



# Conference 2020 Staying The Course

By Ashley Goodin, RTA Executive Director

Uncertainty is a funny thing. My 9-year-old son has recently convinced me to play a popular video game online with him in the evenings. I have to admit that I am not very good at the game at all. However, I have found that one sure way to lose is for the character I am playing to remain in the same space for too long. When I make a move, I have a choice to be offensive or defensive—either I control where I go and what I do, or I essentially run away while someone chases me.

This year has been much the same for all of us in that we have to make choices as to whether to stand still, proactively move on our own terms, or be reactive as we are pushed and pulled with the world changing around us. Honestly, we have probably engaged in all the above in our personal lives and in our work. We are finding our footing in the uncertainty and beginning to move forward with our lives.

In the same spirit, the Railway Tie Association (RTA) is moving forward with our annual meeting. I am thankful for the unwavering support of our long-time sponsors and supporters who continue to help RTA not only survive but also to thrive as we proactively chart our course for the remainder of this year and into the next.

As you receive this magazine, we will be preparing for the opening of our 102nd annual conference. This event is different than any past annual conference in that it is a totally online experience. We have created meaningful ways to engage with one another, even from a distance. I hope that

**“The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith.”**

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

if you haven't registered, you will consider joining us—even if it is last-minute.

Looking ahead into 2021, we continue to move forward in anticipation of our in-person RTA Field Trip scheduled in early June,

our Tie Grading Seminar in the late summer/early fall and, of course, the 103rd Annual Conference in California in October 2021. We will be there to greet you with smiles (hopefully unmasked) and a warm welcome.

After attending the in-person annual conference for Georgia Society of Association Executives (GSAE) in August, the RTA team is confident that we can work with our hotel, transportation and host partners to create face-to-face experiences that are not only safe but also that give us the networking opportunities we all desire. As an aside, there were 115 in-person attendees to the GSAE event and, 21 days post-event, there are no reported illnesses from attendees.

While we live in a time of uncertainty and anticipation, we will stay the course and realize the great things to come. The quote on this page from Franklin D. Roosevelt is ironic in that it comes from the draft of an address he was writing when he died of an aneurism before he could deliver it the very next day. He was planning for a tomorrow that he, personally, never realized.

Regardless of our surroundings and adverse conditions, the Railway Tie Association will continue to maintain the gauge and support the rail just as we have done since 1919. ■

# Survive & Thrive

## RTA 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference & Technical Symposium

RTA has fielded a team of experts across all roles within the wood tie industry to serve as panelists and presenters for the 2020 edition of RTA's Annual Conference & Technical Symposium. For this year's virtual conference, these professionals will not only provide information on their latest research, challenges and opportunities, but they will also be available for questions from the audience. For detailed biographical information, copies of their presentations and photos of these presenters, be sure to download RTA's conference app at <https://homebase.map-dynamics.com/rta2020/dashboard>. Please note that the list of presenters and topics are subject to updates.

### TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20

#### Sawmill Panel

1:30 – 2:30 p.m., EDT

This panel will be made up of active sawmill industry professionals. Each presenter will have 15 minutes to share their experiences and challenges followed by a 15-minute question-and-answer session from attendees. Presenters will focus on two or three of the following items: log availability and inventory; markets for non-crosstie products and fiber; creative solutions for challenges during and post-COVID 19; and employee recruitment, onboarding and retention.

Among those slated to participate in this compelling panel discussion is **Skipper Beal**, who owns and operates Beal Lumber Company, a hardwood sawmill located in Prosperity, S.C.

#### Railroad Engineering Panel

2:45 – 3:45 p.m., EDT

This panel will be composed of individuals working in the field of railway engineering. Each presenter will have eight to 10 minutes to describe a recent challenging engineering project. This will be followed by a brief question and answer session.

Participating in this panel discussion are **Victor Babin**, and **Tod Echler**. Babin is chief engineering officer at Northern Indiana



Commuter Transportation District in Michigan City, Ind., which operates the South Shore Line train service with service from Millennium Station in Chicago to the South Bend International Airport in South Bend. NICTD recently announced federal allocation of \$50.6 million as part of the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grant program for the Double Track Northwest Indiana project. Tod Echler, RTA's 2019 Branding Hammer Award winner, is chief engineer design and construction for CSX Transportation.

#### Innovation Forum

4:00 – 5:00 p.m., EDT

Presenters will offer information about the newest research and advancement in the fields of defect detection, track inspection, or other technology related to track construction, maintenance, tie manufacturing and tie disposal. Among the presenters will be Jeb Belcher, manager of emerging technologies at Georgetown Rail Equipment Company (GREX).

#### Happy Hour Featuring A Virtual Piano Bar

5:15 – 6:30 p.m., EDT

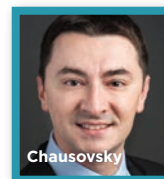
Grab a beverage, bring your friends, and join us for an evening of fun and social interaction with Kelly Goodrich at the keys of our virtual piano bar. Send in your requests early or during the show. It's a good time to connect with your RTA friends from conferences past!

### WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

#### Economic Keynote Address

1:00 – 2:30 p.m., EDT

**Alex Chausovsky** of ITR Economics presents a review of short-term and long-term economic forecasts. The presentation includes an explanation of 12/12 and 3/12 monthly moving averages, business cycles, and how you can directly apply their use



to your business. He will also discuss current events and concerns, leading economic indicators to watch, and insight on inflation, interest rates and taxes.

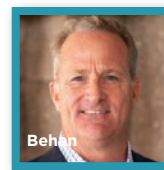
Chausovsky, senior business advisor for ITR Economics, is a highly experienced market researcher and analyst with more than a decade of expertise in subjects ranging from macroeconomics, industrial manufacturing and automation to advanced technology trends. He has consulted and advised companies throughout the United States, Europe, Brazil, China and Japan for the last 15 years and works with clients that rely in his input when developing strategic plans for the future as he helps them plan for risk conditions and find areas of opportunity.

#### Green Tie Procurement Panel

2:45 – 3:45 p.m., EDT

Leading green tie buyers will participate in a panel discussion during which they will each provide 10 to 12 minutes of insights into green tie buying including trends. They will offer suggestions on how sawmills can maximize value with simple grading tips and defect identification to reduce cutbacks and downgrades after shipment from the mill.

**Bill Behan**, **John Heller** and **Jason Dallas** will participate as panelists to discuss their thoughts on green tie trends. Behan is president of Gross & Janes



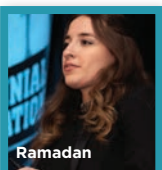
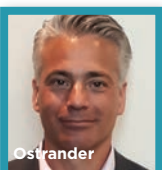


Company, a fourth generation forest products executive with a comprehensive background in hardwood and softwood sawmill operations, lumber and log markets, finance, and business acquisition. Heller is in charge of procurement for Koppers Inc.'s railroad products and services division and is responsible for purchasing and pricing all wood raw materials in North America. Dallas is director of procurement for Stella-Jones Corporation Inc. ▶

**Railroad Purchasing Forum**

4:00 – 5:15 p.m., EDT

A must-see for all attendees, this panel includes representatives from different railroads across North America who will share their plans for tie replacement and infrastructure projects in the coming year.

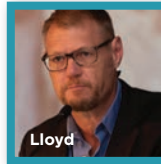
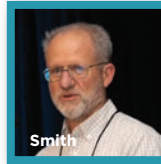
Participants in this year's Railroad Purchasing Forum include purchasing professionals **Kristine Storm** of Genesee & Wyoming, who is also a member of RTA's Executive Committee; **David Knopsider** of CSX; **Sheila Ramadan** of Union Pacific; **Jorge Velez** of Kansas City Southern; **Maya Ramadan** of Canadian National; and **Wade Ostrander** of Canadian Pacific.

Pay careful attention during this session, as this is the session during which RTA members will learn about the upcoming wood tie purchasing needs for these major railroads.

**Wood Preservation Research**

5:30 – 6:30 p.m., EDT

Hear compelling research presented regarding the toxicity of creosote as well as how new technologies are being developed to extend the life of wooden crossties and bridge timbers.



Consulting engineer **Stephen Smith** of Smith Consulting and toxicologist **Nick Skoulis**, Ph.D., of Creosote Council will provide insight on the latest research concerning the use of creosote as a wood tie preservative. **Jeff Lloyd** of Nisus Corp., senior vice president of innovation and sustainability, will also provide an update on his recent research initiatives.

**BONUS SESSION**

**RTA Presidents Reception**

6:45 – 8:00 p.m., EDT

Enjoy this evening bonus session to honor and network with past RTA leaders through video conferencing. Entertainment will be provided with an encore performance by Kelly Goodrich.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22**

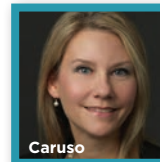
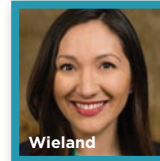
1:00 – 2:00 p.m., EDT

Join representatives from the hardwood lumber industry as they discuss trade, tariffs, regulation and challenges currently facing the forestry industry. Panelists will discuss how export markets and domestic demand impact the fiber used for tie and industrial lumber production.

**Rail Industry Forum**

2:15 – 3:45 p.m., EDT

Panelists representing rail-related trade associations will share recent challenges their members are facing and how their associations are responding. They will also look ahead to the future as the industry moves beyond COVID-19 and other current events.



In this forum, conference attendees will hear from **Chuck Baker**, executive director of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association; **Ashley Wieland**, president of the National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association; and **Beth Caruso**, IOM, CAE, executive director of the Railway Engineering-Maintenance Suppliers Association Inc. ■

**Conference Agenda At-A-Glance\***

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20**

**Sawmill Panel**

1:30 – 2:30 p.m., EDT

- Skipper Beal, Beal Lumber Company

**Railroad Engineering Panel**

2:45 – 3:45 p.m., EDT

- Victor Babin, Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District
- Tod Echler, CSX Transportation

**Innovation Forum**

4:00 – 5:00 p.m., EDT

- Jeb Belcher, Georgetown Rail Equipment Company

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1:00 – 2:30 p.m., EDT

- Alex Chausovsky, Economics presents

**Green Tie Procurement Panel**

2:45 – 3:45 p.m., EDT

- Bill Behan, Gross & Janes Company
- John Heller, Koppers Inc.
- Jason Dallas, Stella-Jones Corporation Inc.

**Railroad Purchasing Forum**

4:00 – 5:15 p.m., EDT

- Kristine Storm, Genesee & Wyoming
- David Knopsider of CSX;
- Sheila Gudenrath, Union Pacific
- Jorge Velez, Kansas City Southern
- Maya Ramadan Canadian National
- Wade Ostrander, Canadian Pacific

**Wood Preservation Research**

5:30 – 6:30 p.m., EDT

- Stephen Smith, Smith Consulting
- Nick Skoulis, Creosote Council III
- Jeff Lloyd, Nisus Corp.

**BONUS SESSION**

**RTA Past Presidents Reception**

6:45 – 8:00 p.m., EDT

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22**

**Forestry Forum**

1:00 – 2:00 p.m., EDT

**Rail Industry Forum**

2:15 – 3:45 p.m., EDT

- Chuck Baker, American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association
- Ashley Wieland, National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association
- Beth Caruso Railway Engineering Maintenance Suppliers Association Inc.

\*Agenda subject to updates.



# THE DAWNING OF A NEW · AGE



RAILWAY TIE  
ASSOCIATION

102<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE

October 19-22

REGISTRATION OPEN  
ONLINE  
RTA.ORG



## WHERE WE SURVIVE AND THRIVE AT RTA'S VIRTUAL EVENT

This year's virtual sessions include:

- » RTA Executive Director Ashley Goodin Delivers the State of the Association Address
- » A hardwood procurement panel discussion
- » Railroad engineering and purchasing forums
- » Research and innovations in preserving and disposal
- » A special Address from Alex Chaousovsky - ITR Economics
- » A Survive and Thrive box delivered to your home or office

A BONUS NETWORKING HAPPY HOUR  
PLUS A VIRTUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT



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