



Bolting ahead

Founded in 2003, **Tracksure** has been working for the last decade to highlight the benefits of its innovative range of engineered fasteners. Gerhard Dodl, managing director, is convinced 2014 will be a breakthrough year for the company

Tracksure markets a unique range of patented nut locking devices that will prevent nut loosening as a result of vibration and settlement. The products, which can be used in a wide number of track and rolling stock applications, enhance safety regimes and deliver cost and operational benefits.

The Tracksure locking device consists of a modified bolt with a reverse thread added to the end, which accommodates both the original nut and the Tracksure locking nut. A locking nut is applied on to the reverse thread until it tightens against the original nut, and a serrated steel locking cap then pushes down over both the original nut and the Tracksure nut, held in place with a spring clip. If the original nut starts to loosen (even

microscopically) the locking nut tightens on the reverse thread with the locking cover combining both actions, ensuring a fail-safe bolt fixing.

Gerhard Dodl is Managing Director at the company. Passionately enthusiastic about the product, Gerhard is keen to highlight the benefits and simplicity of how it works: "Unlike other fasteners it can be simply maintained and does not require expensive capital equipment to install," he noted. "Furthermore, with this product our clients can be absolutely certain that there is no nut rotation possible, which brings huge benefits."

He uses the analogy of a seatbelt to highlight how the Tracksure product could be gradually accepted into the rail industry (and hopes that it could also be adopted into

other markets such as wind farms and oil and gas in the future too.) "When you consider the seatbelt, 45 years ago they weren't even included in cars. Then later they became an option, and today they are mandatory, and you wouldn't drive without one," he explained.

"In this same way, rail operators can continue with the same processes as before, but they can add on a locking device that isn't interfering with the standard bolt, but that brings enormous cost benefits from changed maintenance procedures and also brings positive safety improvements. So it's not a revolutionary transformation, we are not changing standards, we don't change what is already there – we just put the 'seatbelt' on."

In fact, the device itself has been proven successful

Tracksure sample bolt



over years of testing and trials, and as rail operators gradually become open to new methods of working and begin to install Tracksure solutions, so more doors open for Gerhard and his team. "I totally believe in the device – we have even had a visiting professor from an Oxford University confirm to the Permanent Way institute that Tracksure's locking system cannot come undone," he said. "But of course rail operators have certain procedures in place, and we have to get it accepted that after 150 years of the old way of working, now there is a bolt that won't come undone, and this means that there is an opportunity to change existing maintenance procedures and that this will bring cost savings."

London Underground was one of Tracksure's earliest progressive supporters, starting with small tests, and moving onto general approval, with a lot of bolts installed on the District Line amongst others. "We are working with engineers who are very keen on our bolts and we are growing the business there," said Gerhard. "And I anticipate that as we continue to prove the system with London Underground, we will be able to break through into other metro systems. Indeed, in this way we are moving with LB Foster into the Transits in a number of USA cities."

Gerhard explained that LB Foster is a very large player in the US railroad market, with which Tracksure has been working. "We started some trials in railroads and one major railroad in America has already started to specify our products on large diamond crossings, which is a major achievement. LB Foster will give us the ability to roll our products out to a large market, as it has an established and trusted sales force with the right contacts in the railroads, which can highlight the benefits of our device.

"On the Transit side, trials have been going for about 16-18 months, as regulations have to be followed, but I now believe they are convinced about our product and we will soon see some commercial orders in a major city."

Metro and underground systems have stringent maintenance procedures that require (depending on if





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the application is critical or non-critical) scrutiny of bolts as often as every 24 hours. "This product would make absolutely certain in the right application that a bolt cannot come undone and that would allow the operator to utilise its resources in a much better way," highlighted Gerhard.

Interest in the Tracksure bolt is now almost global, with the company being active in Spain, and recently obtaining a Type Approval for an application on the German railways that Gerhard believes will offer up further opportunities. The Hungarian railways approved the product over two years ago and are appreciating the cost and safety benefits, and the Italian state railway (RFI) is also very interested in discussing it further. "We have a very good agent in Italy who got us into a private rail operator about four years ago - after two years of tests they approved the product, and we have been fitting it onto fish plates with great results.

"This opened the door into RFI and this required another in-house lab test. This went very successfully and we are now certified to EN13481-7, which is specifically for switches, crossings, and check rails. This certificate and another successful trial opened the door to get test installations into the main track of the RFI, and at the moment the tests have done well and I will be in Rome discussing this further very soon with senior management," he said.

With every new reference, another door opens and Gerhard works hard to ensure that no opportunities are missed where his products can genuinely bring benefits to operators: "I participated with the company at the AusRail show in Sydney at the end of Nov 2013. A large operator had seen a lot of success with our bolts and fish plates in a very remote and challenging location in South Australia, so we decided to exhibit there and show what we can offer. We are now talking to the various state railways, as well as mining operators. There are a multitude of mine owners who require maintenance free tracks because any downtime costs them a fortune. We are negotiating with potential distributors in Australia

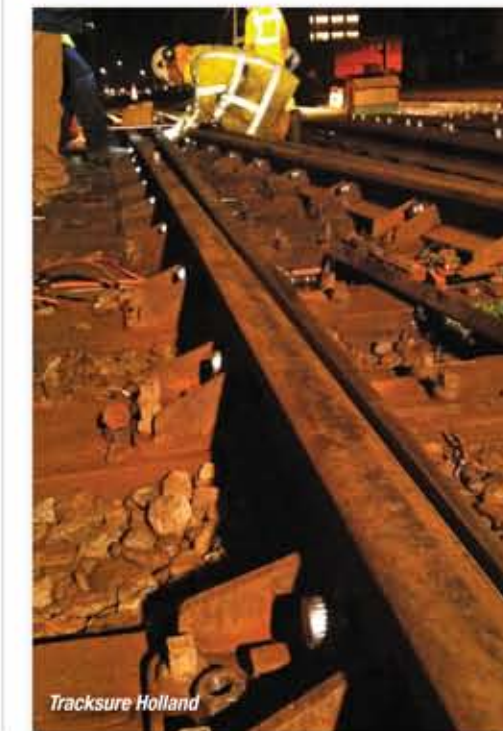
and a number of operators and as a result we will start another trial very soon with one of the largest contractors in Australia - I just can't give you a name yet!"

Expanding across the world without investing in large overheads requires a careful business strategy, and Gerhard explained that Tracksure convinces an operator in one market, and then copies that and transfers it to another. "We are trying to incorporate our products with local suppliers and this is already working through an agent in Italy, and distributors in Holland, Spain and Hungary.

"In this way we work with local experts that already have the contacts, and that means expansion can go ahead more quickly. I think this will happen now, as we have been through the testing processes, and the official procedures, and a lot of bureaucracy, and now we have a customer base who has tested and loves the product, who are keen to come back to us and work with us."

After just over ten years of hard work, Gerhard remains as passionate about his product as when the company was founded: "Every bolt we have fitted globally wherever, has remained tight," he announced with pride. He now feels that his persistence is really starting to pay off and in 2014 Tracksure will see a big breakthrough. "Our business is growing rapidly and I am confident to tell our long term investors that some serious revenue is just around the corner," he concluded. "I see this company growing globally and I think it will be a great success story, of a small British company achieving worldwide success!" ■

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Tracksure Italy

