



NITL Emerging Leader Profile: Carson Pester

For Carson Pester, a career in rail has been built on relationships, continuous learning, and finding solutions that work for everyone involved.

As Asset Manager – Rail at CHS Inc., Carson has spent more than 15 years building a career that started with a single opportunity and evolved through hard work, curiosity, and a willingness to take on new challenges.

Carson grew up in northwestern Minnesota, working at several family farms that produced wheat, beans, and sugar beets. Agriculture was a natural part of his upbringing, and so was an awareness of CHS.

After earning a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Management from Minnesota State University, Mankato, he applied for a position with CHS right out of college. While he was not selected for the role he originally pursued, a Human Resources manager who was part of the interview process encouraged him to consider an open position in the rail department. It proved to be a pivotal moment.

What began as an opportunity in the rail department quickly turned into a long-term career built on continuous learning, expanding responsibilities, and a passion for the industry.

He started as a Rail Biller in June 2011 and steadily took on additional responsibilities over the years. Today, Carson leads a team of four that supports CHS's owned and leased rail assets, including railcars, locomotives, land and track agreements, industrial development projects, and the many activities that occur throughout the lifecycle of those assets.

The scope of his team's work has continued to expand alongside the business. In fact, Carson recently added a new team member dedicated to supporting land and track agreements, reflecting the growing importance of that area.

Despite the complexity of his role, Carson's leadership philosophy is straightforward: treat people with respect and the way you would want to be treated. He emphasizes accountability, communication, and practical problem-solving. Known for his calm demeanor, Carson focuses on listening to all perspectives, understanding frustrations, and helping people work toward mutually beneficial solutions.

"I want my team to collaborate, communicate, and feel supported," he said. "I'm fortunate to work with a strong group that takes ownership of their areas, and my role is to help remove roadblocks, stay aligned, and support them when needed."

When discussing accomplishments, Carson is quick to shift the focus away from himself. Rather than pointing to a single achievement, he talks about the opportunity to continue learning and growing throughout his career. From his early days in rail billing to his current leadership role, each new responsibility helped him expand his expertise and build trust across the organization.

That trust is something he values deeply.

Over the years, Carson has become a go-to resource for colleagues throughout CHS. Whether helping solve an immediate challenge or working through a long-term issue, he takes pride in being someone others can rely on. His broad understanding of CHS locations, commodities, operations, and transportation allows him to connect the dots and help teams navigate complex situations.

The rail industry itself presents no shortage of challenges. Balancing equipment availability, customer needs, market conditions, and countless unknown variables requires careful planning and constant adaptability, particularly when making long-term decisions.

Yet those challenges are also what keep Carson energized.

He is especially excited about opportunities to improve and clarify agreements while exploring new ways to strengthen and support the future of the rail industry. Just as important are the relationships he has built along the way.

“The relationships are what I’m most proud of,” Carson said. “When you’ve built trust with people, it makes it easier to work through difficult situations and find a path forward together.”

Family also plays a central role in Carson’s life. He and his wife stay busy raising their three children—two sons and a daughter, ranging in age from 3 to 14. Between sports schedules, family activities, and outdoor adventures, there is rarely a quiet moment. They try to take one or two trips each year, whether that means spending time at a cabin on one of Minnesota’s lakes or visiting a national park somewhere across the United States.

As a participant in the Emerging Leaders Program, Carson is eager to continue expanding his knowledge and perspective. He looks forward to learning more about policy and regulations, understanding how key decisions are made, and exploring how the transportation industry can effectively engage in the policymaking process.

“I’m excited to share my experience in rail while continuing to expand my knowledge of other modes of transportation and the broader issues affecting shippers,” he said.

With a foundation built on trust, collaboration, and continuous growth, Carson brings both practical expertise and a people-first approach to leadership, qualities that make him a strong addition to the Emerging Leaders Program.

Carson Pester is a current member of the National Industrial Transportation League’s 2026 Emerging Leaders Program.