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May 20th, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Chairman Patrick Fuchs
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

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ENTERED
Office of Chief Counsel
May 20, 2026
Part of
Public Record

Re: Docket No. FD 36873, Union Pacific Corp., et al. - Control - Norfolk Southern Corp., et al. - Resident Comments on the Significance of Blocked Rail Crossings

To Chairman Fuchs and members of the Surface Transportation Board:

I am a resident of Houston, Texas, living in Eastwood near Union Pacific rail lines that run through my community. I am writing to ask the Board to take blocked rail crossings seriously as it evaluates the proposed merger between Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern.

My experience

Blocked crossings on Cullen Blvd. and Leeland Street regularly delay my commute by 20 or more minutes. The frequency of blocked crossings is high enough that I have changed my route to work, resulting in a longer commute using substantially more gasoline per trip. I commute to work 5 days a week, and these costs add up.

Why this matters in our community

Blocked crossings pose public safety risks to our community. They delay emergency response times for fire, EMS, and police. They cut off access to schools, medical facilities, and workplaces. They affect residents' ability to move through their own neighborhood on foot or by car, including elderly neighbors and parents with small children.

The East End and surrounding Houston neighborhoods already bear a disproportionate share of freight rail impacts. We have lived alongside these tracks for generations. The proposed merger is projected to grow freight volumes through our community, and growth in train counts and train length translates directly into more frequent and longer blockages at the at-grade crossings we depend on every day.

The Applicant's position should not control the Board's review

In their May 12, 2026, reply on completeness (UP-51/NS-49, Section XI), Applicants take the position that blocked crossings are appropriately addressed only through the Board's

environmental review process under 49 C.F.R. § 1180.8(a)(2). I respectfully disagree with treating this as a procedural punt to a separate, slower track.

Environmental review on its own does not produce enforceable operating conditions on the merged railroad. A meaningful response to blocked crossings requires conditions imposed at the time of merger approval, with measurable reporting requirements and a real enforcement mechanism. Without those, communities along the line have no practical recourse when blockages happen.

The Board has clear authority under 49 U.S.C. § 10101 and 49 U.S.C. § 11324(c) to impose conditions necessary to protect the public interest, including conditions addressing community impacts of a proposed control transaction. Approving this merger without addressing blocked crossings in densely populated communities would consolidate freight rail control through our neighborhood without corresponding accountability.

Conditions I respectfully request

I respectfully ask that the Board:

1. Treat blocked crossings as a substantive issue in this proceeding, in addition to the environmental review process.
2. Require Applicants to disclose, by neighborhood and by crossing, projected post-merger frequency, duration, and timing of blockages at at-grade crossings in densely populated communities along their lines, including the East End of Houston.
3. Condition any approval of the proposed transaction on enforceable measures to reduce blocked crossings, including:
 - a. A requirement that Applicants share real-time train movement information with local emergency services and 911 dispatchers.
 - b. Public quarterly reporting on blockage frequency and duration at identified high-impact crossings.
 - c. A dedicated regional point of contact and complaint process for affected residents and local governments.
 - d. Investment in grade separation, signaling improvements, or other mitigation at crossings the Board identifies as posing the greatest public safety risk.

Closing

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to provide additional information about my experience or the impacts on my neighborhood if it would assist the Board's review.

Respectfully submitted,
Catherine Noel Santamaria
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cc: Parties of Record

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE I hereby certify that on this 20th day of May, 2026, the foregoing document was served to all parties of record to this proceeding.

/s/ Catherine Noel Santamaria