



NATIONAL MEDIATION BOARD

1301 K St NW, Suite 250E
Washington, DC, 20005

In the Matter of the
Application of the

AMERICAN TRAIN DISPATCHERS
ASSOCIATION

alleging a representation dispute
pursuant to Section 2, Ninth, of
the Railway Labor Act, as
amended

involving employees of

IOWA INTERSTATE RAILROAD

53 NMB No. 28

CASE NO. R-7688
(NMB File No. CR-7276)

FINDINGS UPON
INVESTIGATION- AUTHORIZATION
OF ELECTION

July 14, 2026

This determination addresses the application of the American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA) alleging a representation dispute pursuant to the Railway Labor Act (RLA), 45 U.S.C. § 152, Ninth (Section 2, Ninth),¹ among “Train Dispatchers & Clerical, Office, Station and Storehouse Employees,” employees of Iowa Interstate Railroad (Carrier). The applied-for employees are currently unrepresented.

For the reasons set forth below, the National Mediation Board (Board or NMB) concludes that the appropriate craft or class for the employees covered by the application is “Train Dispatchers and Railroad Clerk Employees.”

Accordingly, the Board converts NMB File No. CR-7276 to NMB Case No. R-7688; finds that a dispute exists; and authorizes an election among the employees in the “Train Dispatchers and Railroad Clerk Employees” craft or class.

¹ 45 U.S.C. § 151, *et. seq*

PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

On May 5, 2026, ATDA filed an application alleging a representation dispute involving “Train Dispatchers & Clerical, Office, Station and Storehouse Employees” at the Carrier. The application was given NMB File No. CR-7276 and John S.F. Gross was assigned as the Investigator.

On May 8, 2026, the Carrier filed the List of Potential Eligible Voters (List) and provided other information requested by the Board, including a statement of position on the appropriate craft or class for the employees covered by the application. The Carrier’s List includes ten employees with the following job titles: “Train Dispatcher,” “Clerical,” “Dual”, and “Student Dispatcher”.

On May 11, 2026, the NMB received signature samples for the employees on the List.

On May 19, 2026, ATDA submitted an initial position statement on the issue of the appropriate craft or class for the employees covered by the application, as requested by the Board.²

On May 20, 2026, the Investigator requested further information from the Carrier related to the craft or class issue. The Carrier submitted the requested information May 29, 2026.

ISSUE

What is the appropriate craft or class for the employees covered by the application?

CONTENTIONS

ATDA contends that a single combined craft or class of Train Dispatchers and Clerical Employees is appropriate for representation purposes. It claims the employees share a substantial community of interest based on their extensive cross-utilization, shared work environment, and integrated operational function. Alternatively, ATDA submits that should the Board determine that two separate crafts or classes of Train Dispatchers and Clerical Employees is appropriate here, the employees covered by the application should be classified according to the craft or class in which they spend the preponderance of their working time.

² ATDA challenges the eligibility of the Student Dispatcher. According to ATDA, the Student Dispatcher remains in training, and, as of the April 30, 2026 eligibility cut-off date, had not independently performed work in the craft or class. This individual’s eligibility will be separately addressed as part of the challenges and objections process. See NMB Representation Manual Section 8.0.

The Carrier does not disagree with ATDA's position on a single combined craft or class, and submits that the appropriate craft or class for the employees covered by the application is "Clerical (Railroad Clerk)/Train Dispatcher."

FINDINGS OF LAW

Determination of the issues in this case is governed by the RLA, as amended, 45 U.S.C. § 151, *et seq.* Accordingly, the Board finds as follows:

I.

The Carrier is a common carrier as defined in 45 U.S.C. § 151.

II.

ATDA is a labor organization and/or representative as provided by 45 U.S.C. § 151, Sixth, and § 152, Ninth.

III.

45 U.S.C. § 152, Fourth, gives employees subject to its provisions "the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing. The majority of any craft or class of employees shall have the right to determine who shall be the representative of the craft or class for the purposes of this chapter."

IV.

45 U.S.C. § 152, Ninth, provides that the Board has the duty to investigate representation disputes and shall designate who may participate as eligible voters in the event an election is required.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

The Carrier is a Class II regional railroad based in Cedar Rapids, Iowa that operates over approximately 580 miles of track between Council Bluffs, Iowa and Blue Island, Illinois. It also operates a branch in Peoria, Illinois. It is one of the only regional railroads in the country with direct connections to all six Class I railroads at multiple locations.

In its rail operations, the Carrier employs ten individuals who perform the functions of the Train Dispatcher and Railroad Clerk (also referred to by the Carrier as "Clerical/Train Desk") positions. The ten employees include six individuals who are currently trained and qualified to perform both Train Dispatcher and Railroad Clerk functions (referred to by the Carrier as "Duals"); two individuals who are currently trained and qualified to perform only Railroad Clerk functions; one

individual who is currently trained and qualified to perform only Train Dispatcher functions; and one individual who is not currently trained or qualified on either position (the Student Dispatcher).

The Train Dispatcher position is primarily responsible for the safe and efficient movement of trains and maintenance of way equipment in accordance with established Carrier and federal government policies and procedures. The job duties and responsibilities of the position include:

- Ensuring compliance with all railroad rules, procedures, and regulations for safety, operations and the Federal Railroad Administration.
- Directing and coordinating railroad traffic, issuing permits and authorities, monitoring all rail movements and maintaining accurate records of all activities.
- Communicating with personnel on weather or any environmental conditions affecting train movement.
- Coordinating movement of trains and maintenance equipment according to operating plan and customer needs.
- Monitoring train and track movements.
- Reporting alleged violations of operating rules and any irregularity relating to the movement of trains.
- Planning in advance for smooth and effective movement of priority trains, trains containing hazardous material or restricted shipments, and meets/passes to avoid unnecessary delays.
- Managing unexpected events and emergency situations to protect the public, railroad employees, and railroad property.
- Responding to safety concerns and taking appropriate action.
- Maintaining familiarity of the territory, including changes in the physical characteristics.
- Coordinating track usage with Engineering Department personnel.
- Crew calling duties as necessary.
- Clerical responsibilities as necessary.
- Other duties as assigned.

The job duties of the Railroad Clerk position include the following:

- Accurate data input, document preparation and record maintenance of freight inventory, hazardous material documents, train list documents (including waybills), and demurrage and interchange records.
- Maintains yard inventory and provides train and switch lists to train crews.
- Provides accurate movement information to customers (internal and external).
- Maintains accurate crew book. Calls crews, arranges cabs and hotel reservations.

- Cross-trains with other personnel in the Customer Service Department.
- Other duties as assigned.

According to ATDA, the Railroad Clerk performs duties that are closely integrated with dispatching operations, including crew calling duties. Other duties and responsibilities include billing, serving as a point of contact for customers, arranging hotels and transportation for crews, and handling operational communications and administrative support functions related to railroad operations.

The Carrier does not maintain a separate position description or list of job duties for individuals designated as “Duals”—that designation indicates only that the individual is trained and qualified to perform both Train Dispatcher and Railroad Clerk functions. Nor is there a separate position description or list of job duties for the Student Dispatcher position as that designation only indicates an employee who is in training to become qualified to perform the duties of the Train Dispatcher position. An individual in the Student Dispatcher position may or may not have been previously trained and qualified in the job duties of the Railroad Clerk position.

The applied-for employees perform their work at the Carrier’s Cedar Rapids headquarters in an office setting and frequently share office space to facilitate communications among them. According to ATDA, the Railroad Clerks work in the same operational environment as the Train Dispatchers, utilize the same systems and communication platforms, and regularly interact with dispatching personnel in the course of performing their duties.

According to the Carrier, the employees on the List share similar terms and conditions of employment. They are also subject to the same chain of supervision—reporting directly to the Assistant Director of Customer Service and Dispatch, who, in turn, reports to the Director of Customer Service and Dispatch and, ultimately, to the Chief Operating Officer.

The Carrier hires employees independently for the Train Dispatcher or Railroad Clerk position, and then, at its discretion, based on employee competency and the needs of operation, may cross-train employees for the other position. For example, an individual hired as Clerical/Train Desk may be cross-trained as a Train Dispatcher, or vice versa.

Once hired, Railroad Clerks and Train Dispatchers undergo in-house on-the-job training. The length of the training may vary on an individual basis, but averages 16 weeks for the Railroad Clerk position and 24 weeks for the Train Dispatcher position. Neither position requires certification. As noted, six of the ten individuals on the List are currently trained and qualified to perform both Train Dispatcher and Railroad Clerk functions, and three are currently trained and

qualified as a Train Dispatcher or Railroad Clerk. The individual in the Student Dispatcher position is not currently trained or qualified for either position.

In terms of scheduling, the Carrier assigns each of the applied-for employees to work “Dispatch” shifts or “Train Desk” shifts. For the 60-day period immediately preceding the filing of the application in this matter (the months of March and April 2026), the Carrier provided preponderance data showing the total number of Dispatch and Train Desk shifts assigned to each individual on the List during that period. The data shows that of the six “Duals” who are trained and qualified to perform the duties of the Train Dispatcher and Railroad Clerk positions, four of them performed work in both positions during the 60-day preponderance period. Although two of the Duals performed work in only one of the positions during the preponderance period, they are dual qualified and subject to utilization by the Carrier in both positions. The other four individuals—one Dispatcher, two Railroad Clerks, and the Student Dispatcher—performed only Dispatch or Railroad Clerk functions during the preponderance period; however, as noted above, they may be cross-trained for and cross-utilized in the other position as the needs of the Carrier require. Overall, the data shows that the Carrier materially cross-utilizes employees in the group, although not all of them were cross-utilized during the preponderance period.

DISCUSSION

In determining the proper craft or class for a group of employees, the Board considers a number of factors, including functional integration, work classifications, terms and conditions of employment, and work-related community of interest. NMB Representation Manual (Manual) Section 9.1; *see Carrollton R.R.*, 51 NMB 93 (2024); *Brownsville & Rio Grande Int’l Ry.*, 47 NMB 64 (2020); *Columbia & Cowlitz Ry./Patriot Woods R.R.*, 38 NMB 264 (2011) (*Columbia & Cowlitz*); *Indiana Southern R.R.*, 37 NMB 226 (2010). The factor of work-related community of interest is particularly important. *See, e.g., United Airlines*, 52 NMB 97, 105 (2025). To evaluate this factor, the Board examines the actual duties and responsibilities of the employees, the environment in which the employees work, and the interaction among the employees involved. *See, e.g., United Airlines*, 52 NMB 13, 20 (2024).

The Board makes craft or class determinations case by case, based upon Board policy and precedent. *See, e.g., Great Lakes Central R.R.*, 52 NMB 89, 92 (2025). The Board recognizes that “historical patterns of representation in the railroad industry provide the basis for craft or class determinations.” *Terminal R.R. Ass’n of St. Louis*, 28 NMB 187, 199 (2000); *see Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Ry.*, 16 NMB 495, 500 (1989). The Board, however, does not base craft or class determinations solely on historical patterns of representation. The Board has also recognized that cross-utilization of employees across class lines presents difficulties in determining craft or class issues, and that on some smaller carriers, employees may work in more than one craft or class over a period of time. *See*

Florida East Coast R.R., 21 NMB 35, 44 (1993). In such cases, “perpetuating historic crafts and classes could result in artificial fragmentation of employees along traditional craft or class lines which do not reflect the carrier’s actual operations.” *Id.* at 44. As a result, when a carrier is small and when its employees are cross-utilized, the Board may look beyond traditional craft or class designations. *See id.* at 45.

Although Train Dispatchers and Clerical, Office, Station, and Storehouse Employees have been recognized as separate historical crafts or classes on railroads, *see, e.g., Buffalo & Pittsburgh R.R.*, 17 NMB 14, 16 (1989) (Train Dispatchers) and *Brownsville & Rio Grande Int’l Ry.*, 44 NMB 70 (2017) (Clerical, Office, Station, and Storehouse Employees), the evidence in this case justifies deviating from these established crafts or classes and finding a single, combined craft or class of Train Dispatchers and Railroad Clerk Employees appropriate for representation purposes.

The applied-for employees share a work-related community of interest. They share common terms and conditions of employment; are subject to the same supervisory chain of command; work at the same physical location (frequently sharing the same office space); and regularly interact with one another. In addition, a majority of the employees (six of 10) are currently trained and qualified to perform the duties of both the Train Dispatcher and Railroad Clerk positions; and a majority of those employees (four of six) were cross-utilized by the Carrier during the 60-day preponderance period. The fact that not every employee in the group is currently cross-trained or cross-utilized in both positions (or was cross-utilized during the preponderance period) does not change the Board’s view that a combined craft or class of Train Dispatchers and Railroad Clerk Employees is appropriate. The Carrier has materially cross-trained and cross-utilized employees in the group and retains the discretion to cross-train and cross-utilize all of them. And, although not dispositive of the craft or class determination, there is no disagreement between ATDA and the Carrier on the appropriateness of a consolidated craft or class of Train Dispatchers and Railroad Clerk Employees on this property.³

The facts in this case are similar to those in *Florida East Coast Railroad*, where the Board found appropriate a combined craft or class of Train and Engine Service Employees, two historically recognized (and distinct) railroad crafts or classes. In making its determination, the Board considered several factors, including the size of the carrier and employee cross-utilization data. The cross-utilization data showed that during the 60-day preponderance period approximately 33% of the employees at issue performed both trainmen and conductor work and engine service (engineer) work, while other employees

³ Craft or class determinations are made by the Board, which is not bound by the application or any agreement between participants. *See, e.g. Connecticut Southern R.R.*, 44 NMB 43 (2017); *Northern Indiana Commuter Transp. Dist.*, 27 NMB 512, 518 (2000).

performed work only as a trainman or conductor or engineer. According to the Board, since the carrier cross-utilized “to this extent” it could not let historical craft or class designations dictate artificial barriers. *Id.* at 45; *see also Texas & Northern Ry.*, 40 NMB 55 (2012) (separate groups of operating and non-operating employees appropriate; only 19% of workforce (seven of 37) was cross-utilized during 30-day preponderance period). The Board in *Florida East Coast* further found that the employees shared a community of interest; were routinely cross-trained and materially cross-utilized; worked in the same work environment under the same supervision; and shared similar terms and conditions of employment. *Compare Florida East Coast Railroad with Louisville & Indiana Railroad*, 41 NMB 82 (2014) (Board declined to find a combined craft or class of Train Dispatchers and Bridge Operators appropriate; employees did not share a work-related community of interest, were based in different locations, and there was no evidence of cross-utilization or cross-training among them). *See also Illinois and Midland R.R.*, 25 NMB 57 (1997) (Board declined to find a combined craft or class of Carmen and Clerks appropriate; no evidence that the employees were cross-trained or cross-utilized).

Here, given the small size of the Carrier and its workforce and the fact that the employees covered by the application share a work-related community of interest and are materially cross-trained and cross-utilized, the Board finds that the appropriate craft or class for the applied-for employees is Train Dispatchers and Railroad Clerk Employees.

CONCLUSION

The Board finds that the appropriate craft or class at the Carrier is Train Dispatchers and Railroad Clerk Employees. Accordingly, NMB File No. CR-7276 is converted to NMB Case No. R-7688.

Based on the authorization cards submitted by ATDA, the Board further finds that a representation dispute exists and authorizes an election among the craft or class of Train Dispatchers and Railroad Clerk Employees, employees of the Carrier, using a cut-off date of April 30, 2026.

Pursuant to Manual Section 12.1, the Carrier is hereby required to furnish, within five calendar days, 1” X 2 5/8” peel-off labels bearing the alphabetized names and current addresses of those employees on the List of Potential Eligible Voters. The Carrier must print the same sequence number from the List of Potential Eligible Voters beside each voter’s name on the address label. The Carrier must also provide to the Board the name and sequence number of those potential eligible voters on military leave who are serving in foreign countries or who reside outside of the United States. The Carrier must use the most expeditious method possible, such as overnight mail, to ensure that the Board receives the labels within five calendar days.

By direction of the NATIONAL MEDIATION BOARD.


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