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July 6, 2008

**Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street S.W.
Washington D.C. 20423-0001**

**Subject :
Docket EP 677 1
Common Carrier Obligation of Railroads
Transportation of Hazardous Materials**

Dear Sirs,

This letter is in support of keeping the ability of receiving and shipping anhydrous ammonia on our rail systems. I am not only our anhydrous ammonia operations manager but also our local fire chief.

I have worked with anhydrous ammonia for 33 years. For those thirty years we received anhydrous ammonia by rail and also by truck. I have seen a lot more advantage of receiving it by rail rather than by truck.

Today the economics is a big issue we are dealing with. Having the price of fuel at the level it is at is well known that it is a lot more expensive to ship it by truck rather than by rail. A bigger issue yet is safety. A rail tanker has the capacity of four times that of a truck tanker. That means there would have to be four times the truck traffic traveling on our already deteriorating roads and through our communities. It also means there will be four times the valves being used and have a chance of leaking and being tampered with. This last fall it would have been a major disaster if we would have had to depend on receiving anhydrous by only truck rather than by rail with the shortage of trucks.

There is a lot more a chance of a semi tractor overturning or involved in a traffic accident on our highways than a rail car on our rail system. We had an anhydrous ammonia truck tanker overturn on a highway in our district. Our fire department and the DOT were on site for a day and a half until it was pumped off and turned back over.

Thank You for your consideration.

Gary P. Smith

**Gary P. Smith
NH3 manager and Lovington Fire Chief**