From Staff Reports
More than 1,000 professionals representing the railroad construction industry attended the 2013 NRC Conference Jan. 9-12 in Miami. Attendance records were broken for the ninth consecutive year, said Chuck Baker, executive director of the National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association (NRCPMA). “We also had more than 100 exhibitors in a sold-out exhibit hall,” he said, adding that the weather was cooperative and the golf and fishing tournaments were sellouts.

The conference drew a variety of personnel including Class 1, regional and short line railroad personnel; commuter rail authority personnel; rail infrastructure engineers; railroad contractors; managers and purchasers in design, construction and maintenance; rail and transit media representatives; state and federal department of transportation officials; transportation consultants; and rail industry service firms, manufacturers and suppliers.

Speakers addressed attendees on a variety of rail-related topics, with a heavy emphasis on the proposed capital programs for Class 1 railroads this year. Other speeches addressed everything from safety to opportunities for contractors and suppliers, to rail legislation issues.

Highlights included presentations from House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster; John Cech of BNSF; Kevin Hicks of Union Pacific; Charlie Stine and Jim Carter of Norfolk Southern; Dale Ophardt of CSX; Jim McLeod of Canadian National; Brent Laing of Canadian Pacific; Dave Brown of Genesee & Wyoming; Ron Close of Watco; Ken Koff of OmniTRAX; Bob Stevens of FEC; Mike Reininger of All Aboard Florida; Anthony Fuller and Paul Worley of North Carolina Department of Transportation; Bob Bergen of NYC Transit; Albert Hernandez of Miami—
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Dade Transit; Larry Huggins and Sam Smith of Chicago Metra; Tony Hatch on the financial status of the rail industry; and Keith Hartwell on the state of rail-related legislation.

RTA members were out in full force during the conference, as was RTA Executive Director Jim Gauntt. “NRC and RTA have developed significant synergies over the past few years with many RTA members participating in the NRC Exhibition and NRC members attending the RTA annual conference,” Gauntt said. “We are proud of our relationship with NRC and look forward to future growth of both organizations.”