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House File 286 and House File 1555, Section 97.

**Public Survey: Voters Express Their Support
for Requiring Two-Person Railroad Crews.**

St. Paul, Minnesota (May 15, 2019) — Survey results released by SMART Transportation Division's Minnesota State Legislative Board indicate Minnesota voters are overwhelmingly on the side of the Legislature to pass a regulation requiring railroads to operate freight trains with crews consisting of a minimum of two people.

After being asked questions and being provided with information on railroad safety, 83% of respondents to a phone survey, conducted Feb. 26 to March 3, 2019, said they would vote for a two-person rail crew law such as H.F. 286. H.F. 286 has been authored by state Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL- Dist. 61A) with companion SF 263 by Senator Scott Dibble, (DFL-SD. 61). The legislation will be heard today on the Floor of the Minnesota House of Representatives with co-authorship from 28 representatives across party lines.

Just 18% of survey respondents had known that just two people work on freight train crews, while more than 63% thought three or more people operate a train these days.

At a time when new technology is causing task over load conditions in locomotive cab compartments, the second crewmember on a train monitors traffic at rail grade crossings, provides Samaritan response to the injured after crossing collisions, and directs emergency first responders with assistance to remove the injured. Since 2014, Minnesota is averaging 40 collisions per year according to Federal Railroad Administration statistics.

Train crews also react after derailments when they occur and can communicate or supervise as needed with the engineer to avoid mistakes during the train's operation, including when the train must be mechanically secured to avoid unintended movement.

The catastrophic Lac-Mégantic disaster in 2013 devastated a town in Quebec, Canada, and occurred when a lone crewmember left his train unattended. The oil-carrying train then rolled into the town with no one aboard and the resulting blast with inferno leveled the town center area. In Canada, 47 people were killed because of an unsecured train.

“After polling responders heard both arguments from the American Association of Railroads with the rail carriers and then from railroad labor, 83% of Minnesotans believe there should be two persons on all Class One trains” said Phillip Qualy, director of the SMART TD Minnesota State Legislative Board and railroad conductor of 39 years.

Residents of Minnesota agreed when asked in the DFM Group Survey. “When the duties of each crewmember were spelled out, poll respondents recognized that running a freight train with a single crewmember would be an inherent danger to their communities and a safety risk they would not want to see the state of Minnesota allow.”

More than three of four (76%) of those surveyed expressed at least some concern of a single-person crew train derailing in their community, while 52% said they were “worried” that a freight train with one crewmember would block crossings, stop traffic, and cause delays in towns and cities all over this state.

“Train crews perform a lot of duties no technology can replace” Qualy said. “Coupling and uncoupling cars at road crossings, repairing or setting-out damaged cars from their train while in route, servicing industries, elevators, and mines, and responding immediately to hazardous material derailments or crossing accidents is what we do every day efficiently and safely. We cannot remain silent while the railroads try to experiment on the public.”

The H.F 286 policy language remains included in the contentious H.F.1555. (Section 97) Transportation Omnibus Bill Conference Committee with entrenched Senate leadership. Governor Walz has expressed his support for this vital public safety legislation.

The poll, taken by DFM Research of St. Paul, Minnesota, Feb. 26 to March 3, 2019, was of 550 random Minnesota residents using both cell phones and landlines. The total margin of error of this poll is ± 4.2 percentage points with a 95 percent confidence.

A similar poll by DFM Research was conducted in March of 2015 from 635 Minnesota residents with cell and land lines and weighted to southern and western Minnesota. That public polling revealed nearly identical survey results. For more information on this polling contact DFM Group at 651-330-9510 or SMART-TD Director Qualy at 651-222-7500.

The SMART Transportation Division is comprised of approximately 1,200 active members in Minnesota. SMART-TD is the former United Transportation Union representing railroad conductors, yardmasters, switch persons, locomotive engineers, and remote-control locomotive engineers.