

Solutionary Rail
Encouraging Berkshire Hathaway to Start
Start Electrification of BNSF Railway Routes
By Clyde Anderson – NE Chapter Transportation Issues Co-Chair

Bill Moyer, co-founder of **Solutionary Rail** (<https://www.solutionaryrail.org/>) - a people-powered campaign to electrify America's railroads and open doors to a clean energy future, contacted me last February concerning support for an action at the Berkshire Hathaway Annual Meeting in Omaha on May 4th.



For the past several years **Solutionary Rail** (SR) has organized a people-powered campaign for getting America's railroads transitioning to a decarbonized mode of freight and passenger transportation. SR's primary goal is to electrify America's railroads. Much of what SR has done has been inspired by the Steel Interstate Coalition (<https://steelinterstate.org/>) and RAIL Solution (<http://railsolution.org/>) movements.

To help communicate its goal, SR has published a book *Solutionary Rail - a people-powered campaign to electrify America's railroads and open doors to a clean energy future*. A PDF copy of the 108-page book can be downloaded for free by going to this website <https://www.solutionaryrail.org/ebook> and entering the coupon code "4WRD2GTHR".

SR also has a 3.5 minute introductory video <http://SolutionaryRail.org/video> that explains its goals and the advantages of railroad electrification.

BNSF Railway is the largest freight railroad network in North America. It is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway (BH). Since all BNSF trains are powered by diesel-fueled locomotives, the railroad is one of the nation's largest consumers of diesel fuel.

SR decided to target BNSF in its effort to promote electrification. The BH Annual Meeting in Omaha May 4th was a perfect opportunity.

Powering trains with electricity rather than diesel has several benefits:

- Although rail transportation requires only one-third the energy of cars and trucks, electric trains are at least 35% more energy efficient than diesel-powered trains.
- Converting from diesel to electric reduces the railroad industry's dependence of fossil fuels and their volatile prices.
- Electrified rail could utilize clean power from renewable sources like wind and solar.
- Rail corridors like BNSF's could become energy superhighways, with electric transmission lines transporting renewable electricity from rural areas to towns and cities.
- The reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases and other pollutants is good for the environment the and health for trackside communities.

Warren Buffett and BNSF need to take the lead on railroad electrification. What a wonderful investment for some of BH's approximately \$112 billion in cash!

Bill Moyer was looking for potential collaborators and contacted Liz Veazey with Mode Shift Omaha and myself with Nebraska Sierra Club. SC agreed to host SR's visit to Omaha, and Bold Nebraska and Nebraskans for Peace also assisted since they had prior experience at BH annual meetings.

SR and SC decided to schedule a program to educate the public about Solutionary Rail and its railroad electrification goals. The [*Electrified Railroad as a Win for America*](https://www.shorturl.at/hkDF2) (<https://www.shorturl.at/hkDF2>) program was held at UNO's Community Engagement Center at 5:30 PM on Friday, May 3rd. Although only 18 people attended, there were a lot of questions asked during Bill's presentation and afterwards at a pizza reception. Bill also met with Omaha Public Power Dist. Board member Rick Yoder.



Photo by Bill Moyer – Solutionary Rail

Early Saturday morning our small crew of volunteers held the Solutionary Rail banner outside the CHI Health Convention Center/Arena while the hordes of people lined up to enter the BH Annual Meeting. While three of us held up the banner, Bill and Jane Wilson handed out informational flyers. Jane was interviewed by Omaha World Herald reporter Erin Duffy and appeared with a photo of the banner in Sunday's online edition.

Thanks to Mark Hefflinger with Bold Nebraska, Bill was able to get BH credentials to attend the meeting. Once inside Mark Welsch of Nebraskans for Peace, who has done this many times before, guided Bill to enter the drawing for those wishing to ask questions of Warren Buffet at the Q & A Session. And Bill's number was drawn first and got to ask the first question! Talk about beginners luck!

Go to <https://www.shorturl.at/wzCQS> to view Bill Moyer asking his question and the responses from Warren Buffet and Charlie Munger. Warren said SR could talk to Carl Ice, who is BNSF's new CEO. Then Charlie Munger added that SR is not only on the side of the angels but that electrification will come and that "Greg Abel will decide that." Greg is the vice chairman of BH for non-insurance business and the CEO of BH Energy. MidAmerican Energy Company, Iowa's largest electric utility is a wholly owned subsidiary of BH and noted for its extensive development of renewable wind energy.

Bill Moyer was very thankful for all the assistance he received from Nebraska Sierra Club and its allies in making for this very successful weekend.

Copies of Solutionary Rail's book will be available at SC, ProRail Nebraska and Mode Shift Omaha events while the supply lasts.

Saturday evening Bill Moyer gave a demonstration of light projection messaging which has been an effective tool at some other Backbone campaigns. Here is a photo of a message to Berkshire Hathaway projected on the awning over the entrance to the CHI Health Center.



Photo by Bill Moyer – Solutionary Rail