



Losses

As we were putting this issue together, two separate losses occurred. First was the loss of life as an Amtrak train left the tracks north of Philadelphia. Second was the passing of well-known surveyor Rj Zimmer.

All the bodies had not yet been recovered from the train crash before some were trying to assign blame. Many immediately latched onto Positive Train Control as something that would have prevented the tragedy.

I first wrote about PTC in 1997 after hearing about it at CGSIC meetings, and several times more until 2007 when it stopped being discussed. There was nothing not to like about it, including increased fuel efficiency through train pacing and increased capacity through train spacing. Initial estimates were that it would take four to five years to build out and would cost \$35-40 million. The requirement for PTC became an unfunded mandate by Congress in 2008, but the most recent estimate of the cost had ballooned to \$13 billion.

Adding to the problems is radio spectrum. According to one report, the equipment had been installed along the corridor where the crash occurred, but due to a three-year wrangle over spectrum, has not yet been tuned on. This same report suggested that a much cheaper solution would be to employ the cell phones of all the passengers to provide train location. A map of the route coupled with location data would allow speed limits to be programmed into the train itself.

Without a doubt, some form of PTC would have prevented the crash and another one not that long ago in NYC. Both were caused by the train going too fast into a curve.

In Passing

It is with great sadness that I announce the passing of Rj "Zim" Zimmer. Rj started writing for me when I was the editor for another magazine.

His life began in 1952, in Chelsea, Massachusetts. After high school, Zim's sense of curiosity and adventure led him to explore the country, hitchhiking the Pacific Northwest and Canada several times. Zim eventually settled in Corvallis, Oregon.

In 1977, he began land surveying in Oregon and building a career that focused on GIS. He received many awards and accolades for his accomplishments and innovative thinking. During his time working in Corvallis, he helped transform and modernize mapping for the local county government. He also earned a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering physics from Oregon State University in Corvallis.

In the late '90s, Zim moved to Helena, Montana, where he proudly served as city-county GIS manager and volunteered his GIS and mapping services to the local fire districts.

In 2012, Zim earned a Master of Geomatics Engineering degree from the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, New Brunswick. This was a longtime dream and one of his proudest accomplishments.

His book, *GIS for Surveyors: A Land Surveyor's Introduction to Geographic Information Systems*, was published in 2013 and has been recognized as an authoritative resource for professionals in the field.

His love of the natural world informed both his professional life and his many passions and interests. Zim found peace and harmony in nature; he loved to spend time hiking mountains and camping in the woods. He was a strong advocate for the protection of wildlife and land conservation. Zim expressed his creative spirit through guitar playing, composing music and photography.

That rarest of individuals, Rj was a licensed surveyor who saw and employed the benefits of GIS. Rj pointed the way for surveyors who wanted to become involved in GIS, and his many articles provided how-to instructions. The surveying community has lost a powerful voice, and Rj will be missed by those who knew him. ■



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