

Dear Phillis Johnson-Ball,

We encourage you to support HR 6707, a long overdue technical clarification to the federal law applicable to Class I railroads.

Currently, federal law is ambiguous regarding whether the STB has authority to reject railroad mergers and acquisitions transactions on environmental grounds. In fact, the STB has neither rejected nor seriously considered rejecting large transactions on environmental grounds, and has never shifted the burden of meaningful mitigation to a railroad applicant. Therefore, large railroads have little or no incentive to engage in serious discussion of mitigation of the negative impacts of their expansion efforts.

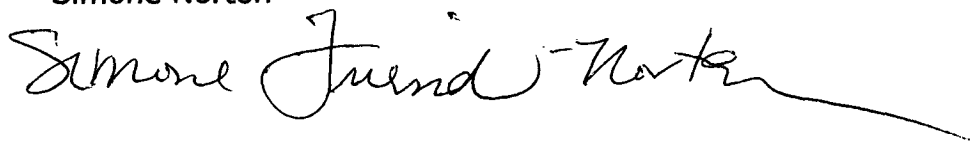
Under the TRACS Act, the STB will be required to disapprove a proposed transaction involving a large railroad and major traffic shifts if community harms outweigh transportation benefits. And, most fundamentally, the TRACS Act would require the STB to conduct an environmental review to assure that environmental impacts are fully evaluated (not currently required).

Most federal law concerning railroads was passed in the 19th Century, a time when it was necessary to lay vast stretches of rail infrastructure to connect sparsely populated outposts. Today, the situation is vastly different – forced and taxpayer-subsidized railroad merger and acquisition activity in developed areas destroys communities. Highly profitable railroads can easily afford to make the investments necessary to safely integrate their operations into American communities.

We urge you to support the TRACS Act to assure communities across America that environmental and safety impacts are weighed against the competitive transportation benefits of private companies.

Thank you for your time,

Simone Norton

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simone Norton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.