

The North American Section held its 2007 Annual General Meeting on Thursday, 24 May in the Walter/Bannerman room at the Hyatt Regency in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. In all, 20 people were in attendance.

The IRSE is an international organization, based in London, of professionals in the railroad communication and signal field. The organization was chartered in 1912, and presently has over 4,000 members worldwide. The goals of the Institution are, first: “The advancement ... of the science and practice of signalling ... by the promotion of research, the collection and publication of educational material and the holding of conferences, seminars and meetings”, and second: “The maintenance of high standards of practice and professional care amongst those working within the industry...”.

The IRSE sponsors technical papers, published in advance of their presentation. Each year the papers are gathered in the Annual Proceedings along with a summary of the discussions. The IRSE publishes a monthly magazine for members, the IRSE News, with technical articles and information on the Institution. There are annual meetings, major technical conferences, and technical visits. The IRSE has also published several textbooks and reports on various aspect of railroad signaling and communications.

The North American Section (NAS) was formed on May 23, 2002 to support the goals of the Institution in North America. The NAS presently has about 35 members, and is hoping that more railroad communication and signal professionals will join. NAS members must be members of the IRSE; the NAS Local Committee can help prospective IRSE members with their applications.



The formal portrait of the 2007 IRSE Annual General Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm, and the meeting minutes of the May, 25, 2006 Annual General Meeting were approved. In addition, congratulations were given to Bill Scheerer for his appointment as Country Vice President representing the North American Section in matters with the IRSE home office in London.

The NAS has been working on a text book on North American Signal practice. Ken Bisset provided a status report on the task. The textbook will be written for new signal designers and be based on the format found in the UK IRSE text “Introduction to Signaling”.

Twelve chapters have been reviewed, with the following approaching the review point:

Cab Signals – In preparation
Defect Detectors – In preparation

The schedule is slipping, but Book committee chairman Kendrick Bisset is confident that final progress can be made in the coming year.

Next was a presentation by David Thurston on the IEEE Guideline for Stopping Distance. David is the chair of the IEEE Working Group 25, which is attempting to standardize the terminology and specification of train stopping distance in preparation for block layout and control line design. The document is currently in final review within the IEEE Rail Transit Vehicle Interface Standards Committee and should be published in 2008.

IRSE Chief Executive Colin Porter then provided a message from London, and gave IRSE President Wim Coenraad's regrets for not being able to attend due to the conflict with ongoing IRES activities. Colin proceeded to present a very informative slide show on IRSE philosophy, practice, organization and current initiatives. In addition, Colin answered many questions from those present concerning IRSE activities and licensing schemes in the UK.

The ballots were then tallied for officers and members of the local committee positions that were due this year. The results are listed below:

Chairman: Kendrick Bisset System Engineer, Safetran Systems Corporation

Vice Chairman: David Thurston, Vice President, SYSTRA Consulting

Local Committee members:

Bill Scheerer, Chief Engineer, General Electric Transportation Systems – Global Signaling

Joseph Noffsinger, Market Development Leader, General Electric Transportation Systems – Global Signaling

At the conclusion of the meeting, special Thanks was extended to the following:

Vic Babin for his work on our representation at the RSSI show.

Colin Porter, IRSE Chief Executive, for his support and presentation.

A special presentation was made for Bob Nash of CP Rail. It was noted that Bob's support of the NAS for this years meeting included Booth Material at the RSSI Show, and arranging for the Field Tour of the CP Rail facilities in Calgary for NAS members. The AGM would not have been possible, or a success without Bob's help.

Another important mention for this year's AGM is the Railway Systems Suppliers Incorporated (RSSI). The NAS AGM is held in conjunction with the annual RSSI product show, and the RSSI provides the NAS with booth space within the show to promote the membership, as well as providing meeting space for the AGM itself. The NAS expresses it's extreme gratitude to the RSSI for their continued support.

It was also noted that two members will be changing their affiliation within the industry; Bill Petit will be retiring from Safetran Systems this fall. Bill has served on the NAS Local Committee since its inception. He has been involved in numerous standards adoptions, and has provided the industry with invaluable knowledge.

Mr. Bill Scheerer will also be retiring in the near future. However, Mr. Scheerer will be merely reducing his hours and remain as Chief Signal Engineer at GE Global Signaling. For those that are not aware, Bill was the driving force behind the creation of the NAS, and we will be forever in his debt..

A technical Visit was made to the CP Rail Network Control Centre the following morning. Ten members took advantage of the gracious hospitality of CP Rail and posed for this photograph outside the CP Rail Headquarters building in Calgary.

