



MARIO CASTILLO
Houston City Council Member, District H

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Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

**Re: Docket No. FD 36873, Union Pacific Corp., et al. – Control – Norfolk Southern Corp., et al. –
Community Impacts of Blocked Rail Crossings in Houston, Texas**

To Chairman Fuchs and Members of the Surface Transportation Board:

I write on behalf of the residents of Houston City Council District H regarding the proposed merger between Union Pacific Railroad and Norfolk Southern Railway and the ongoing impacts blocked rail crossings already have on Houston neighborhoods.

District H includes some of the most rail-impacted communities in Houston, including the East End, Second Ward, Denver Harbor, and Near Northside. Residents regularly experience prolonged crossing blockages that disrupt daily life, delay emergency response access, and create barriers to schools, medical facilities, workplaces, and neighborhood services. These impacts are not theoretical for our communities; they are part of residents' daily lived experience.

Blocked crossings pose serious public safety and mobility concerns, particularly in working-class neighborhoods that have carried the burden of freight rail infrastructure for generations. Any increase in freight volume, train length, or operational activity associated with this transaction has the potential to intensify these impacts in already heavily affected communities.

Applicants state in their May 12, 2026, reply on completeness (UP-51/NS-49, Section XI) that blocked crossings should be addressed through the Board's environmental review process under 49 C.F.R. § 1180.8(a)(2). Respectfully, I urge the Board not to treat blocked crossings solely as an environmental review matter detached from enforceable operational accountability.

Environmental review alone does not guarantee meaningful mitigation for residents. If the Board determines this merger is in the public interest, that determination should include enforceable conditions addressing blocked crossings in densely populated urban areas such as Houston.

I respectfully urge the Board to:

1. Treat blocked rail crossings as a substantive issue within this proceeding in addition to the environmental review process.





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2. Require Applicants to disclose projected post-merger blockage frequency, duration, and timing at at-grade crossings within densely populated communities along affected rail corridors.
3. Condition any approval of the proposed transaction on enforceable mitigation measures, including:
 - a. Real-time train movement information sharing with local emergency management agencies and 911 dispatchers.
 - b. Public quarterly reporting regarding blockage frequency and duration at high-impact crossings.
 - c. A dedicated regional point of contact and complaint resolution process for affected residents and local governments.
 - d. Investment in grade separations, signaling improvements, crossing modernization, or other mitigation measures at high-risk crossings.

Houston communities should not be asked to absorb additional freight impacts without corresponding accountability, transparency, and public safety protections.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mario Castillo". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mario Castillo
District H Council Member
Houston City Council

