

STATE of TEXAS
HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES



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The Honorable Martin J. Oberman
Chairman, Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

HUGH D. SHINE
DISTRICT 55
BELL COUNTY

Dear Chairman Oberman and Members of the Surface Transportation Board,

I have serious concerns about the proposed rule on forced reciprocal switching (EP 711) being considered by the Surface Transportation Board. My community opposes this proposed rule change and the impact it will have on Texas.

We believe the rule change will be damaging to rail-served communities like Temple, Texas, and businesses in Texas and all across the nation over the long term. Forcing railroads to open their tracks to competitors at potentially below-market rates and without any demonstration of competitive abuse would have broad negative impacts on train operations.

Our freight rail system is comprised of a complex, integrated network. Disruptions will reverberate throughout the system. Freight railroads are vital to Texas' economy and industrial advancement. Texas is by far the largest freight railroading state by track mileage, with 54 railroads moving over 320 million tons of cargo annually.

Railroads move 35% of all U.S. exports and connect ports across the Texas Gulf Coast allowing American goods access to international markets. Of the eight international connections between the U.S. and Mexico, six are located in Texas including the five busiest (El Paso, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Laredo, and Brownsville), making Texas the center of rail-based trade between our two countries.

Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth are two of the largest railroad nexuses in the country with dozens of railyards, intermodal facilities, and rail-transportation investments. Hubs like San Antonio, Amarillo, Austin, Temple, El Paso, and Abilene play a key role in the state's rail network while giving manufacturers, oil and gas, and agricultural operations many transportation options. Of Texas' 254 counties, 208 feature rail access—giving local communities, rural economic operations, and industrial parks access that few other states enjoy.

These freight rail routes also support passenger service across the state. Amtrak has opposed forced switching in the past due to potential disruption to the multimodal network that moves both people and freight.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and in the face of continuing supply chain upheaval, railroads have proven to be uniquely nimble, resilient partners in America's interconnected transportation network. What has set railroads apart is their consistently high level of investment in infrastructure, technology, and operations, coupled with continuous innovation to meet the evolving needs of customers and compete in a changing transportation landscape.

Forced switching would undermine railroad efficiency and investment, exacerbate current supply chain challenges, and threaten the long-term health and sustainability of the rail network. I urge you to reject this proposed new rule.

Sincerely,

Hugh D. Shine



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