



Steve Hotz

Sebastian County Judge
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311594 May 28, 2026

The Honorable Patrick Fuchs
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

ENTERED
Office of Chief Counsel
June 11, 2026
Part of
Public Record

Dear Chairman Fuchs:

Docket No. FD 36873

On behalf of Sebastian County, Arkansas, I write to express our interest in and support for the proposed merger between Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern rail lines. Sebastian County has long recognized the importance of rail transportation to the economic vitality of western Arkansas and the surrounding region, particularly through the City of Fort Smith and our expanding industrial and logistics sectors.

As County Judge, I understand firsthand the critical role that dependable freight rail service plays in supporting manufacturers, agricultural producers, small businesses, and economic development initiatives throughout our county. A strengthened national rail network has the potential to improve efficiency, reduce shipping delays, enhance supply chain reliability, and create additional opportunities for economic growth across the Midwest and South.

Fort Smith and Sebastian County are strategically positioned along important transportation corridors, and any investment or operational improvements resulting from this proposed merger could provide meaningful long-term benefits to our region. Improved rail connectivity and infrastructure enhancements may also encourage future industrial recruitment and job creation opportunities for our citizens.

While we recognize the importance of careful regulatory review and consideration of competition, service quality, and public interest factors, we are hopeful that the Surface Transportation Board will continue to evaluate this proposal with an eye toward the long-term economic advantages that a modernized and more efficient rail system could provide to communities like ours.

Thank you for your leadership and service on the Surface Transportation Board and for your consideration of the perspectives of local governments and communities affected by this proposal. We appreciate the opportunity to share our support and look forward to the continued growth and success of freight rail transportation in our region and across the nation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Hotz", is written over the typed name.

Steve Hotz
Sebastian County Judge