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UNION COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

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ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
August 16, 2024
Part of
Public Record

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August 15, 2024

Robert E. Primus, Chairman
Patrick J. Fuchs, Board Member
Michelle A. Schultz, Board Member
Karen J. Hedlund, Board Member
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Chairman Primus and Board Members Fuchs, Schultz, and Hedlund:

Ahead of the Board's September hearing on "Growth in the Freight Rail Industry," please consider the attached letter signed by more than 1,000 local, state, and national leaders in support of the balanced regulatory framework that has been fundamental to the success of freight railroads in the United States. The Staggers Act's approach to regulation has allowed the rail industry to flourish, enabling significant reinvestment in infrastructure, equipment, and technology, all of which are crucial for maintaining a high-quality rail network that benefits our communities, businesses, and the national economy.

This letter shows that communities nationwide recognize the vital economic role of rail in sustaining and building our economies. Growth in the freight rail sector will facilitate our burgeoning economy, alleviate highway infrastructure wear and tear, and further decrease transportation-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

It is essential that the Board remains committed to the Staggers free market principles, ensuring freight railroads can continue to invest in the future of our nation's transportation network. The prosperity of our communities and the sustainability of our economy depend on it.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Mayor Derek Armstead
City of Linden



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October 14, 2020

Ann D. Begeman, Chairman
Martin J. Oberman, Vice Chairman
Patrick J. Fuchs, Board Member
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Chairman Begeman, Vice Chairman Oberman and Board Member Fuchs:

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the enactment of the Staggers Rail Act. We write to urge the Board to maintain the balanced underlying economic framework that has been the bedrock of your decisions and ensure that no actions you take undermine the ability of freight railroads to reinvest in the rail network.

Any action inhibiting freight rail investment would threaten economic development and quality of life in our communities, precipitate job losses in the rail supply and contracting sectors, and undercut safety, efficiency and productivity across the rail network, affecting all railroads, small and large.

As you know, the Staggers Act established a visionary approach to regulation that sparked a freight rail renaissance and continues to provide measurable benefits to businesses, consumers, taxpayers and our economy.

This landmark, bipartisan legislation was necessary because decades of rigidly prescriptive federal overregulation had decimated the U.S. freight rail network. Bankruptcies were commonplace, rail rates were rising, safety was deteriorating, and rail infrastructure and equipment were in increasingly poor condition because railroads simply could not earn enough to pay for basic upkeep, let alone innovation and improvements.

Since the implementation of a balanced system of economic regulation under the Staggers Act, which protects rail customers while allowing railroads to manage their assets and pricing, U.S. freight railroads have invested hundreds of billions of dollars in the rail network. Rail traffic has doubled, rail productivity has more than doubled, rail rates are down more than 40 percent, and recent years have been the safest on record.

Freight railroads' massive, post-Staggers investments in infrastructure, equipment and technology transformed a failing rail system into a high-tech, highly efficient, interconnected network that links American communities, businesses and consumers to markets across the country and around the world.

This is important to us and to our country. Every ton of freight moved by rail promotes economic development, mitigates pollution, eases worsening highway congestion and saves taxpayers money. Railroads are four times as fuel efficient as other modes of transport and emit 75 percent fewer

greenhouse gases. Additionally, railroads do not require the significant public spending that subsidizes other modes.

Railroads are in the midst of revolutionary technological innovation as they adapt to meet changing customer demands and maintain their status as the safest, most efficient way to move freight over land.

We implore the Surface Transportation Board to preserve the delicate regulatory balance created by the Staggers Act, allowing freight railroads to innovate, adapt and reinvest in the rail network. Our communities, our businesses and our employees depend on it.

Sincerely,

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Chair, Senate Trans. & Energy Comm. (Dist. 21)
Alabama Legislature
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Councilor
City of Birmingham
Birmingham, AL

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Dir. of Policy Strategy & General Counsel
Alabama Policy Institute
Birmingham, AL

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CC: U.S. Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee
U.S. House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure