Herzog Railroad Services, Inc. says its P.L.U.S./SMART trains offer the only ballast-spreading technology powered by the accuracy of GPS. The Herzog GPS ballast unloading systems have undergone many upgrades. However, the company says in the past few years, they have seen their most significant upgrades yet.

The first was the second generation GPS ballast train, or the SMART train. This gave the railroads the option of not only dumping on the shoulder, but into the center of the track, as well.

Another recent upgrade to its GPS trains was the development of The Herzog Pro Scan Lidar truck, which replaces the traditional survey that is done before every train is dumped.

“In the past, the only option was for the Herzog technician to ride in the railroad’s high-rail vehicle and manually input the amount of ballast presumed to be needed,” explained Tim Francis, vice president of marketing. “The Herzog Pro Scan Lidar truck can now take the guesswork out of this process. The railroad representative now rides in our Lidar truck, while we scan the track to determine the appropriate amount of ballast needed based on the template provided to us from the railroad.”

With this technology, the company has the ability to shrink dump zones to 15 feet on the approach to a fixed point and five feet on the departure.

“This capability will allow for increased surfacing gang productivity by reducing track and time needed due to unnecessary pulling of ballast because of lengthy dump zones,” he noted.