US railroad CSX announces hundreds of track maintenance worker layoffs

Bill Mertz
17 September 2026

Track maintenance workers at CSX are being "rewarded" for their contributions to a record-setting second quarter with 165 job cuts and as many as 1,062 furloughs in the maintenance of way department. These workers build, maintain and inspect the tracks that run through many communities and cities in the eastern half of the United States, where CSX is one of only two Class I railroads with a substantial presence.

On July 22, 2026, CSX announced second quarter operating income of $1.51 billion and net earnings of $1.00 billion, or $0.54 per diluted share. This was up from the second quarter of 2025, where the company reported operating income of $1.28 billion and net earnings of $829 million, or $0.44 per diluted share. On a year-over-year basis, operating income increased 17 percent, net earnings 21 percent, and EPS increased 23 percent. Total volume of 1.68 million units for the quarter was 6 percent higher compared to second quarter 2025. Revenue totaled $3.94 billion for the quarter, increasing 10 percent year-over-year.

The shareholders and executives are awash in record revenues while workers prepare for a cold winter of layoffs.

On September 11 the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division of the Teamsters (BMWED) announced on their website that CSX "is moving forward with 165 permanent MOW position abolishments, the closure of multiple headquarters and as many as 1,062 projected furloughs overall, including approximately 900 BMWED members assigned to system gangs that are expected to be cut off. System gangs are not expected to restart until late February. In one location, CSX plans to reduce the workforce from 12 employees to four while leaving those four responsible for 142 miles of mainline track and multiple yards."

These job cuts come after years of the company's policy of refusing to fill maintenance of way vacancies as workers retire, are fired or quit. Attrition accelerated after CSX adopted Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR) under the late CEO Hunter Harrison in 2017. The system drives down the operating ratio by cutting staff and assets, running longer trains and increasing the amount of work extracted from the remaining workforce. A 2022 Government Accountability Office report found that employment at the seven Class I railroads fell by about 28 percent between 2011 and 2021 and noted that CSX continued reducing its workforce after implementing PSR.

Often local maintenance forces have diminished to only two track inspectors and one section gang of two to four workers responsible for 100 or more miles of railroad.

System production gangs are CSX's traveling heavy-maintenance forces: rail gangs replace worn rail, tie gangs remove deteriorated ties and install new ones and curve-patch gangs replace heavily worn rail through curves. They operate as mechanized production lines with dozens of workers and specialized machines, carrying out large-scale track renewal that the small local section gangs cannot perform at the same scale.

Cutting these gangs off early therefore means limiting or postponing part of CSX's planned heavy track-renewal program, not simply shifting the work to other crews. One CSX maintenance of way worker told the WSWS, "The three rail gangs are being abolished at the end of this month, September, and tie gangs and curve patch gangs are being cut off in October and November with only some going into December. In previous years they all mostly worked into December." Workers often save vacation till the end of the year, then expect to begin in early January when the gangs would restart production for the new year.

Another CSX worker expressed his rage at the job cuts: "This is corporate greed, plain and simple. If a corporation can afford $5 billion in stock buybacks, then it can afford to maintain its labor force without layoffs. This is a direct transfer of wealth from the working class to the owner class. Unfortunately, for us the federal government has no appetite to regulate this type of exploitation."

CSX's present management was installed amid direct pressure from Wall Street. In August 2025, activist hedge fund Ancora Holdings demanded that CSX pursue a merger or replace CEO Joe Hinrichs. CSX replaced Hinrichs with

Steve Angel the following month. Ancora publicly welcomed the decision and said it expected Angel to find a merger partner.

The pressure on CSX forms part of a broader drive toward consolidation. Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern are seeking approval for an $85 billion merger that would create the first coast-to-coast US freight railroad. After initially rejecting the application as incomplete, the Surface Transportation Board accepted a revised application in May and in August opened the merits phase of its review. The merger application itself includes detailed exhibits on positions to be abolished, created or transferred as the two systems are combined.

Angel’s compensation is tied directly to the interests of shareholders. CSX gave him a $1.5 million annual salary, a $10 million sign-on equity award and eligibility for a $13.5 million long-term incentive award in 2026, along with corporate housing and up to $200,000 a year in personal use of company aircraft.

BMWED is choosing to grovel before the capitalist state: “We will bring these cuts and their safety implications to the Federal Railroad Administration, the Surface Transportation Board and Congress. We will document deferred work, staffing shortages, excessive territories, heavier workloads and any unsafe conditions created or worsened by these cuts. We will make sure regulators, elected officials and the public understand exactly what CSX is doing.” The appeal is directed to the same institutions that have overseen the destruction of railroad jobs for years and, in 2022, intervened to prevent a national rail strike. The bureaucrats will not initiate independent action.

In 2022, BLET members voted 99.5 percent to authorize strike action, while overwhelming opposition to the Presidential Emergency Board settlement spread throughout the industry. After four unions rejected the agreement, the rail union apparatus kept workers on the job through repeated extensions and delays until Congress imposed the contract and outlawed a strike. The agreement resolved none of the underlying staffing and scheduling issues created by years of PSR cuts.

The opposition erupted again in 2024, when the unions tried to pre-empt national bargaining with separate carrier-by-carrier and craft-by-craft agreements. BMWED members at CSX rejected the first agreement by 1,330 votes to 616, while Norfolk Southern conductors rejected a SMART-TD agreement by more than 81 percent. BNSF conductors also voted down their agreement. BMWED then returned to CSX workers with a second agreement containing only minor changes.

In both contract rounds, the union bureaucracies divided workers by craft and carrier and prevented the opposition from developing into unified national action. BMWED is following the same course against the present cuts: regulatory appeals and documentation of the consequences, while CSX dismantles jobs and maintenance programs. An industrial campaign against the layoffs would immediately raise the need to unite maintenance workers with engineers, conductors, signalmen, machinists and other crafts across CSX and the other Class I railroads.

The repeated contract rejections show the depth of opposition among railroaders. The strike at National Steel Car (NSC) in Hamilton, Ontario points toward a fight across carriers and borders. Workers at this facility construct rail cars that are employed across North America. These workers have been fighting for higher wages and an end to an exploitative and unsafe piece work system that has resulted in the deaths of three workers between 2020 and 2022. Workers formed a rank-and-file committee and are currently struggling against the USW bureaucrats' efforts to betray the strike. The USW has reacted with hostility to the rank-and-file committee, fearful the struggle will spiral out of their control. The NSC rank-and-file committee has called for railroad workers to not handle NSCX cars—do not move them, do not load them, set them out. The NSC rank-and-file committee calls for solidarity with North American railroad workers and the international working class.

Railroad workers should take up this appeal by building rank-and-file committees independent of the union apparatus and preparing common action against layoffs, unsafe conditions and the restructuring of the rail industry in the interests of Wall Street. The attack on more than 1,000 CSX maintenance jobs concerns every railroad craft: fewer workers and less track renewal mean heavier workloads and more dangerous conditions throughout the network.