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Office of Chief Counsel
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Public Record

Surface Transportation Board
Office of the Chief Counsel
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

Re: Proposed UP-NS Merger, Docket No. FD 36873

Dear Office of Chief Counsel,

My name is Eric Hare, and I'm the CEO of Global K9 Protection Group in Opelika, Alabama. While our company has grown over the years, we're still very much a small business at heart — one that's proud to be part of the economic engine driving our local community.

Recently, two of the largest railroads in the country — Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern — announced plans to merge. Businesses like mine depend on reliable rail service to move the supplies we need and to deliver our products to customers on time.

As a small business owner for nearly two decades, I've seen firsthand how large consolidations can ripple through operations like ours. When rail mergers are poorly executed, they slow service, cause congestion, and disrupt supply chains. It's often small and mid-sized businesses — the mom-and-pop operations — that end up paying the price.

If this merger is approved, Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern would create what amounts to a near duopoly, further reducing competition. Less competition in rail service almost always leads to higher costs across the board. And when businesses can't absorb those costs, they inevitably trickle down to consumers — the people who can least afford to pay more for essential goods.

Healthy competition is what drives efficiency, lower costs, and long-term success. The prosperity of businesses, employees, and communities across Alabama depends on a strong, competitive rail network. When the merger comes before the Surface Transportation Board, I hope they carefully consider the impact on local businesses and ensure any decision truly strengthens competition, reliability, and safety.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Eric Hare

Eric Hare

Global K9 Protection Group

Cc: Parties of Record, Small Business Administration, and
United States Department of Justice