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**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF COOK COUNTY**

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TONI PRECKWINKLE
PRESIDENT

February 13, 2025

The Honorable Patrick J. Fuchs
The Honorable Karen J. Hedlund
The Honorable Robert E. Primus
The Honorable Michelle A. Schultz

Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423
(via email: patrick.fuchs@stb.gov)

Re: Docket EP 334 (Sub-No. 8A), Petition to Reopen

Dear Chairman Fuchs and Members of the Surface Transportation Board:

I write to urge the Surface Transportation Board to consider reopening Docket No. EP 334 (Sub-No. 8A) and to examine the prior approval of Rule 25 governing rates for hired cars. I hope that the reopening of this proceeding will encourage a pricing system that works for all stakeholders, including both railroads and boxcar owners, and that encourages investment in the boxcar fleet.

For the last two decades, more boxcars have been retired than constructed, in part due to low default lease rates in the Arbitration Rule. Boxcar fleet size has declined 38% since 2008 and is expected to decline another 22% by 2030.

Cook County is home to the headquarters of numerous companies that own significant portions of the boxcar fleet. Many rail equipment leasing companies have called Chicago and its suburbs home for over a century. In fact, five of the six largest railcar leasing companies in the United States are headquartered in my county and collectively own nearly 600,000 of the 1.6 million freight railcars traversing North America.

Rail is the safest and most efficient mode for transporting goods. Railroads handled over 1.1 million carloads shipped via boxcars in 2023. Boxcars also are extremely important to U.S. supply chains, and are used to move critical commodities, including agricultural, forest, and industrial products.

Again, I encourage the STB to examine how the Arbitration Rule impacts competition, the boxcar supply of the U.S. freight rail system, the U.S. supply chains that rely on boxcars and the ability of the railroad industry to collectively grow its share of the freight market and meet customer need.

We appreciate the Board's consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Toni Preckwinkle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Toni" and last name "Preckwinkle" clearly distinguishable.

Toni Preckwinkle
Cook County Board President