad Administration, it's an initiative to develop the industry's next-generation workforce while advancing research and expansion that enhances the safety, efficiency and reliability of rail transportation. Operating long, heavy freight trains, which have become commonplace under the operating method known as Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR), has generated much research—and controversy. Dr. Barkan will explore risk analysis; physical impacts of large trains on the North American railroad network; safety considerations; regulatory initiatives; train and engine crew impacts; and how larger trains should fit into a safer, more efficient, sustainable, equitable and reliable rail transportation system.

The NGFR speaker lineup also includes CSX President and CEO Joe Hinrichs, *Railway Age's* 2025 Railroader of the Year; Canadian Pacific Kansas City President and CEO Keith Creel; CSX Head of Innovation Bill Jacobs and Director of Innovation Dave Mauger; and Jeffrey Watson, Vice President Engineering, Genesee & Wyoming and *Railway Track & Structures* 2024 Engineer of the Year. The luncheon will honor *Railway Age's* 2025 25 Under 40 "Fast Trackers."

*Railway Age's* Next-Generation Freight Rail conference takes place March 11, 2025, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Union League Club of Chicago. A unique opportunity to discuss the freight rail industry's future, the conference brings together top executives and thought leaders to discuss topics ranging from business strategy to the latest technological innovations and increasing safety and reliability. The conference also features a luncheon honoring the 2025 winners of *Railway Age's* Fast Trackers 25 Under 40 awards.