



May 14, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

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

Re: Docket No. FD 36873, *Union Pacific Corp., et al. - Control - Norfolk Southern Corp., et al. - Comments on Blocked Rail Crossings and Request for Conditions Protecting Houston Communities*

To Chairman Fuchs and members of the Surface Transportation Board,

I am Houston City Council Member Julian Ramirez, representing Houston at large, writing to share concerns of some community members that live alongside the Union Pacific main lines. Some of these lines run through dense, working-class, predominantly Latino neighborhoods in Houston's East End and surrounding areas. The proposed merger has direct and material consequences for the public safety, mobility, and quality of life of residents I serve.

I respectfully request that the Board condition any approval of the proposed transaction on the measures described herein, which are necessary to address documented community impacts.

Public interest authority

Under 49 U.S.C. § 11324(c), the Board may approve this transaction only if it determines that the proposal is consistent with the public interest. The Board further retains broad authority under 49 U.S.C. § 10101 to impose conditions necessary to mitigate adverse impacts and further national transportation policy objectives, including reducing adverse environmental and community impacts and fostering coordination between rail carriers and local communities.

On May 13, 2026, a coalition of fourteen Gateway, led by South Gate Mayor Joshua Barron, filed comments opposing the transaction unless conditions are imposed addressing health, and reuse of inactive rail corridors. Some of Houston's East End and the Gulf Coast region face similar impacts. I request that the Board's review reflect that reality.

Conditions in our community

Union Pacific operates active main lines through some of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the City of Houston, which have some documented impacts, including:

- Frequent and prolonged blocked at-grade crossings, often lasting an hour or more, that delay emergency response by fire, EMS, and police.
- Restricted access to schools, hospitals, workplaces, and houses of worship for residents on foot and in vehicles.
- Public safety incidents at and near rail crossings, including pedestrian and vehicle
- Air quality, noise, and vibration impacts from idling and stopped trains in residential areas.
- Disproportionate cumulative environmental burdens on predominantly Latino, working-class neighborhoods that already host significant freight, port, and industrial activity.

These impacts are well-documented at the local level. Houston has invested public resources in studying and responding to blocked crossings, including through the work of the East End Rail Safety Task Force, the Gulf Coast Rail District, and the City's grade separation planning efforts. The proposed transaction's projected freight growth is anticipated to amplify each of these impacts.

Conditions respectfully requested

I respectfully request that the Board require conditions to address these critical concerns described above, as part of any merger approval, instead of as part of an unenforceable environmental review that may occur after approval. Without that, communities along the line, and the local governments accountable to them, have minimal practical recourse when blockages happen and emergency response is compromised. Please,

1. Convene a public field hearing in Houston as part of the Board's review, so that affected residents, local officials, first responders, and community organizations can place their experiences on the record directly.

2. Treat blocked crossings as a substantive issue in this proceeding, in addition to and apart from the environmental review process.
3. Require Applicants to disclose, by neighborhood and by crossing, projected post-merger frequency, duration, and timing of blockages at-grade crossings in densely populated communities along their lines, including the Houston East End and the broader Gulf Coast region.
4. Condition any approval of the proposed transaction on enforceable measures to reduce blocked crossings and address community impacts, such as:
 - a. Capital investment in grade separation, signaling improvements, and other mitigation at crossings the Board identifies as posing the greatest public safety risk, including those previously identified by the East End Rail Safety Task Force.
 - b. Real-time train movement information shared with local emergency services and 911 dispatchers in affected jurisdictions.
 - c. Public quarterly reporting on blockage frequency and duration at identified high-impact crossings, with data made available to local governments.
 - d. A dedicated regional point of contact and formal coordination process with the City of Houston, Harris County, and the Gulf Coast Rail District for corridor management, public safety, and grade separation planning.
 - e. Accountability measures with performance standards, public reporting, and meaningful enforcement consequences for non-compliance.

I respectfully urge the Board to ensure that the public interest standard is applied with the seriousness this community deserves.

Thank you for your consideration. My office stands ready to provide additional information, host Board staff in a site visit to affected communities or otherwise assist the Board's review.

Respectfully submitted,



Julian Ramirez
Council Member, At Large 1
Houston City Council