



CITY OF HOUSTON

Office of Council Member Joaquin Martinez, District I

May 29, 2026

Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

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ENTERED
Office of Chief Counsel
May 29, 2026
Part of
Public Record

Docket No. FD 36873, Union Pacific Corp., et al. - Control - Norfolk Southern Corp., et al.

RE: Proposed Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern Rail Merger

To Chairman Fuchs and Members of the Surface Transportation Board,

On behalf of the residents of Houston City Council District I, I write regarding the proposed rail merger between Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern and the significant concerns this merger raises for our community.

District I includes the majority of Houston's most rail-impacted neighborhoods, including the East End, Second Ward, Magnolia Park, and surrounding communities. For years, residents in these neighborhoods have experienced prolonged rail crossing blockages on a daily basis. These blockages create serious and recurring disruptions to emergency response access, school transportation routes, public transit connectivity, neighborhood mobility, local commerce, and the overall quality of life for working families.

Constituents regularly report being delayed for extended periods while attempting to access school, work, medical appointments, childcare facilities, and essential services. In emergency situations, blocked crossings can and have hindered the timely movement of police, fire, and emergency medical personnel, creating legitimate public safety concerns for residents and first responders. These impacts are not occasional inconveniences; they are persistent challenges that materially affect the daily lives of thousands of my constituents.

As the Surface Transportation Board evaluates this proposed merger, I respectfully urge the Board to give careful consideration to the cumulative impacts that increased freight rail activity could have on communities that are already overburdened by existing rail operations. Any increase in train frequency, train length, switching operations, or overall freight volume associated



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with this merger has the potential to exacerbate existing mobility, safety, environmental, and quality-of-life concerns within District I and across our city.

The residents of these neighborhoods – already heavily impacted by freight rail operations – deserve meaningful engagement and a transparent review process that fully accounts for community impacts and broader economic and operational considerations. It is essential that local voices, particularly those from communities located nearest to rail infrastructure, be included in these discussions.

That is why I respectfully request that the Surface Transportation Board consider holding a public meeting or field hearing in Houston, specifically within District I, where many of the communities most directly affected by existing freight rail operations are located. Hosting a hearing locally would provide residents, civic organizations, small businesses, first responders, and community stakeholders with an accessible opportunity to directly share their experiences, concerns, and recommendations with the Board. I also respectfully request that the Board consider mitigation measures, including support for grade separation projects and meaningful rail funding partnerships, to help reduce traffic congestion, improve public safety, and address the environmental impacts experienced by neighboring communities impacted by freight rail activity.

I have formally expressed my intent to participate in these proceedings and will remain actively engaged throughout the process. I look forward to working collaboratively with the Board, regional stakeholders, and rail operators to ensure that the needs and concerns of impacted communities are fully considered throughout this process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued commitment to public engagement and thoughtful oversight.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joaquin Martinez", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Council Member Joaquin Martinez



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Houston City Council