

“Lance Fritz will be the keynote speaker during the 2018 Illinois Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting and Luncheon scheduled for Sept. 20, 2018, at Hilton Chicago.”



Lance M. Fritz, Chairman, President, and CEO of Union Pacific Railroad, has been named as keynote speaker for the 2018 Illinois Chamber's Annual Luncheon.

Q & A with Lance Fritz, Chairman, President and CEO of Union Pacific

Union Pacific connects 23 states in the western two-thirds of the United States, providing a critical link in the global supply chain. The company operates and maintains more than 2,300 track miles in Illinois. Its St. Louis-to-Chicago route and east-west transcontinental main line across the state are critical paths for many of the goods Americans use every day.

Chicago is home to the world's largest rail center. It also is a strategic gateway for Union Pacific – 25 percent of the company's carloads touch the Windy City including commodities, such as corn and soybeans; automobile parts and finished vehicles; and general merchandise such as clothes, televisions and other electronics. Union Pacific serves more commuters and operates more trains on its three major Metra routes than any railroad in the city. Each day, 200 trains carry more than 105,000 riders throughout Chicagoland.

ILBIZ – What is Union Pacific's role in the global supply chain?

Lance Fritz – Freight railroads are the backbone of U.S. business, supporting jobs in most sectors of the economy. Fluctuations in demand for autos, grain, plastic and thousands of other commodities are a bellwether; often registering in Union Pacific carloadings long before they are reflected in broader economic statistics. At Union Pacific, nearly 40 percent of our shipments either come from or are headed to Asia, Canada, Europe and Mexico.

From my vantage point, I see how international trade benefits our country every day in the stories of ordinary Americans. One example is the Illinois auto worker who molds plastic into dashboards that are shipped to Mexico to be installed in finished vehicles. The vehicles are sent back to the U.S. for sale in American showrooms. I believe it's critical for the U.S. to strengthen its most important trade partnerships. We need to modernize these agreements to plan for the future, providing laborers with new skills that complement our nation's growing reliance on technology.

ILBIZ – How is innovation changing the way Union Pacific does business?

Fritz – At Union Pacific, innovation is ever present. It can be a big idea leading to large-scale improvement or something small that impacts an employee's day-to-day operations. We're harnessing technology like 3-D virtual simulators, lasers and trackside sensors, and drones to work more efficiently and improve safety.

Our tracks are technical runways outfitted with sophisticated systems. Wayside detector networks scan and report potential defects, such as hot wheels and shifted loads, which are then repaired before accidents occur. One of our latest developments, SensorX, is a smart sensor installed in the rail that measures vibration and rail movement, collecting roughly 40,000 measurements a second.

Designed as a technology platform, rather than a stand-alone solution, other components were added. For example, an internal scale measures car weight, determining empty versus loaded cars and whether they're properly loaded.

We're embracing innovation to enhance the customer experience. Using a modified mobile phone, operating employees report freight car movements in real-time, providing our customers tracking capabilities, while eliminating emails and phone calls. In addition to removing extra time spent entering data at the end of an employee's shift, the technology allows Union Pacific to anticipate customer needs and quickly respond, ultimately helping our customers serve their own clientele.

ILBIZ – As Union Pacific embraces technology, what kind of career opportunities are available?

Fritz – We train our work force to take on today's open jobs and build a career for tomorrow. Union Pacific is constantly looking for technically trained employees to inspect, repair and maintain our locomotives. Filling our diesel electrician and mechanic positions is difficult. One way we confront this challenge is running our own apprenticeship programs. It's important for us to provide a solid foundation for our employees, ensuring they're ready to fill the gaps and grow with Union Pacific.



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Union Pacific needs people to safely run our trains. These train crew positions require only a high school diploma or equivalent, and no prior experience. Full-time employees, on average, earn \$60,000 per year (depending on hours worked) for the first two years, plus competitive benefits. Our train crews also have the rare opportunity to see America’s most beautiful landscapes, not visible from highways and tourist hot spots.

We’ve teamed up with the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership to support the Opportunity Works

internship program, giving young adults the resources they need to find a family-supporting job. The intense program begins with fundamental skills training, followed by several weeks of hands-on experience exploring Union Pacific careers in Engineering, Mechanical, Operations and Marketing and Sales.

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