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Office of Chief Counsel
June 23, 2026
Part of
Public Record



Joseph P. Hurst
Mayor

May 20, 2026

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

Dear Chairman Fuchs,

Van Buren has always had a unique advantage being located along the Arkansas River. For generations, that connection to transportation and commerce has shaped who we are as a community. I've long believed in the potential the river brings to this region, because when communities are connected to strong transportation networks, they're better positioned to grow, attract investment, and create opportunity, which is why I'm writing today in support of the merger between Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern.

Reliable rail service is vital to the River Valley. Union Pacific has long helped connect industries in this region to larger markets, from the financial hubs in Central Arkansas to the Fortune 500 powerhouses in the Northwest. UP has been supporting the movement of goods in and out of our communities. The river, highways, and rail lines all work together, and when those systems are dependable, it strengthens the entire regional economy.

The proposed merger with Norfolk Southern is a watershed moment in transportation because it speaks directly to the future capacity and reliability of the network. As freight demands refuse to slow down, communities like Van Buren need infrastructure growing and innovating alongside them. A stronger, more integrated rail system could improve coordination across the broader transportation network serving the River Valley.

As this region continues to offer opportunities for growth, we must continue thinking long-term about infrastructure behind the scenes. This merger could help strengthen the transportation foundation that has supported the River Valley for generations while opening doors for the people of Van Buren, both now and in years to come.

With kind regards,

Joseph P. Hurst
Mayor